DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in the whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature:..... Date: .....

ABSTRACT

Attachment theory is an extensive yet emerging body of research which emphasises the centrality of the mother-infant bond in healthy socio-emotional and cognitive development, particularly during infancy. The last two decades in particular have seen a proliferation of attachment research involving indigenous populations in the developing world. This has also seen our understanding of the concept of 'mothering' grow in breadth and depth. However, with the increased interest in these contexts, so questions are being raised by the scientific community as to the cross-cultural reliability and validity of the findings of such research. A central point of contention surrounds the measure's suitability to the contextual and/or cultural idiosyncrasies of the sample's characteristics. Related to this are issues of construct equivalence, item and/or methodological biases, as well as theoretical discordance between Western and non-Western principles which invariably underscore such research. Debate is particularly rife in situations where the measures have been imported and 'imposed' upon the sample under study without prior, appropriate adaptation.

The mini Maternal Behaviour Q-Sort (MBQS-mini) was employed for the first time in a South African research initiative, the Ububele Mother-Baby Home Visiting Project (UMBHVP), to assess the maternal sensitivity scores of a group of mothers residing in Alexandra Township (Alex), Johannesburg. Maternal sensitivity is thought to be a key concept in the study of parent-infant interactions, and its influence on child development has been significantly correlated to the developmental outcomes of the infant. The MBQS-mini was designed and normed in Canada and is based on the notion of the 'prototypically sensitive', Canadian mother. This brings into focus some of the concerns raised above regarding the measure's appropriateness for use in a distinctly high-risk context like Alex. This research aimed to explore the coders' and trainer's experiences of the first time use and application of the measure in the Ububele research initiative in Alex. A focus group and semi-structured interview elicited important information on the participants' experiences of the training and reliability procedures and further highlighted some of the contextual/cultural constituents that were thought to have impacted the measure's overall performance and thus also its suitability, utility and applicability to a South African setting. The analysis was inductive and exploratory in nature insofar as a prescribed theoretical interest did not necessarily inform the themes that were identified. The findings indicate that despite the significant impact of the context and the possibility of further adaptation to some items, the MBQS-mini is a suitable measure with utility for assessing maternal behaviours within South Africa.

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Aim.

Having already passed through a number of watershed moments since its inception (Crittenden & Claussen, 2000), the proliferation of theory, method and interest in the attachment domain shows no signs of abating in the 21st century. Taking the lead in attachment research, at least historically, have been the so-called 'developed nations' of the world. More recently however, and especially in the last two decades, there has been a growing impetus towards studying the attachment phenomena of indigenous groups, both from outside and within the 'developing world'. The extent of this erudition has yielded findings that illuminate an increasingly complex and nuanced picture of the caregiver-infant relationship. Consequently, current literature is beginning to move toward a broader inclusiveness and understanding of the term 'mothering'. There is also a small but growing appreciation for what might be considered 'optimal mothering' under different environmental conditions in multicultural settings.

As researchers venture to study the attachment phenomena of multicultural groups, so there has been an increase in debate concerning the cross-cultural and cross-national reliability and validity of the measures employed in these studies. Debate is particularly rife when the measures are imported from foreign countries (or contexts) and 'imposed' upon the sample under study without adaptation to accommodate the prevailing cultural and/or contextual demands in these locations (Nsamenang, 2006; Realo & Allik, 2002). More contentious still is debate when the findings from these studies are used to inform intervention and service delivery programs (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008).Current discourse circling the matter pertains to key issues of construct bias and equivalence, the relevance of findings to the sample under study, and the overall appropriateness and consideration of ethical issues in these studies.

The aim of this research was to explore the suitability and utility of the first time use and application of a Canadian-designed measure, the Maternal Behaviour Q-Sort-mini (MBQS-mini), in a South African research initiative called the Ububele Mother-Baby Home Visiting Project (UMBHVP).This exploration was undertaken from the perspective of the MBQS-mini trainer and a select group of MBQS-mini coders involved in the Ububele research initiative. The measure was employed as part of an on-going research initiative in Alex (Alexandra Township), Johannesburg, around a home-visiting intervention for mother-infant

dyads. More specifically, the MBQS-mini was used to assess levels of maternal sensitivity in these mothers, who, given the prevailing, high-risk conditions in which they live, are considered to be at greater risk of engendering in their infants an insecure attachment style (Tomlinson, Cooper, & Murray, 2005), amongst other psychopathology. Information about the measure's performance was obtained via a focus group with four of the South African coders who were tasked with observing and scoring the Alex mother-infant dyads using the MBQS-mini. A semi-structured, in-depth interview was also conducted with the principal MBQS-mini trainer, a Canadian national, who trained the South African coders. Both the focus group and the interview were conducted subsequent to the participants' training on the MBQS-mini and after the participants had reached reliability as coders and begun to use the measure in the UMBHVP on a local sample of mothers.

With the measure's utility and suitability in mind, the focus of this research was to explore the participants' experiences and perceptions of the training and reliability procedures, and their experiences of actually applying the measure in a South African context. The focus on the latter was to try to extricate the contextual factors that were deemed to be most salient in influencing the measure's performance in Alex. The analysis was inductive and exploratory in nature insofar as a prescribed theoretical interest did not necessarily inform the themes that were identified. However, it is hoped that the analysis manages to capture an understanding that goes beyond the surface-level description of the participants' experiences.

1.2 Rationale.

It has been argued that the measures and associated methodologies that have been employed so extensively within attachment theory over the years, and which have seen it established as a 'grand theory' for understanding human bond formation (Waters & Cummings, 2000), have tended to focus primarily on the Westernised middle-class. It may be argued further that the measures used in the promulgation of this research were themselves designed, developed and normed in the contexts and for the populations groups they intended to study, thus optimising the goodness of fit between measure and context.

However, as the attachment footprint in the 21st century moves beyond the boundaries of Westernised settings into the developing world, so attachment researchers in the present day are likely to engage contexts in which there is far greater complexity and instability, concomitant with richer dimensions of culture, ethnicity and linguistic diversity amongst

people who share their own beliefs, values, roles and attitudes (Maiello, 2008; Minde, Minde, & Vogel, 2006; Triandis, 2002). Despite clear evidence for the existence of such diversity, "sub-cultures within many countries...are mostly regarded as uniform and homogenous entities in cross-cultural research" (Realo & Allik, 2002, p. 163).

Contemporary attachment researchers face a fundamental ethical dilemma, in that there is an urgent need to address the imbalance in knowledge between Western and non-Western populations regarding their patterns of attachment and child-rearing behaviours (Tomlinson & Swart, 2003), however the measures available to them in many instances are ill-equipped to extricate, let alone understand, those aspects of behavioural concern and/or interest as a result of the poor cross-cultural fit between measure and context (Sagi, Van IJzendoorn, Koren-Karie, 1991). A central concern in contemporary attachment research therefore hinges on the potential for construct, method and item biases, and other issues of equivalence that may be introduced as a result of context/measure discrepancies (Meiring, Van de Vijver, Rothmann, & Barrick, 2005). Such a dilemma comes at an unfortunate time in the developing world, especially since there is mounting evidence to suggest that adverse contextual factors, including extreme poverty (Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004), high crime and violence (Tomlinson et al., 2005), complex trauma and related psychopathology (Murray, Fiori-Cowley, Hooper, & Cooper, 1996), and low education and literacy levels (Richman, Miller, LeVine, 1992), among other things, are hypothesised to facilitate the development of unfavourable attachment outcomes between mothers and babies (Crittenden & Bonvillian, 1984).

As is the case in most developing nations, attachment research is still in its infancy in South Africa and is heavily reliant on the importation of measures to pursue local research initiatives. While the need to import a measure for a specific research initiative may find swift justification (Realo & Allik, 2002), including for example, a lack of prior research on the topic, funding and/or time constraints, or a lack of expertise to facilitate measure adaptation, concerns around the appropriateness of this approach remains largely unexamined. Foxcroft and Roodt (2005) and Louw (1997) make the poignant observation that since the abolition of apartheid in South Africa, the profession of psychology has failed to respond to the need for the development of contextually-relevant psychological measures, leaving the profession ill-equipped to 'speak the same language' as the South African people. Instead, it is argued that Westernised ideologies and theoretical models still predominate in

South Africa, guiding process and intervention while advocating 'best-practice' ideals without sufficient consideration for localised competencies and conceptualisations of mental health and related functioning (Pence & Nsamenang, 2008). Having recently attended the first ever Infant Mental Health conference in Johannesburg, Bain (2015) notes that "There is a growing pressure in South Africa, and internationally, to provide evidence-based, cost-effective and culturally appropriate therapeutic interventions" (p. 107). This is especially true, Foxcroft (1997; 2011) suggests, in ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse contexts like South Africa, where mental health interventions are sorely needed.

With the aforementioned points of consideration in mind, an investigation into the suitability and utility of the first time use and application of the Canadian-designed MBQS-mini in a South African setting becomes a relevant and necessary undertaking (Foxcroft, 2011; Sharp, Skinner, Serekoane, & Ross, 2011). The focus in this research, therefore, is not on the findings from the measure's use in South Africa, nor is the efficacy of the intervention under review. Rather, the participants' perceptions and experiences of using the MBQS-mini in a distinct, high-risk South African setting are explored in the hope that the insights gathered from this research may pave the way for more relevant and culturally appropriate application of the MBQS-mini in South Africa. As key role-players and the primary users of the measures in these contexts, this line of inquiry seems to be a neglected one, and may thus be considered unique at the current time in South Africa.

1.3. The scope of the MBQS-mini's use in the Ububele Mother-Baby Home Visiting Project (UMBHVP).

Using Tomlinson et al.'s (2005) study on home visiting in Khayelitsha as a platform to guide further attachment research in South Africa, the Ububele Educational and Psychotherapy Trust developed a similar home visiting project in Alex, Johannesburg, with a sample of mothers and their infants. The UMBHVP employed a multifaceted, phased approach to its data collection over a period of 24 months and used a variety of psychological measures to achieve a number of specific research aims.

One of the project's aims set out to assess the maternal sensitivity of a sample of mothers living in Alex. Maternal sensitivity has been causally and consistently linked to play a role in the facilitation of attachment security (Ainsworth, 1979; Wolff, & Ijzendoorn, 1997; Van

Ijzendoorn, & Kroonenberg, 1988). To this end, the research initiative employed the use of the MBQS-mini to meet its data collection requirements.

The Maternal Behaviour Q-sort was developed by David Pederson, Greg Moran and Sandi Bento in 1990 (Pederson, Moran, & Bento, 1999). The MBQS-mini is a tool used for systematic structuring of observable evidence based on video-recorded interactions of the mother-infant dyad. The original measure uses 90 items in order to code the interactions which are compared to that of a 'prototypically sensitive' Canadian mother. After the coding and scoring process is complete, the MBQS produces an overall sensitivity score of the mother's sensitivity. The MBQS-mini was developed to be less time consuming than the original 90 item sort (the MBQS-mini consists of 25 items and takes between 30-60 minutes per video, depending of the skill level of the professional coder). Like the MBQS, the MBQS-mini is also well suited to home visits and for samples of video-recorded interactions that include the full range of procedural application (i.e., during free play, play with toys, reading or book exercise and during a feeding task).

It is a pre-requisite that coders achieved reliability of .75 prior to being allowed to code dyadic interactions using the MBQS-mini. In order for this to be achieved the prospective coder has to undergo an intensive training process which is facilitated by a professional coder. Training of the coders for the UMBHVP, although undertaken at different times, was conducted by the same professional in South Africa. The first phase in the process took place over a weekend training workshop. The workshop's primary aim is to sharpen prospective coders' observational skills and to facilitate discussion using practical examples which are negotiated in a group setting. Phase two requires each coder to individually attempt to code 15 mother-infant videos (of approximately 30 minutes each). Ten of the videos make use of Canadian mother-infant dyads and the remaining five make use of South African mother-infant dyads. These are submitted for reliability verification to a professional MBQS-mini coder. Competency is achieved when 75% of the sensitivity scores submitted are within the required range of reliability, which is set at 0.75 or higher. If reliability is not achieved initially the videos that have thus far been submitted are reviewed and discussed with a reliable mini MBQS coder in order to facilitate improved understanding. The candidate is then required to code further videos until reliability is achieved.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A brief overview of the development of Attachment Theory.

Attachment theory is an enduring field of research interest emanating from developmental psychology which has emerged as a major area of study since the 1950s (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bretherton, 1992). Attachment theory endeavours to understand and explain the evolutionary-adaptive processes specifically involved in human bond formation between a mother (or caregiver) and her infant. The theory's inception can be traced back to the pioneering work of John Bowlby who was inspired by the work of ethological scientists and their observations of the patterns and mechanisms of attachment in mammals. The idea that human beings, too, must also be predisposed towards a relational experience with a significant other was Bowlby's eureka moment which set forth his theory of attachment (Karen, 1990). Armed with this idea, Bowlby was determined to enlighten the scientific community to the profound effects of separation and loss on the developing child's welfare (Bowlby, 1952). Bowlby's ideas of loss and separation had particular relevance to the period in which he was writing, given the many thousands of infants and children who were left orphaned in the post world war era.

A departure from psychoanalytic thinking of the time, attachment theory replaced Freud's psychoanalytic emphasis on the reduction of internal drive states as central to relationship formation to an emphasis on "the role that relationships play in support of exploration and competence in the infant" (Waters, Crowell, Elliot, Corcoran, & Treboux, 2002, p. 1). According to Bowlby's theory, actual experience was thought to have far greater significance in the scope of one's development as compared to fantasised, intrapsychic (object) experience (Fonagy & Target, 2007). Crucially, however, this shift of emphasis also opened Bowlby's theory and ideas to observational technique, an area in which Bowlby was lauded for his sophistication. Attachment theory proposes that certain 'attachment styles' emerge as a result of the quality of the interactions between a mother and her infant over time which, in turn, are thought to have salient developmental consequences for the infant across a number of life domains (Bowlby, 1952, 1956; Sroufe, Carlson, Levy, & Egeland, 1999; Sroufe & Waters, 1977) into adolescence (Hamilton, 2000) and adulthood (Belsky & Cassidy, 2002; Crowell, Fraley, & Shaver, 2008; Waters, Merrick, Treboux, Crowell, & Albersheim, 2000) (The attachment styles are reviewed briefly in the section that follows). These early experiences

between mother and infant, Bowlby suggested, culminates in the affective-cognitive experience of an 'internal working model' (Bowlby, 1969) which "leads to generalized expectations about the self, others, and the world" (Waters, Hamilton, & Weinfield, 2000, p. 678).

Mary Ainsworth, once a student of Bowlby's and who was greatly inspired by Bowlby's ideas at the time joined him in developing and extending the theory of attachment further. Together their intellectual collaboration over subsequent decades resulted in dramatic shifts, both theoretically and practically, in terms of the way in which the mother-infant dyad is thought about and subsequently treated (Bretherton, 1992).

Although Bowlby's observational research and dedicated thoughtfulness to the mechanisms of attachment enabled him to offer forthright speculation about the potential outcomes for the infant, it was Ainsworth's astute methodological ingenuity that enabled her to operationalise many of Bowlby's ideas via an observational technique she developed called the Strange Situation Procedure (SSP) (Bretherton, 1992). Readily acknowledged as the crowning achievement of Ainsworth's distinguished career, the SSP has since become the most widely used standardised method to assess the nature and quality of a child's tie to its mother (Sagi et al., 1991). Karen (1990) acknowledges the significance of Ainsworth's contribution to attachment theory: "Although real-life experiences were widely assumed to shape personality, no one had been able to demonstrate exactly which experiences mattered" (p. 3). The SSP thus not only made it possible for the first time to test many of Bowlby's ideas empirically while simultaneously advancing the theory in its own right, but it also succeeded in reifying many of its central conjectures (Posada et al., 1999).

2.1.1 Attachment facilitation and the "secure base" phenomenon.

Ainsworth's first major theoretical contribution to the attachment domain came during her visit to Uganda in 1954 (Ainsworth, 1967) in which she undertook meticulous naturalistic observation of indigenous mother-infant dyads. During her work there, Ainsworth loosely conceived of the idea that the mother somehow represented a 'secure base' to the infant which he 'used' during his exploration (it was not until much later, however, that the significance of this concept would be realised). Her second contribution came years later in Baltimore, USA, in which she conducted extensive observational research of middle-class mothers and children in their homes over a period of a year. Ainsworth then replicated these findings in a laboratory

setting using the SSP with a larger sample (Stayton, Hogan, & Ainsworth, 1971; Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Wall, 1978).

The SSP is an observational research technique that is used to analyse a variety of attachment phenomena between mother and infant. The experiment is set up in a small room with a variety of toys to encourage the infant to explore. There is one way glass so that the behaviours of the infant (and mother) can be observed covertly by the observers/coders. The procedure is facilitated by observing the infant in a series of eight stages, lasting about three minutes each which are designed to induce in the infant a degree of distress based on the presence or absence of the mother, and/or the presence or absence of a stranger at any given stage. During one of these stages the infant is alone. The interaction is video-recorded and later played back for subsequent coding (Karen, 1990).

During the procedure, Ainsworth and her colleagues observed the manner in which the infant went about exploring his immediate environment, and, more importantly, how they 'used' their mother during this exploration. Ainsworth noted, for instance, that there were distinct differences in how the infant moved away from its mother to investigate their immediate, physical space (Rholes, Simpson, & Blakely, 1995). She also keenly noted that their affective displays that accompanied this exploration differed. For example, was the infant able to explore relatively confidently and independently, or were they apprehensive and reassurance-seeking? However, of greater significance to Ainsworth was the manner in which the mother-infant dyad re-engaged one another upon their reunion when baby's distress was believed to be at its height. Ainsworth paid close attention to the infant's ability to be soothed in the company of its mother. Did the infant seek proximity and comfort from her, and, if so, was this effective in soothing the infant's arousal so that he could return to exploring the environment as before? Conversely, did the infant exhibit avoidance behaviours in the mother's presence, appearing as if he is indifferent to her presence and/or her attempts to soothe him? Alternatively, did the infant actively resist contact from its mother, displaying overt emotion as if inconsolable and preoccupied with his distress?

The significance of this procedure, the theory upholds, is that it provides important clues as to the quality of the infant's attachment to its primary caregiver vis-à-vis his developing internal working model (Bowlby, 1969). By this stage, Ainsworth and her colleagues had developed a formal classification system to represent the secure base phenomenon (Ainsworth et. al., 1978). She came to describe infant-caregiver relationships as either 'secure' or 'insecure'. A

securely attached infant will use its mother in confidence to explore, thus promoting self-esteem and agency in the knowledge that she will be consistently present and responsive in a characteristic manner that he has come to expect from her. In the case of the latter, although still adaptive, the infant will not use his mother in the same way, even though he no doubt wishes to. In this instance, he has come to experience his mother in ways that are not able to soothe or comfort him when he needs it, perhaps having to rely on himself to be soothed which is never achieved to the same degree of satisfaction, thus perpetuating the emergence of a characteristic defence. The category of insecure attachment can be further subdivided into either 'avoidant' or 'resistant/ambivalent' patterns depending on the characteristic pattern of behaviour displayed by the infant. Ainsworth and her colleague, Mary Main, later added a fourth category which they termed the 'disorganised' (attachment) pattern because it did not correlate to any of the patterns described previously (Bretherton, 1992). Whereas infants in the three preliminary attachment classifications were observed to have a relatively organised and coherent strategy for dealing with their arousal systems, disorganised-attached infants either lacked a characteristic response, or they readily displayed strategies that were highly unusual, incoherent or bizarre, and they may frequently be observed to freeze or become disorientated in their mother's presence. Disorganised attachment is thus considered to be an extreme form of insecure attachment, cohered primarily around fear and confusion in relation to the caregiver.

The attachment classifications described above are believed to represent salient developmental consequences for the infant, which are likely to mirror the efficacy or robustness with which the developing infant manages to engage the world as he or she progresses through subsequent life stages. The theory further posits that the overall quality of the relationship is a good indicator of the future psychological well-being of the child, which serves as a relational 'blue-print' for all subsequent relationships in the child's life (Bretherton, 1992), although these are amenable to intervention.

2.1.2 Maternal Sensitivity and the role of the mother (caregiver) in attachment facilitation.

Ainsworth was also interested in the mother's characteristic response to her infant's cues. Although much focus of her research, initially, was very much on the infant, Ainsworth came to understand that the infant's pattern of attachment was developed in response to its mother (Karen, 1990). In other words, it would be considered highly unlikely that an infant would

become securely attached to its mother if the mother's interactions with her infant were 'cold', erratic, intrusive and/or hostile. To describe the mother's role in attachment security facilitation, Ainsworth began to think of the infant's attachment security status as being casually representative of the mother's characteristic behaviours and responses to her infant. In other words, attachment security facilitation was a two-way street. Although hypothesised by Bowlby early on in the theory's development (Bowlby, 1951), the concept of 'maternal sensitivity' was developed by Ainsworth and, after receiving much empirical support from these pioneering studies it has since retained its significance as one of the cornerstones of attachment security formation (McElwain & Booth-LaForce, 2006; Posada et al., 1999; Seifer, Schiller, Sameroff, Resnick, & Riordan, 1996).

Maternal sensitivity has been defined by Ainsworth et al. (1978) as the mother's availability, attentiveness, and well-timed and appropriate responses to the child's cues (as cited in Braungart-Rieker, Hill-Sonderlund, & Karrass, 2010, p. 793). But what exactly does this description of maternal behaviour encompass? And how are the composite parts observed in reality? In an attempt to deconstruct this concept it is likely that: firstly, a sensitive mother would be identified through her ability to display a suitable and sustained awareness of the shared physical environment between her and baby, and structure it appropriately in order to optimise opportunities of qualitative interactive care to take place between them. Secondly, a maternally sensitivity mother has an awareness of the timing (Biringen et al., 1994) of her actions as being critically important, particularly in light of the potential impact that physical and/or verbal intrusions may signify for the infant. Thirdly, the concept recognises the overall appropriateness and well-roundedness of the mother's elaborations with her infant in terms of quality and care of the tactile, verbal and non-verbal contact between them. Fourthly, a sensitive mother will monitor her infant's cues and respond accordingly to 'mirror' her infant's rate of stimulation (Braungart-Rieker et al., 2010). An infant's experience over time of such a mother has been linked to the development of a secure attachment style, which, in turn, has been significantly correlated with a number of developmentally favourable outcomes for the infant, including a sense of self-efficacy, motivation, a sense of self-competence, and security and basic trust (Biringen & Robinson, 1991; Braungart-Rieker et al., 2010; Matas, Arend, & Sroufe, 1978; Pungello, Iruka, Dotterer, Mills-Koonce, & Reznick, 2009; Sroufe, 2005). Mary Main, a former student of Ainsworth's also found an intergenerational transmission of one's attachment style. Therefore, parents who themselves were known to be

securely attached as infants were more likely to inculcate in their infants a secure attachment style (Bretherton, & Munholland, 1999; Karen, 1990).

2.1.3 Measuring the construct of maternal sensitivity.

It is important to highlight that although Ainsworth went to great lengths in her efforts to delineate a workable definition when attempting to measure maternal sensitivity, much debate still surrounds the notion of which is the 'best fit' definition to use. Isabella (1998) points to the conundrum facing researchers when attempting to measure the construct and highlights the lack of cohesion regarding the semantics implicit in the definition. Definitions appear to be culturally-specific and thus embedded in these cultural differences are subtle yet important nuances pertaining to maternal behaviours observed, as well as to the meaning ascribed to these behaviours, which may differ considerably from Westernised societies. Posada et al. (1999) offer support for this view and suggest that future studies must pay special attention to construct definitions used, as well as to the methodologies and measures used to observe them. The sentiments raised by Isabella (1998) and Posada et al. (1999) become all the more important when working within the attachment domain in South Africa given the complexity of the South African landscape on a number of disparate levels, including race, language, educational attainment, access to services and socioeconomic status. Furthermore, the lack of normative data on attachment behaviours in South Africa makes the use of the MBQS-mini uniquely challenging.

2.2 Current research on maternal sensitivity.

Attachment theory is continually evolving and many new and exciting trajectories are beginning to emerge (Bretherton, 1992). A particular area of focus in contemporary research attempts to delineate the mechanisms through which individual differences in patterns of attachment are being noted. Although the value of longitudinal studies in attachment samples has proved useful in validating many of the causal links originally proposed by Bowlby and Ainsworth, so too has contemporary research begun to challenge existing theory and further explore the complexities of the mother-infant relationship and its links to the course of one's psychological development. Believed to be a central construct in the transmission of attachment security, maternal sensitivity has in recent decades been subjected to considerable experimental scrutiny and there is speculation today as to the exact contribution that can be

attributed to the role of sensitive mothering in an infant's development (Seifer et al., 1996). Contemporary evidence provides a more modest view of the role of sensitive mothering in the facilitation of attachment security when compared to findings of earlier studies (Posada et al., 1999). However it has been suggested that a likely cause of the differences observed today can in part be ascribed to a deviation in methodological rigour, which often falls short of the thoroughness of Ainsworth's experimental design (Atkinson et al., 2005).

A meta-analysis of available data suggest that "sensitivity is an important but not exclusive condition of attachment security" (De Wolff & van IJzendoorn, 1997, p. 571). Other authors suggest that "maternal sensitivity at best explains only a portion of the variability in attachment status" (Seifer et al., 1996, p. 20).

2.2.1 Maternal state of mind, maternal sensitivity, and attachment security.

Atkinson and colleagues (2005) undertook a study in which the relationship between maternal state of mind, maternal sensitivity, and attachment security was revisited after results from previous studies proved to be discordant. The aim of this research was to try and establish "how caregivers transmit their attachment representations so as to shape individual differences in infant attachment patterns" across all three constructs (Atkinson et al., 2005, p. 43). Support for the role of maternal state of mind as mediator (known as the Mediation Model) received varying favourable support from studies by Main, Kaplan, and Cassidy (1985) and Van IJzendoorn (1995; 2002). However, the results of the study by Atkinson et al. (2005) found no such mediating effect to be at play thus forcing the researchers to propose an alternative explanation for the interplay between the constructs under study. The conclusion reached by Atkinson et al. (2005) offers greater support in favour of maternal sensitivity as a moderator, particularly in samples where there was discordance between the mother's attachment strategy and the observed attachment security of the infant.

2.3 The Maternal Behaviour Q-sort (MBQS) and MBQS-mini.

The Maternal Behaviours Q-sort was developed by David Pederson, Greg Moran and Sandi Bento in 1990. The MBQS is a measure intended to assess Ainsworth's concept of maternal sensitivity. Maternal sensitivity is considered to be a crucial determinant in the facilitation of attachment security which is 'transmitted' from mother to infant during the on-going

interactions between them over time. Maternal sensitivity has been significantly correlated to the attachment security of the infant as categorised by the SSP classifications (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The MBQS-mini is a tool used for systematic structuring of observable evidence based on video-recorded interactions of the mother-infant dyad. The original measure uses 90 items in order to code the interactions which are compared to that of a 'prototypically sensitive', Canadian mother. After the coding and scoring process is complete, the MBQS produces an overall sensitivity score of the mother's sensitivity. The MBQS-mini was developed to provide a method of describing the dyad's interactions in a manner that was less time consuming than the original 90 item sort (the MBQS-mini takes between 30-60 minutes per video, depending of the skill level of the professional coder). Like the MBQS, the MBQS-mini is also well suited to home visits and for samples of video recorded interactions that include the full range of procedural application (i.e., during free play, play with toys, reading or book exercise and during a feeding task).

2.3.1 Current research using the MBQS or MBQS-mini.

In their 2005 study Atkinson and colleagues made use of the MBQS (90-item version) in order to assess maternal sensitivity. Comparative data were collected from two samples; a London sample and a Toronto Sample which were used to explore the relationship between maternal state of mind, maternal sensitivity, and attachment security after findings from previous studies proved to be "inconsistent and inconclusive" (Atkinson et al., 2005, p. 43). Posada et al. (2002) also chose to make use of the MBQS to assess maternal sensitivity in their study, which focussed on early care and secure base behaviour. The study was a collaborative effort between the psychologists of the universities of Purdue (USA) and Javeriana (Colombia). Commenting on the efficacy of the MBQS as a means of assessing maternal sensitivity, Atkinson et al.'s (2005) study refers to a meta-analysis of the MBQS carried out by Atkinson et al. (2000) which suggests that "meta-analytic data indicate that this procedure may be significantly stronger in predicting infant attachment security than more traditional observation techniques" (as cited in Atkinson et al., 2005, p.46).

2.3.2 How does the MBQS-mini's scoring system work?

The MBQS-mini uses a working definition of maternal sensitivity that was originally proposed by Ainsworth and colleagues (1978). Maternal sensitivity has been defined by

Ainsworth et al. (1978) as the mother's availability, attentiveness, and well-timed and appropriate responses to the child's cues (as cited in Braungart-Rieker, Hill-Sonderlund, & Karrass, 2010). The MBQS-mini is based on the theoretical understanding that embedded in the interactions between mother and infant are the identifiable cues to maternal sensitivity which lend themselves to empirical observation. Reliable coders, trained to be perceptive to these behavioural cues are able to systematically appraise the interaction and provide an overall score of global sensitivity for the mother compared to that of a prototypically sensitive, Canadian mother. A typical coding scenario involves the trained coder independently viewing the recorded material (this may require multiple viewings depending on the coder's level of experience) and scoring what he or she observes using the 25 items that comprise the MBQS-mini. These items are specifically geared towards the identification of a variety of maternally sensitive behaviours which act as prompts for the coder to analyse and subsequently score the observed behaviour (Pederson, Moran, & Bento, 1999). The coder is required to objectively score each item according to a behavioural reference system using clearly delineated categorises called 'piles' which are represented on a 5-point rating scale, including "Most uncharacteristic of mother", "Somewhat uncharacteristic of mother", "Behaviour inconsistent or not observed", "Somewhat characteristic of mother", and "Most characteristic of mother". MBQS-mini item number 10, for example, pertains to a measure of sensitivity as evidenced by the manner in which a mother speaks to her baby (see appendix E for a full list of MBQS-mini items). Therefore "Speaks to baby directly" would be held in the coder's mind during observation who is then required to rate the mother's 'performance' in terms of the salience with which this behaviour characterised their interaction and the subsequent response it elicited in the infant. If the behaviour was observed to be a particularly salient feature of their interaction, the coder would place the mother's rating of this item in the "most characteristic of mother" category, thus adding to her overall sensitivity score. Conversely, if the behaviour was not observed, or was not readily observed, the coder would rate this item accordingly, likely in the "Most uncharacteristic of mother" category. It is important to note however that some items are negatively loaded. Therefore placing a mother's behaviour for such items in the "most characteristic of mother" or "somewhat characteristic of mother" piles would in fact decrease the global sensitivity score she is allocated.

The 25 items of the MBQS-mini are cohered around four global scales which together provide a theoretical framework for the observation and categorisation of maternal behaviours on

which the construct of maternal sensitivity is based (Pederson et al., 1999). Early attachment researchers believed that the characteristics implicit in these four scales were highly inter-correlated (Ainsworth et. al, 1978). Each scale draws attention to particular behaviours that should be characteristically salient and directly observable if a mother is to be afforded a particular sensitivity score. Furthermore, the scales offer a thorough explanation of exactly why and how (by way of detailed descriptions of a range of possible maternal behaviours) these behaviours are implicated in maternal sensitivity outcomes. Scale 1 draws attention to the mother's sensitivity versus insensitivity to her baby's signals. Scale 2 highlights the mother's cooperation versus interference with her baby's on-going behaviours. Scale 3 focuses on the mother's physical and psychological availability versus her ignoring and neglecting behaviours. Finally, scale 4 looks at the mother's acceptance versus her rejection of her baby's needs.

2.3.3 MBQS-mini training in South Africa.

It is a pre-requisite that coders achieved reliability of .75 prior to being allowed to code dyadic interactions using the MBQS-mini. In order for this to be achieved the prospective coder has to undergo an intensive training process which is facilitated by a professional coder. Training of the coders for the UMBHVP, although undertaken at different times, was conducted by the same professional. The first phase in the process takes place over a weekend training workshop. The workshop's primary aim is to sharpen prospective coders' observational skills and to facilitate discussion using practical examples which are negotiated in a group setting. Phase two requires each coder to individually attempt to code 15 mother-infant videos (of approximately 30 minutes each). Ten of the videos make use of Canadian dyads and the remaining five make use of South African mother-infant dyads. These are then submitted for reliability verification to a professional MBQS-mini coder. Competency is achieved when 75% of the sensitivity scores submitted are within the required range of reliability, which is set at 0.75 or higher. If reliability is not achieved initially the videos that have thus far been submitted are reviewed and discussed with a reliable MBQS-mini coder in order to facilitate improved understanding. The candidate is then required to code further videos until reliability is achieved.

A significant feature of the participants' feedback covered the extent to which the nature of the their involvement in the UMBHVP required them to critically engage aspects of

themselves, and in particular, conflicts related to their race, racial identity and relative power and/or privilege in relation to the 'other' (i.e., the Alex mother). The emergence of these feelings became important in the context of the measure's use, insofar as they profoundly impacted how the participants experienced the use of this measure in Alex.

2.4 Contextual and cultural factors affecting maternal sensitivity.

In this report culture was conceptualised as a characteristic 'way of living' that is both enduring and dynamic, and incorporates all those beliefs, customs, art forms, and patterns of communication of a particular society, group, place or time. The influence of culture and the manner in which it impacts the mother-infant dyad has been of particular interest to developmental psychologists in recent years (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). Early attachment researchers asserted that attachment behaviours were likely to persist across a variety of contexts and cultures, suggesting that attachment behaviours were not readily amenable to or could transcend contextual and/or cultural variances (Sagi et al., 1991; Posada et al., 1999). Bowlby (1969) argued that attachment behaviours were so fundamental to the human species, it was as if both mother and infant have been primed for closeness. This was evidenced by the mother's almost complete preoccupation with her infant, particularly in the first year of its life, and, similarly, her infant's growing dependence on her (Ainsworth & Bowlby, 1991; Bowlby, 1951; 1969). Attachment behaviours were thus believed to be innate, incorporating all those interrelated processes and activities which were aimed at the survival of the species, principally through proximity seeking. However contemporary research has begun to challenge the notion that the secure base phenomenon is universally valid (Sagi et al., 1991). Attachment research today is not so much concerned with the distribution of attachment style categorisation observed in a particular context, while still of importance, as it is with how the environmental constituents of a particular context might influence the child-rearing behaviours of that context and subsequently impact attachment facilitation (and thus categorisation) (Posada et al., 2002). New evidence suggests that, in fact, cultural and socioeconomic variations may ultimately affect the presentation of attachment outcomes depending on the prevailing climate in which the attachment formation is facilitated. These studies argue for attachment security being context-bound, which is not necessarily consistent with the Bowlby-Ainsworth perspective of attachment universality (Posada et al., 1999).

These findings have serious implications for child-rearing practices in a high-risk location such as Alex, in which the amount and variety of stressors that mothers are likely to encounter is significant. For example, recent research has revealed that rates of secure attachment are lower in families under stress than in middle-class families (Emmen et al., 2013; Posada et al., 2002; Tomlinson et al., 2005). It is believed that the prevailing socio-economic climate affects the mother's ability to carry out her mothering duties; that is, to observe and interpret her child's signals and to respond to those signals in a prompt and appropriate way. This is in keeping with the Family Stress Model (FSM) (Conger & Donnellan, 2007) which describes a positive relationship between economic stress and increased parental stress, which in turn predicts lower quality parenting. Similarly, levels of maternal education have been cited to be positively correlated with a mother's level of knowledge pertaining to the relational needs of her infant (Bain, Dawson, Esterhuizen, Frost, & Pininski, 2016).Furthermore, locations in which community trauma and interpersonal violence are common place have been found to negatively impact parenting practices in these locations (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla, & Ratele, 2009)potentially leading also to higher rates of depression and anxiety, as well as lowered social support for these mothers in these areas (Shamu, Abrahams, Temmerman, Musekiwa, & Zarowsky, 2011). Postnatal depression, another common feature of high-risk environments in the developing world is also likely to impact the mother's ability to respond to her infant in a warm and consistent manner. Lastly, studies have shown that unplanned pregnancies have potentially serious implications for the health of infants, children and parents (Gipson, Koenig, & Hindin, 2008).

However, given that there is wide-spread acceptance of the fact that other mediating effects are also likely to influence attachment security, even in situations of extreme poverty, other antecedents implicit in the cultural contexts that describe such environments may act as confounding variables. These include acculturation stress, social support, prejudice and discrimination (Emmen et al., 2013). Other research has shown that specific mother-child interactive behaviours may promote social competence in some cultures but not in others (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). Furthermore, certain parental behaviours directed towards children in certain cultural contexts may only be seen to have negative outcomes in those particular cultures, and not in others. The influence of the differences in the overarching cultural climate, which in many respects governs the way in which people relate both externally and intra-familiarly, are now being considered. Within the well-known cultural distinctions of individualism, collectivism, independence and interdependence, Maiello

(2008) attempts to elucidate the "far-reaching implications" such distinctions may have "both in terms of social and cultural values, and for the definition of psychic development" (p. 249).

It has been found that mothers in Western cultures are generally more likely to interact with their baby overtly. Such mothers will characteristically "gaze and vocalise more to their infants, present objects more frequently, situate infants in face-to-face positions, and induce higher levels of positive arousal" (Feldman & Masalha, 2010, p 456). In contrast mothers in African cultures are more likely to take a passive (but not necessarily neglecting) role in their interactions with the infant and mirror baby's arousal. They are likely to maintain a continued presence, both emotionally and physically, but actively engage less by way of vocalisations and gazing (Feldman & Masalha, 2010). Braungart-Rieker et al.'s (2009) study found that there is a significant correlation between maternal education and the sensitivity displayed by the mother towards her infant. Mothers who had higher levels of education were generally rated to have higher sensitivity scores.

These studies support the notion that maternal behaviours and processes have to be interpreted within the socio-cultural context in which they unfold. A child's development therefore cannot be observed to take place along a predetermined, normative trajectory. Instead, the many diverse culture-specific influences must be given due consideration when determining levels of maternal sensitivity and how the infant's attachment style came into being.

It has been said that the sample of mothers who received the intervention via the UMBHVP were a high-risk sample, which at this stage needs qualification. For example, the mother's in the sample had high rates of incomplete school and unemployment, both of which have been associated with family disruption and trauma (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000).

2.5 Previous attachment-focussed research in South Africa.

Considering the extent to which the attachment domain has been researched in recent decades, and the extent to which its developmental consequences have been reported on, it is concerning to note the paucity of literature available in South Africa. As a result, mental health practitioners in South Africa find themselves in the indeterminate position of having many more questions than answers regarding the normative South African attachment behaviours, how these are manifested, and what, if any, the potential consequences might be for the mental health of South Africa's developing population at a broader societal level (Miller, 2005).

There are however a number of plausible explanations which may account for the paucity of empirical research in South Africa. The issue of research funding remains a primary point of contestation (Foxcroft, 1997). According to the World Health Organization's 2014 Mental Health Atlas, per capita expenditure levels in low, lower-middle and upper-middle income countries is less than US$ 2 annually, and falls well below levels estimated for high-income countries (over US$ 50 per head of population). As a global median, 2.8% of health budgets are allocated to mental health, with wide variation between low-income and high-income countries (from 0.53% to 5.10% respectively), indicating that, proportionally, lower income countries spend a smaller percentage of their health budget on mental health (World Health Organization: Mental Health Atlas, 2011).

It is the unfortunate economic reality at the present time in South Africa that the central agency for research funding allocation - the National Research Foundation – has prioritised research for the 'harder sciences'. This has precluded the initiation of a number of needed areas of research from being initiated. Research on South Africa's local attachment behaviours would appear to be one such imperative that has circumstantially been relegated down the order of importance in light of post-apartheid South Africa's more pressing issues needing to take centre stage (e.g., the HIV/AIDS epidemic) (Foxcroft, 1997).

Similarly, emulating the 'gold standard' of attachment research methodology as it was first orchestrated by Ainsworth and her colleagues in Uganda has placed considerable pressure on the scientific community to replicate this design, or closely resemble it if a study's findings are to be seen as having any empirical value. To this end, a particular skill-set requiring specialist training (e.g., required for observational and coding of mother-infant interaction) is required, concomitant with time-consuming methods of data collection. Thirdly, as Foxcroft (1997) points out, the scientific practice of measurement is always going to be a point of contestation in South Africa given its "culturally and linguistically diverse society that is trying to rid itself of the painful legacies of its segregated past" (p. 231). Moreover Foxcroft (1997) is quick to highlight the lack of culturally suitable measures currently available in South Africa, and further suggests that the issue of unexamined test bias might leave test users with little empirical certainty of their findings. To further compound the issues of measurement, Ruane (2008) notes that services in South African are accessed disproportionately introducing issues of sampling. Mental health in general is further noted to compete against varying cultural worldviews of notions of mental health and treatment which is sometimes surrounded by stigma.

The aforementioned considerations offer tentative justification for the empirical lag in attachment research in South Africa, and attempts to highlight some of the obstacles that may have perpetuated its existence. However, notwithstanding these justifications, there is indeed an urgent need in South Africa to begin the process of adding 'scaffolding to speculation' concerning the use of various attachment measures within a South African context. The impetus towards a proactive approach is further warranted, given the fact that there is mounting evidence to suggest that adverse contextual factors are all likely to produce negative attachment security outcomes between mother and infant (Crittenden &Bonvillian, 1984; Tomlinson et al., 2005).

In a study by Tomlinson and colleagues (2005) specific reference is made to the influence and legacy of South Africa's apartheid past and the residual ramifications that have consequentially been handed down to the South African people, including its children.

> The effects of poverty and the inequalities in South Africa are evident across all aspects of child development, and are apparent in the high infant mortality rate, stunted growth, high rates of early drop out from school and general low levels of educational attainment, high rates of homelessness, and criminality. Many children have lost either one or both parents to AIDS (p. 1044).

Under these circumstances, and evidently with such far-reaching socio-political consequences, it would be ill-advised to dismiss the notion that significant damage to the state of South Africans' attachment security may have already occurred. To date only two attachment-focussed studies have been undertaken in South Africa. The first was conducted by Tomlinson and colleagues (2005) in Khayelitsha, Cape Town. This was succeeded a year later by Minde, Minde, and Vogel (2006). On the basis of their independent enquiries both studies reported significant findings, most notably in terms of the prevalence rates of insecure attachment, particularly disorganised attachment, which were noted to be markedly above rates found in developed nations. These preliminary investigations, although extremely valuable in laying the foundation for further research, have only sought to unveil a potentially concerning reality from a mental health perspective in South Africa and which further highlights the need for urgent further research in the area.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the approach and methodology adopted in this research. First, the aims of the research are presented in order to contextualise the study in South Africa, followed by the more specific questions which broadly underscored the research question. Second, the research design, the method of sampling and the data collection processes involved in this research are set out. This is followed by an explanation of the method of data analysis which was employed. Third, the chapter ends with a discussion of important ethical considerations and issues of reflexivity.

3.1 Research Design.

The aim of this research was to explore the coders' and trainer's experiences of the use and application of the MBQS-mini in South Africa. Specific sub-questions related to this main question were:

- What were the reported coding experiences of the trained MBQS-mini coders involved in the Ububele Mother-Infant Home Visiting Project with respect to their training on the measure and the associated reliability processes?
- What were the perceived context specific factors reported by the MBQS coders which were said to have influenced the administration and coding process of the MBQS-mini when used in a South African sample?
- What are the coders' views with regards to the suitability and sustainability of the MBQS-mini in a South African setting?

This exploration was undertaken from the perspective of the MBQS-mini trainer and a select group of MBQS-mini coders involved in the Ububele research initiative. The measure was employed as part of an on-going research initiative in Alexandra Township, Johannesburg, around a home-visiting intervention for a sample of mothers-infant dyads. More specifically, the MBQS-mini was used to assess levels of maternal sensitivity in these mothers, who, given the prevailing, high-risk conditions in which they live, are considered to be at greater risk of engendering in their infants an insecure attachment style.

The research was exploratory in nature by virtue of the fact that the MBQS-mini had not been used in South Africa before the UMBHVP, and little was known about how it would perform

in a South African context. The research sought to address a longstanding concern in the attachment domain, and the social sciences more generally regarding the suitability and all-round appropriateness of the measures (and the theories related to them) used in contemporary attachment research. At the root of this research, therefore, was the prospect of facilitating transformation (Creswell, 2007) for future research initiatives, at least on a local level. Prior to the UMBHVP, two attachment-focussed studies (Minde et al., 2006; Tomlinson et al., 2005) had been undertaken in South Africa. However, the foci of these studies were on the categorisation and explanation of the maternal behaviours observed in high-risk, peri-urban communities in South Africa. No studies have yet explored the views, thoughts and perceptions of the coders and/or trainers involved in these studies. These individuals, along with the subjects in such research, are considered to be key players in the decision-making process regarding measure applicability, suitability and adaption. It is hoped that the findings from this research can be used to address issues related to cross-cultural suitability and applicability of the MBQS-mini in South Africa and elsewhere.

This research made use of a qualitative framework in which a focus group and a semi-structured interview were used. The semi-structured interview was conducted after the focus group in order to obtain further richness of data. Richness of data was desirable as the research was focussed on understanding the *process* of the research (rather than outcomes) noted in how the participants' views, reflections and perceptions of the MBQS-mini were narrated (Babbie& Mouton, 1998). The scope of discussion endeavoured to span the total coding experience, starting with the reliability and training processes through to the actual coding process, as well as to post-coding reflection. A qualitative framework was considered most appropriate to meet the aims of this research, given its focus primarily on human perception and understanding (Stake, 2000) of the context in which the measure was applied in the UMBHVP.

To this end, the focus group made use of open-ended questions which allowed a more naturalistic flow of discussion to take shape and which encouraged the participants to freely reflect on their experience as they experienced it. A thematic analysis was conducted in order to identify any salient themes and categories that emerged from the data. Furthermore, this approach allowed for both similarities and differences across the data set to be emphasised and analysed (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.2 Participants and the research procedure.

The study's sample comprised of five participants, four of whom were the South African MBQS-mini coders, the other being the Canadian MBQS-mini trainer who trained the aforementioned coders prior to their involvement in the UMBHVP. Purposive sampling was used for recruitment purposes which began only after ethics clearance had been obtained from the University of the Witwatersrand's ethics committee. Prior to commencing the research, the researcher was invited to the Ububele premises to meet the participants. As the primary users of the MBQS-mini in South Africa, purposive sampling allowed selection of those participants who "can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 125), bearing in mind that richness of data was optimal (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Each participant was contacted telephonically and invited individually to participate in the research. All of the participants who were approached agreed to partake in the study and were provided additional information about the specifics of the study via email. Inclusion criteria required the participants to have gone through and completed the MBQS-mini's training workshop in South Africa. Furthermore, they were required to have achieved a reliability coefficient of .75 necessary to code and make use of the MBQS-mini (The same criteria applied to the trainer, who was trained and achieved reliability in Canada). That being said, the participants' levels of experience in working with and applying the MBQS-mini may have varied, as some participants had more experience coding the South African videos than others. The South African participants were all psychologists who were employed by the Ububele Educational and Psychotherapy Trust. All participants in the focus group were White, middle-class South Africans. The trainer was a Canadian national of Asian descent.

3.3 Developing the research interview schedule.

An interview schedule was developed with the researcher's supervisor. This semi-structured interview schedule was used in order to facilitate discussion as needed to answer the research questions. Although this was employed in both the focus group and individual interview with the MBQS trainer, it was used more purposefully in the individual semi-structured interview, as the focus group seemed to generate discussion more spontaneously. Thus, the flexibility afforded to the study's data collection procedures lent itself particularly well to thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). With permission from the participants the data was audio-

recorded for later transcription by a professional transcription agency.

3.4 Methods of data collection.

Data for the study was collected from a focus group and a semi-structured interview, which lasted approximately 80 minutes and 60 minutes respectively. The focus group was conducted at the Ububele premises in Kew, Johannesburg, and the interview at the trainer's research offices at the Donald Gordon Medical Centre in Parktown, also in Johannesburg. These were audio-recorded with the participants' prior permission. The focus group and interview followed a semi-structured interview schedule (see appendices). Data from the focus group and interview were stored on the researcher's personal computer under password protection. According to Babbie and Mouton (1998), focus group research in qualitative data collection is advantageous in that it brings together people in a group space in which people "may create meaning amongst themselves, rather than individually" (p. 292). Having all worked together at the Ububele premises in their personal capacities, this familiarity allowed for greater freedom of expression than would have perhaps otherwise been noted. However, the individual interview with the MBQS-mini's trainer, who came from a functional role to the coders in the UMBHVP, as well as from a different country of origin, was invaluable in obtaining different points of entry into the meaning-making process. The advantage of a semi-structured interviewing in this instance is that since the interview with the trainer was conducted after the focus group, the researcher could employ the flexibility afforded by this technique to gather further richness of data that may have been overlooked, thus contextualising the meanings/understandings of the research.

From the researcher's perspective, rapport with the participants played an important role in establishing good working relationships so as to facilitate the data collection process. The researcher endeavoured at all times to maintain a stance that was open, non-judgemental, and outwardly interested to the views of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data collection commenced during the month of April 2014 and continued until July 2014.

3.5 Method of data analysis.

As has already been outlined, the procedures used for data collection were intended to promote flexibility and openness with the aim of gathering rich data as it emerged from

reflexive feedback and discussion. An inductive or 'bottom up' approach was adopted to allow for the interpretation of the data to take shape as it emerged, without necessarily prescribing to a particular theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this research, the data were analysed via a "contextualist" method, that is, the researcher sought to acknowledge and extrapolate "the ways individuals make meaning of their experience, and, in turn, the ways the broader social context impinges on those meanings, while retaining focus on the material and other limits of 'reality'" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 81). It is here that the researcher hoped to succeed in making an interpretation beyond the scope or what was merely reported on in order to access the "latent level" of meaning embedded in the participants' views (p. 84). In order to capture the essence of the participants' collective experience, a thematic analysis, being well suited to aims of the study, was used to identify, analyse and report on the patterns and themes that were uncovered in relation to the predetermined research question.

Although it was anticipated that themes may passively emerge in the data collection process over time, a thematic analysis was especially beneficial in actively identifying these themes for analysis. However, in order to optimise the identification of themes it was of critical importance that the author was aware of his own stance in relation to the data set, his biases, and any prejudicial viewpoints that he may have harboured. This became important early on during the interviews and focus group, but also during subsequent analysis of the data. Furthermore, a thorough understanding of the research domain was paramount in order to necessitate the process of analysis as theme identification was, in large part, a consequence of the researcher's ability to exercise judgment and perceive, in the process of data analysis, what was salient to the research question.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 87) outline the phases involved in a thematic analysis, which the researcher used in this study:

a) The researcher familiarised himself with the data. This involved reading and re-reading the data from the focus group and interview transcripts until a thorough grasp of data was obtained. During this stage the researcher also noted down the initial ideas related to the data.

b) Next, after a preliminary analysis of the data, the researcher generated the initial codes that would be used in order to code the data. These codes pertained to specific points of interest or

groups of interest which spanned the entire data set.

c) The researcher then began the process of searching for themes. These were collated according to the assigned codes for the potential themes noted in the research. All the data that were relevant to each potential theme were grouped together so that they may begin to be identified as distinct themes in the research.

d) The researcher then reviewed the themes and checked if they corresponded in relation to the coded extract (level 1) and the entire data set (level 2), thus generating a thematic 'map' of the analysis.

e) The themes were then defined more accurately and named according to their relatedness. The researcher conducted on-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme so that the overall story of the analysis presented a clear definition for each grouping of themes.

f) Nearing completion of the thematic analysis, the researcher surveyed the selection of the most vivid, compelling extract examples from the data and gave final consideration to these themes by relating them back to the research question and literature. Once it was noted that the researcher had in fact selected the most compelling themes that were representative of the sample's narratives, he began the process of producing the final report of the data analysis.

3.6 Credibility and reflexivity.

Research within the social sciences, and especially within qualitative frameworks, has often been criticised for lacking rigour in their research findings (Babbie& Mouton, 1998). This is because qualitative research is grounded in the interpretation of the data by the researcher himself and from the perspective of his own location within the research. On these grounds, the researcher's subjectivity is invariably brought to bear during the research process, which thus has a significant bearing on research processes and outcomes. Researchers in the quantitative paradigm take issue with this approach because of the claimed lack of generalisability of the findings. It is suggested that if a deeper meaning of understanding is ever achieved for a select group of people, then this holds little scientific value for those outside the scope of the study. These factors have led many within the scientific community to denounce the findings of qualitative research on the basis of their validity and reliability,

presumed necessary for the generalisation of a study's findings. It is however argued by some that no research undertaken, even within the positivist research paradigm is ever purely objective (Crittenden &Clausen, 2000).

Within the quantitative paradigm, it is thus the obligation of the researcher to ensure validity and reliability of the findings so that they can be generalised from a sample group to its target population (Babbie& Mouton, 1998). Validity is commonly defined as the extent to which a measure is able to produce the same result after repeated trials (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Painter, 2006). Reliability, on the other hand, is the idea that a measure employed for research purposes is able to measure that which it had intended (Babbie& Mouton, 1998). Quantitative researchers adopt the view that the "truth" can be measured objectively, that it is located "out there" in the world. A qualitative researcher, on the other hand, "does not maintain, or claim, that knowledge gained from one context will necessarily have relevance for another context or for the same context in another time frame" (p. 277). In other words, a change of sample characteristics and/or demographics is likely to introduce new meanings and understandings that are not representative of the original sample.

As a White, Westernised, well-educated and arguably privileged researcher writing in South Africa at the present time, locating myself in the research never ceased to be a challenge for me. Increasingly, I came to recognise this struggle as being a product of South Africa's tumultuous racial history, thus sharing the views of the participants involved. As the racially-sensitive material began to emerge during the focus group and interview, so I felt increasingly burdened by the idea of how *best* to represent the participants' views, almost all of whom shared my racial designation (although I was the only male in this research). The dilemma, as I came to experience it, was attempting to present the participants' views openly and honestly, to which I felt obligated, but in a manner which also conveyed the sensitivity and sense of trepidation which tended to pervade discussions. It is this latter component that proved to be more difficult for me to capture in the report. I am aware that, failing to convey this adequately or wholly may risk the participants' sounding 'othering' when references to the sample (i.e., the Alex mothers)are made. This, however, is not intended on part of the participants or the researcher, but it is perhaps useful to highlight the enormous challenge which underscores race-related discourse in contemporary South Africa. As the researcher I could therefore relate to the participants sense of unease which seemed to accompany discussion, and I believe I was inhibited in my writing to a degree by many of the same

feelings that were experienced by the participants during coding of the Alex mother/infant dyads.

A qualitative approach to enquiry thus sees the meaning located within the subjectivity of the individuals in the research, in which the researcher himself also plays a vital role in the outcome (Creswell, 2007). Rather than a focus on reliability, qualitative researchers advocate that one should seek "dependability that the results will be subject to change and instability" (p. 204). The goal of this research is thus on richness of data in which "thick" descriptions related to the meaning of a particular aspects of interest in a specific setting are sought (Creswell, 2007). At the heart of this endeavour is to ensure that the findings may be said to be as closely representative as possible of the views, perceptions and understandings espoused by the subjects themselves.

Strategies for ensuring this outcome in qualitative research suggest that longer time spent during the process of data collection increase the opportunity for richness of data to be obtained. Similarly, increased time spent with the participants allows the researcher to steer discussion accordingly so that sufficient depth of understanding is achieved. The notion of triangulation is also used to promote validity of the findings in qualitative research. Triangulation refers to the idea that the researcher uses multiple, reliable sources to inform the research question in which information from different points of view are explored and collated (Babbie& Mouton,1998).

3.7 Ethical considerations.

The intended subjects of research in the present study were the MBQS-mini coders involved in the UMBHVP. However, given the nature of the discussion, and since there were potential implications for both the institution (The Ububele Educational and Psychotherapy Trust) and the individual participants, ethical considerations pertaining to both levels were considered and addressed.

All participants were invited to take part in the study. Informed consent was obtained to acknowledge the research subjects' voluntary participation. All of the participants signed a letter consenting to be interviewed in this research (Appendix B). Similarly, a letter of consent was obtained for the interview with participants to be audio-recorded (Appendix C). They were briefed regarding their involvement and the research aims were made explicit to

them (Appendix A). The participants were also informed that there were no tangible benefits to participating in the study. Furthermore, it was made clear that the participants may choose to terminate their involvement in the study at any time should they feel the need to. If the subject ceased to take part in the study, his or her research contribution/findings were not included in the final report. Although the research subjects were not considered to be a sensitive or vulnerable population, and although the topic is not necessarily of a sensitive nature, it was noted that the content of the participants' subjective disclosures may at times have been sensitive.

From an institutional standpoint, and at the time of writing the report, the organisation had stated that it did not wish to remain anonymous. Similarly, from an individual participant perspective all the participants stated that they did not wish to uphold their right to confidentiality and anonymity, although these too could be reviewed prior to final publishing of the report. It was decided upfront that should one participant not wish to be named, then none would be named and this was communicated to the participants prior to commencing the study.

Upon review, after the data had been collected, one participant decided to remain anonymous in the report. The study respected the confidentiality of this participant and all interview data replaced the participants' names with pseudonyms in the transcripts and final report. The participant's pseudonyms were change to include the following names in the report: Rebecca, Heather, Karen, Jacky and Nina.

It was considered by the researcher that perhaps the participants may have had concerns about having their levels of competence evaluated with regards to their coding abilities, which could possibly have been fed back to management at Ububele. They were assured, however, that the primary aim of the study was to explore their experiences of the measure with regards to cultural/contextual issues in South Africa that affected the measure's goodness of fit in the Alex sample. Their respective competencies on the measure in this regard were thus in no way under any scrutiny and would not be reported to management.

All data were stored on the researcher's personal computer under password protection. The data was further protected in that it was only viewed by the researcher, his supervisor and the professional transcription agency. The anonymous transcripts of the data will be archived, and the audio-recordings deleted after submission of the thesis. The participants were told

that the final research report will be available to the University community and a hardcopy will be provided for Ububele, so that participants may access the final report.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

In this chapter themes are presented which emerged from the trainer's and coders' experiences of the first time use and application of the MBQS-mini in South Africa. The MBQS-mini was used to collect data as part of an on-going research initiative via the UMBHVP. The themes presented here include those found to be common across all sources of participant feedback. These include feedback from the focus group with the South Africa coders and the semi-structured interview conducted with South Africa's MBQS-mini trainer, Jacky. While shared themes are the focus of the presentation of results, in some instances, those themes shared by smaller groups of participants and occasionally the views expressed by individual participants only are also presented. The goal of presenting the findings in this way was to highlight the experiences the participants shared, giving weight to themes of consensus, while also allowing for nuanced experiences and important points of difference to be acknowledged.

The themes have been collated under three main categories in this chapter. The first category focuses on the participants' experiences of MBQS-mini training in South Africa and how this process was negotiated. The second category incorporates the participants' experiences of using the MBQS-mini in the UMBHVP. The participants emphasise the impact of the prevailing context of Alexandra and offer their views on how this may have impacted the MBQS-mini's application in the research initiative. Linked to this exploration, the participants also share their thoughts on how the particular administrative particulars and use of the MBQS-mini in the UMBHVP may have impacted the sensitivity scores of the Alex mothers. In the third category, the participants comment on the MBQS-mini's utility and suitability to the South African context after having used the measure in South Africa for the first time.

4.1 The participants' experiences of training: What was learned along the way?

This was the first time that the MBQS-mini had been used in a South African setting. As a result, Jacky and her South African trainees encountered a number of unique challenges during the course of their training. After having successfully completed the rigorous training and reliability processes required for MBQS employment, the participants reflect on their training in South African and how this process was experienced.

4.1.1 The novelty of mother-infant research in South Africa.

Training facilitation in South Africa began under challenging circumstances, most notably due to the general paucity of local attachment literature in the country. Consequently, without any literature to draw on during training, one of the prospective coder's foremost tasks of establishing a localised contextual gradient of maternal sensitivity in Alex was made particularly challenging. The participants also highlight the on-going challenge they faced in attempting to situate the MBQS-mini's core theoretical constructs in a distinctly high-risk sample for the first time. Lastly, the participants comment on how emotionally demanding it was to observe and code the South African mother-infant dyads in their training, and they expressed some of the personal feelings that were evoked during the process.

4.1.2 Challenges posed by the lack of localised literature.

Given that there is a deficit in mother-infant research in South Africa, many of the theoretical tenets which underscore the MBQS-mini's scoring system, although no doubt familiar to coders via their prior engagements with international attachment literature, would have had little applicative relevance to participants at the local level. This sense of conceptual foreignness was shared by many of the participants, but was best captured by Nina, who commented: "I think it's just a hard thing to get in to. I think it just takes time to get used to coding and get into that Ainsworth way of thinking about mums and babies".

Under ideal circumstances, MBQS-mini coders-in-training would make use of any applicable research literature to orientate themselves to the local context in which the measure was to be employed. This is intended to provide a contextual reference point from which to guide the use and application of the MBQS-mini in a new environment. It is considered useful for trainees to familiarise themselves beforehand with the relevant local literature to understand what maternal sensitivity looks like in the context in which it is being assessed. On this point, Jacky conceded: "We don't know what a sensitive [South African] mom looks like". The result of this literary deficit meant that for the most part training was facilitated on an ad hoc basis, and understanding was developed through open debate and discussion amongst trainees as they grappled with how best to apply the MBQS-mini in the Alex sample.

As South Africa's principal MBQS trainer, the lack of localised literature posed a number of obvious challenges for Jacky, too. She noted: "The challenge of training in South Africa for

the first time is that no other work like this had been done". As was the case with the South African participants, Jacky also made specific mention of the difficulty they encountered as a group in trying to situate the MBQS-mini, a Canadian-designed measure, in a distinctly high-risk sample.

According to the participants, the problems associated with a lack of local literature became most prominent when they transitioned between contexts, that is, from a Canadian setting to a South African setting. Without any prior research to ground the MBQS-mini's application in local literature, the participants expressed experiencing great difficulty in transferring the learned conceptual and theoretical components of MBQS application from one setting to the next. The participants provisionally ascribed this difficulty of transference to the obvious cultural and contextual disparities between the two samples' prevailing circumstances.

4.1.3 "It's an ideal": Finding a localised contextual gradient in Alex.

The primary function of the MBQS-mini is to measure the construct of maternal sensitivity, and produce a sensitivity score which is believed to represent or correspond to the overall nature and quality of a mother's (or caregiver's) interaction with her infant. This rating is derived from a trained coder's objective analysis of a video-recorded session of a dyad's interaction over a defined time period. As a Canadian-designed measure, the 'ideal' sensitivity score is based on the maternal behaviours embodied by the prototypically sensitive, middle-class Canadian mother. However, within the context of the measure's employment in the UMBHVP, it immediately became apparent to the participants in training that this ideal was not going to be represented in the same way in South Africa.

Thus, one of the first major tasks during training of the Alex mother-infant dyads was for prospective trainees to establish a localised point of reference of what maternal sensitivity looks like so that the construct could be assessed within these relative parameters. However, according to the participants, establishing these parameters in the Alex sample never ceased to be a challenge. Principally, the vicissitudes of South Africa's apartheid past became plain in their insidious influence on the maternal behaviours of the Alex mothers. Jacky acknowledged the complexities inherent in trying to facilitate learning within such complex parameters. She stated: "We have to understand that South Africa is not such a clean-cut society, and that you have very different groups. So what does a sensitive mother look like in a certain group of high-risk"?

Jacky approached the issue of trying to find a localised gradient in Alex by drawing on her previous training experience. She explained: "The whole thing with the MBQS, and I would imagine in South Africa or in any country, the key is just to code and watch a lot of videos, because then you are provided a context and you start to see within group variations". According to Jacky, these 'within group variations' needed to be established early on as they provided the coder with a conceptual framework to guide his or her observation of a mother's sensitivity rating within a particular sample and/or context.

Reflections on the 'within group variations' in Alex led Heather to speculate on the kinds of maternal behaviours that would be encountered if a larger sample was to be assessed. She stated: "I wonder how many variations of maternal sensitivity we would have observed if we were to measure across South Africa, given how disparate the context is". Heather compared the variations found in Alex to the Canadian ideal, and suggested: "It's an ideal. I wonder if we haven't recalibrated almost so that we do have a bit of a spread in our sample, even for Alex. Because I'm telling you if we were to do a general Johannesburg sample, it would be very different. I think we've recalibrated".

To further elucidate Heather's views, Jacky provided an example from a previous study that required her to reorient herself from one sample to the next. She compared her work in Alex to that of a sample in Toronto. She noted: "So, the first two videos I watched with the Toronto group were very, very positive [i.e., positive maternal sensitivity scores were observed], because I had been watching a lot of South African videos. So I had to reorient myself".

Jacky continued to reflect on the idiosyncrasies of the Alex sample, some of which were, as she pointed out, particularly unusual to her as a Canadian citizen. She drew particular attention to the MBQS-mini cluster of items which assessed physical manipulation, a behavioural characteristic frequently observed in the Alex sample. She noted: "So we know in Canada a mother who treats her child in a more physical sense – picking her baby up, popping her down, picking up – is negatively viewed...but here, doing that, it might be linked to a positive outcome for the child, you know, having more physical contact. We don't know that".

Jacky continued:

> And it was so hard because then we got to see for the first time, having gone through all of these technical issues and actually seeing, 'Gosh, it's really hard to apply this', because when you've got moms that don't do anything, or that are so different, you

> don't know where to put these items, or all the items end up on one column and you don't have anything else.

The items which pertained to physical manipulation, in particular, were the source of much deliberation and debate amongst the participants. However, without any literature to draw on, the group was forced to accept that such items would have to be carefully managed on a case-by-case basis during observation and without a thorough understanding as to the origins and potential outcomes of such behaviour for the infant.

4.2 The influence of the coder's subjectivity during training.

The South African participants in particular were unanimous in their agreement that the analysis of the South African mother-infant dyads was a far more intense experience compared to that of the Canadian dyads. Given the strength of their conviction, the researcher was curious to explore the reasons for this consensus, and the South African participants were encouraged to reflect on the emotions that were evoked in them during training. However, this line of enquiry was initially met with some hesitancy, and each participant looked to the person next to them to begin proceedings.

It became apparent that the coders' sense of hesitation may have been linked to their reluctance to acknowledge the extent to which their individual and collective subjectivities had been aroused during their work in the UMBHVP. Their reluctance seemed appropriate, especially since this declaration was essentially at odds with the intended use and application of the MBQS-mini, as an evidence-based measure, and which strongly advocates coder objectivity during observation. Their comments suggested that the use of the measure in Alex was, or rather became, inextricably bound to the coders' experiences of themselves as South Africans. It further became apparent that, over and above the need to situate the MBQS-mini's theoretical constructs in the Alex sample, a concomitant and equally important task for the South African coders was to locate themselves as South Africans in the research initiative.

It emerged that coder subjectivity lay at the core of the South African coders' experiences of using the measure in Alex, insofar as their subjectivity seemed to have a significant bearing on how the measure's items were interpreted and subsequently applied to the observed behaviour. Jacky's earlier assertion of "I think we've recalibrated" now made greater sense, as it spoke to the potential influence of the South African coder's subjectivity. The participants' feedback also suggested that at least part of the challenge of locating oneself in the research

had to do with how the coder's innermost feelings related to their own race and racial identity were evoked during observation. How one made sense of these aspects of oneself, then, seemed to become the "window" through which observation of a dyad was mediated.

Given the emerging salience of the coder's subjectivity, a brief overview of the training in South Africa is necessary to orient the reader to the point at which the coders' subjectivities were made incumbent on them in the course of their work. In the absence of any local South African attachment literature, training facilitation for the UMBHVP began with the observation of a number of Canadian introductory videos. These served as a coding exemplar of how best to approach observation and apply the theoretical components of the MBQS-mini scoring system. Each Canadian video was observed in a group setting and prospective coders were encouraged to provide feedback on what they observed, or rather, *how* they saw it. This was intended to stimulate debate and discussion so that points of difference and/or any misunderstandings of interpretation could be shared and systematically and worked through. For the most part, feedback from all the South African participants suggested that training at this level was negotiated rather seamlessly and they were soon ready to progress on to the observation and scoring of the South African videos.

Throughout the duration of their training, but especially on the training of the South African videos, the participants expressed a range of powerful emotions: intense sadness, feelings of helplessness and guilt that were evoked in them. At times these emotions were directed solely towards the mothers, while at other times they were reserved only for the infants. At other times still the dyad as a whole would evoke a particularly strong emotional response in the coders. The South African participants acknowledged that their collective sense of helplessness was at its most pronounced when they observed the most economically deprived mothers. But perhaps most compelling of all were the emotions that were stirred up within the coder, the deep-seated feelings of guilt that they were forced to process in order optimally to apply and work with the MBQS-mini in the Alex sample. Their testimonies suggested that sometimes their feelings were quite overwhelming and, at times, became difficult to manage internally, particularly during the initial stages of their training.

More often than not these feelings were coloured by the coders' internal worlds, and were seemingly compounded by their inherent knowledge and appreciation of the conditions under which the sample lived. It was acknowledged by the South African coders that this would often make objective observation of the Alex dyads a poignant undertaking. Thus, the training

and coding processes unearthed a barrage of internal experiences in the participants which they had regularly to confront within themselves, and in the presence of their fellow coders. It was clear that one of the main difficulties of using the MBQS-mini in Alex is having to make 'judgements' about the Alex mothers' behaviours against the backdrop of their obviously disadvantaged circumstances. However, it seemed that if one's subjectivity could be reasonably curtailed, then it became a vital tool in the coder's skill set to make the most accurate assessment of the Alex mothers' sensitivity score.

Stephanie recalled the sense of sadness the group was often left feeling, mostly early on in their training. She explained: "I think that's why we've absolutely wept [when observing some of the South African videos], and still scored them a minus 0.8 [a "low" maternal sensitivity rating], and then just cried about how horrible it is". Stephanie's statement epitomised the struggle in the mind of the coder in attempting to uphold the rigour and objectivity of the MBQS-mini's scoring requirements in an environment in which they were so well-attuned to the plight of the mothers. These sentiments were further elaborated by Heather, who said: "I think that's where you really felt it, in the rigour of the criteria. That if you kept that in mind only, you have to put aside your feelings of concern, or your awareness of the mother's situation. It's quite hard". Rebecca added her views which spoke of her sense of helplessness during observation of the South African dyads: "What I find really difficult is to see babies with very neglectful, or very intrusive mothers, and to see baby's distress...that mother is not able to manage or sometimes mother doesn't even know about. That is so distressing for the child. That's hard".

With the introduction of race being acknowledged as a primary factor impacting coding, the question was posed to the South African participants whether or not they coded through a Canadian or South African lens. Stephanie was first to offer her views on the matter: "It's more of a privileged, White South African lens". Here Stephanie's response spoke to many of the underlying and potentially deep-seated feelings of guilt that the South African coders had to contend with as they coded and of having to critically evaluate a mother's behaviours in a relatively prescriptive manner. To do so, however, seemed to induce in the coder an internal conflict in which their whiteness and associated privilege would periodically arise and mediate the interpretation of what they were coding.

While negotiating feelings of guilt that may have been induced by the position of difference and privilege, the reality of the effects of apartheid began to permeate the feeling in the room

during the focus group. This was observed foremost in the number of references the participants made to the "starkness" of the sample's level of deprivation or to their "inherent knowledge" as South Africans, as if this was something unwelcome that was bound to their experience of themselves.

4.3 The 'clinician versus researcher' debate: Management of coder counter-transference.

The discussion which follows progressed from the points raised in the previous section. Here the participants offered their views on how their professional stance, as either researcher or clinician, impacted their experience of the training process. It was generally agreed by all participants that there were advantages and disadvantages to each approach. It must be noted, however, that the South African participants who were involved in the UMBHVP came predominantly from a clinical background with a significant number of clinical years' experience between them. Jacky, on the other hand, came from a pure research perspective, and, thus, was constantly called to reign in the trainees' natural inclination to form a "clinical impression" of a dyad during observation. As Jacky would often attest during her individual interview with the researcher one of the maxims of MBQS coding is that a given rating is only assigned to a dyad when there is observable evidence for the behaviour. What is coded should only be what is observed and not the general mood or feeling evoked by the interaction in the mind of the observer. This seemed to be a challenging shift for the South African participants to make, particularly since they were so accustomed to using this and other clinical skills, including counter-transference, in their clinical work.

In fact, all the trainees expressed great difficulty in terms of managing their own counter-transference reactions during observation. It was suggested that the impact of the coder's counter-transference was generally more pronounced if the coder had a number of years of clinical experience as they were likely then to be more accustomed to using this particular clinical skill. Heather, in particular, commented on her difficulty with managing her clinical skill set during observation. She indicated: "I would say that it would probably always be a struggle for me. I think, the subjective, clinical impressions that I make quickly are what I really have to watch". She went on to explain her tendency to "drift" when she coded: "What's influenced the drifting? I mean it's a far more well-practised skill, making a kind of

counter-transferential assessment of an interaction that I make use of all the time clinically, and coding, trying to be much more objective with evidence is a less developed skill".

Coming from her own vantage point, Jacky offered a balanced view of the advantages and disadvantages of each perspective, particularly after having worked with such a clinically-focused group. She explained:

> Clinicians might be a bit more astute to certain things, picking up that, 'Oh, wow, mom kinda looked sad and depressed there. I wonder what's going on?' Linking mom's mood or her inner state to what's maybe happening with the baby, etcetera. I think what the researcher pulls back on is, 'Well, where is the evidence?' So, yes, maybe mom was sad there, but let's not read into it too much.

While Jacky's views acknowledged the potential value of noting the mother's mood during observation, she retained an emphasis on scoring only what was directly observable as evidence of the interaction. However, even at Jacky's insistence on this particular point in training, the participants continued to express difficulty in meeting this MBQS-mini's scoring requirements. Nina's comment highlighted this difficulty: "Your clinical skill is important. I mean, it's a clinical skill using your subjective kind of experience. I think there's a whole lot of theory that we draw on at Ububele that's particular, so it's not necessarily part of Ainsworth's model or that's part of the MBQS way of thinking about things".

Nina added her views on how these two different perspectives may radically impact the way a dyad is observed and coded. She stated: "If Jacky coded them [referring to some of the Alex mother-infant dyads] she would give them a worse score than we would give them". Nina's comment confirms the notion that the coders' clinical impressions, together with their inherent knowledge of context, are somehow bound to the experience of coding, the combination of which seems to have a significant bearing on how the MBQS-mini items were interpreted and subsequently scored.

This prompted a return to a point of contestation raised earlier by the participants in which they expressed encountering a great deal of difficulty in trying to find a balance between upholding the rigour of the MBQS-mini's scoring system in the face of such stark circumstances, which, to the South African participants, simply could not be overlooked. Nina's comment also suggested that the South African coders were perhaps more attuned to, or had a greater appreciation of, the dynamics which characterised the Alex sample. Nina's comment hints at the possibility that Jacky, as a foreign national with a research-driven

background, may, at times, have overlooked the inherent complexity of the context in which the MBQS-mini was being applied.

Stephanie picked up from where Nina left off, and acknowledged: 'I think that's one of the things that has been hard having Jacky as our MBQS guru. She's not very familiar with this context so she can't go down those avenues with us. A lot of the time we can't draw on her as our trainer".

Jacky also reflected on her journey of training this particular group of trainees in South Africa and what she learned during the process. She described how the group really challenged her, and she applauded their capacity to make the MBQS-mini their own under challenging circumstances. She mentioned that this had a positive impact on her approach to training and prompted her to be more open. She commented: "So this group actually taught me quite a lot because they would say, 'Whoa, in our context, Jacky'". Thus, in summary, while the clinician, by training, may be inclined to feel that to observe only through the eyes of a researcher may not tell the whole story of an interaction, so too might the researcher feel that too much emphasis on context would ultimately bias one's interpretation of events.

4.4 Group coding versus individual coding.

The experience of observing and coding a dyad individually, versus coding as a pair or group was another heavily debated topic. While there were benefits cited to each approach, consensus from the participants was generally that coding as a group, or as a pair, outweighed the experience of coding individually, both in terms of the diagnostic 'accuracy' of a sensitivity score, but also in terms of the potential for learning. The reasons for this consensus were discussed amongst the participants.

Jacky set the tone of the discussion and stated how, when one coded individually there was always the potential for the coder to lose touch of her objectivity. She explained: "You get on what we call the 'secure train' or the 'sensitive train' and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. You then look for evidence to support what you have predetermined from the outset". Stephanie indicated: "Well, coding alone is less complicated, but actually, as a group, you learn more about yourself and the mom and the baby - other peoples' perspectives". Heather, who had already acknowledged her tendency to drift while she coded, seemed to appreciate the role that her colleagues played in grounding her during observation. She

commented: “But I also think we ‘pull’ [i.e., more in line with the prevailing views of the coding group], because there has been drift and I think that coding in the group has probably restricted the drift. You know, we have to say out loud why we feel a certain way and provide evidence for why we’re saying that”. At this point Stephanie added a personal account of when the experience of coding as a group had been particularly beneficial to her. She recalled:

> I just never see ‘Praise’ [a cluster of MBQS-mini items] for example, so I was getting into a habit of just giving ‘Praise’ a minus two [a rating], almost habitually, whereas it was good to kind of interrogate that a little bit and look at nuances. And I suppose part of doing things habitually is also bringing some of your own subjective way of seeing things in the world. So we sort of help each other to see that. That was helpful.

Nina was in agreement with both Stephanie and Heather’s views, and added: “I think it’s something we’ve noticed when we’re coding together [the tendency to drift during coding]. I think you don’t notice it as much when you’re coding by yourself. You’re not going to spot your own blind spots”.

Jacky reflected on the approach adopted by the group during coding, and commented on the virtues the team approach afforded them. She noted: “They’ve tried buddy coding, group coding, and coding individually, but coding as a group gave them much more valuable data. I analysed the data and, indeed, the ones they coded as a group were much better” [i.e., more reliable].

4.5 The trainer’s perspective on the impact of ‘race’ during training.

During her interview with the researcher Jacky was asked to reflect on her experience of training a mixed-race group in South Africa. As was the case with her South African colleagues, the introduction of race as a point of discussion was initially met with a degree of apprehension. However, Jacky soon came to appreciate the opportunity to express her views on the issue of race, as can be noted in her response: “I’m glad you raised that. So first thing you have to keep in mind is that the first training I did [in South Africa] I had literally just arrived in the country for less than three months, so I’m completely oblivious to what’s going on. I’ve read books, but never really actually experienced what’s going on”.

Jacky’s comment here spoke to a number of pertinent issues. Firstly, that simply hearing or reading about racial dynamics and tensions in contemporary South Africa cannot bring a full appreciation of how ‘loaded’ the term is in reality. Instead, real understanding of the vicissitudes of the concept of race in South Africa can only be achieved via an experiential

learning process, which, unfortunately, as was noted by Jacky's hesitancy, is often accompanied by a sense of apprehension to engage it. Jacky also alluded to another poignant point, namely her perception of the manner in which the races engaged and interacted with each other during training. On this point, Jacky was forthcoming with her disappointment and suggested that, given the apparent rules of engagement between the races, a vital learning opportunity may have been missed in that she believed that the Black participants were no doubt in a better position to enlighten her and the other trainees to the dynamics underlying many of the behaviours they observed. She expressed it this way:

> And the other thing was I was a bit disappointed in is that I found that the non-White participants just didn't participate as much as we had the Caucasian participants engage. But I think that's very important, and I think particularly, I don't know, I don't know if the non-White participants may themselves have quite a lot of insight to provide, things we can only speculate on, or things we only read about in books, etcetera.

A review of Jacky's comments captures the inherent difficulties that surround issues of race and racial identity, as well as the accompanying rules of engagement that are invariably aroused when the races engage both with each other, but potentially also with the 'authority'. It also suggested to the researcher the extent to which the concept of race seemed to permeate thinking in South Africa; that no one seemed to be exempt from its influence or is able to transcend it. It appeared evident that regardless of where one comes from, even Canada, as in Jacky's case, there is an experience of race's ubiquity and 'aliveness' in South Africa.

4.6 The influence of context on the MBQS-mini's employment in Alexandra Township.

The issue of context and the extent of its influence on MBQS-mini's administration in Alex proved to be a wellspring of thoughtful discussion amongst the participants. Discussion opened with the question of whether or not attachment behaviours were a universal phenomena, as advocated by the attachment purists, or whether in fact they were more culturally and/or contextually prescribed, in accordance with emerging research. Heather was first to suggest that context is a major determinant of how attachment behaviours play out between mother and infant. She indicated:

"Yes, I think that there are universal attachment behaviours, but you're looking at specific behaviours [in Alex] that are maybe a bit more culturally biased. So attachment behaviours in

a Chinese mom versus an American mom would be completely different. If we talk about the MBQS being used here, we need to talk about contextual factors".

Nina added her views in support of Heather's and suggested that for the South African coder to take a purely objective stance, and attempt to use the MBQS-mini in this way, was essentially at odds with the coder's inherent knowledge of the prevailing context in which he or she was operating. On the matter of being objective when coding, Nina stated: "We know that, and we believe that and all of that stuff, but when it comes to coding a mom, what's good enough, and how a mom is managing in her context and doing enough for her baby and getting by, feels relative".

It was not long before the other participants volunteered their views. Stephanie drew a comparison between the South African and Canadian contexts when she suggested: "The way it's applied in Canada might be very different to the way it's applied here". While all the focus group participants were quick to offer their support for Stephanie's proposition, the researcher was eager to unpack the reasons behind this apparent consensus. Nina suggested that many of the nuances in application were embedded in the fact that South Africa is a society in transition, which made it difficult to position and apply the MBQS-mini's scoring system to a local setting. She suggested that the prevailing contextual landscape in South Africa, with its inherent complexity, is in and of itself a major determinant of the differences observed in the maternal behaviours between South African and Canadian mothers. Nina suggested: "I guess what's so complicated about South Africa is that we're kind of like in the middle". Although the complexity of the South African landscape has been alluded to in previous discussions, the participants were encouraged to contextualise and make explicit their understanding of how this complexity plays out and what impact it may have had on the coding processes and sensitivity outcomes in Alex more specifically. Heather elucidated her views by focusing on the general applicability of some of the MBQS-mini items to the Alex sample. She suggested: "I'd question some of the items' relevance for the South African context". She continued to extrapolate her views in more detail:

> We're not rating physical stuff as highly as the Canadian mothers would. We are not as punitive to facilitation of learning and exploration. We're not as punitive to praising. We're kind of norming the sample that we've had. If we were scoring according to the ideal Canadian mother our sample would be way, way negative [in terms of their sensitivity score rating]. But we actually are across the spectrum.

Heather's comment suggests that to make these adjustments were a crucial part of the coding process. She went on to explain: "We've kind of adjusted it and shifted it in our heads

because of our knowledge". Commenting on the South African videos, Heather offered support for Rebecca's views. She stated: "We've made allowances for context". Thus the coder's experiential knowledge on the context of Alex seemed to act as a mediating influence while coding, and on which the coders regularly drew when they assessed a dyad.

The question was posed to the participants whether or not the behaviours they observed in Alex were culturally-bound or contextually-bound (For clarification purposes, culture in this research report was conceptualised as being a characteristic 'way of living' that is both enduring and dynamic, and incorporates all those beliefs, customs, art forms, and patterns of communication of a particular society, group, place or time. In this regard, the Alex mothers in the UMBHVP were conceived of having their own unique cultural backgrounds that are distinct from the cultural characteristics of the participants in the research report (i.e., the MBQS-mini coders and trainer), who were thought of as being more 'Westernised' in cultural orientation. Context, on the other hand, referred to the physical location in which the mothers the Alex mothers raised their infants).According to the participants the source of influence was a subtle yet important distinction that needed to be made, as it was likely to influence the outcome of a sensitivity rating. The participants suggested that this was necessary to hold in mind whether or not the observed behaviour was a typical contextual and/or cultural nuance, an atypical one within the same sample, or could be generalised to a larger population group. This is suggested by Heather's comment: "I don't think it's cultural knowledge and understanding, I think it's contextual knowledge and understanding, and I think that's a major, major difference. With this we need to be very careful about what we say is culture or context". Heather's remark suggests that the South African coder would be better equipped to use the MBQS-mini if they had a thorough understanding of the particular context in which the sample lived so that within group variations specific to Alex could be appropriately applied as a guide when coding.

However, it was also noted by the researcher that although the participants' views suggested that knowledge of the source of influence on behaviour was important (i.e., culture versus context), it was evident that this distinction was extremely difficult for the participants to make with any certainty, and, at times, it appeared as though these two concepts appeared diffused and were often used interchangeably during discussion. To make such a distinction is likely not possible given that culture in South Africa is by no means homogenous, nor is it necessarily prescribed based solely on the physical location of a group of people, in which a high degree of variance may be encountered in one particular area.

The significant disparity amongst the South African people was brought to the fore during discussion and the idea of having multiple norms for the MBQS-mini was briefly introduced and discussed. The need for multiple norms was hinted at by Nina. She suggested: "If we were to go find a more Western mother in South Africa, who has been brought up with more kind of Western ideals that are more similar to Canada's, we'd have nowhere to put her". This seemed to imply that South Africa's diverse contextual (and likely cultural) landscape brought with it a number of possible nuances in behaviour which makes comparisons of maternal sensitivity across South African mothers unlikely.

The participants returned to the statement posed earlier by Stephanie regarding the differences and similarities between the MBQS-mini's application in South Africa versus Canada. The participants hypothesised that context (and not culture) had a significant impact on how the MBQS-mini was applied in South Africa. Similarly, they suggested that to use the MBQS-mini in a different context in South Africa, for example, a Black middle-class family who ascribed to a more Westernised ideology, would require a shift in the coder's mindset in order to accommodate his or her understanding of that particular contextual landscape.

These views echoed Jacky's earlier sentiments which suggested that it was an immense challenge to use the MBQS-mini in Alex, given the novelty of the UMBHVP in South Africa, and, more specifically, the complexity of the sample's governing environmental characteristics. Jacky indicated:

> From the perspective of these coders [the focus group participants], it seemed that in order for the MBQS to be applied appropriately one has to allow for one's subjectivity and sensitivity to context to be incorporated in the scoring process. Similarly, in-group variations seemed to be very much an experience-based, personalised interpretation of what was being observed in context.

Taking the aforementioned considerations into account, it becomes easy to understand why the South African coders felt most at ease when coding as a group. It also seemed to make sense that doing so produced the most accurate sensitivity scores as it afforded the individual coder protection from their own subjectivity, and being 'pulled' in too many directions at the same time.

In summary, Rebecca posed the question to her colleagues: "How would someone code if they weren't as familiar with the context of Alex as you guys"? The participants responded in agreement that the sensitivity outcomes would likely have been very different under these circumstances. Nina made the point, however, that insensitive mothering, in whichever form

it may take and regardless of context, was always likely to be perceived as insensitive, and would be interpreted and scored accordingly. She stated:

> But at the end of the day it's an insensitive thing to do to her child, and might have repercussions for their relationship. And I think that's why we work in Alex, because we know that poverty impacts, not directly, but because of all the things it's related to and how it impacts on sensitivity. We know that we're looking at a sample that's probably more at risk for insensitivity already.

While the discussion in this particular arena seemed to reveal more questions than answers for the group, there was a degree of certainty that maternal behaviours and child-rearing practices will always take place in a particular context, with its own idiosyncrasies. The level to which the prevailing context impacts the interactions between mother and infant is something that needs careful consideration when coding, particularly when coding takes place in samples of high-risk and only a snapshot of the behaviour is being observed.

Nina tempered discussion at this point and indicated that simply because a context is deemed to be high-risk, both in reality and on a subjective basis of understanding, it does not negate the opportunity for sensitive mothering to take place. The discussion therefore hinged on the degree to which context, and the multiplicity of factors which may impact a dyad, required careful consideration when using the MBQS-mini.

4.7 The impact of changes made to MBQS-mini's research design in Alex.

In order for the MBQS-mini's performance to be gauged effectively, the participants frequently drew comparison between the MBQS-mini's application in South Africa versus its application in Canada, the latter of which seemed to represent a performance benchmark from which comparisons could be made.

MBQS-mini training in South Africa required prospective coders to observe and code a number of Canadian and South African videos, which provided the participants a useful comparative baseline from which to scrutinise administration particulars. So far the participants have identified a number of distinguishing contextual factors which have impacted the MBQS-mini's application in Alex. Stephanie proposed that: "The way it's applied in Canada might be very different to the way it's applied here". With this hypothesis in mind the participants shifted their attention to other areas of the MBQS-mini's performance analysis, namely its administration flexibility and adaptability to a local South African context.

An opening point of discussion centred on the location and circumstances in which the dyads were video-recorded. The Canadian experimental design allowed for the mother-infant dyads to be video-recorded in the familiarity and comfort of their own homes. This was not the case in the South African research-design in which the mother-infant dyads were collected and brought to the Ububele premises for filming. It was suggested that this difference in application was as a result of the prevailing contextual factors, including potential space and lighting limitations in some Alex homes, as well as a concern for the coders' safety. Jacky offered her views on the impact of this significant difference in experimental design. She stated:

> You have to keep in mind we do it in the home [in Canada]. It's a home visit, so we try to remove that element of novelty of the environment. Now the design [in South Africa] obviously, for various practical reasons, had to change here. So first of all they're brought in – that process – so then watching all these videos and realising that just that paradigm in itself introduces a challenge once you actually get into it and see it on video.

The researcher found the aforementioned statement to be rather telling in that it spoke to the very real impact that context seemed to exert on the MBQS-mini's application in South Africa. This was encapsulated foremost by Jacky alluding to the design in South Africa needing to change "for obvious reasons", that for a mother to be observed in her own home in Alex was simply not an option. So how then did the "novelty of the environment" to which Jacky refers play out exactly? Jacky continued to express her thoughts on the matter and recalled the impact this point of difference had on her personally. She indicated: "There is that awkwardness and you can see it. It's strange for anybody, let alone for her [the mother] to be brought into a strange place with a strange woman telling her what to do".

Jacky provided a further example which again spoke to the awkwardness created by the unfamiliar recording environment, both for herself, but also for the Alex mother. Her comments on this occasion were made in reference to one of the MBQS-mini's assessment items, namely "Speaks to baby directly". Jacky noted: "So I don't know if it's culture that, you know, adults don't speak to babies because babies don't understand? If that's a belief or not? Or maybe they were just uncomfortable being videotaped and having to do this? It's just a very awkward thing, or it's just something they [the mothers] never do".

Like Jacky, the coders also felt the impact of this change in administration. Rebecca suggested that its effects were so palpable that she would often catch herself thinking about how the mother must have been feeling when she was being video-recorded. She stated:

> "Oh, just play normally!", and it almost felt to me like they wouldn't just play normally. And so I found I was adjusting my mind to that. So I think very often I'd adjust to kind of the context, of what I knew what happening here [at Ububele] and some of the dynamics that they were coming into. That it wasn't necessarily their lack of sensitivity.

At this point Heather offered her views as a requalification of Rebecca's sentiments. She indicated: "I mean, what Rebecca's saying is that all the videos were coded here [At Ububele]. In the Canadian sample they're all coded in the home, as it was possible to go into homes. The massive deprivation of Alex, and the relative affluence that this place [Ububele] kind of represents I think". Heather's reference to the sample's deprivation reminded Rebecca of a particularly hard-hitting incident which she felt illustrated, rather tragically, the mothers' circumstances. She expressed:

> One of the things that really struck me...you saw the dolls as you walked in? A whole lot of the dolls went missing during filming. So you'd get moms coming in with their babies who can't afford shoes for them, and we've got dolls here with children's shoes on. That is such a huge thing compared to all of Jacky's videos where they go into these peoples' homes, beautiful, nice, with so many different toys.

4.7.1 The impact of the novelty of the toys used.

Another fiercely debated topic concerned the suitability of the toys used in the South African experimental design. The toys used were similar to those in the Canadian videos and included a variety of common household toys that most middle-class mothers were likely to have been familiar with, at least to some degree. These included toys to cater to both boy and girl infants, including colourful stacking objects, sorting objects, a play telephone, balls, and a push car.

It became obvious that the participants were not in favour of the toys used in the UMBHVP. From the outset they were unanimous in their agreement that the toys may have been too foreign for the Alex mother. Though the impact of this apparent foreignness could not be quantified, the participants believed that the toys may have impeded the mother's ability to engage with her infant in a spontaneous and natural way. It was again suggested that the conditions under which the sample lived meant that the Alex mother would have been largely unfamiliar with the Westernised toys she was expected to engage with. Cited as yet another consequence of South Africa's apartheid past, low literacy levels were also believed to have been implicated in the mother's ability demonstrate her capacity for sensitive interaction. The mother was required at some point during video-recording to make use of a reading/picture

book to interact with her infant. On this note, Heather offered her thoughts: “You know, you’re kind of limiting it [assessment of the mother-infant interaction] to something that’s very much linked to literacy, and we have very low literacy rates”.

There was generalised support for Jacky’s viewpoint. However, consensus soon veered in another direction after Rebecca’s sentiments had been expressed, which upheld the validity of the MBQS-mini’s scoring objectives and its prescribed use of toys, even in Alex. She suggested: “Giving a mom who can’t read a book doesn’t mean she doesn’t tell her child stories".

As the participants continued to reflect on the use of toys the researcher became aware of a slight sense of unease amongst them. This appeared to be in reaction to a re-emergence of feelings of guilt as the participants recalled personal anecdotes of the manner in which the mothers attempted to play with their infants using the toys provided. There was a sense that to observe these interactions was somewhat uncomfortable, as it seemed to offer a stark reminder of the disparity amongst the races. It was as if the mothers’ inability to engage the toys appropriately was somehow illustrative of the sample’s collective deprivation.

Jacky expressed her general discomfort at what she observed. She recalled: “Things like the mom not knowing what to do with the toys...it’s very uncomfortable”. Stephanie expressed similar sentiments: “Sometimes the mothers actually did not know how the toys worked, or they played with them themselves because it was a novelty for them”. At this point Rebecca again offered a counterargument, which seemed to come in contrast to the prevailing views of the group at this stage. Rebecca felt that the potential toy foreignness was not something which necessarily counted against the Alex mother’s sensitivity score. She contended: “I felt like moms who were more ignorant about the toys scored better in that way, because they didn’t know how to use them and therefore didn’t insist to use them in this way, and they gave baby space to explore”.

In partial agreement of Rebecca’s sentiments, Stephanie drew a comparison between the South African and Canadian videos she observed. Her thoughts on the impact of the novelty of the toys:

> That’s why I say, sometimes the mothers read the books themselves first quickly, because they were interested and caught up, and then they might stop to try to introduce it to the baby. So I think there was just something about the novelty of the toys for them that caught them probably, which I don’t think you’d see in the Canadian videos.

At this stage Nina enquired of the group: “How does the fact that the mom doesn’t know what this toy is affect her sensitivity? And does that have repercussions for their attachment, or doesn’t it? There are mothers who are very deprived, but they can still be sensitive”. Heather seemed to show a greater conviction of her views, which came in response to Nina’s question. She suggested: “It’s the foreignness. It’s not foreign there [in Canada], and it’s foreign here, and so we’ve got a barrier”.

After much debate the group was still unable to quantify the extent to which this potential barrier impacted the Alex mothers’ sensitivity scores. However, consensus was that it nonetheless had some bearing on the Alex mothers’ sensitivity outcomes, generally a negative one, as it may at times have compromised the mother’s ability to demonstrate her aptitude for sensitive interaction with her infant. It was also evident that the participants had held these views from early on in their training. They mentioned that this particular topic had been discussed with Jacky in terms of whether or not more appropriate toys could be substituted in the Alex sample. Nina said: “That’s been one of the questions that we’ve asked of Jacky, which I think she is quite open to, is do we need to use these specific toys? Can we use different toys, and what toys would be more appropriate for our children”? Which toys, then, according to the participants, would be considered “more appropriate” for the Alex sample? It was suggested that makeshift toys or commonly found household objects in many township homes, including for example a bowl and spoon set, pots, a water jug, or a broom would have been better suited to the sample under study. She suggested further: “Dare I say cleaning! A lot of the observations I’m hearing from our home visitors is that there’s a lot of time spent making where you stay look good, and I think that little ones are involved in that. Sweeping or washing up, or carrying water”. Nina added her views in support of Heather’s and suggested that “practical things” would be more appropriate. Rebecca also added her views on the matter, which came in support of both Nina and Heather’s views. She suggested:

> I know working with preschool children that that’s very prevalent [referring to household chores]. The preschool kids at Ububele spend a lot of their time mimicking household things; like putting a baby on your back, or cleaning, or sweeping, or cooking, whereas I think in a different context kids aren’t exposed to those kinds of day-to-day things as much.

While the participants’ recommendations concerning the assortment of toys in Alex may be rather unconventional in more Westernised countries, it was maintained that these would have been better-suited to the Alex mother given their frequency of use and familiarity in the

household, thus increasing the potential for sensitive interaction between mother and infant to be demonstrated on their terms.

4.7.2 "Can I do this in front of the Mlungu?"

The sentiments evoked during discussion in the previous section ushered in the opportunity for the researcher to revisit one of the more sensitive themes, namely the issue of race in South Africa. The researcher's intention was to conduct a more purposeful exploration of the influence of race so that its significance in the context of MBQS-mini application in South Africa, and particularly in the Alex sample, could be better understood. The participants were all invited to articulate their thoughts on the matter.

Nina was first to offer her views and drew a comparison between Canada and South Africa's historical contexts. She suggested: "It's a contextual factor that Canada does not have a history of racial discrimination - there, a white family being filmed by a white person, but here [in South Africa] a white, professional coder and a poor, black mom means something". Nina's statement strongly suggested that a race/class dynamic may have been present in the room during video-recording. The researcher was interested in the effects of this dynamic, specifically on the mother, and enquired of the rest of the group whether they too felt its presence. Stephanie was first to respond: "Well we've speculated that you know, having a white researcher observing. Because of the kind of dynamics in this country we might make them feel like they have to comply, perform, or do the right thing. I felt it at times". Stephanie's statement garnered support from the other participants. Rebecca was next to offer her views. She suggested:

> Well they sometimes refer to us as "the Mlungu"[the White person], so, I mean, it obviously does have an impact, but I think also there is a little bit more beyond just race of the person filming. There's more of a sensitivity perhaps of being brought up in an environment where things can be more threatening to you. We wanted to film pre and post for a [intervention] group we were running and there were a lot of people who didn't want us to film because they didn't want it come across that they were HIV positive. So I think there might be a little bit more anxiety about protecting [oneself].

Rebecca's comment suggested that the mother's need to protect her infant may have influenced her behaviour in the room. Rebecca was of the opinion that their need to do so was driven out of a sense of anticipatory anxiety in the mothers that their infants may be taken

away from them if they were deemed to be ‘not good enough’ in the eyes of the White authority. She continued to elaborate on this poignant, but important insight:

> They’re having to be a little bit more protective over themselves than you. That, in this context, maybe the filming would feed into that as well, you know, that they don’t want to be seen as a ‘bad mom’. If you were to come film me it’s never going to enter my mind that maybe you will call the social workers and they’ll take my baby away, whereas for some of the moms that we’re filming, that’s a real threat.

Having heard Rebecca’s sentiments, Stephanie interjected and proposed another potential reason for the mothers’ potential fear response. She suggested it had something to do with mothers’ economic reality. Stephanie speculated: “Maybe it’s because they don’t have the materials to look after them [their infants]”? Nina seemed to concur with Stephanie’s views and expressed her thoughts in agreement. She stated: “I mean there are unfortunately social workers who work like that. There’s probably more of an anxiety in people who don’t have physical resources, that don’t have nappies. They’re doing the best with what they’ve got, but there might be a lot more anxiety in terms of how they come across in their mothering”.

An example provided by Stephanie seemed to consolidate the views of the group. She recalled an incident in which a mother was playing with her baby on the mat when, quite suddenly she appeared to become self-conscious. The mother leaned over to speak to the home visitor sitting on the mat next to her, a Black woman, and in her native tongue politely asked if she could proceed with her desired action in front of the “Mlungu”. The mother’s need to ‘check-in’ with the home visitor regarding her actions spoke to a sense of trepidation in her, to which Rebecca had referred earlier about the fear surrounding intervention. The mother appeared apprehensive in her awareness that the customary actions within her context may not meet the approval of the White ‘authority’ in attendance. Stephanie relayed her experience of the incident in greater detail. She recalled: “It was interesting that comment of, you know, that comment ‘Can I do this in front on the Mlungu?’, and then the home visitor says, ‘Yes, it’s fine,’ and then she sucked the snot out of her baby’s nose, which shocked all of us”!

4.8 A closer look at specific MBQS items and how they performed in the Alex sample.

One of the predetermined tasks of the research report was to identify those MBQS-mini items which presented the greatest challenge to the participants to apply in the Alex sample. This was important because it provided insights into the MBQS-mini’s goodness of fit to the Alex context. Each item or cluster of items could then be analysed to determine which items

performed less effectively than others. It was stated that analysis on this level was intended to guide future practice and determine how best the MBQS-mini could be applied and adapted to different localised conditions. As has been highlighted throughout this research, the complex idiosyncratic context in which the MBQS-mini was expected to perform made the matching process between context and measure a challenging ordeal. Here, the participants describe their experiences of using specific MBQS-mini items in Alex.

Heather immediately singled out those items which pertained to verbal communication as being somewhat problematic to score given the mothers' general lack of face-to-face interaction with their babies. She stated: "I think the ones that jump out are the ones that depend on verbal communication. So, 'Speaks to baby directly,' and, 'Repeats words carefully and slowly to baby as if teaching meaning or labelling an activity or object'". There was widespread agreement that interactions of this kind were noticeably infrequent in Alex. In accordance with Heather's statement, Nina added: "They also wouldn't do well on 'Builds on'," which garnered support from the rest of the participants. It was also noted by the participants that the Alex mothers rarely praised their infants either.

Furthermore, the participants were in agreement that the prevalence of physical contact between mother and infant was particularly high, and they were all very curious about the reasons, origins and consequences of this (according to the MBQS-mini's conceptualisation of maternal sensitivity the prevalence of such physicality would have decreased a mother's sensitivity score).

Jacky added her thoughts on the prevalence of physical manipulation observed in the Alex sample. It was clear from her manner of expression that this type of behaviour was quite atypical in the context of Canada. Therefore, she too displayed a natural curiosity about the potential reasons for this behaviour. She expressed:

> For me in the South African context the only surprise was that of 'physical manipulation'. The mother's picking up, propping up the child - as if the child is an inanimate object - and popping them down, or taking the child's hand to do something without allowing the child the freedom and the independence to explore...For me that was very interesting, and I would love to hear what mothers think, and then ask them a bit more about the items that we're less comfortable with. They might well say, 'Well in our culture that's how we teach children. We're a very physical community. That's how we communicate,' and that could have some positive influences.

Jacky drew comparison between Canadian mothers and mothers in Alex, and stated:

> They [Canadian mothers] know how to engage. There's much more of a sort of direct contact with their baby. But in this sample, it was...moms didn't really know what to do because they didn't really talk to their babies, they sort of just bounced the baby. It was a bit awkward. And again, I don't know if it's because they were too uncomfortable, because I would assume a lot of mothers are used to singing to babies. But then again they're in this awkward room with all these strange people asking me to do things.

Rebecca added her thoughts on another cluster of items which she found to be particularly challenging to apply in Alex. She indicated: "The one domain that I think is interesting is the 'Facilitation of learning and exploration'. I think, in general, our South African moms are low on that. I don't know if that is an element of deprivation, if it's a contextual thing, or if it's a cultural thing"? Stephanie added her thoughts in response to Rebecca's question, in which she tended towards it being a matter of context and the circumstances in which the sample lived. She suggested: "I want to leap in and say it's definitely deprivation". The group continued to brainstorm why this particular cluster may have been so low amongst the Alex mothers. Jacky proposed that the lack of such behaviours (i.e., mother facilitating learning in her infant), particularly when viewed through the lens of the Canadian-designed MBQS-mini, was due to the fact that the MBQS-mini's scoring systems was unlikely to give recognition to, or adequate acknowledgment of the processes which underlie the facilitation of learning in Africa. Jacky continued to make a strong case for the learning potential implicit in the intergenerational transmission of culture in Africa, including the many Africanisms, adages and stories which are exclusively African and which do not necessarily lend themselves to direct observation. Rebecca suggested further that the transmission of a historical deprivation may be a potential source for the scarcity of "facilitation of learning and exploration" observed. Rebecca stated: "It might be that if you've got previously disadvantaged grandparents and parents". Stephanie was in agreement with Rebecca. She added: "Ya, that can't help the learning process".

These comments suggest that the process of learning is an intergenerational one, passed down inter-familially and therefore culturally. However, the comments also acknowledged that the infrequency in the behaviours may also potentially have contextual origins. It was suggested that the transmission of historical economic deprivation passed down from one generation to another, may promote intergenerational severance which results in lost opportunities for intergenerational learning to take place.

Staying with the same cluster of items, Stephanie continued to expand her views on the matter. She indicated: "I think they [the Alex mothers] haven't had that in their own lives. So

I think that's got something to do with it. I'm actually talking about the mindset of scaffolding and stimulating the child and giving them things to do". Rebecca returned to Heather's statement suggested earlier regarding the goodness of fit between the MBQS-mini and "facilitation and learning". She suggested: "I think what Heather's saying is this [the MBQS] is looking at scaffolding in a very specific context. It's not looking at maybe slightly more practical, everyday things that are being passed on to children and that things are being scaffolded".

At this point the researcher was reminded of another heavily debated topic raised moments earlier regarding the impact of toys and the MBQS-mini's administration in Alex. The discussion points surrounding "facilitation and learning" seemed to engender a similar, stirring feeling in the group, and, although debate about "facilitation and learning" was noted to be more exploratory in nature, it was apparent that the participants felt that the Alex mothers had again been deprived of the opportunity to reveal how they, in their context, might facilitate learning; that is, through story-telling, sharing of Africanisms, shared child-rearing responsibilities and/or via more practical means such as household chores.

The participants continued to interrogate and discuss the suitability and applicability of many of the MBQS-mini's items in relation to South Africa's contextual, cultural and historical landscape. Although debate was approached enthusiastically by all concerned, and proved to be incredibly thought-provoking, it was generally enveloped in a veil of uncertainty. This was noted foremost in the lack of conviction with which hypotheses about item performance (or underperformance) were delivered. Similarly, discussion about the reasons why these items performed in Alex the way they did seemed to lack conviction. The researcher could not help at this juncture but to give immense weight and significance to Jacky's suggestion to surrender our speculative "knowledge" of the Alex mother's behaviour and instead direct our curiosity towards the mothers themselves in order to learn from them more directly ("I would love to hear what mothers think, and then ask them a bit more about the items that we're less comfortable with.").

4.9 Recommendations for MBQS-mini's future in SA: "Back to basics".

The recommendations which follow are based on the participants' collective insights after using the MBQS-mini in the UMBHVP.

The first recommendation put forward included the need to weight the MBQS-mini items to better suit or represent the South African context more closely. Nina was first to relay her views on the matter. She suggested: “Sort in order of importance and re-weighting of items”. Stephanie was in agreement with Nina, and soon added: “I think that’s the issue”.

Jacky indicated: “We’ve done this exercise and we now have a core of people who are really familiar and they own it. They’re highly competent, but maybe there is a need to get back to the basics and for us to just understand what a sensitive mother looks like”. The researcher enquired what Jacky meant by “a need to get back to basics”. She explained: “Getting mothers from the communities we’re interested in doing interventions and research, and asking them what’s important”.

In accordance with Stephanie and Nina’s sentiments highlighted earlier, Jacky’s comments suggested that some of the items were in need of revision so as to better reflect a localised understanding of the milieu of maternal behaviours in Alex (and potentially in other South African samples). She suggested: “We could ask experts in South Africa who are privy to the culture here, but who also know the theory very well, to do the sort [of items]”. Jacky went on to explain that although further changes may be necessary in future research she cautioned against making too many revisions to the current MBQS-mini setup, highlighting that the universality of attachment behaviours should not be cast aside in South Africa simply because some items were challenging to apply.

With regards the issue of toys, the participants’ recommendations were in keeping with their views promulgated earlier, that is they felt the assortment of toys should promote the mother’s ability to demonstrate her aptitude for sensitive interaction with her infant in a more naturalistic way. Jacky again alluded to the pressure the mothers may have felt during filming at Ububele, particularly in the presence of the ‘White authority’.

Finally, Heather suggested that attachment research in general would benefit if the MBQS-mini was used in other local studies in South Africa.: “The next thing really is just to have a bigger and less high-risk sample to see if we can compare if there is enough homogeneity in this country of ours. That we...if there is one South African sensitivity”.

4.10 The limitations of using the MBQS via the UMBHVP in Alex.

The first limitation was cited by Jacky who reiterated the likely impact of the administration differences between South Africa and Canada on the observed sensitivity outcomes. She stated: “One thing was, we could go into the homes, but I do understand there are challenges with that. So it would have been ideal if we could just do it in a more familiar...in a place where she’s [the mother] a lot more comfortable and for a longer period of time”. She continued: “Again, I think because they’re in that observation room it’s quite limiting. What we’d like is to see them in a natural environment, in the home, so that mom can very comfortably get up, you know, and go make herself a cup of tea”.

Like Jacky, Stephanie also seemed to place importance on the limitations introduced by the administration differences, particularly the location in which mothers were video-recorded. She stated: “I think that the idea of a mother and baby being videoed in an artificial situation, and the unknown impact it has on the mother’s self-consciousness”. Nina soon added her views in support of Stephanie’s sentiments. She indicated: “But in terms of the MBQS itself, the actual test, that’s not generally designed for picking up and bringing in [to a location]. So that has been the unusual part of how we have used it”.

On the issue of time spent with the Alex mother, Jacky added further comment and suggested that the more time that was spent with the mother - particularly during the data collection and recording processes - the greater the mediating influence on the mother’s sensitivity score there was likely to be found. She indicated:

> The thing is that these [recordings] are very short. Mums were playing without toys for five minutes. When we do them in Canada we would be there for two hours. We didn’t just code the MBQS, we took notes from the moment we stepped in and we also did lots of other interviews, lots of tasks. We did the MBQS on the whole visit. So not just the video-taped part, it was from the moment the mom answered the door.

The issue of language differences between the research team and Alex mothers was briefly raised by Jacky, who suggested that this may have caused a potential barrier to entry. She proposed ways that future MBQS-mini users in South Africa could overcome this potential barrier suggesting that training of bilingual or multilingual researchers was advisable. Jacky suggested: “People the mom is more comfortable with...so people that either speak the local language so they’re not forced to have to speak in English. So training people that are familiar with that community and going in to that community”.

Since Jacky had already spoken to a number of limitations which she felt were introduced via administrative parameters in South Africa, the researcher felt the need to consolidate what had

been offered thus far. In summation, he enquired of Jacky: “So in other words, try and somehow neutralise the effects of the unfamiliarity of the experience”. Jacky responded in affirmation, and stated: “Well, exactly that. Because the benefit of us in Canada, when we went to the homes for two hours there was...as much as mom could try and pretend, after a while it just comes out [her ‘actual’ sensitivity score]”.

The impact of racial difference between a Black mother and White observer was again cited as potentially having a negative impact on the Alex mothers’ sensitivity outcomes. This was proposed by Stephanie, who indicated: “I have to add something controversial...we [the study’s findings] might represent an Alex sample, but seen through the lens of a Canadian-grown MBQS, and the lens of White, South African clinician”. Rebecca was quick to offer support for Stephanie’s statement. She highlighted: “I don’t think you would have gotten the same results had you had people scoring who hadn’t been working in Alex”. Heather offered a more balanced view on the matter. She suggested: “It doesn’t feel as if it’s through a Canadian lens. I mean, I think Mary Ainsworth started in Uganda, didn’t she, and so her credentials are there. She’s got African roots theoretically, so I don’t think it’s starkly a Canadian tool”.

4.11 The suitability of the MBQS-mini in a South African context.

Generally speaking, all the participants felt that the MBQS-mini was a value-add assessment tool which was suitable for use in the South African context despite the aforementioned administrative and coding challenges that were encountered along the way.

On the point of suitability Jacky put forward her views which acknowledged that there was room for improvement. She stated: “I think we can work on it a little bit more. Yes, the short answer is absolutely, but I don’t think it’s perfect. I think like any tool it needs to be tweaked and I think there’s definitely an opportunity for it and I would absolutely love to do it”.

Stephanie makes clear the imperative to always acknowledge the contextual (and cultural) parameters which govern the use and application of the measure in a specific environment. She stated:

> Essentially it draws on attachment theory, which is quite universal I think, but I think there needs to be an awareness of where you are. For me it’s a quality assessment tool, but it’s time consuming and it takes a lot of time to become reliable and to apply it, to

> code it. It definitely has huge advantages, but some disadvantages as well for our particular context.

Stephanie continued to say: “I haven’t seen anything else that appeals to me, but there’s still something about this forming business that feels a bit elusive”.

Finally, Rebecca added her views: “For me I think it completely applies, but I think we have adjusted things slightly by ourselves and that’s why it completely applies. And I think that the research that has been done is incredibly rigorous”.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

It was evident from the themes that emerged from the participants' narratives that the use and application of the MBQS-mini in South Africa, and specifically within the Alex sample, was a deeply personal and evocative undertaking. As one of the more salient themes to emerge, the participants drew attention to the on-going challenge they faced in attempting to 'locate' themselves in relation to the mothers and babies whom they were coding. At the core of this struggle of location lay the strong emotional responses that were evoked in the participants during the course of their work in the UMBHVP. The very nature of the work seemed to require participants to critically engage aspects of themselves, and in particular, conflicts related to their race, racial identity and relative power and/or privilege in relation to the 'other' (i.e., the Alex mother). The emergence of these feelings became important in the context of the measure's use, insofar as they profoundly impacted how the participants experienced the use of this measure in Alex. The first section of this discussion will engage with the issues of racial difference and historical inter-racial trauma that surrounded the use of the measure. The second section will address the findings with regards to the applicability and utility of the MBQS-mini in a South African setting.

5.1. The roles of race and privilege in the experiences of the first South African MBQS mini coders.

In order to illuminate the participants' challenges related to their location, their experiences have been viewed in light of their respective roles and/or the functions each person performed in the UMBHVP; namely the South Africans as *coders* and the principal Canadian MBQS trainer as the *trainer*. Although their reflections in this regard may, at times, have overlapped during feedback, it is hoped that an explanation along these relatively separate lines may extricate the extent to which the influence of race was experienced. Moreover, it was considered useful to present the participants' reflections in this manner, given that different aspects related to this struggle were emphasised by different individuals at different stages, but often in accordance with their role and/or their individual or group identity (i.e., as White South Africans, or as the Canadian 'authority' or 'outsider').

The discussion points which follow attempt to make explicit, as far as is possible, how the pervasive experience of 'race' and a relative sense of privilege in South Africa were made

incumbent on the participants via their work in the UMBHVP. As a secondary goal, attempts are made to illustrate how the participants managed to curb, or work with that which was evoked in order to optimise the measure's application in a South African setting for the first time under distinct and challenging circumstances.

5.2 The unique case of "race" in South Africa.

There is an extensive body of literature that exists in the social sciences that has attempted to grapple with conceptualisations of race and the plethoric tensions surrounding it. Historically, however, such research was undertaken and explored primarily from the perspective of the White researcher, the findings of which were used to serve the academic hegemony of the White elite, thus further perpetuating the gulf between the races along these lines (Fox, 2012). Racism and racial tension is especially well documented in the context of Africa. After laying a thorough groundwork for the development of the "origins of whiteness" in Africa, Fox (2012) presents a number of poignant testimonies of early European missionaries, anthropologists, and more recent ethnographers who have ventured into indigenous Africa. He draws attention to how, since the earliest periods of colonisation, 'whiteness' in Africa has retained its significance as something to be both revered and deplored. The exposition reached by Fox is that Whites have, and may continue to "struggle to belong in places where their skin colour carries significant symbolism and connotation" (p. 1).

No more so has race and race-related tension been studied than in the context of South Africa (Fox, 2012). Steyn (2001) even goes so far as to proclaim that up until the dissolution of the apartheid government in 1993, South Africa was "the most overtly racial society anywhere in the world" (p. 23). More than twenty years on, South Africa's ever-tenuous ideal of a peoples' 'Rainbow Nation' continues to be undermined by the "ghosts of the apartheid legacy" (Hadley, 2015, p. 15). As a result, many of its most salient and insidious features are still perceptible today, albeit via more covert means. The ubiquity of race in contemporary South Africa thus cannot be disputed, and enactments along racial lines continue to be part and parcel of the everyday experience of South African life. Evidently, this is also true of the contexts in which mental health professionals in South Africa are called to work and intervene.

In recognition of the concept's salience in contemporary South Africa, there is a growing body of literature that is being written by health care professionals across a variety of settings that seeks to understand and break down the rhetorical power of the term(e.g., Eagle, 2005; Esprey, 2013; Kruger, 2012; Long, 2011; Nair, 2008; Stevens, 1998; Swartz, 2007). It is recognised in many of these writings that South Africa is a transitioning society, and, without the "ghosts of apartheid" necessarily behind us, the coming together of diversity in the same locations that were once used to demarcate and forcefully segregate, creates opportunity for underlying tensions to be acted (Bennett & Bennett, 1993; Long, 2011). Similar sentiments in this regards were expressed by the participants, who referred to South Africa as being "in the middle" and in a state of "transition". The conflict associated with one's location in the context of their work in South Africa is therefore not a new one. However, it is equally recognised that despite an urgent need to move beyond the over-deterministic connotations of "race" which still haunt us, such encounters, whether entered into inter- or intra-racially, are experienced with a high degree of ambivalence (Long, 2011).Writing from her experience of facilitating discussion within a multicultural university setting, Eagle (2005) notes that "discussions of race carry more stark political connotations and also potentially raise painful feelings associated with devaluation and oppression on the one hand and exploitation and guilt on the other, given the publicly shameful history of racially based apartheid in South Africa" (p. 43). Reflecting on the salience of race within the clinical encounter, Esprey(2013) notes that issues surrounding race form part of contemporary clinicians' "irreducible subjectivity" in their work, and have the potential to interfere in the therapeutic process through "disavowal, the turning of a blind eye and racial enactment" (p. 33). Kruger (2012) believes that the clinician is particularly susceptible to enactment when dealing with highly impoverished clients. The views expressed here by Eagle, Esprey and Kruger highlight both the implicit and explicit complications which surround the issue. Their views further suggest that, given the inevitability of the encounter, mental health workers in South Africa would indeed be better off if they were able to engage critically and manage the issue as and when it is experienced. Foxcroft (2003), for example, urges health care professionals working in community settings to "be aware of [their] own prejudices and preconceived ideas" (p.3), a sentiment to which one of the South African coders aptly referred as one's coding blind spots.

Despite the stickiness which invariably accompanies the term 'race', almost all contemporary writers on the topic advocate adopting a proactive, open and sensitive disposition in order to facilitate discussion in order to begin the process of working through race tensions. This is

particularly true in locations and contexts where physical appearances are so powerfully juxtaposed and have been used for the historical stratification of people (Fox, 2012). Eagle (2005), for example, notes the place and importance of reflection in such contemporary encounters as being particularly valuable if we are to move beyond the rigid, loaded connotations historically associated with race conceptualisations in South Africa.

Working within these parameters, it was assumed that such tensions would invariably be part of the encounter of the participants' work in the UMBHVP. While the research study's aims to explore the cultural and contextual applicability and suitability of the MBQS-mini within the South African context implied some engagement with issues of cultural, and by extension, racial difference, the researcher was surprised by the extent of the influence of race and the intensity of feelings evoked by this topic in the participants. However, when given more consideration, it is possible that the very tensions highlighted above may have instilled in the writer an ambivalence to engage the topic. In any event, despite this ambivalence, the rhetorical power of 'race' was not prevented from emerging in discussions with the participants.

5.3 "It's more of a privileged, White South African lens". The impact of the South African coder's subjectivity during coding.

The South African participants were unanimous in voicing their agreement that the observation and coding of the South African mother-infant dyads was a far more evocative and personal experience than coding the Canadian dyads. Owing perhaps to a greater appreciation of the tensions related to their racial designation as White, well-educated South African women, many of whom were themselves mothers, the South African participants were noted to be highly attuned to the complexities inherent in their location. Curiously however, the same participants demonstrated some apprehension around engaging the topic of race. This was noted foremost in their hesitancy to discuss the notion of different lenses being used during coding (i.e., from their perspective as White South Africans), which seemed to suggest that the topic was perhaps meaningfully situated within the coders' experience of themselves. However, once the topic was broached by a member of the group, the participants were able to engage the topic more freely. Nevertheless, during such discussion it was evident that the coders tended to band together and frame more carefully their "judgements" of the Alex mothers' behaviour as a collective, seemingly with the result of mediating feelings of

guilt that may have been evoked by revealing a judgement.

While the participants described finding the Canadian videos as fairly manageable to code, the shift in context from a Canadian setting to a South African setting introduced a very different experiential dynamic in the coders, one which significantly altered their interpretations of the Alex mothers' maternal behaviours. This seemed to be related to issues of race difference, and the participants described a number of difficult emotions emerging in relation to the coding of the South African videos. Telltale signs of this could be noted in, for example, the number of times the participants made reference to the "starkness" of the Alex mothers' "deprived circumstances". The readily perceptible divide between the Alex mothers' deprivation and the coders' relative privilege seemed to surface quite viscerally during discussions, in which references to the coders' "inherent knowledge" about the prevailing circumstances of Alex would became commonplace. Considering the frequency of such references, it seemed plausible to think of the coders' "inherent knowledge" as perhaps more synonymous with, at least to some degree, the coders' inherent 'bad feelings' regarding their implicit location within South Africa's historically imbued axis of power (Eagle, 2005).

Well acquainted with the challenges that are involved in parent-infant observation in the developing world, and particularly by coders of different racial and/or cultural designations, Crittenden (in Crittenden & Claussen, 2000) suggests that "what one sees is only partly a function of what one looks at". "More intriguing," she says, "is the impact of where one stands when one looks at what one has seen in the past…Time and place color observation such that it cannot be objective and be the same to everyone" (p.3). Crittenden's (2000) thoughts about the process of observation are particularly relevant to the participants' feedback, in that she gives significant weight to the idea that attempts at 'objective' observation are always mediated by the context and location, both now and historically, in which it occurs. Similarly, she emphasises the coder's relationship at the time of observation both to him/herself but also to the subject he or she is observing, particularly if the meaning ascribed to their relationship is fraught or has been politically and/or racially orchestrated. Her comments also give weight to the suggestion that the coder wears a number of 'lenses' during observation, which, more importantly, change according to who is being observed and at what particular time in history. This might explain why the coders' experience of observing the Canadian dyads was so radically different. Similarly, Greenberg (1986) notes that personality and life experiences are felt to impact the way in which therapists are able to relate to the

theory. In this instance, it is Greenberg's emphasis of one's life experiences that is of importance within the context of the UMBHVP since most of the South African coders grew up under the apartheid government.

The results suggest that the difficulties experienced by coders' when coding the videos of the Alexandra mothers and babies were related to intense feelings of discomfort about 'judging' these poor, marginalised, Black mothers' abilities to raise their infants from the vantage point of a privileged, middle-class, White observer's perspective. David Hadley, a UK based child psychotherapist, recently spent a year providing supervision to supervisors, individual clinicians, interns and professional groups at Ububele, Johannesburg, who had been involved in community parent-infant work in South Africa. What he noted in his position as supervisor is of significance to this research in that he observed that mental health professionals in South Africa were susceptible to the inevitable, 'unconscious forces' which were likely to surface when working in community settings. The feelings associated to this, Hadley says, may become an impediment to the facilitation of adequate contact with the subject, and may foreclose one's ability to think (Hadley, 2015). It is not difficult to assume that the caution with which the South African participants tended to frame and present their observations of the Alex mother may have been linked to a need to keep at a safe distance their unresolved and/or residual feelings related to their 'whiteness' and privilege in relation to the Alexandra mothers.

During the course of their work, the South African coders mentioned that they experienced a range of feelings, including intense sadness, despair, helplessness and guilt. These were particularly prominent early on during their training, but tended also to persist throughout their work in the project. It seemed that the feelings that were most difficult to manage were those that were self-directed and which seemed to tap into a feeling of guilt or shame for one's whiteness and apparent privilege. According to Arminio (2005), guilt has particular leverage in the context of race-related tensions, and is believed to be constellated around notions of power and privilege which may become 'alloyed' to the experience of one's whiteness. This is particularly true in circumstances and/or locations where institutionalised categorisations of 'White' and 'Black' have seen the exploitation of some people based on the colour of their skin. In such instances, race-related guilt may surface from simply bearing witness to racial disadvantage, feeling powerless to prevent it, or at having once aligned with the principals of the oppressor - the opportunities for race-related guilt in contemporary South

African society are many. Although not explicitly mentioned by the participants during discussion, it is likely that shame would have surfaced in tandem with feelings of guilt (and others). The fact that this emotion was not explicitly noted does not surprise Kruger (2012), who recognises the surreptitious nature of shame in the work of White South African clinicians. Its impact, however, is suggested by both Kruger (2012) and Swartz (2012) to be incredibly powerful, making the clinician, or in this instance the coder, prone to enactment.

It is here perhaps that the coder's "inherent knowledge" and acknowledgement of the "starkness" of the Alex mothers' circumstances can now be recognised as having been particularly influential. Helms (1993) expresses the view that White people in the 21st century are facing a moral dilemma. He suggests that they "recognise the moral dilemma of *being* White...They appreciate and enjoy its privileges, but realise those privileges are not extended to all people, and in particular are denied (overtly and covertly) to those who are not White" (pg. 56). Therefore, the views held by the aforementioned authors recognises the place and potency of the residual feelings associated with one's historical and/or present day subjective perception of power and privilege. Altman (2000) espouses the view that "If we do not confront such feelings in ourselves, we do not stand a chance of being able to process such interactions therapeutically, in words and in action" (p. 599).

5.4 The practical implications of coder subjectivity on coding procedures.

Such were the vicissitudes inherent in the transition between contexts during training that the South African coders soon came to appreciate the value of coding as a unit. Adopting this approach proved invaluable in curtailing the coders' individual subjectivities. It was also consistently shown to produce the most accurate maternal sensitivity scores for the Alexandra mothers. The participants felt that the efficacy of this approach lay in the fact that they had to make explicit, up front, their views about a dyad and provide reasons for their interpretation of events as they saw them. In so doing, it allowed the individual coder the needed, non-judgmental room to explore their subjectivity and potential blind-spots that may have otherwise gone un-checked. This was particularly useful early on in the coders' training when the 'within group variations' were still being negotiated and worked through. The group coding approach was also deemed to have value in placing a limit on the extent and use of one's counter-transference reaction during observation. Although this was believed to be a necessary component of observation, one coder in particular, who had a number of years of

clinical experience and was thus used to making use of her counter-transference reaction in her work, indicated that oftentimes her emotional reaction to the Alex dyads was so strong that she was susceptible to 'drifting' too much if she coded alone.

5.5 Conclusion

The first time use and application of the MBQS-mini in South Africa, and specifically within Alex, was thus a deeply personal and evocative experience for the participants involved. The very nature of their work in the UMBHVP seemed to bring into focus the participants' awareness of the implicit relational dynamics and very explicit differences between themselves and the Alexandra mothers. This invocation of this awareness had a profound effect on how the participants applied the measure in the context of the UMBHVP. The remaining points of discussion concern the relationship between the idiosyncratic context of Alex and how it was believed to have influenced the measure's overall performance in a South African setting.

5.6 Coders' perceptions of the applicability and utility of the MBQS-mini in a South African context.

Having given significant weight and importance to the seemingly inescapable influence of the participants' subjectivity during training and scoring procedures, the following sections explore the extent to which the idiosyncratic context of Alex was believed by participants to have impacted the measure's overall performance.

The participants felt that the unique contextual constituents of Alex exerted significant pressure on *how* the measure was applied. For example, a number of methodological changes to the South African research design had to be made, compared to the Canadian design, which, in turn, were believed to have impacted the mothers' ability to demonstrate optimally their aptitude for sensitive mothering. In this regard, consideration is given in the influence of the following aspect of MBQS-mini application: the potential impact of the 'observer effect', the use and assortment of toys, and the nature of the tasks imposed on the Alex mothers. Given the relationship between these important nuances in application and their potential impact on the reliability and validity of the results, discussions surrounding the aforementioned topics were illuminative of the measure's utility and suitability to a South

African setting, not least because this was the first time the measure was being used in South Africa.

Another important area of focus concerned the MBQS-mini's items or clusters of items that required adjusting in order to accommodate the context of Alex. It became apparent early on during their training that some of the maternal behaviours commonly observed in Alex were at times markedly different from the "ideal" of the prototypically sensitive, Canadian mother on which the MBQS scoring system is based. Participants' reflections on the cultural and contextual variances in behaviour, and the identification of those items that were the most challenging to apply, are discussed in this theme. The process of item re-weighting, so as to optimise the goodness of fit between measure and context to obtain the most accurate data, is also discussed.

Thus, with the measure's utility and suitability in mind, what follows are the participants' reflections and insights which seek to answer the question of the measure's ability to perform its primary function, that is, to appraise the Alex mothers' interactions with their infants under conditions of noteworthy complexity.

5.7 The influence of context on the MBQS scoring system: The process of "calibration".

When discussing the issue of the measure's performance in South Africa, the participants frequently alluded to the pervasive impact of the context of Alex. Although the extent of its influence could not easily be quantified, the relationship between the Canadian-designed MBQS-mini and context of Alex, and how to optimise the goodness of fit between them comprised a major task for the participants involved in the UMBHVP. This process was generally referred to by the participants as the process of 'calibration'.

It was evident by the participants' feedback that the idiosyncrasies in maternal behaviours noted along Alex's contextual gradient were perceptible during training. However, negotiating how to calibrate the MBQS-mini's scoring system to accommodate the behavioural manifestations noted in the context of Alex was a far more elusive task. Without any local literature to guide them, the participants relied heavily on their collective insights, understandings and professional expertise accumulated over the years after having worked in

similar settings in South Africa. In many instances, however, the participants had to tolerate a sense of 'not knowing' as they negotiated the process of calibration. For example, the participants were not certain as to why the mothers' behaviours manifested as they did within the context of Alex specifically, nor were they necessarily able to reach a thorough understanding of the potential source(s) of influence of the behaviours concerned. Therefore, the participants recognised this and were forthcoming in their acknowledgement of the limitations inherent in their position of the 'outsider looking in' (Triandis, 2002). This sense of ambiguity was often expressed as a source of frustration for the participants, particularly since one of the most important aspects of their work, namely an identification of the potential consequences of the mother's behaviour, could not be known with a high degree of certainty.

In any event, the participants approached the task of calibration by employing a systematic 'framework' for thinking about the behavioural variances that emerged in Alex. This framework was used by the participants to guide an informal 're-weighting' of items, deemed necessary to control for the item and construct biases that were believed to exist in the measure. For example, with regards to the item measuring mothers' 'physicality' with their infants, coders felt that they judged the Canadian and South African mothers differently on this item, holding in mind the normative trend for South African mothers to be more physically interactive with their infants. The participants held the view that the maternal 'between group variations' (between the Alex and Canadian videos)were as a result of the interaction between the distinct 'micro' community context of Alex, which, in turn, was interwoven with and further embedded in the broader 'macro' context of South Africa, the latter of which was believed to be heavily influenced by South Africa's apartheid past and in which the prevailing socio-economic climate of Alex may also be located. The participants' emphasis on context, however, did not mean they believed the sample group's behaviour was in no way influenced by cultural phenomena, but they simply retained their focus on trying to understanding the 'micro' context of Alex as being most significant in shaping the mother's behaviour.

With this understanding in mind, the participants went about identifying the most significant behavioural 'outliers' in the Alex sample, those behaviours which, if left unchanged, would likely have skewed the results most significantly. Once these had been identified, the participants collectively debated the behaviour's salience and significance within the context of Alex. They scrutinised the behaviour in terms of whether or not it was an idiosyncratic

contextual nuance specific to Alex mothers, or whether the behaviours were location, contextually or culturally-bound, or if in fact it could be generalised to a broader cultural collective that was transcendent of context and/or location. Likewise, the potential consequence of the behaviour from the perspective of the infant was also given much attention during calibration. Over time a coding 'blue-print' emerged of how 'best' to apply the measure within the specific contextual confines of Alex. When analysing the measure's utility, it was maintained by the participants that those behaviours that were considered to be most 'atypical', even within the relatively atypical spectrum of the Alex mothers' normative behaviours (when compared to Westernised mothering ideals) were still able to be 'flagged' relative to the rest of the Alex mothers. In this way, the MBQS-mini was still able to identify any of the highly problematic, intrusive, and/or disruptive behaviours that were hypothesised by the participants (and supported theoretically, if necessary) to be the most harmful developmentally for the infants concerned.

The behaviours that were observed to be most atypical were those that were cohered around items pertaining to 'physical manipulation', 'praise' and 'facilitation of learning'. Given the degree to which the mothers were observed to physically 'intrude' on their infants during interaction, that is, by frequently picking them up, moving them around, often with substantial force and intention, such items were re-weighted to accommodate this seemingly normative behavioural nuance. Praise on the other hand was generally noted to be highly infrequent, as were the behaviours normally associated with such behaviour, including face-to-face, reciprocal vocalisations between mother and baby, commonly observed in most Western cultures (Keller, 2013). Other items that were difficult to apply concerned those which pertained to behaviours clustered around the prototypically normative ideal of how learning *should* be facilitated between infant and care-giver. This cluster of behaviours was also not readily perceptible, and, as a result, items pertaining to these were weighted accordingly so as to control for the construct bias that may have been introduced by these behavioural nuances.

5.8 Cultural and contextual influences on mother-infant interactions.

Almost as long as four decades ago, Bronfenbrenner (1979)astutely noted an 'imbalance' that was emerging in the research of the time, as a result of social science's narrow, limited focus on the impact of the context in which child-rearing takes place. Any assumptions with regards to the effects of the environment on child-rearing practices could not be answered with any

degree of scientific certainty due to the paucity of research directed towards understanding the specific influence of contextual factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).These sentiments in many instances ring true of the participants' experiences in the UMBHVP, as a high degree of ambiguity was noted to pervade their work regarding the nature and influence of context.

In the scope of the UMBHVP, however, the participants were quite clear that "if we are to speak about the MBQS-mini in Alex, we need to speak about contextual factors". This line of thinking is in keeping with contemporary cross-cultural/cross-national research in which greater weight and importance is being afforded to understanding the impact of the location, culture and/or prevailing contextual landscape in which child-rearing practices take place **(**Tummala-Narra, 2009***)***. For example, maternal responsiveness as a feature of the construct of maternal sensitivity has been found to be significantly correlated to maternal education in lower socioeconomic groups (Richman, Miller, LeVine, 1992). This finding may have particular relevance in the context of Alex, given the extremely low levels of maternal educational as a residual ramification of South Africa's apartheid legacy in which opportunities for education were not equally distributed. Contemporary research has also found a link between economic deprivation and lower psychological well-being of the parents, which in turn has been linked to more punitive, inconsistent or unresponsive parenting as a result of the prevailing familial tensions brought on by financial stress (McLoyd & Wilson, 1991**;** Orthner, Jones-Sanpei, & Williamson, 2004). Moreover, it is the unfortunate reality in South Africa that many families are feeling the strain of HIV/AIDS related illness and parental mortality. Equally significant, the effects of urbanisation and increasingly scarce opportunities for employment (Tummala-Narra, 2009)often drive people away from their homes to find work, leading to familial fragmentation, decreased social support and the absence of important generative roles believed to be important in the developing African child's life **(**Pence &Nsamenang, 2008). Bornstein et al.'s (2007)findings, although limited in their generalisability due the specific sociodemographics of their sample, suggest unfavourable developmental outcomes for the infant in Alex given that "enhanced language may encourage the child to engage the mother more, promote joint attention on (named) objects, and extend interactions, which in turn inspire maternal sensitivity" (p. 210). This finding is noted to contain elements of 'facilitation of learning', principally by way of the naming objects (for example, during play), which was also noted to be relatively infrequent in the Alex sample. The conditions and associated theoretical proponents described here are likely to be significant in shaping the maternal behaviours within Alex and may

further make a case for unfavourable developmental consequences for a portion of the Alex dyads.

While these studies may have theoretical and conceptual applicability within the scope of the UMBHVP, they arguably fall short in describing and explaining the idiosyncratic maternal behaviours and the potential effects thereof within the context of Alex more specifically. Finding literary support for what seems only to allege predominantly negative developmental outcomes for mother and infant alike, particularly in contexts of high-risk, although potential illuminating, may fail to capture the uniqueness of what is actually happening on a local front in Alex. Furthermore, it potentially introduces the risk of labelling the Alex mother's behaviours as 'deviant' or 'deficient' prematurely, without proper grounds for making such categorically powerful statements. The participants sometimes referred to the idea that one of the MBQS-mini's perceived shortfalls was that it looked only at *specific* behaviours, defined in a different cultural setting, and without necessarily taking into account the prevailing context in which the measure was being employed. In other words, there might be very good, longstanding and shared understandings as to why many Alex mothers don't facilitate learning in the same 'normative' way that a Westernised mother is expected to do so. Thus it was argued by the participants, particularly the South African coders, that at times the MBQS-mini's scoring systems was too prescriptive and may overlook local meanings of the behaviours observed.

The research which follows suggests that with a change of 'lens' (or lenses), one may be inclined to view and understand the Alex mothers' behaviours as producing developmental outcomes other than what might be expected in conditions of high-risk. Trevarthen (1989), for example, found a particularly interesting correlation which speaks to the relationship of one of the participants' more poignant observations regarding the prevalence of "praise" and "physical manipulation". Trevarthen suggests that in contexts (or cultures) where reciprocal vocalisations between mother and infant were less common, other ways of responding to each other, including tactile responses and handling, may be more prevalent as a conduit to development. Holding Trevarthen's (1989) findings in mind, Hartenstein's (2006) research supports the idea that the prevalence of physical manipulation observed in Alex may not necessarily be associated with a developmental deficit for the infant, as is commonly believed in most Westernised contexts/cultures. At the very least, Hertenstein suggests, it is possible that the meaning ascribed to these behaviours, both by the Alex mothers themselves, as well

as the infant and/or child who is the recipient of such behaviour, may lead to different and culturally-normative experiences of these interactions. The principle of "equipotentiality" refers to the idea that the same type of touch can be assigned very different meanings or consequences between people (e.g., an arm around one's shoulders may be interpreted as loving or a display of dominance).This specific aspect was indeed something that the participants readily speculated about with regards to the prevalence of physical manipulation that was observed.

It has been found that mothers in Western cultures are generally more likely to interact with their baby overtly. Such mothers will characteristically "gaze and vocalise more to their infants, present objects more frequently, situate infants in face-to-face positions, and induce higher levels of positive arousal" (Feldman &Masalha, 2010, p 456). In contrast mothers in African cultures are more likely to take a passive (but not necessarily neglecting) role in their interactions with the infant and mirror baby's arousal. They are likely to maintain a continued presence, both emotionally and physically, but actively engage less socially by way of vocalisations and gazing (Feldman &Masalha, 2010).

Similarly, a different view is espoused by the research of Halpern (1993) regarding the impact of socio-economic status. Low socio-economic status alone, particularly if measured solely by family income, may not necessarily constitute a risk factor for the development of insecure attachment in which maternal insensitivity is believed to play a mediating role. Rather than poverty alone, it might be that specific factors that are associated with low income, such as teenage motherhood and low social support may constitute risk factors, because they are, in turn, associated with inadequate care-giving. In this regard, the participants' exposition that a mother may still be 'good enough' in the context of her prevailing and pervasive life circumstances holds weight and potential for the development of favourable attachment security.

Taking a broader view of the relationship between context and child-rearing, research on child-rearing practices in Sub-Saharan Africa promotes the view that it is the prevailing environmental demands of the people residing in these locations that will ultimately govern the practices that are observed in these settings (Mpofu & Ortiz, 2008; Nsamenang, 2006). For instance, a particular community may preference certain human abilities that they perceive to give expression to their core values and/or social interests (Mpofu, Ntinda &

Oakland, 2012). In these communities, working towards the attainment of such values would inevitably entail that the maternal behaviours observed in these communities are geared towards this end, often from birth. The work of Greenfield et al. (2003) and Keller (2013) speak to the intrinsic dynamics related to this. They both espouse the well-researched idea that development takes place along two deeply entrenched developmental pathways which are cohered around underlying notions of independence (psychological autonomy) and interdependence (hierarchical relatedness) (Keller, 2013). Although these are not necessarily thought of as being mutually exclusive, they are expected to promote mostly distinct yet salient ideas about how children should be raised. In African communities, notions of interdependence have been found to be more prevalent, obviously to varying degrees depending on levels of urbanisation and acculturation to dominant Western values portrayed in the media. For example, Mpofu et al. (2012), in citing the research of Super, Harkness, Barry & Zeitlin (2011)provide an account of African children living in subsistence economies being able to walk earlier than children raised in more modern industrialised societies. The reason for this development is believed to be causally linked to the families' prevailing needs in the community, in which they naturally begin to train toddlers to walk at an earlier age, thus promoting the infant's mobility and independence so that family members themselves, including the mothers, are not compromised in their capacity to work and earn a living. The greater family needs are thus prioritised. This has particularly salient implications for how a child might be raised and would likely include a greater amount of physical manipulation to promote mobility. Harkness and Super (1992) make a case for the enduring sense of community and the "spirit of mutuality" which underscores childcare in African communities as essentially being a social enterprise in which care-giving functions are shared formally and informally with others, including parents, kin, friends, neighbours and older siblings (p. 374).

5.9 The impact of context and the subsequent effect of methodological changes in the UMBHVP.

In the discussion points which follow the participants specifically explore the impact of the methodological changes that were made to the South Africa research design. They further give consideration to the impact that these changes may have had on the mothers themselves, most notably due to the likely impact that the changes may have had on the behaviours observed. The first point looks at the impact of the 'observer effect', followed by an analysis

of the nature of the task 'imposed' on the mothers, and finally the impact of the assortment of toys in the UMBHVP is considered.

5.9.1 "Can I do this in front of the Mlungu?": Alex mothers' reactivity to the presence of the observer.

The relationship between the assessment practitioner and the test-taker may be thought of as representing a power relationship (Foxcroft, Roodt, & Abrahams, 2009). Within the scope of the UMBHVP, the participants gave serious consideration to the potential impact of this dynamic during filming, namely that the researchers or assessors were White, middle-class professionals and the assessees were Black women from a lower socioeconomic group. It was the view of the participants that, given the entrenched racial and identity politics in South Africa, this specific aspect of the research design may have had an particularly adverse effect on the Alex mothers as a result of the implicit power dynamics in the relationship between the observer and the observed (Crittenden &Claussen, 2000).

In exploring this idea, a more poignant reflection was used to illustrate the potential impact of the observer in the UMBHVP. The participant in question recalled an interaction which took place at the Ububele premises in which a mother was seemingly going about interacting 'naturally' with her infant, when, at one point, she seemed to hesitate, and turned to the Black home visitor/translator sitting alongside her and, speaking in her native tongue, asked her if she was allowed to proceed with her desired action. On confirmation from the facilitator that her behaviour was "OK", the mother proceeded with her action and drained the mucus from her infant nose using her mouth. After the session, the Alex mother's request pertaining to the above interaction was translated by the facilitator. Her words to the facilitator were: "Can I do this [the action she wished to perform] in front of the *Mlungu* [the White person]?" The mother's statement may be seen as being representative of an underlying relational tension between the two parties, and which may have arguably characterised the mother's experience in the room, thus echoing the sentiments of Esprey (2013) raised earlier regard one's "irreducible subjective" at play in the encounter. The mother's sense of apprehension in this example is perceptible in her request, perhaps as a result of her fear that her behaviour (that would otherwise have been quite normal and commonly accepted by those around her in Alex) may potentially be 'judged' or misunderstood by the observer. By 'checking-in' with someone more closely aligned to her racial identity, who is likely also to be more attuned to

her reality, the mother's fears seemed to be allayed. Furthermore, the fact that the mother made specific reference to the 'Mlungu', or the White person, and seemed to be asking permission, strongly communicated her awareness of the racial and power differences between herself and the observer. While this example may not be representative of all of the Alex mothers, the aforementioned considerations highlight the potential strength of the observer effect in the scope of the UMBHVP.

Few studies since the 1970s have sought to systematically analyse the significance of the observer effect. Gardner's (2000) review of the available data on such an effect in direct parent-infant observational research finds a modest to negligible correlation. However, it deserves mention that the studies reviewed by Gardner (2000) bear little resemblance to the sample characteristics of the Alex mothers, nor does the research reviewed entail a detailed account of the prevailing, high-risk contextual circumstances noted in the scope of the UMBHVP. In many instances, potential associations or determinants have been studied in isolation with little cross-cultural correlation. Moreover, at the time of publication, little of the effect of video-recorded research was known. Thus, specifically within the current context of contemporary South Africa, and within the greater historical context of its fraught racial politics in particular, it may be argued that the impact of the observer effect was operative to a far more significant degree. To add weight to the suggestion of its effect, one of the South African participants made the cogent point that in many instances in South Africa, particularly in lower socio-economic, high-risk communities, social work intervention often results in the infant or child being taken away from the mother or caregiver. The participant's exposition, which she supported by providing testimony of such accounts taking place that she knew of, speaks to the potential of an underlying apprehension in the Alex mothers at being seen as 'less than' or 'deficient' in terms of her capacity for sensitive mothering (Tummala-Narra. 2009). This may be particularly true if the mother understands the research to have the potential for intervention based on the results. Given this potential power dynamic in the room, the mothers' sense of vulnerability may have been amplified under the perceived notion that they were at the whim of the swift and decisive actions of the 'all-knowing' and/or 'all-powerful' observer (Foxcroft, 2011).

Similar effects have been noted in anthropological studies, where Whites observers have immersed themselves into contexts, cultures and/or locations in Africa for research purposes. Even when the goal in these studies is to learn via an emic approach, that is, to adopt a stance

facilitated by a passive, participatory observer engaged in a long-term immersion into the sample under study, the impact of simply being present as a White observer never seems to go unnoticed. Fox (2012, p. 1) recounts one such anthropologist's experience when she describes that her presence "disrupted the regular flow of daily household life," and that she altered "the social dynamics" of the people she was studying (Cheney, 2007, p. 33). These sentiments add significance to the notion of the observer effect in a South African setting, and potentially raises further questions about the mother's ability 'to just act normally' if under psychological duress.

5.9.2 "Oh, just play normally": The nature of the task imposed on the observed.

During parent-infant research, tasks are often imposed on research participants in order to "elicit efficiently the behaviours of interest and to introduce a degree of comparability between subjects" (Hughes & Haynes, 1978, p.225). In the South African design, the mothers were asked to engage in a free play activity with their infants using an assortment of toys, and later a book reading exercise was introduced, in line with the Canadian administration on the MBQS-mini. However, it was argued by the participants that the nature of the tasks that the Alex mothers were expected to engage in would not have been ones that they would normally encounter in their daily lives. For example, rather than attempting to ask an illiterate mother to engage her infant with a picture/reading book, it was suggested that a mother in Alex might instead be more acquainted with the practise of storytelling, thus affording her the opportunity to show her capacity for sensitive mothering on her terms. The mother's literacy levels therefore, in the scope of the research initiative were defined by the participants as representing a "barrier" to sensitivity by limiting the nature of the task to a book reading exercise, or by not giving the mother the option to express herself in a more natural way. As a result, the mothers would have been rated according to a scoring system which looks for and preferences those prototypically sensitive behaviours that would normally be elicited via this common 'Westernised' interaction, namely through a book. If the mothers were asked to engage in activities that were not necessarily part of their daily repertoire of behaviours, how then might this have impacted the behaviours that were eventually elicited in the dyads? Gardner (2000) says that although imposing a task may increase the reliability of the findings by limiting the range and scope of the behaviours elicited, thus making comparisons between subjects possible, it does not necessarily improve the validity of the results.

5.9.3 The assortment of toys used in the South African research design.

A primary point of contestation surrounded the assortment of toys used in the current project's design. The South African participants were of the opinion that the toys used in the UMBHVP may have introduced another barrier to sensitive interaction by minimising the window of opportunity for sensitive interaction to take place between mother and infant. The basis for this exposition stemmed from the premise that the toys used were 'too foreign', and, as a result, were also likely to have disrupted the dyad's ability to engage in a natural and spontaneous way. The coders argued that if one was to adopt a purely objective stance during observation of play with toys in Alex, the coder would likely have assessed the mother as being relatively insensitive based on *how* she played with her infant. For example, the coder might notice the infrequency of praise and/or direct communication or vocalisation between the mother and infant, or they might struggle to find evidence to suggest that any 'learning' is being facilitated during their interactions involving the use of toys. In Westernised cultures, play is widely recognised as central to the facilitation of a child's social and cognitive development. Mother and infant usually play together with toys that are geared towards the promotion of the child's intellectual and social capacities. Play through toys between mother and infant is therefore recognised as a crucial component of an infant's development. The pair normally plays in unison together and reciprocal vocalisations are common in the initial phases of play (Fenson et al., 1976). Play through toys is particularly relevant in the provision of 'give and take' socialisation and other salient social and cognitive skills which are vital for an infant's development (Quilitch & Risley, 1973).

Although they weighted the items described above differently so as to accommodate the context of Alex, the participants still questioned whether the construct of maternal sensitivity via the use of toys had been 'accurately' captured in the scope of the UMBHVP. On their suggestion, 'more appropriate' toys should have been used, including pots and pans, and other household cleaning goods which were likely to have been more familiar to both the mothers and infants as objects of daily living. These suggestions were based on the participants' observation that many of the children at the Ububele Playschool appeared to be adept at keeping their immediate surroundings tidy, leading to the assumption that they were likely to have been involved in such chores at home. This could have optimised the opportunity for sensitive mothering to take place between the dyad, perhaps creating also opportunities for 'facilitation and learning' to take place.

How then might this fundamental and universal developmental task be achieved in Alex? Literature supports the notion that African cultures may approach such endeavours differently. Pence and Nsamenang (2008**)**, for example, provide a compelling critique on the differences in child-rearing in which the use of toys is noted. They also address contexts and situations in which learning is facilitated and who the role-players in this regard might be:

> In the African context, children play a critical role in their own development, and have a responsibility for their own 'self-education'. Indigenous pedagogy permits toddlers and youngsters to learn in participatory processes in the home, community, religious service, peer culture, and other activity setting through 'work-play' activities, with little to no explicit didactic support. They are expected to demonstrate competence and learning at key points of life, but often without direct instruction (p. 3).

This description of how learning takes place emphasises the medium of 'work-play' in a variety of settings and with significant others, principally without much support. In African cultures, therefore, it may be argue that such processes will span one's socio-emotional and cognitive development, which is arguably very different from the approach adopted by the MBQS-mini's scoring system in which specific behaviours are scored. Furthermore, in Western cultures the mother is often seen as the primary caregiver and thus the context of learning is predominantly facilitated in the household or until such time that the child is able to progress onto play school (Fenson et al., 1976). Similarly, then, this progression through the early years of development, especially in contexts of lower socio-economic status where shared child-rearing practices may be used to alleviate the mother's burden of raising her child exclusively, provides potentially salient mediating effects on how the infants are raised in such settings.

5.10 Conclusion

The process of calibrating the measure to context was a necessary but challenging undertaking for the participants given the prevailing context in which the measure was being applied in Alex. A central theme in this regard was how the participants went about controlling for item, construct and method biases, and related equivalence issues that were believed to have been introduced as a result of measure/context discrepancies. The items that required the most consideration were those that were cohered around 'physical manipulation', 'praise' and 'facilitation and learning'. These were noted to be the behavioural 'outliers' in Alex that made the measure a challenge to apply, at least initially. Based on the salience and/or infrequency with which these behaviours were observed in Alex, the items which pertained to these

behaviours were re-weighted based on the participants' collective understandings and expertise of working in similar contexts in South Africa. The participants felt that their own understandings regarding the meanings and consequences of such behaviour fell short in describing the true essence of these behaviours, which was at times a point of frustration in their work. By way of methodological design changes, the participants suggested that the 'observer effect', the use and assortment of the toys, as well as the nature of the task imposed on the Alex mothers were likely to have impacted their ability to demonstrated their aptitude for sensitive mothering. A primary issue raised by the participants was that the MBQS-mini's scoring systems tended to look for specific behaviours which the South African participants, in particular, believed may have belied an understanding of the inherent complexity and meaning of the behaviours themselves.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary of the findings of the research.

This research aimed to explore the experiences and perceptions of the participants, namely the coders and trainer, who were involved in the first time use and application of a Canadian-designed measure, the MBQS-mini, in a South African research initiative, the Ububele-Mother-Baby Home Visiting Project (UMBHVP). Of particular interest to the research was the participants' experience of the training and reliability processes that they had to go through before the measure could be applied in a South African setting. Similarly, given the noteworthy complexity of the context in which the measure was being applied, a central theme related to the participants' experiences was how they negotiated the process of optimising the goodness of fit between measure and context so as to obtain the most accurate maternal sensitivity scores of the Alex mothers in the UMBHVP. In this regard, much attention was given to trying to understand the extent to which the idiosyncratic environmental constituents in Alex may have been related to the mothers' behavioural manifestations that were observed, which, in turn, affected how the MBQS-mini's scoring system was subsequently applied in the scope of the Ububele research initiative. The participants gave consideration to the impact of the changes to research design in South Africa as a result of context, and the likely impact these changes would have had on the mother's ability to demonstrate her aptitude for sensitive mothering. An important thread which connected the research findings, and which was always held in mind, was how the aforementioned considerations influenced the measure's suitability, utility and applicability within a South African setting. The main points highlighted here surfaced as the most important points of consideration, which were believed to have impacted the measure's overall performance in South Africa. It is hoped that the findings elucidated from this research might be applied to future attachment research in South Africa, which is in urgent need.

The findings of the research suggested that the participants' involvement in the UMBHVP was a deeply personal and at times highly evocative experience. The theme of 'race' and the implicit feelings related to one's racial identity were brought to the fore quite strongly via the readily perceptible differences between the observer and the observed, and which seemed to imbue the participants' involvement with a sense of ambivalence as they coded the Alex mothers. This ambivalence seemed to be associated with having to 'judge' the maternal

behaviours of a poor, marginalised Black mother, who lived in conditions of high-risk from the participants' perspective of relative power and privilege in relation to the 'other' (i.e., the Alex mother). This relational dynamic was deemed to have significance in the context of the UMBHVP given South African's particularly fraught history of racial tension and the particular racial profile and designation of the participants themselves. The dynamics referred to here were thus guilt-inducing, amongst other feelings of helplessness and despair that were evoked during the project's course, and which seemed to have a profound impact on how the participants interpreted and coded the behaviours they observed.

The results further suggested that the process of calibrating the measure to the context of Alex was a necessary but challenging undertaking for the participants, given the prevailing context in which the measure was being applied. A central theme in this regard was how the participants went about controlling for item, construct and method biases, and related equivalence issues that were believed to have been introduced as a result of measure/context discrepancies. The items that required the most revision and consideration were those that were cohered around 'physical manipulation', 'praise' and 'facilitation and learning'. These were noted to be the behavioural 'outliers' in Alex based on the salience or infrequency with which they were observed. Items which pertained to these behaviours were weighted accordingly based on the participants' collective understandings and expertise of working in similar contexts in South Africa. The participants felt that their understandings of the meaning and consequences of such behaviour fell short in describing the true essence of these behaviours, which was at times a point of frustration in their work. By way of methodological design changes, the participants suggested that the 'observer effect', the use and assortment of the toys, as well as the nature of the task imposed on the Alex mothers were likely to have impacted their ability to demonstrate their aptitude for sensitive mothering, thus potentially impacting the measure's results. A primary point of issue raised by the participants was that the MBQS-mini's scoring system tended to look for *specific* behaviours which the South African participants, in particular, believed may have belied an understanding of the inherent complexity and meaning of the behaviours themselves. It was suggested that while attachment-seeking behaviours between mother-infant dyads were indeed universal, the construct of maternal sensitivity is no doubt burdened by the ethnographic conceptualisations of mothering in Alex.

Responding to the sentiments of Bain (2015), Foxcroft (1997; 2011) and others regarding the need to provide evidence-based, cost-effective and culturally appropriate therapeutic interventions in South Africa, this research was conducted with this primary intention in mind, that is, to explore the MBQS-mini's first time use and application in a South African setting of notably high-risk. Regarding the measure's suitability and utility in South Africa, and after the aforementioned points of interest were given thorough consideration, it was the generally the view of participants that, beyond its established use in developed countries, the MBQS-mini shows potential for use and application in Alex, as well as in other settings in South Africa. The participants generally believed that the measure's use and application in the scope of the UMBHVP was a success based on the sort of maternal sensitivity data they obtained of the Alex mothers. Most importantly however, the participants believed that they were able to identify those behaviours that were most significant in terms of potentially causing 'damage' to the infant's development, and which may then warrant intervention based on the potential for such effects.

6.2 Limitations of the research

The findings in this research are limited by the size of the sample of participants who took part in the study. Inclusion criteria centred primarily on the participants' experience and familiarity with using the measure via the UMBHVP in the hope that their inclusion would provide the most holistic feedback on the measure. Another limitation was observed in the demographic profile of the participants involved, the majority of whom were White, well-educated South African woman. Again, the sample of participants who were selected was based on their familiarity with the measure, which had a limiting effect on the demographic profile of those involved. The aforementioned aspects thus challenge the transferability of the findings across samples. The data collection method of a focus group also posed potential limitations. Individual interviews with participants may have uncovered views that could not be expressed in a group setting.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

For future research specifically using the MBQS or MBQS-mini in South Africa, it was deemed necessary to further bridge the gap in understanding regarding issues of equivalence. Ideally, it was suggested that the process of calibration be entered into, as far as possible,

prior to the measure's employment in future studies so that the behaviours that may be encountered, including aspects of salience, modes and range of expression, as well as the consequences linked to these behaviours, may be better understood and aligned to the MBQS scoring system. The goal of such an endeavour would thus be to optimise the reliability and validity of the results obtained in future research. It was suggested that issues related to construct and item equivalence, such as those described above, could be overcome in future by adopting an "appreciative inquiry approach" (Whiteny & Trosten-Bloom, 2010), whereby information from a wider range of responsible and knowledgeable persons and professionals, both from within the community as well as 'outside', would engage in discussion and debate so as to facilitate understanding of the inherent meaning of the behaviours observed. A critical step in this process will hinge on how, on the basis of a more thorough understanding, the MBQS-mini's items and clusters of items will be re-weighted to accommodate the context in which it was being applied. Again, the intended goal of such an endeavour would be to ensure that the measure is performing its primary function of detecting in the mother-infant dyad those behaviours that are likely to cause the most harm to the infant's socio-emotional and cognitive development.

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APPENDIX A:
Consent Form (Interview)

Good day.

My name is Bryn O'Reilly. I am studying a Masters degree in Clinical Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand. I am conducting research as part of my degree and am inviting you to take part in this study. I am doing research on the Ububele Mother-Infant Home Visiting Project. In this study I would like to find out what your experiences of the coding process have been using the mini Maternal Behaviour Q-Sort (MBQS) in South Africa. As a trained and reliable coder of the mini MBQS, I am interested in interviewing you to understand your thoughts and opinions surrounding the coding process with particular reference to the suitability and utility of the measure in South African as it is the first time it is being used in a South African setting.

I am inviting you to take part in this research study. Ideally, five coders will take part in the study (one of whom is the researcher) all of whom have been involved in the coding of mother-infant videotaped interactions using the mini MBQS. If you decide to take part you will be required to take part in an interview which will be conducted by the researcher. The interview will take approximately 1 hour and will need to be sound recorded for later transcription. It is necessary for me to record the interview in order for me to remember as much detail as possible. You may choose not to answer any questions that you do not want to, there are no right or wrong answers and you may stop the interview at any time with no negative consequences. Participation is voluntary and you will not get any benefits or money for participating in the study. You will also be required to participate in a focus group and as such confidentiality will thus be limited. The focus group will be approximately 90 minutes.

Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential, however, absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Should you choose to remain anonymous, your personal information will not be included in any part of the final research. Your interview will not be heard by anyone else other than researcher. Similarly, should you wish to remain anonymous during the individual interview, when I will write up your interview transcript, all your identifying information will be removed. The digital interviews and transcripts will be kept in a password-protected file on a computer which only I will have access to. The printed out transcripts will only be seen by my research supervisor and me and will be kept safely in a locked cupboard. My supervisor will not know any of your personal information and will only be reading

the interviews to help me write my report. It is possible that direct quotes from your interview will be used in the report, however, no identifying information will be included and they will be used with quotes from other interviews. After the report is finished your interview recording and transcript (both digital and printed out) will be kept in their secure places for 2 years, if the research is published in a journal, or for 6 years, if it is not published, before it is deleted. A copy of the report will be given to the manager of the Ububele Clinic, and the finished report will be seen by the home visitors, the psychologists at the project, the people who mark my report and a copy will be kept in the library at the University if the Witwatersrand. My contact details and those of my supervisor are attached to this form if you have any questions.

If you do choose to participate please can you fill out the two consent forms attached and give them back to me; the one is consent to participate and the other is consent for the audio recording.

Please feel free to contact either me or my supervisor if you would like any further information, have any further questions, or would like to report any negative affects the study has had on you.

Kind regards

Bryn O'Reilly	**Dr. Katherine Bain**
(Clinical Psychology Student)	(Research Supervisor)
083 653 4321	011 717 4558
Email: brynoreilly@gmail.com	Email: Jacky.Bain@wits.ac.za

If you would like to report any problems or complaints that you have with regard to any part of the research process you can contact the University of the Witwatersrand's Human Research EthicsCommittee (non-medical) Saintha Maistry**,** on 011 717 4613 or at saintha.maistry@wits.ac.za.

Counselling services

We do not expect that the interview will harm you in any way but if you feel that you are having difficulties after having participated you may access one of the following free therapy services.

Emthomjeni Community Psychology Clinic	011 717 4513
Lifeline	0861 322 322

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APPENDIX B:
Consent Form (Interview)

I _____ consent to being interviewed by Bryn O'Reilly for his study on the mini Maternal Behaviours Q-Sort (MBQS-mini).

I understand that:

- Participation in this interview is voluntary.
- I have the choice to not answer any questions I do not want to answer.
- I may stop the interview at any time.
- Direct quotes will be used in the report, however, no personal information that may identify me will be included in the research report, and my responses will remain as confidential as possible, however, I understand that due to the fact that all the participants know each other, my responses might be recognised.
- After the report is finished a copy will be given to Ububele, and one will be kept in the library at the University of the Witwatersrand and will be available to people who have access to the library.
- If a journal article is published the interview recording (or notes taken) as well the transcript will be kept in password-protected files as well as in a locked cupboard for 2 years. If no publication arises they will be kept in these places for 6 years.
- There are no direct benefits for me in participating in this study.
- There are no anticipated risks for me participating in this study.

Signed _____

Date _____

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APPENDIX C:

Consent Form (Audio Recording)

I _____ consent to my interview with Bryn O'Reilly for his study on the mini Maternal Behaviour Q-Sort. I understand that:

- The tape and transcript (these are written documents which contain what has been said in the interview) will not be heard or seen by any person at the Ububele Clinic or the Mother-Infant Home Visiting Project staff at any time.
- The tape will be heard by the researcher only.
- When the tape is used to write up the transcript, only the researcher will listen to it. Everything will be kept in a secure place, which only she will be able to access, while the study is ongoing.
- No personal information, such as names (yours, your family etc.) or places (where you live, where you are from etc.), will be used in the transcripts.
- Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to my transcript, however, the supervisor will not know any of your identifying information.
- After the report is finished my interview recording and transcript will be kept in a safe place, that only the researcher will have access to for 6 years.

Signed _____

Date _____

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APPENDIX D:

Interview Schedule

(Preamble: I would like to discuss with you your experience of having been involved with the coding of the MBQS-mini during the Ububele Mother-Infant Home Visiting Project. I will like to get to know your thoughts and feelings around the coding process, your experience of it in general, and any difficulties or challenges you may have experience throughout the process. If you do not understand any of the questions you may ask for them to be explained differently and if there are any questions you do not want to answer, that is also OK, we will carry on to talk about something else. You can take your time in answering the questions and please try to answer in as much detail as possible because I would like to learn as much as I possibly can from your experience.

1) What were some of the challenges you experienced when using the MBQS-mini in South Africa? Please provide examples?

2) How did you manage the challenges you described above?

3) Which items did you find most challenging to code? Why? (Item list to be provided)

4) What where your perceptions of the training you received? Would you do anything differently?

5) Did you feel adequately prepared (in terms of training)?

6) During training, were there any differences your recall between the Canadian training videos and the South African ones? Can you reflect on these differences?

7) Do you feel that there is anything in your personal life or any past experiences that may have impacted your experience of using the MBQS-mini?

8) Do you have any thoughts around the relationship between mother and baby in relation to the interviewer? How might this have impacted the mother in your opinion (if at all)?

9) Do you feel the measure is suitable to a South African setting? Please explain...

10) Do you feel that the MBQS needs any adjustments?

APPENDIX E:
MBQS-mini items

Below are the 25 items included in the MBQS-mini used to code the dyadic interactions between mother and baby. “M” stands in for mother; “B” for baby:

1. Mother provides baby with little opportunity to contribute to the interaction. *Explanation*: Mother may initiate play or interactions, however, she does not follow baby’s lead and as a result there is little or no turn taking. Mother is directive without regard to babies’ intentions. If little or no interaction, place in the middle piles.

2. Monitors baby’s activities during visit. *Explanation*: Regardless of competing tasks, M keeps close tabs on baby. Should baby enter another room M is aware of baby’s activities, her behaviour suggests she knows what baby is doing at all times

4. During interaction with visitor does not notice B. *Explanation*: M is preoccupied with visitors and does not monitor B, unaware of B's actions. M fails to notice or comment on B's activities.

6. Supports interaction of B with visitor. *Explanation*: Introduces B to visitor. M positions herself where she can facilitate B's interactions with visitor. Suggests what B is comfortable with in interactions with strangers.

10. Speaks to B directly. *Explanation*: B is attending when M directs comments to B. Elicits B's attention before communicating.

11. Repeats words carefully and slowly to B as if teaching meaning or labelling an activity or object. *Explanation*: M expands B's vocalizations or activities in a teaching style.

17. Content and pace of interaction set by M rather than according to B's responses. *Explanation*: M follows own agenda during interaction. Ignores B's initiatives or signals to change pace or content of the interactions. Imposes her wishes.

22. Appears to tune out and not notice bids for attention. *Explanation*: Psychologically inaccessible to B, unaware of B's signals.

24. Arranges her location so she can perceive B's signals. *Explanation*: Sits facing B, if B moves M re-positions herself to enable her to hear or see B

27. Responds to B's distress and non-distress signals even when engaged in some other activity such as having a conversation with visitor. *Explanation*: M not only attends but also responds to B's cues while engaged in other tasks.

30. Interactions with B characterized by active physical manipulations. *Explanation*: Interactions are physical rather than verbal. M physically controls B's movements, position, and actions. *Explanation*: May move B's hand to object; vigorously moves B, hand over hand pat-a-cake

32. Non-synchronous interactions with B, i.e., the timing of M's behaviour out of phase with B's behaviour. *Explanation*: May interfere with activity B is enjoying; may not acknowledge B's communications to her; initiates interactions when B is attending to other activities; is active when B is quiet; quiet when B is active

34. Interactions revolve around B's tempo and current state. *Explanation*: Indicates awareness of B's current state by following B's lead. Examples - when B is tired does not push B to complete a task, changes the interaction according to B's interest or level of frustration.

41. Interactions with B are object oriented (e.g. with toys, food). *Explanation*: M uses toys or food to mediate interactions. Notice especially what M does in response to fusses and proximity bids

43. Is animated when interacting with B. *Explanation*: Uses varied expressions of affect, enthusiastic with B. If M apathetic or indifferent in interaction with B place in the unlike piles.

44. Realistic expectations regarding B's self-control of affect. *Explanation*: Intervenes when B has reached the limit in the ability to self soothe or otherwise regulate emotions. Determine M's expectations by noting the timing of M's intervention as well as the content. Examples - limits B's frustration with task by offering assistance; monitors B when falls to see if B needs comfort in managing hurt; gently suggests alternative activity to contain B's over excitement

45. Praises B. *Explanation*: Shows B approval by acknowledging and celebrating B's accomplishments and activities with B.

48. Points to and identifies interesting things in B's environment. *Explanation*: Aware of B's environment such that she points to and labels things that may be of interest to B. Also consider how M structures the environment for B by offering verbal prompts to transitions in activities, introduces visitors, labels toys and activities during play.

50. Creates interesting physical environment for B. *Explanation*: Has apparently thought about B's needs, interests and developmental level by providing toys and objects that are accessible and appropriate to support B's exploration and learning. Also consider the provision of a place for B to play with these objects.

60. Scolds or criticizes B. *Explanation*: Interactions characterized by reprimands, scorn or hostile criticism. There is a punitive tone to the interactions.

65. Responds to B's signals. *Explanation*: Not only is M aware of B's signals to her, she also responds to these signals. Responses may or may not be appropriate. If B does not signal, place in middle piles

71. Builds on the focus of B's attention. *Explanation*: Aware of B's interest and attention and uses this information as a guide for her interactions. Example - in play, attends to what the B is interested in, rather than introducing a new activity.

72. Notices when B smiles and vocalizes. *Explanation*: Gives an observable sign that she is aware of B's positive signals. Example - looks when B smiles, but may or may not respond by smiling, vocalizing.

79. Distressed by B's demands. *Explanation*: Has a low tolerance for more insistent signals; has difficulty accepting responsibility for B's care. Examples - when B needs care or comfort, M is annoyed, irritable, exasperated or resentful.

84. Display of affect does not match B's display of affect (e.g., smiles when B is distressed) *Explanation*: Affect is not congruent with B's emotional state, may indicate that M mislabels B's affect. Example - B frightened, M laughs and says B is shy.

87. Actively opposed baby's wishes. *Explanation*: Does not acknowledge baby's autonomy, does not accept that baby has a will, actively interferes or redirects baby from activity in progress. Does not consider baby's mood and activity in progress.