What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach? An exploratory study

by

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Declaration

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

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Abstract

The role of a parent is an important one (Aminabadi, Jamali, Azar, & Oskouei, 2015). The way in which we parent has an influence on the developmental outcomes of our children. If we are able to parent competently, we can affect children's well-being positively, along with their future success and happiness (Mowder & Sanders, 2008).

In recent years there has been an explosion of new parenting approaches. In particular, positive parenting increased in popularity in the 2000s (Ahmann, 2002). Books have been written and programmes have been developed to advise parents in applying a positive parenting approach, which is seen as an optimal approach (Nelsen, 2006). Even though there is growing interest in this parenting approach among psychologists, parenting coaches, and parents, most of the research studies that have been conducted on positive parenting are intervention studies aimed at improving poor parenting practices. These studies are quantitative and concerned with child behaviour outcomes. There are relatively few studies that explore the perceptions of parents about positive parenting in general, and none with regards to parents' motivation to apply a positive parenting approach. Consequently, this study aimed to explore what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach.

This study was conceptualised and designed within the positive psychology paradigm and based on the Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) framework, which is concerned with parents' thoughts, feelings and behaviour. In this exploratory qualitative study, semi-structured interviews were conducted to gain the perspectives of 16 mothers who identified themselves as positive parents. Participants responded to the following open-ended question: "What motivates you to apply a positive parenting approach?" The data gained was analysed using Braun and Clarke's (2013) thematic analysis technique, from which four categories with

themes and subthemes emerged. In the first category – "It's who I am" – the participants expressed that their motivation for positive parenting reflected who they are. This parenting style is aligned with the participants' sensitive temperaments, desire to fulfil both their child's needs and affect social change, and their strong viewpoints on the negative impact of punishment on children. Due to predominantly negative childhood experiences with their own parents, the participants were motivated to apply more positive parenting with their children. In the second category – "It just works" – the participants reported feeling motivated because the approach works for them, their children respond positively, and it yields effective results. In category three – "Gaining knowledge through learning and resources" – the participants described being motivated by information gained from reading and what they understood about the importance of their parenting for optimal child development. Lastly, in category four – "The importance of social support" – the mothers relied on social support and reported that their partners motivated and supported them in the application of the positive parenting approach.

The findings of this study contribute to our understanding of and insight into what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach and positive parenting research. This study's findings are limited by the inclusion of mothers of only one race and one socio-economic class. Therefore, it is recommended that future studies include fathers, and participants from various races and socio-economic classes.

Opsomming

Die rol van ’n ouer is van die uiterste belang (Aminabadi, Jamali, Azar, & Oskouei, 2015). Die manier hoe ons as ouers ons kinders opvoed het ’n invloed op die ontwikkeling van ons kinders. As ons ons meer bekwaam met die opvoeding van ons kinders, kan ons die welstand van kinders positief beïnvloed en hulle toekomstige sukses en geluk beïnvloed (Mowder & Sanders, 2008).

Die afgelope paar jaar was daar ’n toename in nuwe ouerskapbenaderings, spesifiek positiewe ouerskap. In die 2000’s was daar ’n toename in die gewildheid van positiewe ouerskap (Ahmann, 2002). Daar is boeke geskryf en programme ontwikkel om ouers te adviseer om ’n positiewe ouerskapbenadering toe te pas, wat beskou kan word as ’n optimale ouerskapbenadering (Nelsen, 2006). Alhoewel daar ’n toenemende belangstelling in hierdie ouerskapbenadering onder sielkundiges, ouerskapafrigters en ouers is, is die meeste navorsingstudies wat oor positiewe ouerskap gedoen is ingrypingstudies wat daarop gemik is om swak ouerskapstyle te verbeter. Hierdie kwantitatiewe studies het te doen met die uitkomste van kindergedrag. Daar is relatief min studies wat die sienings van ouers oor positiewe ouerskap in die algemeen ondersoek, en geen studies met betrekking tot ouers se motivering om ’n positiewe ouerskapbenadering toe te pas nie. Gevolglik was die doel van hierdie studie om ouers se motiverings vir die toepassing van ’n positiewe ouerskapbenadering te ondersoek.

Hierdie studie is gekonseptualiseer en ontwerp binne die positiewe sielkunde-paradigma en is gebaseer op die ouerontwikkelingsteorie (Mowder, 2005) raamwerk, wat handel oor ouers se denke, gevoelens en gedrag. In hierdie kwalitatiewe ondersoek is semi-gestruktureerde onderhoude gevoer om die perspektiewe van 16 ma’s wat hulself as positiewe ouers geïdentifiseer het, te verkry. Deelnemers het geantwoord op die volgende oop-einde vraag:

“Wat motiveer jou om ’n positiewe ouerskapbenadering toe te pas?” Die data wat ingesamel is, is met behulp van Braun en Clarke (2013) se tematiese ontledingstegniek ontleed, waaruit vier kategorieë met temas en sub-temas na vore gekom het. In die eerste kategorie – “Dit is wie ek is” – beeld die deelnemers uit dat hulle motivering vir positiewe ouerskap weerspieël wie hulle is. Dit is in lyn met die deelnemers se sensitiewe temperamente, begeerte om beide hulle kind se behoeftes te bevredig en sosiale verandering te beïnvloed, en hulle sterk standpunte oor die negatiewe impak van straf op kinders. As gevolg van oorwegend negatiewe ervarings met hulle eie ouers as kinders was die deelnemers gemotiveer om ’n meer positiewe ouerskap met hulle eie kinders toe te pas. In die tweede kategorie – “Dit werk net” – rapporteer die deelnemers dat hulle gemotiveerd is omdat die benadering vir hulle werk, hulle kinders positief reageer, en dit effektiewe resultate lewer. In kategorie drie – “Verkryging van kennis deur middel van leer en hulpbronne” – beskryf die deelnemers dat hulle gemotiveerd is op grond van dit wat hulle gelees het en wat hulle oor die belangrikheid van hul ouerskap vir optimale kinderontwikkeling verstaan. Laastens, in kategorie vier – “Die belangrikheid van sosiale ondersteuning” – vertrou die ma’s op sosiale ondersteuning en meld dat hul lewensmaat hulle motiveer en ondersteun in die toepassing van die positiewe ouerskapbenadering.

Die bevindinge van hierdie studie dra by tot ons begrip van en insig in ouerlike motiverings vir die toepassing van ’n positiewe ouerskapbenadering en navorsing oor positiewe ouerskap. Hierdie studie se bevindinge is beperk omdat slegs ma’s van een ras en een sosio-ekonomiese klas ingesluit is. Daar word aanbeveel dat toekomstige studies pa’s en deelnemers van verskillende rasse en sosio-ekonomiese klasse insluit.

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This thesis survived bacterial meningitis, a coma, rehabilitation, pregnancy, childbirth and a global pandemic. At long last it is completed!

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Chapter 1

Introduction to, motivation for and aim of this study

This thesis presents findings from an exploratory qualitative study that investigated what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach. In this introductory chapter, I outline the background to and context of the study (section 1.1), as well as the study's motivations and aim (section 1.2). In section 1.3, I provide definitions of key terms used. Lastly, I include an outline of the remaining chapters of the thesis (1.4).

1.1 Background and context

The process of becoming a parent is a period of great change that can provide significant meaning to individuals, causing parents to alter their goals and aspirations, and bringing new richness to their lives (Silva & Pugh, 2010). For some, child rearing is considered a calling and a much anticipated stage of life (Coulson, Oades, & Stoyles, 2012), while for others it can come as an unexpected event that alters their life plan. It is a role upon which great importance is placed, as the decisions parents make with regard to child-rearing can affect the outcomes of children in either positive or negative ways (Respler-Herman, Mowder, Yasik, & Shamah, 2012). It is also a role that most parents strive to be great at but many feel unprepared for (Coulson et al., 2012). For this reason, it is no wonder some parents spend a great deal of time and attention questioning and reflecting on their parenting practices (Galinsky, 1987).

The way in which a parent rears a child is called a parenting style (Baumrind, 2012; Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Baumrind (1971, 1996, 2012), the developmental researcher who extensively studied and introduced the concept of a parenting style, has found there are predominately four

parenting styles. These are referred to as Authoritative, Authoritarian, Permissive, and Uninvolved/Neglectful parenting. I will discuss these in more depth in Chapter 2.

Parenting styles have changed significantly over time (Trifan, Stattin, & Tilton-Weaver, 2014). These changes are due partly to the many studies that have been dedicated to the negative effects of harsh and inflexible parenting (McKee et al., 2007; Silva & Pugh, 2010), and the increase in access to information, which is largely available via the internet and social media (Madge & O'Connor, 2006). The last few decades have seen society shift from a predominately authoritarian parenting style, which is punitive and controlling, towards an authoritative parenting style. This style is more child-centred in nature and has been shown to have positive effects on both the parent and the child (Baumrind, 2012).

The way in which a certain parenting style is expressed is referred to as a parenting practice or approach (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Research into what determines a parenting style and its practice is still ongoing. More time has been dedicated to quantitative research of parenting style/practice outcomes (Jungert, Landry, Joussemet, Mageau, Gingras, & Koestner, 2015; Mowder & Sanders, 2008; Murphey, 1992) than to the exploration of the way in which parents make certain parenting choices (Mowder, 2005). It appears that what motivates parenting beliefs and behaviour is complex (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984). Much of a parent's practices remain non-conscious and automatic in nature, while others are driven by a conscious decision-making process (Coulson et al., 2012; Mowder, 2005). The most extensive study, upon which many later studies (Morse, 2010) have been based, is that of Belsky (1984). He determined that there are three main influences on parenting practices, namely personal and psychological resources, characteristics of the child, and contextual sources of stress and support. These, and other influences, are discussed in depth in the literature review in Chapter 2.

One parenting practice (hereafter referred to as an approach) that has been growing in popularity is positive parenting. The positive parenting approach falls under the umbrella of an authoritative/democratic parenting style (Mowder, 2005). Positive parenting is characterised by warmth, structure, and mutual respect (Durrant, 2011). Positive parents use non-violent, non-shaming discipline, which fosters a problem-solving approach. The parent guides rather than exerts control over the child and mistakes are used as learning opportunities. It is summarised as an approach using both kindness and empathy, within clearly defined boundaries (Nelsen, 2006).

In the light of the growing interest in authoritative parenting approaches, there have been many studies exploring child outcomes of a positive parenting approach (Lachman et al., 2017; Latouf & Dunn, 2010; McKee et al., 2007;Roman, Davids, Moyo, Schilder, Lacante, & Lens, 2015). There are also numerous interventions that teach parents positive parenting techniques with the view that it is an optimal parenting approach (Gould & Ward, 2015; Morrill, Hawrilenko, & Córdova, 2016; Herrero Romero, Hall, Cluver, & Meinck, 2017; Sanders, 1999).

Despite academic interest in the determinants of parenting styles and practices (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984; Morse, 2010), information on the perspectives of parents themselves is limited. Whilst research has been done on what may determine a parenting style, a thorough literature review revealed that, to my knowledge, there is minimal to no research regarding what motivates parents to adopt a particular parenting approach. With growing interest in teaching positive parenting techniques in interventions (Knerr, Gardner, & Cluver, 2013; Morrill et al., 2016; Sanders, 1999), and increasing bodies of literature that educate parents about this approach, little attention has been paid to the motivations and experiences of parents already

putting into practice the positive parenting approach. For this reason, this study was planned and executed to give insight into what motivates parents to apply this approach, namely positive parenting.

In the next section I provide the motivation and aim of this study.

1.2 Motivation and aim of this study

The motivation for this study was four-fold. Firstly, it is driven by a personal interest in positive parenting. Secondly, the study is motivated by historical trends in research, with an increase in interest in parenting studies (Trifan et al., 2014). Thirdly, it addresses a bias in the way in which literature has been presented in the past. Lastly, it pertains to a need for further research and information on the positive parenting approach, its definition, and understanding. All four of these motivations highlight gaps in the current literature. This study could therefore contribute to filling some of the identified gaps. In the following paragraph I discuss the first motivation, my personal interest.

I came across the term positive parenting due to my own interest in parenting styles and techniques. This sparked a search to find positive parenting studies and read positive parenting material. Much of the literature, especially that of parenting coaches, attempts to provide reasons to motivate parents to apply this approach. Examples of the motivators given include: it is better for child development, it fosters a strong parent-child relationship, it breaks cycles of abuse, shame and disrespect, and it increases compliance, along with many other benefits discussed further on in this thesis (Durrant, 2011; Eanes, 2016; Nelsen, 2006). The more literature I read, the more I became curious about the parents' perspectives, which are underreported (Mowder, 2005). Are the reasons stated above indeed motivating parents? Or

are there other reasons why some parents apply a positive parenting approach? The answer to this question was not immediately apparent. Therefore, this study, entitled 'What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach: An exploratory study', aims to explore 'why' and not just 'how' parents use the positive parenting approach with their own children. I will now explain the second motivation – historical changes in parenting practices.

Historically, parenting practices have shifted over time. Parenting is changing as information becomes available on the negative effects of a harsh or authoritarian parenting style (Mowder et al., 2010). As parenting has changed, so has research. In keeping with the historical progression of parenting for optimal child outcomes, there is increasing interest among both the general public and researchers to understand the impact of parenting practices and the parent experience (Ahmann, 2002; Latouf & Dunn, 2010; Morrill et al., 2016). According to Çerkez and Çise (2017), who examined existing trends in research on parenting styles, articles published in journals on parenting styles have increased by 10% every year following 2008. This indicates that there is growing interest among the research community to understand parenting, the impact it has on the parent-child relationship, as well as on child development. They have also observed an increase in the number of qualitative and mixed-methods research designs since 2012 (Çerkez & Çise, 2017). This may be as a result of the findings of qualitative studies gaining more repute as scientific data (Braun & Clarke, 2013). As knowledge continues to emerge regarding parenting, this study on the parent experience and motivations could contribute to this growing area of interest, and address a growing need for more qualitative studies (Armstrong, Birnie-Lefcovitch, & Ungar, 2005; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Despite these changes, there still is a bias towards a preferred research paradigm. In the next paragraph I will address this bias.

The current study was executed from within a positive psychology paradigm. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994), a paradigm is a set of beliefs from which the individual views the world and his or her place in it. The positive psychology movement gained popularity in the 20th century. Positive psychology is primarily the study of human strengths and potential. It has an interest in exploring what works for individuals and enables them to function and flourish (Sheldon & King, 2001). Some researchers feel that there traditionally has been a negative bias towards studies that focus on treatment, prevention, and intervention in order to improve dysfunctional aspects of societal functioning (Gable & Haidt, 2005; Sheldon & King, 2001). Within the positive psychology paradigm, it is postulated that enquiry should aim at understanding the entire human experience, from dysfunction and distress to fulfilment, well-being and hope (Linley, Stephen, Harrington, & Wood, 2006). The fathers of positive psychology, Seligman and Csikszentmihayli (2000, p. 9), say that traditional psychology was not producing enough "knowledge about what makes life worth living". In keeping with this trend, I observed that, despite positive parenting being (as the name suggests) an approach focused on the positive aspects and strength building in the parent-child relationship (Nelsen, 2006), the majority of academic studies regarding positive parenting have focused on interventions. These studies were concerned primarily with families considered at risk and were aimed at improving poor parenting practices (Breen et al., 2015; Garbarino, 1982; Velderman, Bakermans-Kranenburg, Juffer & Van IJzendoorn, 2006) . Seligman (2002a) proposes that there should be more studies examining normally adjusted children and positive emotions, and not just studying distress and maladjustment (Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018).

Therefore, not only is it of interest to explore the motivations of parents practising what is seen as an optimal parenting style, but it is also important to add to the body of research that

highlights the positive aspects of the parenting experience. In the next paragraph I will highlight a gap in the reported research and indicate how this current study can contribute in this regard.

In recent years, there have been an influx of positive parenting books, courses, blog posts and intervention programmes, mostly written by psychologists and parenting educators (Morrill et al., 2016; Sanders, 1999; Velderman et al., 2006). These coaches, gurus, psychologists, and social workers approach this literature from an advice perspective. These experts advise parents on techniques and practices that enhance the parent-child relationship (Eanes, 2016; Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006). Most of the research presented in these advice books regards child outcomes of parenting style choices. Despite the growing body of qualitative research, it is still a very underrepresented research method (Linley et al., 2006; Pope, Ziebland, & Mays, 2000).

Within the positive psychology paradigm, the subjective experiences of individuals are viewed as scientific data (Linley et al., 2006; Sheldon & King, 2001). My research is qualitative in nature and views parents' perspectives from the inside out. The findings may contribute to the increasing number of qualitative studies available, and assist educators, psychologists and parenting coaches in understanding and appreciating what it means to be a parent (Mowder, 2005). This would aid researchers and coaches alike in understanding parents and the way they may view and value their parenting motivation.

As I indicated previously, most positive parenting studies are either interventions or reports on the success of parenting programmes. What is also quite apparent is that, despite interventions and studies explaining that they used a positive parenting approach, many of these studies struggled to clearly define what positive parenting is (Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018). Therefore, this study could also contribute towards literature that clarifies the concept of positive parenting. It is also conceivable that, if we could begin exploring what motivates a parent to

apply this approach, we may also open the door to further research on and understanding of how to encourage more parents to not only adopt positive parenting, but also to maintain the skills beyond interventions and courses (Rodrigo, 2010).

A great deal could be learned from the perspectives of parents who consider themselves to be using this approach already and learning about what motivates them to do so. Therefore, the aim of this study was to gain a better understanding of what parents, and in particular mothers, report to be their motivation for applying a positive parenting approach.

In the next section, I conceptually define some of the important terms used in this research. Further on, key terms and constructs are defined as they are understood and used in my study.

1.3 Definition of key concepts

A parent is defined as: A father or mother; one who begets or one who gives birth to or nurtures and raises a child; a relative who plays the role of guardian (American heritage dictionary of the English language, 2015).

Parenting is defined as: "The process of promoting and supporting the physical, emotional, social and intellectual development of a child from infancy to adulthood" (Brooks, 2012, p.10).

A parenting style is defined as: "A constellation of attitudes or a pattern of parental authority towards the child that is conveyed to the child, creating the emotional context for the expression of parent behaviour" (Leung & Tsang Kit Man, 2014, p.199).

For the purpose of this study, the term parenting approach is used synonymously with the term parenting practice. A **parenting approach** is defined as: A specific behaviour that a parent uses with a child, a way of doing or thinking about parenting (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate

Dictionary, 2005; Spera, 2005). It also includes child-rearing choices that reflect your beliefs and values as a parent (Zero to Three, 2019).

Motivation is defined as: "A reason or reasons for acting or behaving in a particular way" (Pearsall & Hanks, 2001).

Positive parenting is defined by using the understanding which was constructed by Rodrigo (2010, p. 282) in her article in the *European Journal of Developmental Psychology*: It is "parental behaviour based on the best interest of the child that is nurturing, empowering, non-violent, and provides recognition and guidance, which involves setting of boundaries to enable the full development of the child".

Positive discipline is defined as a way of teaching and guiding children by letting them know what behaviour is acceptable in a way that is firm, yet kind and empathetic (Nelsen, 2006).

Sensitive and responsive parenting is defined as: the interactions between the parent and child in which the parents are aware of and in tune with the child's emotional and physical needs. This ability to tune in allows them to respond appropriately and consistently (Dix, 2000).

1.4 Presentation of this thesis

In this first chapter, I have given some context to and background information on the research question: What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach? I have explained the four factors that motivated this study. These are my own personal interest, historical trends, the contribution this study can make to a better definition of positive parenting, and its contribution to understanding the parent experience. I have explained how each one of these motivations highlight a gap in the present literature and how this study may speak to that gap. I then linked these motivations to my aim, which was to understand what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach.

In Chapter 2, I introduce the positive psychology paradigm (Seligman, 2002b), which guides my research. I discuss my theoretical framework, Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005), and explain its relevance to my research question. I also provide a review of current literature pertaining to my research. First, I examine human motivation in general. Then I explore theories of parental motivation. I outline parenting styles and practices currently being used. Lastly, I explain what positive parenting is.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodology used to perform this study. This chapter includes the research design, sampling procedures, participant recruitment information, the data collection procedure, interview schedule, data analysis procedure, and ethical considerations. The results are reported in Chapter 4, and the findings are discussed in relation to the relevant literature. Chapter 5 provides the final conclusions of this study, along with its limitations and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This chapter begins in section 2.1 with an introduction to the theoretical framework of this study. I first discuss the positive psychology paradigm and briefly outline Parent Development Theory (which is discussed in more depth in the literature review). Next, in section 2.2, I review the literature. This begins with a discussion of studies and information regarding what motivates human behaviour in general (2.2.1). Following this, I narrow my focus to explore only parental motivation studies (2.2.2). I have organised this section into exploring five sections, describing different facets of motivation. In section 2.2.3 I review the concept of parenting style. Leading from this, section 2.2.4 concerns the answer to the question, "What is positive parenting?" This takes into consideration positive parenting studies – both positive results as well as criticism. Lastly, in section 2.5 I provide a conclusion and the implications of all that has been discussed in this chapter.

2.1 Theoretical framework

My study makes use of Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) as a theoretical framework, incorporating perspectives from the positive psychology paradigm. Before I explain Parent Development Theory, I briefly explain the positive psychology paradigm and how it relates to this study.

2.1.1 Positive psychology

Positive psychology was established by Seligman (2002b). Frustrated with the dominant focus on pathology in the field of psychology, Seligman sought to understand more than just disease and dysfunction (American Psychiatric Association, 2013). The field of positive psychology is

founded on the belief that individuals desire to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. It also acknowledges the ability of people to use distress mechanisms to their advantage, even in the face of adversity (Seligman, 2002b). Although dating back to 1954, the positive psychology movement gained momentum in 1999, when the first positive psychology summit took place (Linley et al., 2006). Research within the positive psychology paradigm aims to gain a deeper understanding of the entire human experience, and not just of suffering and the negative aspects of life. This new way of thinking brought with it a different outlook on parenting and parenting studies. It is not surprising, then, that the positive parenting model also became popular around the same time (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

In reference to parenting, the positive psychology paradigm is about nurturing the strengths in children and parents alike (Seligman, 2002a), viewing children from a perspective of potential. Seligman proposes that, in being positive in their parenting outlook, parents can enhance the life satisfaction of themselves and their children (Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018; Seligman, 2002a). Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) hold the belief that raising children is not about fixing that which is seen as wrong with them, but finding and nurturing their strongest attributes.

Research from within this paradigm concerns itself with resilience, strengths, happiness, optimism and, as in the present study, motivation (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2014). It is about finding out why something works, rather than why it does not (Gable & Haidt, 2005). The present study, which was conducted using a positive psychology paradigm, is primarily concerned with examining what enables parents to find meaning and flourish within a positive parenting approach.

Now that I have explained the paradigm from which my research should be understood, I briefly explain Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005), the theoretical framework of this

study. This theory makes most sense in the context of the literature review of this study. Therefore, for the sake of avoiding repetition, I will first provide a summary of the theory and then cover the theory in more depth in section 2.2.2.1.

2.1.2 Parent Development Theory – a summary

Parent Development Theory was established by Mowder (1991, 2005, 2006), who was dissatisfied with the lack of a theoretical model that could be used to examine parents and the parenting role. She noticed the large number of interventions and programmes focused on parental development, but could not find a model that would assist those researching this behaviour to structure and organise their theory and research (Mowder, 2005). Mowder believes that research in the past, by theorists such as Baumrind (1996) (whose theories will be introduced later in this chapter), considered parenting as something parents did to children, with less reflection on the reciprocal nature of the relationship (Smith, 2011). She wanted to acknowledge the important contribution that understanding the thoughts and feelings of the parent in the development of their parenting role could make to research (Mowder, 2005). Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) acknowledges the ever-changing nature of the way in which individuals, right from childhood, construct their ideas around what it means to be a parent (Sperling & Mowder, 2006). Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) is discussed in more detail in section 2.2.2.1.

2.2 Literature Review

In this section I review the literature relating to my research topic. Initially, I discuss some theories regarding what motivates human behaviour. I begin by defining motivation. Next, I focus on three popular theories of motivation. Following this, I narrow my focus to discuss theories of parental motivation. In the parental motivation theories section, I incorporate this

study's theoretical framework, namely Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005). The other parental motivation theories are then divided into intrinsic motivation and beliefs, parent and child characteristics, societal influences and social support, parent's developmental history and, lastly, the intergenerational transmission of parenting.

I begin by discussing what motivates human behaviour.

2.2.1 What motivates human behaviour?

This thesis deals with the topic of parental motivation. The *New Oxford English Dictionary* (Pearsall & Hanks, 2001) defines motivation as "the reason, or reasons, for acting or behaving in a particular way". McClelland (1987, p. 4) succinctly describes motivation as "how behaviour gets started, is energized, is sustained, is directed, is stopped". Bernard et al. (2005) propose that motivation can be measured by cognitive structure motives. Motives are the constructs that guide interests and behaviours. These differ in strength and influence in individuals. Competing theories have been developed over time in an attempt to fully explain human motivation. Each one is distinct in philosophy and has strengths and limitations. To date, no single theory can account for all characteristics that drive motivation. Together they may create a greater understanding, as well as indicate the complex nature, of motivation (Weiner, 1989).

In their approach to determine the causes of motivation, some researchers have chosen to focus on the biological sources of motivation, others on the social sources, some review intrinsic motives, and others consider the impact of the environment to be the largest influence (McClelland, 1987). Whilst there is no consensus among researchers on the acceptability of some theories rather than others, for the sake of clarity I have chosen to give a brief overview

of three of the most well-known historical approaches to individual human motivation. These three categories or schools of thinking are: the behaviourist approach, the psychoanalytic approach, and the humanistic approach. I acknowledge that these are just three approaches of many, but for the sake of maintaining focus I briefly report on these and then narrow my focus to explore parental motivation, as it is of most relevance to this study's research question.

2.2.2.1 The behaviourist approach to human motivation

One of the earliest understandings of human motivation and behaviour came from the school of psychology known as behaviourism. Behaviourism gained popularity in 1913, when a key psychologist, John Watson (1994), who was dissatisfied with the results of the studies into human consciousness, postulated that psychology needed to be made a more objective, observable, and experimental branch of natural science. In what became known as classical behaviourism, Watson (1994) promulgated that human behaviour is motivated by only two effects. One, it is a response to a certain stimulus, either in the external environment or by an internal biological process, and two, behaviour is a learned response that is motivated by the desire to avoid punishment and/or gain reward (Meyer et al., 2008). In this theory, the concept of free will becomes obsolete, as behaviour is determined exclusively by the environment (Weiner, 1989). This approach later evolved into what became known as radical behaviourism, founded by Skinner (1953). Like Watson, Skinner believed the goal of psychology should be to control and predict behaviour. His point of departure was that, unlike the classical behaviourists, who saw the mind as a blank slate (the 'tabula rasa'), radical behaviourism recognised the role of innate behaviours, along with genetic and biological factors, in motivating human behaviour.

One major advantage of the behaviourist movement is that it created a way to measure changes in behaviour. The foremost criticism of the behaviourist perspective is the reductionist approach that it takes to human motivation. Seeing it as unobservable, not objective and unable to be measured, they view internal events, such as thinking and feeling, as inconsequential (Meyer et al., 2008). The premises of behaviourist research are based mostly on animal studies, as these theorists see little distinction between the behaviour of animal and human subjects (Bernard et al., 2005). Behaviour is seen as non-conscious, rather than purposeful, with most of the focus on the present. Little attention is paid to what motivates behaviour, which may be future orientated and in alignment with higher-order goals and aspirations (Bernard et al., 2005).

In the context of parenting, the behaviourist approach is more successful at explaining child, rather than parent, behaviours. It is possible that theories such as operant conditioning, which proposes that a child's behaviour is shaped by seeking reward and avoiding punishment, could go some of the way towards explaining early childhood responses to parents. It may fall short in explaining why parents might choose to engage in the less-rewarding aspects of parenting. It fails to understand how parents' feelings and drives might direct their actions, even when they are at odds with their impulses (Skinner, 1953).

2.2.2.2 The psychoanalytic approach to human motivation

The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, is one of the greatest contributors to the study of human motivation. Whilst many of his theories are considered controversial and radical, many of the underpinnings of his work continue to influence studies on human behaviour today (McClelland, 1987). One of the main premises of Freud's work on motivation is the concept that we are motivated by three sources: the id, ego and superego (Meyer et al., 2008). The id is

the instinctual, animalistic part of our mind, which responds directly to our wants and desires. The id seeks pleasure and avoids pain. The ego is the part of the mind that makes decisions. Capable of using logic and reason, the ego can override the impulses of the id, if necessary. The superego is the part of the mind responsible for our values and morals, and is often learned from society or from one's parents' parenting. The superego is able to hold off on the gratification of one's own needs and impulses in order to behave in a way that is moralistic and aligned with higher values (Nuttin, 1956).

In relation to parenting, psychoanalysis highlights how the importance of one's own childhood experiences (the memories of which are often repressed in the unconscious mind) are fundamental in shaping one's behaviour in adulthood (Weiner, 1989). The psychoanalytic theory also considers that different human behaviours may be directed by multiple sources of motivation (Nuttin, 1956).

2.2.2.3 The humanistic approach to human motivation

Humanism is an approach to human motivation that emphasises the innate potential of all humans for good. This theory proposes that each individual is striving to realise his/her potential and attain an ideal self (Weiner, 1989). One of the most cited theories of human motivation is that of humanist psychologist Abraham Maslow. Maslow proposed a hierarchy of human needs, often depicted as a pyramid. The most basic needs, at the bottom of the pyramid, are a prerequisite for higher-order needs to be fulfilled (Maslow, 1943). Maslow refers to the first four layers of his pyramid (see Figure 1) as deficiency needs. He postulates that, without the physiological requirements of safety, security, social support, and esteem being met, an individual would not be motivated to attend to higher-level needs. These higher needs include creativity, problem solving and self-actualisation (Hoffman, 1999).

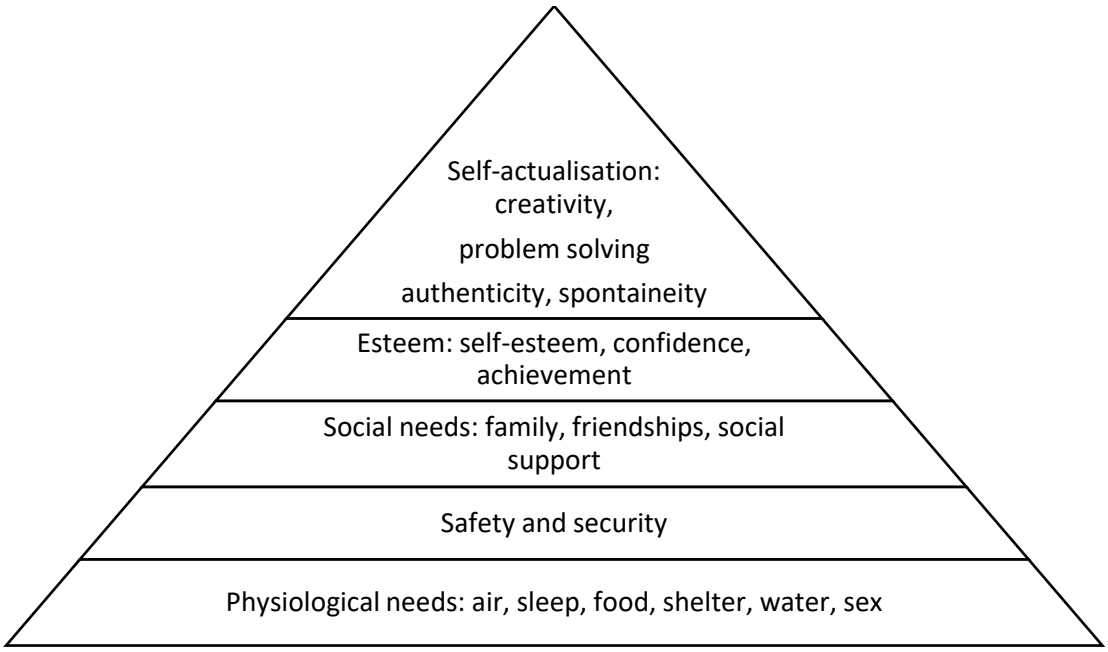

Figure 1. Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1954).

In relation to my research question, it may be of interest to note that both parents and children have a hierarchy of needs. Parents may find it challenging meeting all of a child's needs, particularly when their own needs may not be fulfilled (Dix, 2000). If survival needs are not met, it may be difficult for a parent to apply what might be seen as an optimal parenting approach, such as positive parenting, as this parenting approach requires a great deal of parental input and self-awareness (Brenning et al., 2015). Although not an academic resource, Francis (2012), a popular blogger among mothers seeking advice, came up with what she refers to as the mother's hierarchy of needs in a bid to apply Maslow's hierarchy of needs to parenting (see Figure 2).

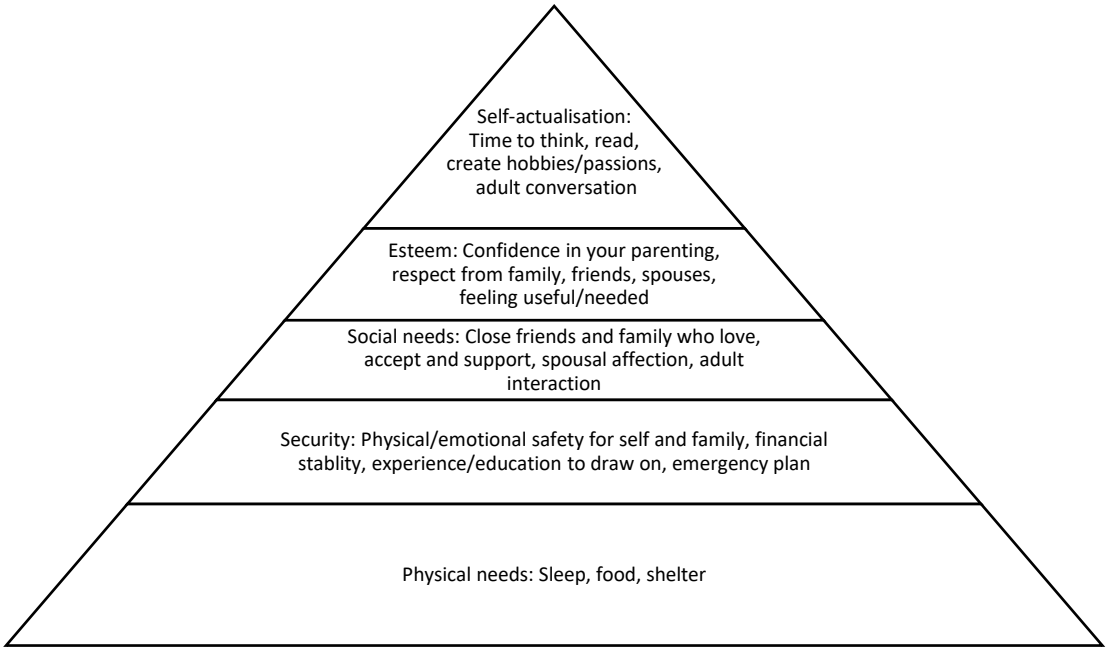

Figure 2. Mother's hierarchy of needs (Francis, 2012).

In Francis's (2012) hierarchy, she highlights the specific needs of mothers as an extension of the needs outlined by Maslow (1943). She proposes that, without physical needs, security and social needs, it is challenging to experience confidence in your parenting and to feel useful and needed.

Using Maslow's hierarchy of needs, humanist psychologist Alderfer (1969) categorises the five needs as outlined by Maslow into three categories, namely existence needs (the physiological and safety/security needs), relatedness needs (a combination of social and esteem needs), and growth needs (which encompass part of esteem needs and self-actualisation). Alderfer believes that a lower-order need does not have to be satisfied for a person to fulfil a higher-order need (Wahba & Bridwell, 1976). In this way, Alderfer's theory takes into consideration the uniqueness of the human experience and acknowledges that the order of needs differs for different people. The ability to prioritise certain needs above others may account for why some parents are able to parent effectively, despite lower-order needs not being met (Weiner, 1989).

There are many more extensions of the theories discussed above, as well as multiple newer theories and understandings of human behaviour. These include McClelland's (1987) achievement motivation theory, Erikson's (1959) stages of psychosocial development, Piaget's (1977) constructivism theory, and Vygotsky's (1994) social constructivist theory, to name just a few. In order to bring balance to this thesis, I chose to include only three theories so as to maintain the focus of this research on parental motivation.

In this section (2.2.1), I have briefly discussed individual human motivation in terms of behaviourist, psychoanalytic and humanistic theories and only alluded to the many competing theories that attempt to explain human motivation. I have also demonstrated the complexity of understanding human motivation and acknowledged that no theory is able to do so in its entirety. In the next section (2.2.2), I will review the research on parental motivation.

2.2.2 What motivates parental behaviour?

Research on parental behaviours, motivations, and beliefs produces a wide range of results (Gannon & Zeedyk, 2001), which serve to demonstrate that parental motivation is a combination of interactions between many motivational sources in the context of circumstances (Dozier, 2000).

In this section, I begin by explaining the theoretical framework of my study, namely Parent Development Theory, as developed by Mowder (1991, 2005). I chose to include Parent Development Theory as part of my literature review to demonstrate its relevance for and contribution to the understanding of parental motivation. Following this, I provide an overview of research on parental motivation for employing different parenting styles, techniques, approaches and behaviour. This is divided into the following sections. In section 2.2.2.1, I

explain the Parent Development Theory approach to parental motivation. In section 2.2.2.2, I look at intrinsic motivation and parental beliefs. In section 2.2.2.3, I look at the influence of parent and child characteristics on parental motivation. In section 2.2.2.4, I highlight the societal influences and the influence of social support. Lastly, in section 2.2.2.5, I explore the developmental history of a parent and the intergenerational transmission of parenting

2.2.2.1 Parent Development Theory

Parent Development Theory was established by Mowder (2005, 2006) to explain how parents construct their parental identity and how this changes over time. Mowder (2005, 2006) sees parental development as a complex combination of the parent's own experiences, needs, and life circumstances, in conjunction with the ever-changing needs and development of their child. She considers the social structure within which parenting takes place (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Mowder (2005) draws attention to the idea that parenting never operates in a vacuum. Rather, Mowder sees parenting as directed by four main forces (cited in Wessels, 2013): (1) The individual characteristics and beliefs of the parent (influenced by past experience, personality, and education), (2) the characteristics of the child and their developmental and individual needs (gender, age, and any developmental difficulties), (3) the social relationships of the parent (firstly, the parent-child relationship, followed by family dynamics), and (4) the broader socio-cultural environment (including child laws, societal expectations).

Whilst acknowledging that aspects of the parenting role are innate, Parent Development Theory also proposes that a large part of parenting is learned and influenced by either past experience, modelled behaviour or education (Mowder, 1991). Parents' belief system, assumptions, and awareness provide the framework for their behaviour (Mowder, 2006; Murphey, 1992). In

layman's terms, how parents think and what they believe may dictate what they do (Mowder, 2005).

The parenting experience is ever changing in nature: a parent's cognitions, views and ideas change and evolve over time, in adjustment to both the child's and the parent's experiences and circumstances. Although one must acknowledge that there is not always fluidity between parenting cognitions and parenting behaviour, parents' behaviour is often directed by their understanding of what they see as important (Wessels, 2013). The implications of this for the current research are that: although parental views have some level of permanency, studying the thoughts of any parent or group of parents only indicates their cognitions in that moment in time, and may be subject to change as their children develop and their lives together evolve.

2.2.2.2 Intrinsic motivation and parental beliefs

According to Ouderyer and Kaplan (2007, p. 54), intrinsic motivation is defined as "the doing of an activity for its inherent satisfaction rather than for some separable consequence. When intrinsically motivated, a person is moved to act for the fun or challenge entailed rather than because of external products, pressures, or rewards". It is of importance to the success of the parent-child relationship that parents are motivated to meet their children's needs. Parenting, which is intrinsically motivated, is associated with more positive consequences than behaviour directed by extrinsic factors. Parents who are self-determined experience greater life satisfaction, more enriched learning, higher self-esteem and greater interest in activities (Bouchard et al., 2007; Jungert et al., 2015). According to a study by Jungert et al. (2015), parents who were intrinsically motivated use a more supportive and optimal parenting style. For these parents, the motivation for parenthood often begins long before the conception of a child. Prior to meeting a partner or even in the early stages of a relationship, many individuals

find themselves in a process of imagining their future children, and how they might be and behave as a parent (Galinsky, 1987).

Coulson et al. (2012) describe parents who strongly identify with the parenting role as experiencing a higher calling to become a parent – not dissimilar to a religious or spiritual calling. This calling manifests in the experience of feeling that fulfilling the role of parenting is doing what one is born to do. In Coulson et al.'s (2012) qualitative study, conducted in Australia the 11 participants (5 fathers, 6 mothers) describe their parenting as passionate, meaningful, and bringing them a great sense of purpose and joy. They also express a strong commitment to making great sacrifices in order to be the best parent they can be. They say that they will readily abandon opportunities for themselves in pursuit of an activity that would benefit their children more. These parents explain their call to parenting as an "urgent need" or "destiny" that occupies the majority of their consciousness (Coulson et al., 2012). However, it should be noted that the study by Coulson et al. (2012) is restricted by its small sample size, and so it is not clear just how many parents in the general population might feel this way.

Due to the importance they place on their parenting role, some parents choose to place the needs of the child in front of their own needs, deciding to benefit the child rather than themselves (Dix, 2000). In accordance with the connection theory of Bell and Richard (in Dozier, 2000), sensitive parents are motivated by the emotion they label "caring". Dix (2000, p. 95) defines caring as "an enduring emotion that motivates caregivers to meet the needs of a specific dependent". Connection theory proposes that emotions, rather than learning, values, or attitudes are what direct sensitive parenting (Dix, 2000). This "caring" emotion is so strong that it can override human desire to pursue self-interest. However, connection theory fails to consider the aspects of parenting that may not be entirely altruistic (Shaver & Fraley, 2000).

Intrinsically motivated parents may also engage in caregiving behaviours for the feeling of satisfaction they gain from being connected to another human being (Bouchard et al., 2007). Through nurturing the child, the parent may grow psychologically, particularly in the areas of self-esteem and self-concept (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003).

What may also be of great importance to intrinsic parental motivation is the parents' belief system regarding the amount of difference their parenting style may make in their child's life. Parents who see their input as mattering and important to the development of their children may be more motivated and invested in the parenting role (Belsky, 1984; Schofield et al., 2014). Whilst the majority of parents are prone to act first and think later, particularly when emotions are high, parents with strong intrinsic motivation may be more reflective of their behaviour following their automatic responses (Dix, 2000; Murphey, 1992). This reflection may cause parents to change their future behaviour (Murphey, 1992).

2.2.2.3 Parent and child characteristics

Parenting is not just about the interactions of the parent with the child but is also about the reciprocal nature of the child's interactions with the parent. No matter how motivated a parent may be, certain characteristics and personality traits of the child may make them easier or harder to parent (Belsky, 1984; Mulsow et al., 2002). The child's characteristics and the parental perception of these as challenging or easy to manage influence parent responses to the child (Murphey, 1992). When dealing with children's challenging behaviour, what may be of importance in the way a parent responds and views this is the belief about whether the child's behaviour is intentional or not (Dix et al., 1986). Children who are seen as challenging by disposition may cause parents to feel they have less control and possibly result in negative responses to the child (Bugental et al., 1984). When it comes to coping with negative child

behaviours, research by Bugental et al. (1984) and Dix (2000) shows that parents' views of their ability as parents and their perception of their child's behaviour may be protected by a certain bias in the way in which they view negative and positive behaviour. Positive child behaviour is seen by the parent as stable and internally constructed, and undesirable behaviour of the child is seen by the parent as externally driven and just temporary (Bugental et al., 1984; Dix et al., 1986). Research shows that child temperament has more influence on the parents' behaviour towards the child when the child is younger than five years old (Mulsow et al., 2002). In a similar way to child temperament, child health or developmental challenges may cause some children to have more physical and emotional needs, which places more demands on the parent and can be stressful and time consuming (Abidin, 1992; Belsky, 1984; Mowder, 2006). Other child characteristics that may influence parental beliefs and behaviour include age, gender, physical appearance, and the extent to which the child is perceived as competent or intelligent (Krochek & Mowder, 2012; Murphey, 1992). Mothers often report that boys' behaviours are more challenging and aggressive than those of girls. Mothers also report more intrinsic motivation with younger rather than older children (Jungert et al., 2015).

In contrast to the characteristics of the child being viewed as easier or harder to parent, certain qualities or traits of the parent may also make the parenting role more fulfilling and less stressful. Mulsow et al. (2002) find mothers' personality to be the strongest predictor of parenting stress. Mothers who are recognised as having higher levels of positive qualities, such as extroversion and agreeableness, as well as low levels of neuroticism, reported much less parental stress and higher parental satisfaction. These authors also found that parental health and well-being are large determinants of parental stress. Mental or physical challenges can influence not only parents ability to parent effectively, but also their perceptions and belief systems regarding their own parenting (Belsky, 1984; Cardoso et al., 2010).

When it comes to the parent-child relationship, it may not be that specific child characteristics make some children easier to parent, but rather the 'goodness of fit' between characteristics of the parent and those of the child (Belsky, 1984).

2.2.2.4 Societal influences and social support

Many individuals experience social pressure to adopt the role of a parent at some point in their lives (Coulson et al., 2012). Some parents are motivated by other's expectations of how they should behave as parents. However, this kind of external social pressure is often related to parents reporting that they feel unsatisfied and lack competence in the parenting role (Jungert et al., 2015).

The complexity of the influence of social context on parenting is often understood through an ecological systems approach. Ecological systems theory is based on the understanding that human behaviour does not happen in isolation from the social environment, but is embedded in what Bronfenbrenner (1977) refers to as the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. In the context of the family, the microsystem refers to those close interactions with other family members and perhaps close friends. This group is often the most influential in parenting behaviours. The mesosystem refers to the interaction between two microsystems, and this would include the relationship between the child and parent and a school; the workplace and the parent; and churches and families. The exosystem defines the larger social structure in which the family is embedded. This includes the major institutions of society, for example the neighbourhood in which the family lives and the government in power (Addison, 1992; Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Lastly, the macrosystem refers less to a specific context, but includes broader social constructs such as cultural values regarding child rearing and laws regarding child protection and rights (Addison, 1992).

On the socio-demographic level, certain factors have been associated with higher stress levels. Parents may be affected by circumstances, which may increase their risk of poor parenting practices. These include low socio-economic status, single parenthood, teenage parenthood, poor education, mental illness, poverty, and unemployment (Murphey, 1992). Factors such as these may keep parents at a lower level of functioning in a bid to meet basic needs. This puts many families in survival mode, in which thinking about higher level needs, such as emotional well-being and the promotion of child development, drops lower down in their list of priorities (Maslow, 1943). The cultural context can also play a huge role in parenting practices, in particular in what might be perceived as stressful, and also what coping mechanisms are acceptable and available (Cardoso et al., 2010).

Some of these stress factors can be mitigated by social support. Social support is important to parents, particularly those with young children. It has been well documented that adequate social support can influence parenting behaviours in positive ways. Studies have found that parents, and to a greater extent mothers, who report feeling socially supported also felt they had lower levels of parenting stress (Ostberg & Hagekull, 2000), were able to maintain warmer relationships with their children (Lippold et al., 2018), and punished less (Belsky, 1984). Social support also leads to overall more positive and effective parenting (Respler-Herman et al., 2012).

Whilst some studies highlight that becoming a parent reduces social life and increases social isolation (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003), others find that, through parenting, individuals may experience the benefit of increased social networks and interaction with others. Thus, for some parents, the process of parenting often leads to more social integration and deeper social

connections with others, while for other parents it can increase feelings of isolation and loneliness (Umberson & Grove, 1989).

What may be of importance to how supported parents feel is the type of social support parents receive. Some types of support are viewed by parents as more helpful than others, depending on the circumstances and context (Belsky, 1984). It also seems that fathers and mothers may derive different benefits from social support. In a study by Fonseca et al., (2014) about potential benefits of social support for parents, it was found that mothers and fathers had different needs. Fathers seemed to benefit most from support from friends, and mothers from familial support. Despite different needs, Jungert et al. (2015) did not find that levels of motivation to parent differed between mothers and fathers.

Although support may come from different sources, social support takes on three forms: it can be emotional, instrumental or informational (Morse, 2010). Emotional support is nurturing, and may take the form of empathy offered to the parents by a partner, family or friends. It provides the encouragement parents sometimes need in order to feel they are capable of managing their stress and still meet the needs of their children (Wessels, 2013). Emotional support can be effective in helping enhance parents' confidence in their parenting skills (Armstrong et al., 2005).

Instrumental support is practical in nature and helps parents to reduce their task load by delegating some of their responsibilities and childcare chores. This type of support is often asked for directly, sometimes paid for, and takes on the form of a tangible or concrete aid (Armstrong et al., 2005).

Informational support is support in the form of advice or guidance. It often comes from teachers and professionals, but sometimes is offered by family members, friends and other parents. This type of support can assist parents in understanding all aspects of child development and how to handle certain behaviours effectively. It can guide parents in making better parenting choices, taking things less personally, and feeling empowered to tackle challenges. It is often the kind of support offered in intervention programmes and has been shown in many cases to reduce unhealthy parenting behaviours (Cluver et al., 2017; Morrill et al., 2016; Velderman et al., 2006). Whilst not always the most reliable source, the internet has in recent years also become a source of informational support for parents (Madge & O'Connor, 2006). It may not be the source, type or amount of support received that helps a parent to feel supported, but the match between the amount of support the parent desires and the amount that is perceived by the parent to have been given (Belsky, 1984).

2.2.2.5 Parents' developmental history and intergenerational transmission of parenting

Individuals first learn about what parenting is through their childhood perceptions of their own parents. Our parents' parenting can then shape us as caregivers and guide our parenting behaviours with our own children (Mowder, 2005). Much of the literature on parenting styles and motivation has been dedicated to the term intergenerational transmission of parenting. Van Ijzendoorn (1992, p. 77) defines this as "the process by which purposively or unintendedly an earlier generation psychologically influences the parenting attitudes and behaviour of the next generation". There are four potential modes by which this transmission can occur.

1. By our experiences with our caregivers in their interactions with us.

2. By observing our caregivers interacting with other children.

3. By coaching received by the child from the parent, often during an interaction with another child (Crittenden, 1984).

4. Genetic components, which are passed down between generations (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992).

This transmission of parenting does not only influence the actions of the future parents themselves towards a child, but also their attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours regarding child rearing. There may be more similarities between generational parenting styles among families who continue to share a similar social and environmental context (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992). According to research conducted by Schofield et al. (2014) children with harsh parents are more likely to treat their own children harshly. Morse (2010) found that parents who had childhoods that were abusive may lack empathy in their own parenting. Although some research indicates that the use of punitive measures by parents correlates with their own parents having also used corporal punishment, it is also evident that many parents go on to break the cycle of abuse and have positive relationships with their children (Morse, 2010). This seems to happen most when those who have suffered poor parenting receive emotional support in adulthood (Morse, 2010).

Whether we experienced our parents' parenting as desirable or undesirable, it may play a large part in whether we continue to parent in the same way in which we were parented. Whilst some may have a strong belief that their upbringing was correct and satisfying, others may find that they are compelled to do things differently from their own parents (Todorović & Matejević, 2014). Those who have received support and healing from a difficult childhood may display more positive parenting behaviour and reject the parenting style of their own parents (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992).

In a recent study by Schofield et al. (2014), involving 290 families in the family transitions project in the USA, on positive parenting beliefs and intergenerational resilience, they discovered a relationship between poor parenting practices by one's own parents and adopting a positive parenting approach oneself. Individuals who had a strong belief about parental efficacy (the belief that nurturing parenting affects child development positively) and who were able to apply active coping strategies proved less likely to repeat their own poor parenting history with their children. In contrast, parents who scored low on their belief in parental efficacy and who also did not have coping strategies were likely to perpetuate the mistakes of their past parenting. What is also interesting is that those who had a history of past positive parenting were still able to apply positive parenting to their own children, even if they had average levels of resilience and coping strategies in their own lives. What this means is that the influence of having been raised by a positive parent is the most dominant factor in future positive parenting. Findings in studies such as that of Schofield et al. (2014) bring hope to the idea that positive parenting interventions in one generation may have an influence on generations to come.

2.2.3 Parenting styles

2.2.3.1 Baumrind's parenting typologies

The process by which a parent carries out the behaviours associated with their parental role is called a parenting style (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). Parenting styles are the responses and demands that parents have in relation to their children (Lippold et al., 2018). Diana Baumrind (1996) was one of the first researchers to define parenting styles. Her parenting typology research has become a key pillar in understanding, theorising about and categorising parental approaches (Lippold et al., 2018; Makwakwa, 2011; Trifan et al., 2014). In her research,

Baumrind considered that there are four behaviours that shape parenting and result in a parenting style. These behaviours are referred to as responsive in contrast to unresponsive, and demanding in contrast to undemanding (Darling, 1999; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). Responsiveness refers to the warmth and supportiveness of the parenting and the ability to respond to the child's cues appropriately and timeously. Demandingness refers to the amount of control exerted by the parent and the level of expectation the parent expresses (Baumrind, 1996). Using this as a base, Baumrind (1971) then divides parenting into four predominant approaches and names these authoritarian, authoritative/democratic, permissive, and uninvolved/neglectful parenting.

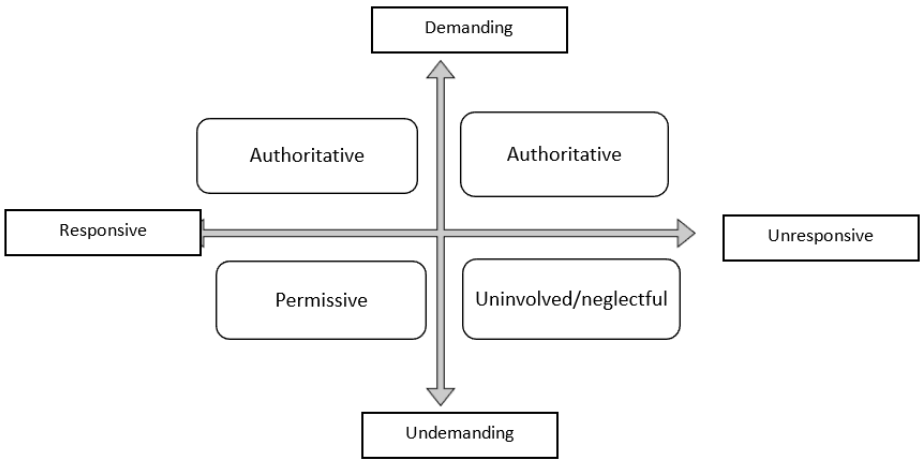

Figure 3. Baumrinds Parenting Typologies (Baumrind, 2012).

Authoritarian parenting is demanding, but not responsive. These parents may use forceful or coercive forms of punishment (Baumrind, 1971, 1996), seeing discipline as the most important aspect of the parent-child relationship (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012). Children are expected to comply with commands with little explanation as to why. It is a "because I said so " approach (Cluver et al., 2017). There are clearly defined rules and boundaries and a high degree of

structure in the home (Darling, 1999). Whilst this style is often described as harsh and dictatorial, and is sometimes associated with abusive parenting (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012), parents who use this style do not always do so with negative intentions. Instead, they may see the world as a cruel place in which their child needs to be tough and be able to yield to authority in order to survive (Robinson et al., 1995). This attitude can result in children who are obedient through fear of punishment, but who are not always incredibly happy (Stassen Berger, 2014). Although this parenting style has been dominant in many stages of Western history (for example in the Victorian era), in modern times this parenting style is often seen more in non-Western cultures, where values such as respecting elders are important (Arnett, 2013).

Authoritative parenting is seen as demanding, but unlike authoritarian parenting it is also high in responsiveness, warmth and nurturance (Nelsen, 2006). These parents have clear rules, but allow flexibility in the application of these rules. The relationship with the child is more important than obedience and compliance (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012). The parents strike a balance between being assertive without being intrusive (Darling, 1999). Parents who follow this approach attempt to empathise with and understand their child's feelings, even while instilling boundaries and discipline. Their discipline is of a supportive, rather than punitive, nature. These parents are better at regulating their child's feelings, instilling limits whilst encouraging free thought and independence (Baumrind, 1996). There is often a dialogue between the parent and the child that considers the child's wishes and feelings. It acknowledges that the child can make some of his or her own, age-appropriate decisions with the guidance of the parent in the background (Baumrind, 1996). It is an emotionally supportive parenting style embodying a "let's work together" approach (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012).

Permissive parenting is indulgent (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). It is warm and responsive, but there are no demands, with few or no rules. Parent-to-child communication may be lacking, but child-to-parent communication is domineering and demanding (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012). These parents are non-directive and conflict avoidant, and there is a large onus on children to regulate themselves (Darling, 1999). These parents adopt more of a friend than parental role, with discipline being limited to occasional advice. Children raised with this parental style can be seen as irresponsible, lacking in maturity and impulse control (Dornbusch et al., 1987). Parents who engage in this style are often desperate to be liked by their child (Van Ijzendoorn, 1992).

Parenting that lacks nurturance and promotes unresponsive freedom without boundaries is referred to as uninvolved or neglectful (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Maccoby & Martin, 1983). This parenting style is neither responsive nor demanding, and may also include some rejecting-neglecting behaviour (Darling, 1999). Children parented in this way lack in all areas of development and show the most anti-social or deviant behaviours (Finkelhor et al., 2009).

In line with Baumrind's (1971) work, numerous studies have confirmed that an authoritative parenting style is the optimal parenting style for positive child outcomes (Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Latouf & Dunn, 2010; Roman et al., 2015). These children outperform those with other parenting styles in terms of social and emotional skills, positive behaviours, self-esteem, self-directedness, academic performance, and decision making (Darling, 1999; Dornbusch et al., 1987; Latouf & Dunn, 2010; Makwakwa, 2011). The positive parenting approach falls under this parenting style (Sanders, 1999).

Above I have described Baumrind's four parenting typologies. In the next sections I focus only on authoritative parenting styles, because they provide the umbrella under which positive

parenting falls. The following section is a discussion of attachment parenting theory. After this I explain positive parenting.

2.2.3.2 Attachment parenting theory

Falling under Baumrind's authoritative parenting style, attachment parenting is a parenting philosophy that has received a lot of attention in both the academic and public domains. Theorised by John Bowlby (1979), but later academically tested by his wife Mary Ainsworth's (1989) attachment theory, the attachment parenting style relates to the nature of the emotional bond and relationship between parent and child and, in particular, a mother and a child. The term attachment parenting, which was created by William Sears, is most applicable to the parenting of infants and young children. It is characterised by high responsiveness, warmth and empathetic parenting (Sears & Sears, 2001). The quality of the attachment between a parent and a child has an influence on the way in which a child experiences relationships for the rest of their lives (Nicholson & Parker, 2013, p. 1).

Parents who want to implement attachment parenting are encouraged to follow their intuition. Mothers especially are encouraged to tune in to the child emotionally and to be responsive to the child's needs, correctly interpreting cries and behaviours. Sears and Sears (2001) name attachment parenting practices the seven baby Bs, namely: birth bonding, breastfeeding, baby wearing, bedding close to the baby, belief in the language value of the baby's cry, beware of baby trainers and, lastly, balance. It is a child-centred parenting style that promotes the use of instinct and common sense over professional advice and training. Attachment parents avoid adult-imposed feeding and sleeping schedules, preferring to feed on demand and to follow the baby's natural sleep patterns (Dewar, 2008).

Research has shown that there are many benefits to attachment parenting. The purpose of this approach is to create securely attached children who, as a result of this secure attachment, are happier and healthier (Miller & Commons, 2010). Research by Madigan et al. (2016) has shown that children of attachment parents are better able to regulate their emotions and are less prone to behavioural problems. Attachment parents are highly responsive and do not allow an extended period of crying. According to Miller and Commons (2010), this, and the support of distress relief for children in infancy, leads to children who are more resilient and have fewer feelings of fear and anger. In a quantitative longitudinal study of 103 mothers and children in Iowa, Kochanska and Murray (2000) found that parent responsiveness to child needs produced children who were more compliant to instruction by adults and who displayed a more developed conscience. In a study on 106 children Davidov and Grusec (2006) examined the link between the two key components of positive parenting (resposivness to distress and warmth) and the impact this has on children socio-economic functioning, In this study they found a positive correlation between parental responsiveness and increased levels of empathy and prosocial behaviour in these children.

As it stands, attachment parenting is not without criticism. Some fear that the responsiveness and high level of parental input would create children with issues of dependence who rely on others to regulate their emotions for them (Dewar, 2008). Despite these concerns, research indicates that children of attachment parents are often more independent and likely to explore on their own. They see their parents as a secure base from which they can venture out and to which they can return if distressed (Bowlby, 1999; Mercer, 2006). For some critics, the impression created by attachment parenting is that it may lead to parents who are overwhelmed, isolated and burnt out by the needs of their infant. Jenner (2014), author and child-development specialist, describes attachment parenting as unsustainable, exhausting, and placing children's

needs above that of the parents. She describes it as creating bad habits and children who do not learn to self-soothe. There may be some truth to the idea that attachment parenting requires a huge amount of time, energy and investment by the parent (Nicholson & Parker, 2013).

The topic of this thesis refers to positive parenting. Those who have used an attachment parenting philosophy with their children in their infancy often go on to use positive parenting and positive discipline in the toddler years and beyond (Nelsen, 2006). These two approaches overlap (Juffer et al., 2012) and share the core idea that parenting should, in its essence, be sensitive and responsive (Dewar, 2008). The worldwide educational organisation, Attachment Parenting International (n.d.), lists positive parenting and discipline as key aspects of their programmes and principles. Attachment parents also often refer to positive discipline as one of their lifestyle choices (Juffer et al., 2012). In the popular book, *Positive parenting – An essential guide*, Eanes (2016) lists attachment as the first of her five principles of positive parenting. Therefore, an understanding of attachment parenting is a key aspect to consider when researching positive parenting.

2.2.3.3 Modern parenting styles

Positive parenting is seen as a modern parenting approach. However, in very recent years, other parenting approaches have emerged. Although not scientific in origin, various names have been created to describe parents and especially mothers. For example, the term tiger parent refers to those who take a tough-love approach, with a hyper focus on achievement. Helicopter parents are those who over-parent and remove all obstacles from a child's life (Howard et al., 2019; Ockwell-Smith, 2016). Free-range parents are described as hands-off, permissive parents who value independence over everything else. Dolphin parenting is a collaborative and balanced

approach that focuses on connection and guidance (Beach, 2016). Lastly, crunchy parents do not buy into the mainstream way of living life and are described as neo-hippies (Quick, 2017).

There are now more names for parenting practices than ever before in history (Beach, 2016), and this might indicate that increasing attention is being paid to differences in the way in which individuals parent. Society is developing more specific and detailed distinctions between parenting practices.

2.2.4 What is positive parenting?

The focus of this study is on positive parenting, an authoritative/democratic parenting approach. In the next section (2.2.4) I discuss the history, definitions, and research pertaining to positive parenting.

2.2.4.1 The history of positive parenting

. The understanding that both the human rights and positive psychology movements have given us on the negative impact of abusive parenting practices and the positive impact a positive approach can have on child development, has led to a change in family structures. Research on parenting styles has increased and the positive parenting approach has gained in popularity (Rodrigo, 2010). Surfacing in the 1920s, positive parenting became widely disseminated in the early 2000s (Nelsen, 2006). Perhaps this can be attributed in part to the increased use of social media as an information platform (Zeiger, 2011). Over the years, many psychologists and parenting coaches have developed their own styles, techniques, and parenting models (Knost, 2013b; Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006; Sanders, 1999). For this reason, and despite the similar origins of the different models, it may be challenging to provide one definitive answer to the question, what is positive parenting? Rather than a parenting approach with precise rules

regarding its application, positive parenting may be seen as more of a parenting attitude and philosophy – a holistic way of being, rather than a trend (Ockwell-Smith, 2016). Many different variations of positive parenting, based on the same principles, have sprung up worldwide. Different parenting coaches and gurus have adapted the same ethics and developed their own names and techniques for the positive parenting philosophy. Examples of these parenting styles are conscious parenting, awareness parenting, peaceful parenting, responsive parenting and gentle guidance (Coste, n.d.). Despite the use of different labels and skills taught by these tenets, they all share the same core values and beliefs. For some who practice positive parenting, it is not a learned or researched method or technique at all. It has no label or origin, but simply resonates with their values, temperament, lifestyle and the essence of how they choose to live their lives (Grille, 2014). Broadly speaking, positive parenting may be understood as an approach committed to parenting with love, empathy, kindness and understanding. The approach emphasises the creation of a positive environment conducive to teaching and modelling behaviour to children (Rodrigo, 2010). It does so in a way that is flexible, boosts the self-esteem of the child, and creates a harmonious relationship between parent and child (Sanders, 1999).

The earliest theorists within the positive parenting movement are the psychiatrists Alfred Adler (1927) and Rudolf Dreikurs (1968, 1985). Adler, who was interested in classroom behaviour management, presented the idea of teacher and parenting education in the 1920s. With revolutionary ideas for the times he was living in, he was an advocate of the equality of all people, regardless of race, gender, or age. During his professional life, he developed the concept of Adlerian psychology. Adlerian theory embraced the idea that the individual, assisted by both nature and nurture, strives for self-development, belonging and usefulness (Dattilio & Bevilacqua, 2007). He then applied the concepts of his Adlerian theory to assist parents and

teachers in strengthening their relationships with their children. In the late 1930s he was joined by Dreikurs, who then (after Adler's death in 1937) continued his work. Adler and Dreikurs introduced the concept of the kind, but firm, approach to parenting. They argued that parenting without a respectful and democratic approach leads to behavioural problems among children in both the classroom and the home (Nelsen, 2006). They also stood by the philosophy that spoiling and overparenting children may lead to children with social and behavioural challenges. Their bid to understand maladaptive child behaviours led to the conclusion that many challenging behaviours were compensatory, goal directed, and driven by a need for social belonging. They referred to this as the 'mistaken goals' of behaviour (Rogers, 2017). Adler had a special interest in the power dynamic between parent and child, student and teacher, postulating that the feeling of inferiority is "the starting point from which every childish striving originates" (Adler, 1927, p. 65). One of his key philosophies is that there are no bad children, only positive and negative behaviours (Lansbury, 2014b). Adler describes positive parents as those who can separate the child from their behaviour, allowing for emotions without condoning negative actions (Adler, 1927). Positive parents actively engage in assisting their child by teaching the child how to process situations in which they struggle to self-regulate more appropriately. They do this whilst remaining calm and respectful (Lansbury, 2014b). Rather than teaching children right and wrong, positive parenting advocates tapping into a child's intrinsic motivation to behave in a prosocial way (Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018). Positive parents assume that all children are born with the desire to do the right thing (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

As positive parenting took off in the 2000s, the work of therapists such as Durrant (2011), Eanes (2016), Lansbury (2014b), Nelsen (2006) and Nelsen et al. (2015) became some of the most popular positive parenting resources. Nelsen (2006) proposes that positive parenting can

be summarised by the following five criteria: (1) It focuses on creating a connection between parent and child, helping the child to feel a sense of belonging and significance. (2) It is both firm and kind at the same time, promoting mutual respect. (3) It avoids the need for immediate control at the expense of teaching long-term skills. (4) It is a problem-solving and teaching approach, helping children learn social and life skills. (5) It is based on the principle that children are capable and it encourages them to be autonomous.

Positive parents nurture in a way that is consistent and unconditional (Seay et al., 2014). Children should feel that the love and approval of their parent is not dependent on their behaviour (Knost, 2013a). Parents should guide, teach and lead. Best-selling author and positive parenting guru, Rebecca Eanes (2016), views one of the major goals of positive parenting to be creating emotional intelligence (EQ) in children. All the research points to the idea that children with high EQs are happier, healthier and more successful, both relationally and academically (Miller & Commons, 2010; Roggman et al., 2008). According to Eanes (2016, pp. 6-9), in essence, positive parenting boils down to “the relationship between parent and child”. Children cooperate when there is a connection with the parent. Nelsen et al. (2015) name this “connection before correction”.

Practically speaking, positive parenting may involve parental actions such as offering choices rather than giving commands. A playful and creative approach is taken to motivate children to achieve and complete tasks. The child is permitted to express feelings in their entirety; following this, if negative behaviour resulted from the expression of these feelings, the parent would discuss how to manage the situation/emotion more appropriately next time it occurs. Where the situation is not dangerous, limits are negotiated, and children are encouraged to have a voice, albeit a respectful one. Reflection is a key element of positive parenting. Parents reflect

on their child's negative behaviour in order to consider where an unmet need may be manifesting itself (English, 2014; Roggman et al., 2008). Parents are also encouraged to reflect on their reactions, and consider where they may handle situations constructively to work on their own emotional trauma and triggers (Markham, 2012). Positive parenting is about realising that, neurologically, children are incapable of regulating their emotions and may need the parent to help them diffuse their emotional overwhelm appropriately (Ockwell-Smith, 2016). It is not about creating perfect parents, but rather parents who can repair relationships and accept responsibility when they recognise that they have behaved inappropriately (Markham, 2012).

2.2.4.2 Positive discipline

Although positive parenting refers to more than just discipline, much of the literature uses the words 'positive discipline' synonymously with positive parenting. This is because a crucial component of positive parenting is that it is always non-violent in nature and sensitive to the child's needs (Howard et al., 2019; Rodrigo, 2010; Smith et al., 2000). A large amount of literature on positive parenting deals primarily with positive discipline. This could be an indication that child behaviour, particularly challenging behaviour, may be the area in which parents struggle most, and therefore is the topic for which they seek the most advice (McKee et al., 2007). Discipline is one of the key areas that sets positive parenting apart from more traditional parenting approaches (Ahmann, 2002). Whilst discipline traditionally is associated with punishment, in positive parenting the word 'discipline' equates with the original meaning of the word, disciple (Knost, 2013a; Nelsen, 2006), which means a pupil of a teacher or leader (Pearsall & Hanks, 2001). In the positive parenting approach, discipline is not just about interactions of a correctional nature. It incorporates most other interactions between the parent and child, such as positive reinforcement and encouragement (Durrant, 2011). Discipline in

this regard is a solution-focused approach. Positive discipline requires the parent to empathise with the child's desire and perspective. The parent should also take into account a child's developmental stage in order to be realistic in their expectations of appropriate child behaviour (Erikson, 1959). The parent considers the emotional needs and agendas (Herbert, 1996) of the child and is able to empathise and even agree without condoning negative behaviour (Nelsen, 2006). Parents commit to regulating their own emotions so that they can assist the child.

In her book, *Positive Discipline*, Nelsen (2006, p. 33) describes the damage done by a punitive approach to discipline as "the 4 Rs: Resentment, revenge, rebellion and retreat". The underlying principles of the positive discipline approach are mutual respect, identifying the belief behind the behaviour, a solution-focused approach, teaching through discipline and encouragement, and valuing long-term character building over short-term compliance (Eanes, 2016, 2019; Lansbury, 2014b).

The positive parenting philosophy advocates for a gentle approach to discipline. The child is not isolated in time-out or physically harmed. Instead, the parent remains with the child, talking them through the emotion or expression (Lansbury, 2014a). Knost (2013b, p. 55) views it as the following: "discipline is helping a child solve a problem. Punishment is making a child suffer for having a problem. To raise problem solvers, focus on solutions not retributions". According to Knost (2013a), the consequence of positive parenting is to create a world in which adults have experienced having had their needs met as children. Positive parenting should support children to develop coping mechanisms for dealing with stressors and overwhelming feelings. Positively parented children should grow up into adults who trust and feel safe and are able to seek solutions to their problems.

According to Hunt (2001), positive parents understand that children are not vastly different from adults. What motivates adults is the same as what motivates children. Adults do not genuinely improve their behaviour when shouted at, punished, or hit, and neither do children. Children may co-operate out of fear of being hurt or shamed, but they have not truly internalised the meaning behind the behavioural change (Nelsen, 2006).

2.2.4.3 The benefits of positive parenting

Positive parenting, which is responsive, sensitive, involved, and democratic, has shown multiple positive effects. Numerous books have been written by parenting gurus and there is a wealth of academic research pertaining to the principles and values of positive parenting and its outcomes. In this section I briefly report on the benefits of positive parenting in the emotional, social, cognitive, and behavioural domains of child development.

In the realm of emotional development, multiple studies have found that children with positive, warm, involved, and responsive parents are better able to emotionally self-regulate (Bornstein, 2019; De Graff et al., 2008; Newman & Blackburn, 2002; Roggman et al., 2008). Eisenberg et al. (2005) suggest that not only does warm positive parenting improve emotional regulation, modulation and expression, but it may also have a positive influence on a child's temperament. Due to this ability to self-regulate, the children in the Eisenberg et al. (2005) study were reported to be less likely to experience frustration and anger, and thus less likely to display externalising problems. The longitudinal nature of the Eisenberg et al. (2005) study also suggests that the effects of positive parenting were seen to persist two years later, when the children became adolescents.

According to Power (2004), parents who express positivity and high levels of emotion may assist their children in modelling constructive ways to handle stress. Positive parents are better at fostering a predictable and supportive environment, which assists children in feeling emotionally secure (Brody & Ge, 2001). Among children and adolescents, positive parenting has been shown to increase self-esteem (Laible et al., 2004) and self-efficacy, as well as a willingness to try new things (Coleman, 2003). It has also been seen to result in children with better coping skills and more resilience (Newman & Blackburn, 2002). Hasan and Power (2002) also found that autonomy-supportive parenting increases the levels of optimism among children, while Duinveld et al. (2017) found that it reduces depressive symptoms among adolescents.

Not only are there emotional benefits to positive parenting, but socially, children of responsive, sensitive and democratic parents show increased social skills and less antisocial behaviour (Smith et al., 2000). This kind of parenting has also been found to have a positive effect on the parent-child relationship, increasing communication and secure attachment (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999).

With regard to cognitive functioning, there is an overwhelming amount of research to suggest that the use of positive discipline in schools shows an improvement in academic performance and motivation in the school environment (Battistich et al., 1999; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Joussemet et al., 2008; Kellam et al., 1998). In the home environment, positive parents are more likely to use a scaffolding approach to learning and to arouse their children to experience positive emotions. Children who experience positive emotions are better able to access higher-order thinking, enhancing both creativity and problem-solving (Fredrickson, 2001; Isen et al., 1987).

Positive discipline in schools and positive parenting in the home lead to a decrease in problem behaviour (Battistich et al., 1999; Kellam et al., 1998). As well as decreasing problem behaviours other studies have demonstrated that positive discipline leads to an increase in compliance (Bornstein, 2019; Coleman, 2003) and an improved ability to resist peer pressure (Juffer et al., 2012; Lochman & Wells, 2003; Sandler et al., 2011).

The 2000s have seen an increase in the use of positive parenting practices in interventions aimed at improving the quality of parenting among parents with children who have been identified as at risk. In the next paragraph I report some examples.

The most common outcome of positive parenting interventions is a reduction in negative, problematic and antisocial behaviour in children from toddlerhood through to adolescence (Kellam et al., 1998; Kochanska & Murray, 2000; Laible et al., 2004; Miller & Commons, 2010). In an intervention aimed at single mothers, Forgatch and DeGarmo (1999) used a parent training programme aimed at 238 divorcing mothers with sons to reduce coercive and increase positive parenting. They found that the intervention improved the parenting practices of the mothers in the programme and that these changes did not decay over time. These improvements were enhanced attachment security and better school adjustment (as reported by parents and teachers) among the children of these mothers. In an intervention report, Sandler et al. (2011) examined the long-term impact of 46 parenting intervention programmes, and found that, overall, the parent intervention programmes led to a reduction in child problem behaviours, and a decrease in mental health issues among parents and children, and that these effects were long lasting. They also reported an increase in job aspirations and educational goals in children over time.

2.2.4.4 Critique of positive parenting

The positive parenting approach is not without criticism. In an article entitled "The pitfalls of positive parenting", Reece (2013) argues that a positive parenting approach requires too much effort and trouble for parents and is destructive of the spontaneity of the parent-child relationship. Reece calls it the "be nice" approach and is concerned that removing the power to punish from a "parent's toolbox" leaves parents unable to discipline. Reece claims that parenting requires a balance between discipline, which includes punishment and power-assertive sanctions, and positive reinforcement, which encourages positive behaviour. In her view, positive parenting is an approach in which the parent is blamed for the child's misbehaviour, which is founded on the belief that how parents behave is the primary influence on a child's development. This approach also requires parents to constantly shadow and monitor the child (Reece, 2013). Reece (2013) mainly bases her understanding of positive parenting on the pamphlet produced by the British Government and the National Health System's (*Birth to five | HSC Public Health Agency*, n.d.). This is a booklet given to all new parents, with guidelines and child-rearing advice and information. Reece (2013) does not quote any other parenting resources, which may limit the scope of her understanding of this approach.

In an article entitled "Children and parents deserve better parental discipline", Larzelere et al. (2017) critique the positive parenting principle that children can never benefit from punishment. They assert that there is empirical evidence to suggest that, if used appropriately, this kind of discipline could have positive effects on child development. They also propose that most positive parenting research is based on myths. They view positive parenting as a style of parenting that seems opposed to any form of consequences or punishment for wrongdoing.

In response to these critiques: It may be that many of these researchers are confusing the lack of punishment in positive parenting as a permissive parenting style. Positive parenting is neither controlling nor permissive, but firm and kind at the same time (Eanes, 2015; Lansbury, 2014a; Nelsen et al., 2015). The elimination of punishment does not mean that a child can do whatever it is that they want. It is true that it is an approach which requires a great deal from the parent in terms of self-reflection, effort and child monitoring (Nelson et al., 2015). Positive parenting is neither controlling nor permissive, but firm and kind at the same time, it requires a huge deal of active engagement from the parent and the use of what is called natural consequences (Eanes, 2015; Lansbury, 2014a; Nelson et al., 2015). There is no disputing that punishment does often work, however these effects are seen mostly in the short term with perhaps less effective and damaging long term consequences (Nelson, 2006). Perhaps one of the reasons that parents punish is that they feel that the alternative is to be permissive, they lack the tools to apply a different approach. Some of examples the discipline tools utilised in the positive parenting approach include, time-ins (an alternative to isolating a child whereby the parent stays with the child helping them to co-regulate their emotions); natural consequences (allowing the child to learn by the consequence that follows the behaviour naturally), discussion, teaching the child techniques such as breathing to learn to regulate emotions (Durrant, 2011; Eanes, 2015; Lansurbury, 2014; Nelson, 2006).

Whilst some parents naturally adopt a positive parenting approach, perhaps because it was modelled by their own parents or aligns with their temperament and life philosophy (Schofield et al., 2014), other parents who use this approach may have come across it in a deliberate attempt to learn about parenting (Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006). In my literature search for this current study, no research could be found determining why some parents follow this approach. Consequently, the aim of this research was to explore what might have motivated

the seeking and/or undertaking of a positive parenting approach. In reviewing the present literature, it was apparent that many positive parenting outcome and intervention studies fail to clearly define for the reader what positive parenting is, perhaps assuming the reader is familiar with the term and its practices. Therefore, this current study aims not only to explore the motivations of parents already following this approach, but also to add to the academic literature that defines what positive parenting is.

In this next section, I conclude this chapter.

2.3 Conclusion

My research is directed by the positive psychology paradigm. This paradigm generates scientific data on the subjective experiences of individuals (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). My research is also guided by Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005), which provides a framework for understanding the perceptions parents may have about the parenting role (Mowder, 2005, 2006). Despite literature on both the positive psychology paradigm and Parent Development Theory pointing to the importance of research concerning parents' thoughts and feelings and motivations, the dominant research trend has been both quantitative and researcher directed, orientated around child outcomes of parenting practices. The literature review indicates both a need for qualitative research concerning the perceptions of parents themselves. In order to address this gap in the literature, my research is qualitative in nature and concerned with what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach.

My research concerns the topic of motivation. There are many classic and modern theories as to what may motivate human behaviour in general. I chose to focus my literature report on only three schools of thought, namely psychoanalytic, behavioural, and humanistic theories. However, there are many other theories and variations of these three schools. The many and

diverse studies concerning parental motivation show that parental motivation does not come from any single source. For example, both Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) and Belsky's (1984) view of parenting are directed by the characteristics of the parent, those of the child, the social relationships of the parent and family, as well as the beliefs of the parents, the effect of the broader socio-cultural environment and the parents' developmental history (Belsky, 1984; Mowder, 2005, 2006). From the literature it is clear that there are aspects of innate parental motivation (Ahmann, 2002; Coulson et al., 2012; Jungert et al., 2015), as well as external influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Cardoso et al., 2010; Hanington et al., 2010). What seems to be lacking in the literature is an understanding of why these things may determine or motivate parental behaviour.

Various parenting styles were explored in the literature review.These were the authoritative, authoritarian, permissive, and neglectful parenting styles (Baumrind, 2012). It has been widely accepted that the most optimal of these styles is the authoritative approach (Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012; Robinson et al., 1995; Trifan et al., 2014). Positive parenting is one approach that can be identified as authoritative parenting (Eanes, 2016). This literature shows many benefits of positive parenting, such as a decrease in negative (anti-social) behaviour (Battistich et al., 1999; Kellam et al., 1998; Nelsen, 2006; Smith et al., 2000), the experience of more positive emotions by both parents and children (Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999), a better parent-child relationship (as reported by parents and children) (Coleman, 2003), and increased social skills among positively parented children (Smith, 2010, 2011).

In conclusion, the lack of literature on parents' motivations to apply positive parenting and the identified gap in the literature led to this study's the research question: What motivates parents

to apply a positive parenting approach? In the next chapter, Chapter 3, I will report on the method of this study.

Chapter 3

Method

In this chapter, I describe the design adopted by this research to achieve the aim and objectives stated in section 1.2 of Chapter 1 (to present the perspectives of parents about their motivation to apply a positive parenting approach). Section 3.1 discusses the research design used in the study (qualitative research), while Section 3.2 details the use of the purposive sampling technique and justifies why it was most appropriate. Section 3.3 provides a description of the participants and their demographics. Section 3.4 outlines the data collection procedure used and walks the reader through how each stage of the study was executed. Section 3.5 describes the interview schedule. In section 3.6, the data analysis procedure is detailed, and Section 3.7 proves the trustworthiness of my study as well as the ethical considerations of this research. In the conclusion, I remind the reader of what was presented in this chapter.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research design (Babbie & Mouton, 2010; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Qualitative research methods are utilised to answer questions from the viewpoint, attitudes and opinions of the research participant (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Babbie and Mouton (2010, p. 53) describe qualitative research as research that looks at an "insider's perspective".

As the literature review has shown, research on the outlook of parents on positive parenting is scarce. There appears to be no research on what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach. My study is also exploratory in nature. The qualitative methodology is best suited to

the exploration of new ideas, as it enables the researcher to generate an in-depth understanding of previously understudied areas of research (Richards, 2012).

I chose thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyse the qualitative data collected during semi-structured interviews. In the next section I discuss the sampling strategy I followed.

3.2 Sampling

Sampling is the process by which a number of participants are chosen as a representation of either the whole population or, as in the case of this research, to explore a social phenomenon in more depth and find meaning beyond individual cases about what is being studied (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). In my study, the participants were recruited by means of non-probability purposive sampling (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). Non-probability sampling is best suited to research in which a specific sample group is required, and is a sampling technique that allows the researcher to subjectively choose the participants to be included in the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010).

For this study, purposive sampling was used, as the participants needed to be self-identified positive parents (some criteria needed to be met; see Appendix B). Participants were sought whom I thought would be most appropriate for the study (Berg & Lune, 2012). For practical reasons, participants from my country of residence, South Africa, were sought. I also decided to include only mothers in the study – for several reasons. Despite shifts in recent years, mothers are still perceived by societal norms to be primary caretakers (Jungert et al., 2015). According to Renk et al. (2003), mothers have higher levels of direct interaction with their children, and also have more child-care responsibilities. McBride and Mills (1993) found that

mothers of preschool children spent more time doing activities with their children and had a larger share of child-care responsibilities. (It should be noted, however, that this research is dated, and times may have changed.) In a more recent study, Radey and Randolph (2009) found that mothers are the parents who spend more time reading books, attending workshops and seeking out parenting tips and advice, which is particularly true of parenting information and tips sought through social media. A survey conducted by the Pew Research Centre that included 100 participants found that mothers look for more parenting information, receive and give more parenting social support, and ask more questions than fathers (Duggan et al., 2015). Another inclusion criterion for my study was that mothers should be over 18 years of age and their oldest child should be no more than 10 years of age. This is due to the fact that middle childhood is seen to end at age 11 (Meggitt, 2012) and the parenting demands of children entering adolescence and those in their early and middle childhood differ (Keenan et al., 2016).

Participants were sought using the social media platform Facebook. I deemed this the most appropriate way of finding the sample group I required, due to the number of individuals who follow (subscribe to) positive parenting Facebook groups (a public profile created by an organisation, cause or business) (Rouse, 2010). Permission from the administrator (creator or one who runs the group) of the various groups was obtained and, following this, an advertisement (see Appendix A) was posted in the following groups: “peaceful parenting”; “holistic parenting South Africa”; “hippie parents South Africa”; “aware parenting South Africa”, and “positive parenting international”. These groups were chosen due to my own previous experience. I have followed these groups for a year due to my personal interest and I am aware that their content centres around a positive parenting philosophy. Included in the advertisement were criteria to assist the parents in self-identifying as positive parents, as defined by this study. These criteria were guided by the literature and can be found in Appendix

B. The mothers willing to participate in the study who believed they met the criteria then approached me via my Facebook inbox or my email address to volunteer. These volunteers were then contacted via the medium of their preference, as indicated by themselves (telephone, e-mail or messenger), and interview times and dates were scheduled.

Participants were recruited until data saturation was reached. Data saturation is defined as "the point when no new information or themes are observed in the data" (Guest et al., 2006, p. 59). Whilst varying data is provided in research on the correct sample size for qualitative research, Guest et al. (2006) recommend between six and 12 participants, and Baker and Edwards (2012) recommend 15 participants. Other researchers, such as Adler and Adler (cited in Bonde, 2013), loosely define the appropriate number of participants for a qualitative research study as between 12 and 60 participants. One benefit of a smaller sample size is that it gives the researcher time to analyse the data collected in depth and with more attention than would be possible for a large sample size (Mason, 2010). In my study, data saturation was reached after 16 participants were interviewed.

3.3 Participants

The demographic variables of the participants were as follows: All 16 participants were white and proficient in English. For 11, English was their first language, for three Afrikaans was their first language (with English as a second language), and one was bilingual (English and Afrikaans). The participants' ages ranged between 24 and 51 years, with an average age of approximately 36 years. All the mothers had formal education and a matric (The South African school leavers qualification), with 14 of those having higher qualifications such as certificates and/or diplomas and/or degrees. Fourteen mothers self-identified as middle-income, one as higher- and one as lower-income. Thirteen of the mothers were married, two were in a

relationship and co-habiting, and one was a single mother. Nine participants resided in the Somerset-West and Strand area, two in Cape Town, one in Hermanus (all of these in the Western Cape province), two in Johannesburg (Gauteng province), one in a remote location in the Northern Cape province, and one in Durban in the Kwazulu-Natal province. The participants' occupations ranged from home executive (stay-at-home mothers), to consultants and managers, and included teachers and those working in health care.

Half (eight) of the mothers had one child and the other half (eight) each had two children. The children's ages ranged from five months (those with infants also had an older child) to nine years, with an average age of 3.4 years. Seventeen of the 24 children were younger than five years of age and the remaining seven were between six and nine years of age. Of the 24 children, 12 were female and 12 were male. All the children resided with the parents.

3.4 Data collection procedure

After they had responded to the advertisement, the participants were contacted via either email or Facebook Messenger to schedule an interview time. For those in closer proximity, face-to-face interviews were scheduled. For those located further away, Skype interviews were used. During the process of scheduling the interviews, the qualifying inclusion criteria were reiterated and the participants gave verbal or written confirmation that they adhered to the following:

1. Do you try to the best of your ability to parent with warmth, understanding and respect for your child as an individual with their own wants, needs and goals?
2. Do you find that your expectations of your child's behaviour take into consideration what might be considered normal at their stage of development?

3. Do you use non-violent discipline techniques, which aim to teach and guide rather than punish?
4. Do you use lots of positive praise and encouragement, trying to point out more of your child's strengths than the areas that they need to improve?
5. Do you focus on finding solutions to problems, which will be mutually beneficial to you and the child?

These inclusion criteria were guided by a review of the positive parenting literature and the key concepts of positive parenting (Ahmann, 2002; De Graff et al., 2008; Eanes, 2015; Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006; Nelsen et al., 2015).

Eight of the 16 participants were interviewed face-to-face. Those who chose face-to-face interviews preferred to meet in a coffee shop, except for one participant, who came to my home. Most chose places close to their work or the child's school so that the interviews could fit into their schedule and were more convenient for them to attend. Where I was asked to choose the venue, I ensured that the coffee shop was both quiet and secluded, and arrived first to ensure the most private seating.

The remaining eight participants I interviewed via Skype. I included Skype interviews in this study as it allowed me to overcome the limitation of not being in the same area as the participants. This enabled me to create a more varied sample with wider geographical scope (Iacono et al., 2016). A Skype interview takes place in a comfortable and familiar interview space for the participant, which may contribute to a more relaxed and flowing interview process (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014). A Skype interview also made it possible to fit the interview into their schedule whilst having children at home and not needing to make child-care and travel arrangements (Iacono et al., 2016; Madge & O'Connor, 2006). These positives were weighed

against the potential drawbacks that it may be harder to establish rapport with participants over Skype, and that the researcher runs the risk of technical issues challenging the interview process. Data may also be data in relation to the subtle body language displayed by participants during the interview (Seitz, 2015). In the literature reviewed, I found that researchers report the positives of this interview medium to outweigh the potential challenges. Studies have found that the Skype process is not dissimilar to face-to-face interviews, as long as the researcher carries out the same ethical process (Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Iacono et al., 2016; Seitz, 2016; Sullivan, 2012), which I did.

Once an interview time had been established, a consent form, explaining the purpose of the research study and what it would entail (see Appendix C) was sent to the participants in advance so that they would have time to ask questions or obtain clarity during the interview. The rights of the participants were stipulated. These rights included the guarantee of privacy, anonymity, and the voluntary nature of the study, as well as the right to withdraw from the study without consequences to the participants. Contact details of myself, my supervisor, the Division of Research Development at Stellenbosch University, and a therapist (should they deem it necessary) were provided.

The interview began by me explaining and going through the consent form with the participant. None of the participants had any questions or need for clarification. For those being interviewed using Skype, the consent document was signed during the interview. After the interview, it was scanned and emailed by the participant to me. For the face-to-face interviews, the document was signed in person. All the participants agreed to sign the document and verbally consented to participate in my study. The face-to-face participants were given a copy of the biographical questionnaire (see Appendix D), while the Skype participants were emailed the questionnaire

in advance. They completed this during the interview and returned it to me via email with the consent form.

I asked for permission to either audio-record the interview or to take notes. All participants consented to an audio-recording, therefore note taking was unnecessary. I went through the inclusion criteria (see Appendix B) and all participants confirmed that they still believed their parenting falls within the scope of these criteria. Following this process, I was able to proceed with the interviews. In the next section I explain the interview process.

3.5 Interview Schedule

I collected my data by means of a semi-structured interview in English with the mothers included in the study. Semi-structured interviews are conducted in an open manner with a conversational style of communication. Open-ended questions are used as a guide, but the researcher often deviates from this so as to allow for flexibility and greater discovery (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). During these interviews I was guided by the questions in the interview schedule (see Appendix E). The first question (Tell me about your parenting?) was introductory and aimed at easing the parents into the interview. I allowed the participants to form their own interpretation of this question. The following questions became more specific and related to the research topic:

Tell me a bit about why you apply a positive parenting approach?

What do you think motivated or motivates you to apply positive parenting?

What do you find helpful and supportive of being a positive parent?

As the concept positive parenting had been clarified in the research advertisement (see Appendix A), the participants were clear on what qualified as positive parenting. However, the

understanding of the use of the words ‘apply’ and ‘motivate’ were left up to the participants’ interpretation. In addition to the above specific questions, probing questions were used to entice the participants to elaborate on their answers. These included prompts such as how? where? could you explain more about this? what do you mean by that? I periodically summarised the participant’s responses to ensure my understanding was correct. This was phrased so that it sounded like … is this correct? (Kennedy, 2006). If a resource was mentioned following the question, ‘What do you find helpful or supportive of this approach?’, I asked questions such as the following – as it would provide additional information about which resources these parents find useful:

Do you remember some of the names of the books that you read?

What was the course/programme that you attended, and can you tell me about it?

What does this social media group entail?

In keeping with guidelines provided by DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006), 30 to 60 minutes were allocated for the interviews. However, for the sake of giving participants the freedom to elaborate as much as they wished on the interview questions, and to avoid repetition and making the interview tedious for those who felt they had answered all the questions, I was flexible about this timeframe. Thus, the longest interview was 45 minutes and the shortest 26 minutes. My intention was to re-visit participants should additional information be required. However, the information provided proved sufficient, and this was unnecessary.

In the next section I discuss how I analysed the data collected during the interviews.

3.6 Data Analysis Procedure

Several methods are available for analysing data qualitatively. Examples of these methods are discourse analysis, ethnography, interpretive phenomenological analysis, grounded theory, narrative analysis, discourse analysis, and thematic analysis (Lyons & Coyle, 2007) For this study, thematic analysis was considered the most suitable data analysis technique. Thematic analysis is a method by which a researcher can identify, analyse and extract meaning from qualitative data. The technique allows the researcher to make sense of collective experiences and meanings through rich and detailed analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Unlike some of the above-mentioned data analysis procedures, thematic analysis can be conducted using a variety of different approaches and applied to any theoretical framework. Thematic analysis is particularly useful in cases where a topic has been under-researched (such as in this study), and for which an overall description of a phenomenon is required (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was deemed most suitable for this research due to its inductive nature from which themes can emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

In the past qualitative data analysis was done using paper, and word processor features such as copy and paste (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Charmaz, 2008; Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Qualitative data analysis has modernised and evolved to offer researchers the use of coding software (Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996). In this study I made use of the ATLAS.ti (2015) to assist me in organising, coding and comparing the data (Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996) and to apply a thematic analysis approach to data analysis, using the six steps determined by Braun and Clarke (2006).

These six steps are:

1. Familiarising myself with the data, which involves repeated reading, note taking and thinking of ideas for later coding.
2. Generating initial codes, organising the data by identifying meaningful words and sentences, as well as repeating patterns.
3. Searching for themes, looking at all the codes and considering how to combine them into overarching ideas.
4. Reviewing and refining themes and deciding whether themes can be combined or need to be separated and subthemes created.
5. Detailed analysis of themes, creating descriptions and looking at how each theme begins to form the bigger picture in relation to my research question.
6. Writing the report. By this stage, themes and their descriptions have been fully discovered and a write-up had been done, which not just describes the data but also its interpretation and relevance (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Corbin & Strauss, 1990; Glaser, 1992; Milliken & Schreiber, 2012; Ralph et al., 2015).

According to Friese (2019a), ATLAS.ti is a sophisticated computer-assisted data analysis tool which requires the researcher to use two phases of development in order to fully comprehend the coded data. The first phase involves describing the data and creating a coding system. Coding the data is a way of minimising the data into smaller units. Words and sentences that stand out as having meaning are selected and highlighted using ATLAS.ti (2015). Notes (memos) can be made in the comments box in the margins (Smit, 2002). As information gets repeated across interviews, labels can be assigned to this data, often referred to as tags, and

colours can be assigned to these tags to differentiate them from others. These groups of codes are then referred to as emerging themes and given one label (ATLAS.ti, 2015; Woolf, 2007).

The second phase involves querying the data, looking for relationships between concepts, themes, and theories in order to understand how it all fits together to create answers to my research question (ATLAS.ti, 2015; Smit, 2002; Woolf, 2007). Smit (2002) describes this process as a continuous process of searching for similarities, differences, and concepts among the different datasets (in this case interviews). This is a more complex process than simply identifying emerging themes and can also include higher order synthesis, such as meta- and subthemes (Smit, 2002). Friese (2019b) quite simply describes the analysis process using the N-C-T model – noticing things, collecting things, and thinking about things.

One of the pitfalls of computer-assisted analysis is that it may remove the researcher from the data (Pope, 2000). Far from replacing my role in interpreting the data, I utilised the computer-assisted software to enhance my experience and provide the platform to interact closely and in-depth with the data, whilst saving time that would have been used for menial tasks in traditional coding, such as copy and paste. Functions such as retrieve, search and visual networks free up time to focus on the interpretative aspects of data analysis (Pope, 2000; Smit, 2002). Every effort was taken to remain engaged with the data. I used ATLAS.ti (2015) to structure, order and create visual representations in order to aid my own interpretation and analysis of the data (Mays & Pope, 1995; Smith & Hesse-Biber, 1996).

I now describe how I applied this process of data analysis to the data in this study. I began by listening to and transcribing the data word for word in a word processing document. Following this, I read and re-read the transcripts, making a mental note of any interesting or reoccurring ideas. I then created a project file in ATLAS.ti (2015) and inserted the transcribed documents

into this file. In my ATLAS.ti (2015) project, I worked with 16 primary documents (interview transcripts). I went through each interview line for line and, from these, selected segments of text from which codes were generated. Using the technique suggested by Dey (1993), I continued to ask the questions what, who, how and why the participants were explaining their perceptions in the way they did. After the first two interviews were coded, I felt more confident in my coding ability and revisited the first two interviews to refine and review my coding technique (Charmaz, 2008). After reviewing all the interviews, I selected segments of text from which codes were generated. These individual codes were then grouped into code groupings, which I called themes. Themes are defined as names given to define conceptual similarities or groups of codes that are similar and share the same patterns (Smit, 2002). Initially, I ended up with four overarching categories from which I extracted fourteen themes (I explain how this was eventually reduced in the next paragraph). As my research was inductive (aimed at generating new theory based on the data), all generated themes were derived straight from the data at the time of coding. From all of this I was able to create networks and links between the different codes and groupings. Initially, I fell into the trap that Friese (2019a) refers to as code swamp (having generated to many themes). I overcame this by revisiting the data and reviewing and refining my data analysis, finding that many of my themes overlapped and could be combined as they were facets of the same thing (Friese, 2019b). I also realised that the themes could be better organised by making use of categories. Therefore, the themes were reduced to four overarching categories, seven themes and two subthemes. Dey (1993) calls this the process of breaking up data in order to bring it together again, with more meaning. The data analysis process took six months.

3.7 Ethics and Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, the researcher is the instrument and it is of paramount importance to prove that research has been conducted ethically (Orb et al., 2001). Before commencing with my study, my research proposal was submitted to Stellenbosch University's Research Ethics Committee (REC, Humanities) on 30/05/2018 (REC-2018-7398) and underwent a stringent ethical clearance review. Due to the possibility that the exploration of the participants' views on parenting could be sensitive in nature, the study was declared a medium-risk study by the REC. However, it was decided that the results obtained from the study would yield valuable information and the experience of talking about positive parenting could be a positive experience for my participants. Therefore, the risk was deemed acceptable. Ethical clearance was granted on 01/08/2018 (see Appendix F).

Ethical standards were upheld during the process of data collection. The confidentiality of the participants was of the utmost importance. Following the interviews, pseudonyms were used to identify the participants in the transcripts. No information was shared that could link the participants to their statements. Participants took part in my study voluntarily, with the option to withdraw at any stage without consequences. Care was taken to treat them with dignity and respect, keeping them fully informed of their rights and the objective of my study, as well as about how their information would be used. Participants were reminded that they could stop the interview at any stage, and they were provided with the details of a therapist they could speak to (see Appendix E). None of the participants showed any signs of distress and, due to the positive focus on what works with regard to their parenting, many participants reported it to be an enjoyable experience.

The data is kept in a locked folder on a password-protected computer to which only I have access.

Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, validity and reliability are easy to establish, as they are often supported using statistics and represented numerically. In qualitative studies, reliability and validity are less easily established (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). To confirm the trustworthiness of this study, I employed the trustworthiness evaluation criteria of Guba and Lincoln (1994). These four criteria are credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. I now discuss these criteria and explain how they were established in this study.

Credibility refers to the confidence that the researcher has in the accuracy of the research findings (Statistics Solutions, 2016). In qualitative research, credibility is less about how much information has been collected and more about the quality of the collected data. Credibility is established when the viewpoints of the participants are accurately interpreted by the researcher. Credibility in this research was established by utilising step-by-step thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), which employed a stringent line-by-line analysis of the data. The interpretations of the data were checked and rechecked several times. A great deal of time was spent engaged in deep analysis of the data (Noble & Smith, 2015).

Transferability is the degree to which the results of the study can be applied to other contexts and settings (Anney, 2014). Through the communication of my results and discussion in my study, I have provided a rich description of the research findings and how these findings may be of value to the research community (Berg & Lune, 2012). This attention to detail will enable other researchers to determine how applicable this study is to other contexts.

In order to have dependability, the researcher needs to document the research process in a traceable way, which would mean the study could be repeated easily (Noble & Smith, 2015). In this study I made use of and followed an interview schedule (see Appendix C) to ensure consistency in the interview process. I provided a clear description of my data analysis procedure, describing every step taken to arrive at my results. This description would allow another researcher to follow the same procedure should they wish to repeat the study.

Confirmability is supported by showing that the researcher's results are reflective of the data collected. In order for any external researcher to determine the confirmability of my research, I need to show that the conclusions reached reflect the raw data (Nowell et al., 2017). In this regard, frequent contact and discussions with my experienced supervisor were invaluable. Having no prior knowledge of the positive parenting approach, he was able to provide insight into the plausibility of my interpretations from the raw data. Furthermore, I provided a thorough account of how I had identified themes from the dataset and how my findings corresponded with those of previous research.

3.8 Conclusion

In this chapter I described my research method. A qualitative research design was best suited to this study as it concerns itself with the motivations and perspectives of the research participants (Hammarberg et al., 2016). Participants for this study were recruited using non-probability purposive sampling (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006), and data was collected in-a semi structured interview process Thematic analysis in accordance with the steps of Braun and Clarke (2006) was employed to analyse the data. I made use of the computer software ATLAS.ti (2015) to assist me in coding and analysing the data. Lastly, I ensured the reader that

the study was conducted ethically and highlighted what was done in order to enhance the trustworthiness of the data collection procedure.

In Chapter 4 I report on and discuss the findings of this study.

Chapter 4

Results and Discussion

In this chapter I present the findings of my research. These results are then interpreted and evaluated with reference to the literature and conceptualised from the perspective of Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005). The analysis of my data gave rise to four categories, with eight themes and two subthemes. A representation of the themes and subthemes is provided in Figure 4. Themes are represented with numbers and subthemes with bullet points.

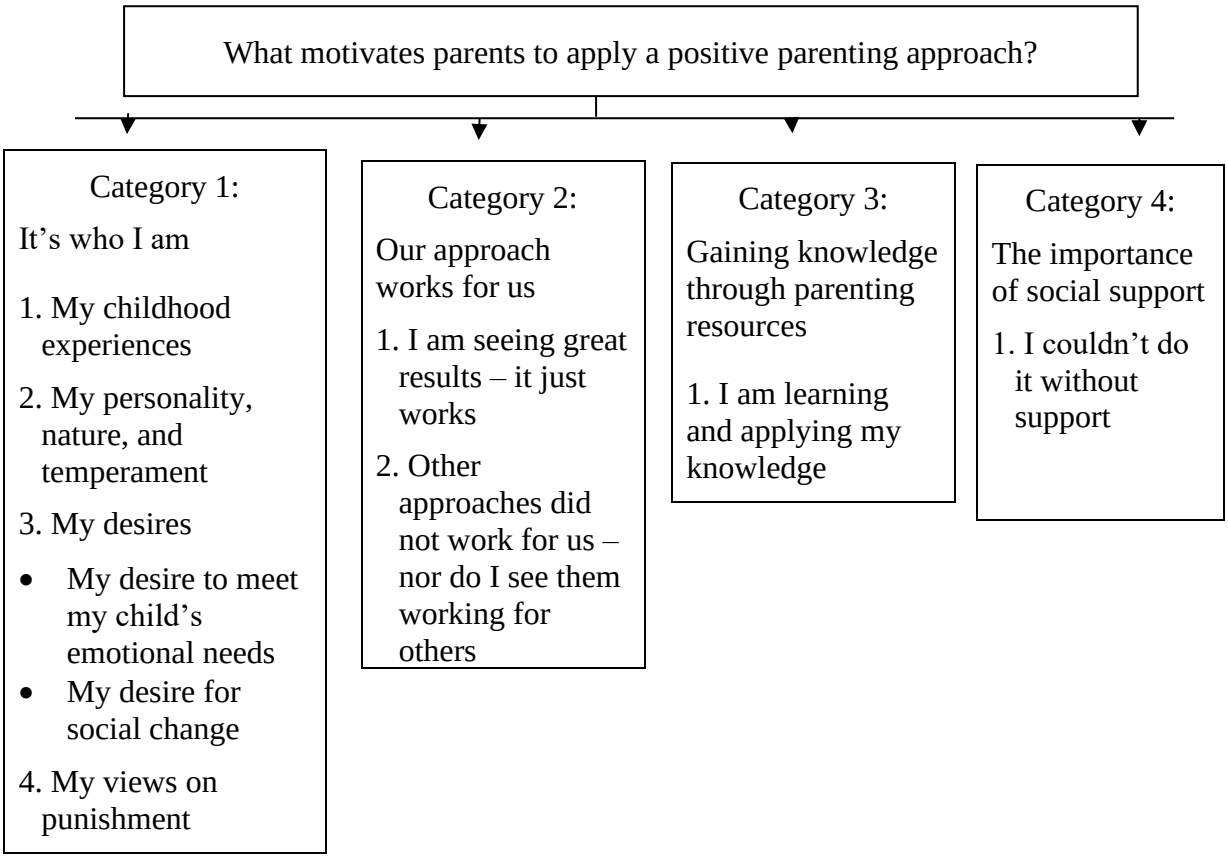

Figure 4. A visual illustration of all themes and subthemes within their respective categories.

4.1 It's who I am (Category 1)

The first category is entitled, 'It's who I am'. During the interview process, every participant spoke about how their experiences, temperament, personality, desires, and views, as a reflection of who they are, play a large role in their motivation to apply a positive parenting approach. According to Parent Development Theory, who we are as parents is made up of our thoughts, feelings, and experiences (Mowder, 1991, 2005). Other researchers would say our identity also includes our temperament and personality (Clancy & Dollinger, 1993; Meyer et al., 2008). Four themes emerged from this study's data: My childhood experiences, my personality, nature and temperament, my desires, and my views on punishment.

4.1.1 My childhood experiences

In this section, I discuss the impact of the past on motivating the parenting approach of the participants. When relating the importance they placed on their past experiences in shaping who they are today, 14 of the 16 participants discussed the importance their childhood experience of their own parents had in motivating their present parenting. For some, their childhood experience of their own parents was negative, and for others it was a positive experience. For a third group of participants, their childhood experience of their parents was neither positive nor negative. Most participants were able to acknowledge aspects of both positive and negative experiences in how they were parented. In this theme, I report on and discuss the impact of both positive and negative childhood experiences. Thereafter, I summarise the theme and consider its relevance to the current literature throughout.

Eleven of the participants talked to me about negative aspects of their childhood, recalling bad events and feelings in childhood, stemming from the way in which they were parented. Some participants expressed the view that they were not always parented in the best way, and many

had reflected on the negative impact this had on them as adults. For some participants, the decision to parent very differently from the way in which their parents had parented was a conscious one. Anna said:

> I kind of came into look at being a parent, I don't really know how I want to be, but I know what I don't want to be. I didn't want to be what I had. So, when I was pregnant it was just like this conscious thing of, I'm going to do the complete opposite of what they did, one hundred percent.

When discussing a conversation she had with her partner during her pregnancy, Naomi shared these sentiments and articulated:

> I just said we cannot do anything like what they did, and they are very nice people, they just couldn't be parents. So, it was like anything they did, I did the complete opposite.

Another participant felt that she had adopted some of her parents' negative qualities and was determined not to allow these qualities to limit her own parenting.

> I thought to myself no, no I don't want to pass that on to my child, because I know there are certain bad things of my Dad that I've got, and there is certain things, bad things of my Mom that I learnt, and I thought no, no, no, no, my child shouldn't have this. – Suzette

Rachael and Monique voiced that they felt "screwed up" and "damaged" by the way in which their parents had treated them. Suzette went to therapy to deal with the "issues" she felt she had with her mother as a result of her upbringing.

> I feel they damaged me in many ways because of their style of parenting. Just, just things they said to me or it's amazing how you know, what you say can have such a huge influence you know and be absorbed into a person's like psych. – Monique

In telling me about the feelings they experienced from their own past parenting, some of the words the participants used were "not good enough", "isolated", "'emotionally blackmailed" and "I didn't understand". There were also sentiments of being responsible for their parents' outbursts of anger and a fear of punishment. This fear is well summed up in Anna's statement:

> I remember what I felt like as a child when I knew I was going to get a hiding or when I knew my Mom was going to absolutely s*** herself, she was just going to lose her mind, because of something I had done, and I always thought that was a really heavy responsibility to put on a young person, you know, I mustn't make my mom angry, I mustn't make my mom disappointed.

The aspiration not to have the same kind of relationship with their children as they had with their own parents motivated some of the participants to do something different. More than one mother even commented that they did not wish their children to be like them.

> I don't have to have a child that's like me, my child can be free, he can look at life differently, he can literally make his own choices, he can learn from his choices, he can learn that he is an independent person from me, from the start, he doesn't have to satisfy Mommy. – Suzette

Despite reporting their negative childhood experiences with a greater frequency and more emphasis, it is important to note that not all the participants experienced their past parenting as

negative. For two, it was predominantly a positive experience, one which they wished to recreate with their own children.

> I am doing this [using a positive parenting approach] because, my parents, they are amazing, also very gentle. – Meredith

> I think a big motivating factor for me was because I was raised, probably not the textbook example of gentle, but my mom was always very supportive. – Nina

A third group of participants recalled that their experiences were both negative and positive. Some had one parent who demonstrated positive qualities and another who demonstrated negative qualities. This provided them with a contrast between their parents, giving them an example of both how they wanted to be as parents themselves, and how they did not want to be.

> I grew up in a home where my father was quite punitive in his parenting style, and my mother wasn't, so complete opposites. Even now I pick up in myself, if my kids do something, I have to stop myself from being like my Dad, in the sense that he was very angry, and his anger was the only thing you heard, and I don't want my kids to only hear that. – Keira

> My mother was very black and white, very strict, no bending of rules, and so I was always close to my father, and with my mother, we had a very, very difficult relationship. – Catrina

The mothers in this study told me about their childhood experiences of their own parents' parenting, which for the majority were predominantly negative. They credited these experiences for shaping their viewpoints and motivation for their own parenting choices. For

many participants there was a desire not to be with their children as their own parents were with them, but rather to foster a more positive experience to spare their children some of the negative feelings that they had from their parents' parenting. Some described feeling emotionally damaged and not good enough for their parents and, as a result, did not have a close relationship with them. For many, these feelings permeated adulthood and became something from which they needed to heal. A small minority of participants communicated that they were motivated to apply a positive parenting approach, as this was how their parents parented them. Participants also told me about discrepancies between each of their parent's parenting approaches, which led to them having a better relationship with the less punitive parent.

The findings in this theme are consistent with the idea proposed by Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) that our past experience plays a large role in our parental approach. In accordance with Mowder (2006), our ideas about what a parental role looks like originate in early childhood and develop and change over time. The influence our childhood parenting has on our own parenting is called the intergenerational transmission of parenting (Schofield et al., 2014; Van Ijzendoorn, 1992). The participants in this study used a positive parenting approach, yet many of them reported experiencing their parents' parenting as undesirable. The frequency with which the participants spoke about their negative childhood experiences of their parents was more than double that of their positive experiences. The number of participants who spoke of their own parents in a negative light was also far greater than those who reported having positive experiences with their parents. The ability of the participants to recall their negative over positive childhood memories may be explained by a phenomenon called the negativity bias (Hilbig, 2009; Norris, 2019). The premise of this bias is that events and interactions that are labelled as negative are recalled better than those that are positive (Cacioppo et al., 2014).

In the article, “Bad is stronger than good”, Baumeister et al. (2001) explain that negative events have a greater influence on an individual than positive ones. This is the case even when things are equally both bad and good – the bad outweighs the good. The purpose of the negativity bias is to aid individuals in avoiding things which may be harmful to their well-being in the future, and to assist individuals in pursing more positive opportunities (Norris, 2019). Therefore, we learn more from negative life events than from positive ones (Vaish et al., 2008). In relation to this study, the negative events that the participants recalled of the way in which they were parented may be more influential in motivating the way in which they parent themselves.

Many of the participants used statements that indicate that they do not wish to parent in the same way as their parents. From their descriptions of, and desire to, parent differently, I could deduce that most of the participants’ parents did not use a positive parenting approach. The literature mostly suggests that there are more similarities between intergenerational parenting than differences. Those with harsh childhoods are more likely to treat their own children harshly (Morse, 2010; Schofield et al., 2014; Simons et al., 1993). Despite the increased likelihood that we will parent just as our parents did, according to Van Ijzendoorn (1992), those who have support and have healed from a difficult childhood (such as through attending therapy, as in Suzette’s case) are often able to reject their parents’ parenting and apply more positive behaviour with their own children.

Most of this study’s participants seem to have reflected on their parents’ approach and made some conscious decisions to do things differently. There are two factors which may protect the participants from repeating their own parents mistakes. First, the idea proposed by Todorović and Matejević (2014), namely that those who have a strong belief that their own parent’s parenting was not correct, are more motivated to use a different parenting style. Second, there

is the idea that one is less likely to repeat the parenting mistakes of one's own parents, when one (the new parents) places great importance on the belief that your parenting has a large impact on your child's development, outcomes, and emotional health. A positive parenting approach centres on the idea of the importance of meeting a child's emotional needs, driven by the latest developments in child psychology (Lansbury, 2014b; Ockwell-Smith, 2016). Due to their identification with positive parenting, it is logical to deduce that this study's participants are protected from using the parenting approach of their own parents because they are highly invested in seeing their role as important for their children's well-being, rather than viewing their child's outcomes as being out of their control.

In summary of this theme (my childhood experiences): The participants commented on how their experiences as a child of their parent's parenting motivated them to use a positive parenting approach. Eleven of the 16 participants recalled negative memories and feelings relating to their own parents' behaviour throughout their childhood. They regarded how they were parented as inadequate and, as a result, decided to parent very differently. They felt this would protect their children from some of the long-term consequences that their parents' parenting had on them psychologically. However, this was not the experience of all the participants. Two participants experienced their past parenting as positive, and so used this to guide them to parent in a similar fashion. A third group describe one parent as more positive than the other, and used this contrast as an example of what does and does not work in terms of parenting attitudes and decisions.

In the next section I report on and discuss the participants' outlooks that they utilised a positive parenting approach because it reflects their personality, nature, and temperament.

4.1.2 My personality, nature, and temperament

In this section, I describe the theme, "my personality, nature, and temperament". When discussing their motivation for applying a positive parenting approach, all but one of the participants told me that their parenting was aligned with their temperament, personality, and nature. They explained that this approach was their automatic way of behaving, something that came naturally to them. In the context of this theme, the meaning of "my nature" is defined as "the fundamental qualities of a person or thing; identity or essential character" (Reverso-Softissimo, 2020). Personality is defined as "individual differences in characteristic patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving" (Kazdin, 2000, p. 3300). Temperament is defined as "the emotional state of mind of people or animals as shown in their behaviour" (Cambridge advanced learners dictionary, 2013, p. 1856). According to Digman and Shmelyov (1996), temperament be the foundation of personality. It should be noted that, whilst there are differences between these three definitions theoretically, the participants used the terms personality, nature and temperament interchangeably. For the purpose of this subtheme, I deduced that, in using the terms personality, nature and temperament, the participants were referring to aspects of the same thing, which encompasses all the above definitions. Some participants explained that, upon discovering positive and attachment parenting literature and advice, they felt this was the way they were already doing things, that it resonated with who they are. Some participants told me that positive parenting made them feel proud and good about themselves and their choices. I now report on and discuss these sentiments. (For the purpose of this theme, the reader should be aware that the terms gentle, positive, and attachment parenting are all used to describe the positive parenting ethos, as discussed in the literature review chapter of this thesis.)

The participants communicated how a positive parenting approach complemented their own temperament and personality traits. Some of the words they used to describe themselves were positive, gentle, sensitive, laid back, conflict avoidant, and calm. Sarah said:

> I am also sensitive. I know I've always been shy and that. But, I've realised that I'm a sensitive person and I don't do confrontation.

Comments made by Hannah, Pam and Nina in response to the question, what motivates you to parent using a positive parenting approach? were:

> I don't know if it's just my personality, you know. I think that's a big part of it. – Hannah

> I think deep down I actually am just a gentle parent. – Pam

> Gentle parenting just sort of came naturally to me – Nina

For Nina it was not even a conscious decision to parent using a particular approach. She sees it as just a reflection of who she is as a person:

> The motivation would be more difficult for me to answer, because it is so natural, because that is the way I am naturally. So, it isn't really a motivated decision to be a gentle parent, to be around and be nice to my kid. That is kind of what I am doing naturally, rather than what I'm choosing to do.

This sentiment was shared by Pam, who told me:

> If I grew up in the wild without any influences from the outer world then that is the way I would have parented.

Tara felt that her parenting approach was not guided by anything except her own intuition and instinct:

> It's important to trust my gut and instinct, and just to follow my intuition and let that lead me. I am following my instincts as opposed to following any kind of set system or anything like that.

On the other hand, Pam, Kiera and Ruth felt that what they had read and learned about positive parenting (correlated with the theme. "my education and learning"), supported their instinctive way of doing things.

> So, it's (my parenting), a combination of reading on topics and seeing what … How can I phrase it? What ways works the best with our children, and going with gut, because it's completely new territory for us. – Pam

> A lot of it comes intuitively, based on what I've studied or based on what I've seen in other parents. – Kiera

> When I started reading up on attachment parenting [a parenting style which forms part of positive parenting and is often used in the early years, especially during infancy] it gelled with me, and I was like well that's what I'm doing naturally. So, I'm just going to carry on doing what is right for me. – Rebecca

> When I read up about the positive parenting thing, and style of parenting thing, it really resonated with me because, it's a very complicated thing to answer. I didn't feel right about some of the other ways of doing things. – May

Not only did the positive parenting literature resonate with how they naturally parented, the literature concerning other approaches to parenting seemed unnatural and not especially useful.

Three of the participants described positive parenting as not the "mainstream" way of doing things. Participants listed the names of popular parenting books (three mentioned the international best-selling *Baby Sense* (Faure & Richardson, 2010), explaining to me how unnatural the "mainstream methods" (their own description) described in these books felt to them and how the advice just did not seem congruent with their identity. Monique told me the books annoyed her immensely. as they "talk about children as if they are machines".

Rachael explained that she did not find most books useful.

> I just stopped reading all the books and all that jazz, because it felt wrong for me and I always go on my gut and my instinct. – Rachael

> Books were telling me what to do, and the books weren't sitting well with me, and everyone's advice was also not sitting well with me. Um, so, I kind of just started doing some more research into it, and just that when I sort of read up on the positive parenting and attachment style of parenting. It just, um, it just made sense. – May

Five of the mothers in this study also felt that not only did their positive parenting approach reflect their character and natural parenting style, it made them feel good about who they are and the parenting choices they had made. It made them strive to be better people and a good example. This was reflected in comments such as:

> There is also that 'feel good' feeling of doing it. It makes you feel better as a parent. There is a part of me that goes, I love being able to say to people this is how we've done it, because I'm proud of it. It gives you the opportunity to be better. – Anna

> I think it's made me become, or try and be a better a person, because I've been like, my daughter is looking at me and she is doing what I do. – Monique

> We actually see him [their son] as empowering us and helping us to be the best possible versions of ourselves. Where we can, be an example for him, which isn't very freaking easy. – Rachael

The theme "my personality, nature, and temperament" involves three aspects. First, parents report that positive parenting aligns with their personality and temperament. Second, they feel positive parenting supports their natural way of doing things. Third, positive parenting makes them feel good about who they are. I now discuss these three aspects in relation to the current literature.

Some aspects of applying a positive parenting approach are intentional, while others were reported by the mothers in this study as being a result of personality and temperament. In this theme, some participants indicated that their temperament and personality guided their parenting approach. There are limited studies that have examined parent temperament as a predictor of parenting behaviour (Lengua & Kovacs, 2005). There are considerably more studies that look at the relationship between parent temperament and personality and the resulting child behaviour (Dix, 2000; Hanington et al., 2010; Mulsow et al., 2002; Rettew et al., 2006).

In particular, there are many studies that report on the positive impact that positive parenting has on child behaviour (Abidin, 1992; Baumrind, 1996; Danzig et al., 2015; Sanders, 1999). When looking at parent personality, researchers focus on what is referred to as the "Big 5 personality traits", namely neuroticism, agreeableness, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness (Goldberg, 1990), and the impact of these personality traits of the parent on child behaviour (Oliver et al., 2009). There is also a great deal of information on which child temperaments may be easier or more difficult to parent (Belsky, 1984; Mulsow et al., 2002;

Murphey, 1992). The mothers in this study described themselves as gentle, sensitive, positive, and calm. They felt that, due to their personality, positive parenting felt natural to them and their automatic way of doing things.

Fifteen of the 16 participants discussed the use of intuition and instinct as guiding their parenting approach, whilst one participant felt she was guided by instinct alone. The other participants felt a symbiosis between the knowledge they had gained about positive parenting from things they had read, what they had learned from others, and their own natural way and automatic approach to parenting. Intuition is "what we know without knowing where we learnt it", an "automatic process which happens without conscious awareness" (Plessner et al., 2011, p. 4). This means that it is possible that what my participants describe as their "gut" and "instinct" may be guided by complex processes. In her blog post on her 'positive parenting connection' website, Boyle (2018) describes intuition as coming from many sources. Intuition may come from our own context and experience. It may be guided by education and history. It is influenced by our biological responses and physical sensations. It may be discerned from picking up on and reading the emotions and body language of others. It also is influenced by observing others and by advice from others.

Some participants felt that reading about positive parenting affirmed some aspect of how they already parented naturally. When discussing what they had learnt and read about positive parenting, the participants told me that it both guides, and is supportive of, their natural style. What they read encourages them, along with their knowledge, to make use of their gut and intuition to guide them.

Positive parenting is an authoritative parenting style (Baumrind, 1971; Nelsen, 2006), with the central tenet of a high level of responsiveness from the parent to the child (Ahmann, 2002;

Kochanska & Murray, 2000). Many researchers (Marlin et al., 2015; Schön & Silvén, 2007; Swain et al., 2007; Young et al., 2016) would argue that responding to a child's needs, and in particular to infant distress, is instinctive in nature, driven by a biological response process. Positive parenting places great importance on meeting a child's emotional needs, and regards bids for attention as a sign of unmet needs (Knost, 2013b; Ockwell-Smith, 2016; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). My participants communicated that positive parenting feels like it is naturally how they parent, that it "makes sense" to them. This may be because being responsive is natural for mothers. Not only did positive parenting feel natural to the participants, information in books concerning other approaches did not feel natural, and was ultimately rejected by three of the participants. These mothers mentioned in particular the *Baby Sense* (Faure & Richardson, 2010) series, which is an international best seller, having sold over one hundred and fifty thousand copies. This book series centres on the idea of strict routines regarding baby feeding, sleep and stimulation, promoting behaviour that is parent-led in nature (Harries & Brown, 2019). This approach is the opposite of a positive parenting approach, which is child-led (Eanes, 2016). This fundamental difference in the two approaches (parent-led and child-led) may explain why embracing one approach, as it feels natural, may lead to rejecting the opposite approach, as the two cannot co-exist in harmony.

The act of parental caregiving is not just of benefit to the child, but has benefits for the parent as well (Shaver & Fraley, 2000). Through nurturing, parents can grow in self-esteem and confidence (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003). Parents often gain a great sense of satisfaction, well-being and fulfilment from their care-giving role (Bouchard et al., 2007). This was the case for five of the participants, who explained that positive parenting made them feel good about themselves as a parent. Anna felt a great sense of pride in her parenting decisions, while both Monique and Rachael recognised the importance of modelling in parenting behaviour

(Stephens, 2007; Wiese & Freund, 2011). This understanding, that their behaviour is being watched and copied by their children, encourages them to behave in ways they hope their child will emulate. These participants felt inspired by their children, and the process of parenting them motivated them to grow positively as people.

In conclusion, the theme, my personality, nature, and temperament, involves three aspects. The mothers described how positive parenting is an approach that complements and reflects their own personality and temperament. They described themselves as already possessing many of the qualities that are encouraged in a positive parenting approach, such as a sensitive and gentle nature. Further, they explained how a positive parenting approach felt instinctual to them. In learning about the approach, some participants said that it felt natural and already part of their automatic way of parenting. Lastly, the participants told me that positive parenting made them both feel good about who they are, and it motivated them to be better people.

In the next section. I discuss the theme of "my desires".

4.1.3 My desires

The dictionary defines a desire as "a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen" (Collins Dictionary, 2020, p.123). It is also seen as a hope or longing for something. In this section I report on the desires the participants expressed, and how these desires motivated them in their parenting choices and approach. This theme is best understood by exploring two kinds of desires that the mothers in this study deemed motivational: The desire they had to parent in a way that meets their child's needs, and the desire to create social change and address their own social conscience.

4.1.3.1 My desire to meet my child's needs

The mothers in this study had a desire to meet their child's needs in a way that they felt their own needs may not have been met adequately by their own parents (as discussed in the theme "My childhood experiences"). It is important for a good parent-child relationship that parents are motivated to meet a child's needs (Ahmann, 2002; Coulson et al., 2012), and most parents aspire to do this (Bowlby, 1956). The participants in this study were no exception and seemed to have put thought into and reflected on what these needs might be and the influence that their parenting has on the fulfilment of these needs. They communicated that it was their desire to fulfil their child's needs that motivated them to use a positive parenting approach. The mothers in this study hoped that by parenting using this approach they would meet their child's needs, which would in turn have a positive impact on the child's well-being.

In his theory of human motivation, Alderfer (1969) recognises that individuals rank certain needs higher than others. In the same way the mothers in this study prioritised their efforts to meet those needs that they felt are of greater importance to their children's wellbeing. The mothers identified and prioritised six needs as integral to having happy, healthy and successful children who have trust, respect and emotional security. These needs are: 1. The need for support and encouragement. 2. The need to support the child's individuality. 3. The need for emotional validation. 4. The need to understand discipline. 5. The need to both give and receive respect. 6. The need to feel loved and happy. I now report on each of these needs and discuss their relevance to the literature.

The need for support and encouragement

The participants pointed out that children need to feel both supported and encouraged in order to flourish. They demonstrate this in comments such as:

> That's what children need, they just need someone in their corner who is like, you do, you, and I'm just going to support you through it … They just need like, what you are doing is good, be true to who you are, and that will give you the confidence and the comfort that you need to carry on. – Nina

> Every kid does feed off encouragement and support and positivity. – Sally

> What we are to do is give them so much love and so much support and so much care, because by doing that their roots are going to go down deep. – Rachael

A sentiment of two of the mothers was a desire for their children to know that they could turn to their parents for support in times of trouble, even when they had made mistakes, without fear of retribution. When speaking about this, Nina and Naomi said:

> They know I love them, and we have a good connection, and they know that they can come and tell me everything, and anything, and if they get into trouble, they must not hesitate to call me. – Nina

> We let her know there are two people who love you and will help you out of any situation, and that's what positive parenting is! – Naomi

The mothers in this study are positive parents, and positive parents are both sensitive and responsive. This sensitivity and responsiveness allows the mothers to be tuned in to their child's emotional needs (Dix, 2000). Some of the words used to express what the mothers thought their children need were: encouragement; support and to have 'someone in their corner'. These views are shared by Adler (1927), one of the fathers of positive parenting, who believed that children's primary needs are for both belonging (connection between parent and child) and significance (the idea that what you do matters). The consequence of a child feeling supported

and secure in their relationship with their parent results in something called secure attachment (Bowlby, 1979).

Children with secure attachments are well bonded with their caregivers and feel that they are dependable and supportive (Fonagy, 2018). Attachment theorists posit that secure attachment is a fundamental need for infants and children, as it influences all future relationships and ability to connect to others (Juffer et al., 2012). Many of the mothers in this study mentioned practising attachment parenting, especially during their child's infancy.

Naomi and Nina hoped that, because of the connection that they had fostered, their children know that they can come to them in times of trouble and be met with support rather than admonishment. Positive parenting experts (Eanes, 2015; Faber & Mazlish, 2002; Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006) theorise that if you punish your child when they make a mistake, they are less likely to come to you in times of trouble, rather choosing to lie or hide the truth from their parents.

The need to support the child's individuality

Several mothers conveyed the desire not to try to mould their child into something that suited their own ideals or agenda, asserting that children need to be allowed to find their own identity and feel accepted for who they are. They wished to allow the child the freedom to be and fully express themselves. More than half of the parents discussed this concept. Tara, Sarah, and Monique mentioned the following:

> Society is just too much of a conditioning. So, what we try to do is allow our daughter to express herself fully without any interreference from anyone, including ourselves, which is difficult. I mean, she is getting conditioned from us, whether we like it or not

> …. We allow her to be entirely her own self, because she has the potential to do anything. – Tara

> I do want them to grow up as they are and not make them into something … – Sarah

> We are trying to kind of encourage her to be who she is, or how she is, without having to conform to whatever mould people say that you have to be. – Monique

Kiera, Sarah and Sally all have more than one child. In discussing their children's needs, they were mindful that each of their children had different needs and they therefore adjust their parenting approach in accordance with the individual child. All three of them identified that one of their children needed more emotional support than the other(s).

> Each child needs something very different. They both respond very well, but they respond very well when I approach them in a way that suits them. – Kiera

When describing her first-born, Sally told me:

> He was not your typical child as such and that he would need a bit more, um, support when it comes to emotional, especially emotional side.

Tsabary (2014), author of *The Conscious Parent*, speaks of how natural it is for a parent to try to mould a child to either be like them or be how they imagined their perfect child to be. The parents in this study seemed conscious of this and intent on allowing their children to have the freedom to be themselves. In this way they may have healthy parent-child relationships in which the child is able to become their own individual person, rather than an extension of the parent. Tara (one of the participants in this study) recognises that her child is being conditioned by society. This view is what Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems approach describes – that the parent is just one influence on the child and that there are many other influences,

including society as a whole. Monique, another participant, also acknowledged the influence of societal expectations on her child. She hopes her child will not feel the pressure to conform to societal expectations of her. The participants in this study may have a heightened awareness of their child's need for sense of self and autonomy (Griffin & Tyrell, 2013). This may be due to their own childhood experiences of not feeling able to fully express their individuality with their own parents (discussed in the theme, 'My childhood experiences').

The need for emotional validation

Many of the mothers were concerned about their child's emotional well-being. They desired their children to know that all their emotions are okay, and they encouraged them to express these emotions appropriately. The mothers said that the fulfilment of certain emotional needs precedes positive feelings about themselves and the world around them.

> We just wanted to raise our daughter with an actual open mind. She is entitled to her opinions, she is entitled to her emotions, but they have to been well thought through. – Nina

> If we can create, or if we can, I can't find the right word, help this little human being to be human, to be in touch with their emotions ... imagine what a beautiful world. – Rachael

> I want him to be in touch with his emotions. – Suzette

May felt that she can teach her daughter how to communicate well by assisting her in labelling her emotions and then talking about them.

> I read also that we have to communicate their feelings for them and we need to teach them how to use their words. So, um, I use that a lot with them, still, to say, you know, let's use our words, let's talk about it.

The mothers placed emphasis on emotional validation, asserting that children have the right to express their emotions. Emotional validation is an important part of the positive parenting approach. Children are encouraged to express their feelings and parents are encouraged to empathise with these feelings (Eanes, 2015, 2016; Nelsen et al., 2015). Validation has been shown to increase a child's emotional awareness and help them to be more tuned in to how they feel (Lambie & Lindberg, 2016). It is possible that there is a link between this study's participants' desire to meet their child's emotional needs and the claim that they make in the theme "it works" – namely that their children are very aware and articulate about their own emotions.

Positive parenting is about realising that, neurologically, children are incapable of regulating their emotions without the assistance of a parent (Eanes, 2015). Children may need the parent to help them appropriately manage their emotional overwhelm appropriately (Ockwell-Smith, 2016). The participants in this study showed an awareness of this and a desire to help their children to express their emotions appropriately.

The need to understand discipline

Pertaining to discipline, a few participants explained that children need to understand what is expected of them, and why. For some parents it is important that their children do not just obey them because 'they said so', but are given an explanation for why a behaviour may not be acceptable. They hope to adopt a healthy approach to discipline – one that is mindful of the

child's emotional well-being. The sentiment conveyed was that discipline rooted in understanding rather than obedience allows the child to feel respected and heard, and nurtures cognitive development through understanding.

> It makes sense to me that she understands things, rather than just does what is told. Um, so that, you know as she grows up, she understands concepts and is not a little sheep, following everyone else. – Sarah

> We don't punish him when he is doing something wrong, we try to explain to him why we are doing something, and what our decision is, you know. – Hannah

> We talk about things and respect, and not because we say to her, 'why have you done this', or 'don't say this to that person', but talking to her about the reasons why we are saying no, has made her emotionally so intelligent. – May

Nina felt her daughter needed to understand what is expected of her in order to feel emotionally secure.

> We have those conversations, this is what is expected of you, it's open. This is what is expected of you as an individual, this is what is expected of you in our family.

The parents in this study use positive discipline, the discipline model employed by the positive parenting approach. Positive discipline opposes the punishment of behaviour and advocates for teaching through encouragement and communication, and identifying the need behind the behaviour (Eanes, 2016, 2019; Lansbury, 2014b). The mothers in this study used positive discipline techniques and articulated that children have a need to understand their mistakes and learn from them. They preferred to discuss wrongdoings with their children and have their children understand why their behaviour is not appropriate. The participants did not have the

expectation that their children should obey simply because ‘they said so’, and this is indicative that they follow an authoritative rather than authoritarian parenting style (Baumrind, 1971). The mothers in the study said that they believed that this approach to discipline helped their children to feel emotionally secure (as discussed in the theme, ‘My views on punishment’). Kiera (one of the participants in this study) embraced the positive discipline technique of a solution-based approach, preferring to brainstorm alternative ways of behaving following discord, rather than penalising her children. Discussing solutions to challenging behaviour after it has happened is an effective way of using a positive parenting approach to teach long-term problem-solving skills (Eanes, 2016; Nelsen, 2006).

The need to both give and receive respect

Respect was vocalised by most of the mothers as an important part of their value system. The values communication and respect were mentioned frequently by 11 of the 16 participants. These participants told me that children have a need to both practise and receive respect. Monique said that, in responding consistently to her child’s needs, she thinks her child will develop a relationship with her that meets her need for both trust and respect.

> What you are going to teach them is that you will respond to their needs, which is building up that trust and respect. I guess, um, and so it all stems from there. I think, like any person you want to feel attached, and secure, and have this relationship of trust and respect. And I don’t, just because they are little, I mean, I also think they understand far more than you give them credit for, just because they can’t vocalise. – Monique

For the participants, the way to gain mutual respect was to model and practise it themselves. Through respect they hoped to have a more positive and fruitful relationship with their child.

> But I do think you just get more, more out of a child if you … Um, ja, just more understanding. I don't know, and it is all about respect, as well. – Meredith
>
> If you are respectful towards them, you just get so much more out of them. – Hannah
>
> We talk about things and respect, and not because we say to her, 'why have you done this', or 'don't say this to that person'. – May
>
> What I think you should do you should be responsive to them and their needs if you want them to be responsive to you and yours. I guess it's a respect thing, it's a two-way street thing, right. – Monique

The parents in this study emphasised that respect is a key part of how they parent. This is not just the child showing respect to them, but especially the respect of the parent for the child. That children need to be treated with both respect and dignity is a key tenet of the positive parenting ethos (Ahmann, 2002; Eanes, 2015; Juffer et al., 2012). This is based on the principle that all people, regardless of age, are entitled to respect. The belief in this approach is that only by modelling and giving respect can the parent expect the child to show respect in return (Cherry, 2017; Leo, 2016). In their book, *How to raise emotionally healthy children*, Newmark and Menninger (2008) propose that the need to be respected is one of a child's five critical needs. Monique (a participant) said that "just because children are little does not mean they do not understand things, nor that they aren't entitled to respect". This demonstrates her use of an authoritative parenting style (of which positive parenting is one), which is an emotionally supportive way of parenting in which the parent and the child work together and the child's wishes, feelings, and needs are taken into consideration (Baumrind, 1996). This is in contrast to an authoritarian parenting style, in which respect is demanded rather than earned (Robinson et al., 1995). Meredith and Monique (participants in this study) both believed that it is this

respect that fosters trust between themselves and their children. Both Hannah and May told me that, in showing respect to their children, they "get more out of them". It is not clear what they mean by this, but it indicates a belief that parental respect has a positive effect on their child and their relationship.

The need to feel loved and happy

The mothers wanted their children to know that they are loved and to feel happy. They see these needs as of vital importance. They hope that the positive parenting approach will enhance the bond created between themselves and their child, which would assist in conveying love to their children. This belief was expressed by Nina in her statement:

> The biggest motivating factor for me (to parent, using this approach) is just for my kids to know that I'm there, for them. All you want is for your kids to be happy, well-adjusted, and successful in something that they love. And this is what I feel we will give our daughter. – Nina

> My angle is, what we are to do is give them so much love and so much support and so much care. I mean, if everybody focuses more on responding with love and tenderness and care and compassion, then those children would model that behaviour to other people. – Rachael

> Life is tough, and you know, I want to make my kids happy and being positive around them. And you know, rather telling them that what they are doing is wrong. – Sally

Monique thought that, in meeting a child's needs, the child will be happier in general. She did not think this is unique to children, but something that all people experience.

> What you are going to teach them [the children] is that you will respond to their needs, which is building up that trust and respect, I guess. Um, and so, it all stems from there, for sure. And that, if their needs are met, I think that's with any person. If their needs are met they are generally happier to, and are able to function better. So, it's exactly the same with a child, right. – Monique

The parents talked to me about the importance of their children feeling loved and happy. Four mothers emphasised their desire for their children to experience happiness in their lives. Happiness is a construct that is integral to the positive psychology paradigm. Positive psychology researchers are particularly interested in what makes people happy and flourish, and what gives their lives meaning (Seligman, 2002a; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). My participants believed that their positive parenting approach, which incorporated support, love and care, would promote happiness in their children.

The sentiments discussed in this theme are encompassed by parenting expert Knost (2013a), who explains that the consequence of positive parenting is to raise a child who has had their needs met so that they can become adults who have all the coping mechanisms that they need in order to feel safe, secure, and cope with life's stressors.

To summarise this subtheme: The mothers in this study had a desire to meet their children's needs. They reflected on and had clear ideas of what these needs might be and hoped to meet these needs using positive parenting, and that positive outcomes would follow – happier, more confident and well-adjusted children who know that they are loved and respected. The participants wished to validate their children's emotions and help them to be 'in touch' with their feelings. They also wanted to allow their children the freedom to be themselves, without being manipulated by the parent or societal expectations of them. The participants parented

with mutual respect and wanted their children to feel loved and know that they can come to them in times of trouble.

Not only were the mothers in this study motivated by the desire to meet their child's needs so as to make an impact on their well-being, they also had the desire to influence society. I will discuss this second subtheme of 'My desires' in the next section.

4.1.3.2 My desire for social change

Social conscience is defined as "a sense of responsibility or concern about the problems and injustices of society" (Oxford Dictionaries, 2014, p. 165). Eleven of the 16 participants said that a social conscience and a desire for social change are of importance in motivating them to apply a positive parenting approach. The popular opinion among them was that the world is a "broken" and "dysfunctional place". They articulated seeing a lack of kindness, respect, personal responsibility, and accountability in the current world. This viewpoint is demonstrated in these quotes:

> I think there is a huge social problem in the world. I think that the world needs a lot more love to heal of the disgusting stuff going on. – Monique

> The society that we live in now, everything is so negative, everything is so what are you going to give for free? There is no empathy, there is no compassion, there's no more service in this country. There is no more: I'm going to serve a charity, I am going to serve the community, there is none of that. – Naomi

> There is so little kindness left in this world. – Sarah

> There is so much hatred out there. – Meredith

Due to the viewpoint that society is in a negative state, the mothers expressed feeling motivated to raise a child who becomes part of making the world a better place. The participants said that they are raising children not only to fit into society, but perhaps also play a small part in transforming it. Anna said the reason that she uses a positive parenting approach is because:

> It fits into our greater plan, which is to have a functioning adult human being that actually can fit into society and do great things.

Some of the participants wanted their children to be part of a solution to what they identified as 'social disintegration'. Naomi and Sarah wanted to instil values in their children that would lead to them engaging in prosocial behaviour. They wished to raise children who are considerate of the needs of others.

> There is so little kindness left in this world, and to instil that sort of thing, and rather, you know, put other people, not always put someone before you, but realise that helping other people is important. – Sarah

> I want my child to be somebody who sees someone struggling on the side of the road and says, 'can I help you?' I want her to be a good person, I want her to go to bed at night and be like: 'what did I accomplish, who did I serve today?' And that's what's led us to this [positive parenting] in the end. – Naomi

Hannah and Rachael thought that an appreciation of nature and animals was important.

> If we can help this little human being to be in touch with their emotions, to appreciate life and nature and animals, and, um, be tolerant of other cultures, races, nations. I mean, can you imagine what a beautiful world. – Rachael

> We try to bring him up to respect everything, people, nature, animals. – Hannah

The theme, “My desire for social change”, presents a future-orientated viewpoint. Rachael said that when you have a child:

> … it’s not about you anymore, it is about the future.

Sarah said she was motivated to use positive parenting because of the effect she felt her children could have on the world in the future:

> I think, maybe I am just motivated by who she will be, who both of them will be.

The participants discussed who they wanted their children to be now, but had also given a great deal of thought to how they want them to be in adulthood. The mothers saw beyond their child and the present and through about the future society their children might find themselves in.

Catrina told me that her motivation for using a positive parenting approach was to “bring about change”. She added:

> You are raising an adult; you are not raising a child.

In this way, she (Catrina) demonstrated an awareness that what she does now will also affect her child in the future.

Towards the end of her interview, Pam felt compelled to tell me that, in her experience, those who are members of positive parenting groups on social media are also part of other Facebook groups that promote environmentally friendly behaviour. She thinks this may be of significance to this current study.

> Um, just a random thought, I don't know how this will impact your study. It seems to me that the people that are members in positive and gentle parenting groups, are also

> those who tend to babywear instead of using a pram. They are also those who tend to co-sleep instead of letting baby sleep in their own room. They are also those on the zero waste journey groups, the recycling groups, the cloth nappy groups.

In the subtheme, "My desire for social change", I have reported the viewpoints of the participants on their motivation to parent using a positive parenting approach in order to bring about social change. I now discuss these findings in relation to the relevant literature.

The participants described the world as a broken place, a place devoid of compassion and empathy, one that needs healing. These participants are not wrong that there are many problems being faced in the world today. According to the World Health Organization (cited in Clark et al., 2020), today's children may face an unpromising future. This may be due to several factors, such as climate change, growing inequalities, and a lack of health care and educational opportunities. Due to their perspectives on social disintegration, the participants wished to parent children who would try to make the world a better place through prosocial behaviour and positive character traits. Prosocial behaviour is voluntary, helpful and has the aim of benefiting another person or society as a whole (Laible & Karahuta, 2014). In keeping with both the theory put forward by Seligman (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), the founder of positive psychology, and the positive parenting ethos, parents have the belief that all children innately have a desire to behave in a prosocial way (Kyriazos & Stalikas, 2018; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Parenting in an authoritative manner, such as positive parenting, is more likely to create children who have internalised moral values (Sunil & Sunil, 2018).

Four of the participating mothers talked about their child's future. They had thought about the long-term consequences of their current parenting for the adult that their child will become. In the positive parenting approach, there is great emphasis on long-term goals rather than

immediate compliance. One of the five pillars of positive parenting as laid out by Nelsen (2006) is that positive parenting should be effective in the long term.

In summary, this subtheme addresses the participants' desire to create social change. The participants expressed concern about the state of the world, describing it as a broken place. The mothers in this study wanted their children to engage in prosocial behaviour so as to contribute to positive change in the world. They had the desire to raise "good people" who do the right thing. The participants could also see beyond their child in the immediate and thought about how their present parenting may affect their child's approach to the world in the future.

Another theme from the category, "It's who I am", which emerged from the data concerns the mothers' views on punishment. This theme is discussed in the next section.

4.1.4 My views on punishment

In this theme, participants told me about their view on punishment. Due to the number of participants who talked about it, and the frequency with which they did so, I deduce that this is one of the most well-supported themes in this study.

In response to the question, "What motivates you to apply a positive parenting approach?", 11 of the 16 participants said that they felt motivated to apply a positive parenting approach to discipline due to their views against physical and punitive discipline. This point was conveyed by Anna, when sharing her view that "… the idea of smacking a little person is abhorrent and I just can't do it".

Some of the participants saw little difference between administering a "hiding" or "smack" (popular words used to describe physical punishment) and child abuse. Pam said her "… heart

bleeds for the children that get hit when they are just being human". Naomi described corporal punishment as "… violent, psychologically damaging, and mentally abusing a child".

Positive parenting is an approach committed to parenting with empathy, kindness, and understanding (Ahmann, 2002; Rodrigo, 2010). One of the main tenets of positive parenting is the use of non-physical and non-punitive discipline (Nelsen, 2006). Because of this, one inclusion criterion for this study required participants to declare that they did not use physical punishment. Therefore, it is not surprising that the viewpoints expressed by the participants with regard to punishment are in keeping with the principle that positive parenting is a gentle and non-violent parenting approach (Knost, 2013a). One cannot employ a positive parenting approach when using corporal punishment and physical punishment, as the two are mutually exclusive (Nelsen et al., 2015). What is worth noting is that most participants did not just have views on, but passionate opinions about, the use of corporal punishment, punitive parenting measures, and an authoritarian parenting style.

It was not just the idea of physical discipline that the participants disliked, but also measures such as time-out (a name for placing the child in isolation). Anna had created an attitude that her family was a team, and therefore did not like the idea of time-outs. Anna had strong ideas that removing a child from what she called her "family team" was "awful" and "ostracising". She told me:

> We [her husband and herself] were speaking to friends who had kids previously (prior to having their own children) about time-outs and I said to my husband 'that just feels really awful to me as well'. Because, you know, being shoved in a bedroom at four, to think about what you've done, like, I don't think that, that works.

Naomi agreed that she would not put her child in time-out.

> So, like, I never forced her to go to bed in a dark room, and close the door, I never left her.

Most of the participants described their discipline style as talking to the child, communicating wrongdoings, and explaining things to the child.

> We just kind of say I understand, you're frustrated, can I help you? Just kind of work through the situation, um, ja. So, just trying talk her through any kind of situation. – Monique

> We don't punish him when we he is doing something wrong. We try to explain to him why we are doing something, and what our decision is, you know. – Hannah

> I just try and talk through things with her and try and get to understand what is happening. Rather than just 'because I said so'. Ja. – Sarah

Kiera stressed that, for her, it was also important that disciplinary communication took place away from others so as not to humiliate or shame her children.

Throughout their interviews, the mothers in this study expressed that boundaries and respect were very important to them, but that there was also room for "well-thought-out negotiation". May talks about a parent as a guide who works with a child:

> I think positive parenting is all about communication, and going on their level, and guiding them, and doing it together, really. That's my aim.

The participants in this study disliked the use of isolation, commonly referred to as "time-out", as a means of discipline. They opted for talking to their children and communicating boundaries

in a mutually respectful manner, which allowed their children to have an opportunity to discuss their thoughts. The description of how the participants used discipline is similar to what positive parenting expert Lansbury (2014b) outlines in her book, *No bad kids*, in which she says that, instead of isolating or physically harming a child, the positive parent talks them through their emotions and their expression. In this way, the parents in this study were using the authoritative parenting principles of discipline in which the parents have boundaries and limits, but also encourage independent thinking (Baumrind, 1996).

The participants in this study talked about disciplining with mutual respect and open communication. This way of approaching discipline embodies the viewpoint of Mowder (2005) in the Parent Development Theory framework, in which she expresses that parenting is not something parents do to children, but is part of a reciprocal relationship. The mothers in this study saw their role as guiding their child so that they could teach long-term values, rather than improve compliance in the present. These values are important in helping children learn how to solve their own problems, without violence.

Despite having a gentle and kind approach to discipline, the mothers in this study were not permissive. Catrina and Monique, and Nina in particular, saw the importance of boundaries in managing child behaviour. Nina said her child liked boundaries; Catrina held the view that children thrive with boundaries. Parents using positive discipline empathise and express an understanding of their child's wishes, whilst still holding boundaries in place (Lansbury, 2014b; Nelsen, 2006; Nelsen et al., 2015).

Ten of the 16 participants also communicated the view that corporal punishment "did not work". Naomi said:

> You threaten to hit your child, I threaten to talk to her, and mine works in the end.

May continued:

> So, I've learnt early on that smacking doesn't work. It didn't work for me as a child, so it's not going to work for my own children. And I think it was hard, cause that's your first instinct.

Four of the mothers also explained that they never saw punishment as necessary, as their children were generally compliant and responded well to just being spoken to.

> We have never been that type of parents that are like, 'you're going to do this, you're going to do that'. It is always having that open conversation with her and we have, like, a really easy chilled kid, never gets in trouble, never pushes boundaries. She likes boundaries, she respects boundaries. – Nina

Nina's viewpoint was that she could not understand why "being nice to your children is not the norm", saying that she did not think mainstream ways of discipline are "very effective". Clara emphasised: "If I try to force my daughter in another way, it just backfires, every time."

May had used physical discipline in the past, saying that she "felt guilty for doing so". She told me:

> I did not like the person I was when I smacked her.

Four of the mothers believed that punishment would not teach their children good long-term values. Monique understood the importance of modelling behaviour for children (Rodrigo, 2010), and said:

> Giving a child a hiding teaches them that responding to situations that you don't like, that violence is the way to solve a problem.

Nina explained that using punitive measures was a "sure way for your kids to look for help elsewhere" later in life when they run into difficulties. Catrina said:

> You know, you are raising an adult, you are not raising a child. And if you are trying to teach your son or daughter that it's okay to, you know, for someone to treat you a certain way, then why should they change that when they are an adult?

As discussed previously under the subtheme, "my desire for social change", the focus on instilling long-term values even at the expense of immediate compliance is a key pillar in a positive parenting approach (Eanes, 2016). Monique, Nina, and Catrina believed that the use of physical punishment encouraged children to solve their problems with violence. They viewed modelling as an important behaviour in teaching their children how to better solve their challenges. Parental modelling is an important factor in teaching a child how to manage their emotions and consequently their behaviour (Rodrigo, 2010).

For more than half of the mothers in this study, the decision not to use physical punishment was made before the child was born, during pregnancy or early in their parenting journey. For a few it was a decision made based on a key resource – for Hannah it was a radio discussion, and for Pam a study she read on Facebook explaining infant brain development. This aspect is discussed further under the theme, "I am learning and applying my knowledge". Lastly, for most parents, hitting their child just did not resonate with who they are – linking up with the theme, "My personality, nature, and temperament".

In summary of this theme, the participants in this study expressed strong views against the use of corporal punishment and punishment in general. They reported that they did not use punitive measures or corporal punishment and advocated for the use of positive discipline, which entails talking to their children rather than isolating or hitting their children. A few of the mothers communicated that punishment was not necessary. as they found their children to be compliant and responsive to their positive forms of discipline. Some of the mothers said they thought about the long-term consequences of their discipline approach and felt that corporal punishment did not instil good values, as it impaired the child's ability to solve conflict later in life.

4.1.5 Summary of the themes and subthemes in Category 1

The first category, "It's who I am", contains four themes and two subthemes. This category embodies how the participants were motivated by a combination of their childhood experiences, their personality, nature, and temperament, their desire to meet their child's emotional needs, their desire for social change and, lastly, their views on punishment. In the theme, "My childhood experiences", I have relayed what the participants told me about their own parents and childhoods. The participants described their motivation to parent as coming from the desire to either be like their own parents, or to do the opposite of what their parents did. In the theme, "My personality, nature, and temperament", the participants described their personalities and characteristics as being aligned with the positive, gentle, and sensitive ethos of a positive parenting approach. In the theme, "My desires", the participants told me about their desires to both meet their child's emotional needs and to have an impact social change. Lastly, in the theme "My views on punishment", they had strong views against corporal and punitive discipline and were motivated to use positive discipline as an alternative to this.

In the next section I discuss why the participants felt motivated to apply a positive parenting approach – due to the view that it works for them.

4.2 Our approach works for us (Category 2)

This category consists of two themes. The first theme pertains to the positive results that the participants saw from their positive parenting approach, entitled "I am seeing great results – 'It just works'". The second theme centres on the idea that other approaches did not work for them and is called, "Other approaches did not work for us – Nor do we see them working for others".

4.2.1 "I am seeing great results – 'It just works'"

In this section, I discuss the theme entitled, "I am seeing great results – 'It just works'". Thirteen participants reported that they were motivated by the outcomes of their parenting approach. They found this to be evident in the relationship and closeness they had with their child, as well as their child's character, qualities, and behaviour. They also reported that the feedback that they received from others, including teachers, family members, and friends, contributed to their view that this parenting style works by way of affirmation. Not only did they report seeing that it works for them, but also that they were motivated by observing that alternative and more authoritarian parenting styles did not work for others.

The relationship between parent and child was important for the mothers in this study. Many found that their parenting approach increased the quality of their mother-child relationship. They saw this closeness as an indication that their parenting approach was working. They felt this was the result of positive parenting virtues, such as mutual respect, good communication, emotional support, and understanding (Nelsen, 2006). The relationship they had with their

children motivated the mothers in this study to continue to apply positive parenting. Naomi said:

> She will always be my daughter, but we will be friends for the rest of my life. And that is because of positive parenting.

Monique described her relationship with her child as exceptional, saying,

> I think attachment for me has got the biggest part to play with it, in terms of how we connected, because we've got an exceptional relationship, you know.

She added that she thought this closeness fosters co-operation and respect from her daughter:

> I think it adds to the fact that she will listen to me, because she does respect me, because she does love me, because she does have that attachment, because she knows I will love her, no matter what.

Not only did the mothers find their relationship with their children was close in the present, they also thought about the long-term importance of a good relationship. They saw the relationship building they are doing now as a foundation for the child's future:

> You are giving your child a relationship for the rest of her life that they know will always be … We let her know there are two people who love you and will help you out of any situation, and that's what positive parenting is! – Naomi

> I think it builds them up, and at the same time it works on your relationship too, and they communicate with you, which I think is so important. Because, if you don't build that up now, then you will have problems later on. – Catrina

The participants also felt that it was this close relationship that contributed to their child's temperament and behaviour, which they said was "compliant", "helpful", "respectful", "well-adjusted", and "easy going". Nina felt that the sense of security that she had cultivated contributed to her child's positive behaviour:

> At this point we have a really good relationship. And generally, if I ask her to do something, it gets done. And she is polite and helpful, and that's just the way she is. I think it's because she is happy to help, and do what she is told, because she has that secure environment.

May described her children's behaviour as "not difficult", which she said meant that she did not need to discipline beyond talking to them or, as she said:

> My children aren't difficult children as such. There has never been a reason why I have had to put extra things in place.

Sally noticed:

> My parenting makes the children more positive, and more happy, and more willing to do things, to help or follow commands.

When asked why they felt it works, the participants made statements such as:

> Its undeniable, it's undeniable to see that she is benefiting hugely from this way of parenting. I think (I am motivated), because I'm seeing the results, and I'm seeing my two children really thriving. – Tara

> I am seeing the results and that's really motivating me, to be able to see how far we've come with them and how happy they are … being able to manage the daily stresses that other children can't. – May

> I think I must say it just works. – Catrina

> We are motivated by the results that we see. – Hannah

When describing their children's personality, the participants descriptions were not dissimilar to those they used to describe themselves (see theme, "Who I am"). Character traits such as gentle, kind, empathetic, thoughtful, sensitive, easy going, and mature were mentioned by 14 of the 16 participants. Meredith described her son as:

> He's gentle. He's amazing, he is such an amazing soul, he helps other kids, he is soft, he is creative, he is awesome.

May felt that the empathy her child displayed was cultivated by a positive parenting approach:

> You can now see, with my eight-year old, where I am really picking the fruit. She's got so much empathy for people, and I know it's because of the way that we talk about things, and respect.

Monique said the following about her daughter:

> She is so gentle and thoughtful, about how it affects other people.

It was these responses to their parenting that the mothers in this study felt motivated them to continue using a positive parenting approach.

It was not just the parents who reported seeing the results of their parenting approach. Nine of the 16 mothers were further motivated by the feedback that they received from others – friends, family, and teachers. Anna explained how many people, including teachers, confirmed that they also see the qualities she sees in her child:

> We have everybody always says to us, her teachers and that, ‘there is a very confident, very empathetic little person’ that we are bringing up. And I think that’s something, for me.

Suzette was amazed that her child could be seen by others in such a positive light. She said:

> People are like, in, wow! He is so well behaved, look how he sits, so up, till now it has worked well for us.

May found that even strangers commented on her children’s behaviour:

> We go out with our children, and we have so many people commenting: ‘What have you given these children, because they’re so, they are just so content and so relaxed.’

May felt proud of her parenting approach and went on to tell me:

> I think I am motivated by seeing the results and also you know, chatting to other people who don't follow the same way, when they say like ‘how do you get Millicent to behave so nicely?’ Or you know, and when I tell them that we have never smacked her, there is this look of, ‘you’ve got to be kidding me, how it that possible?’

A few participants also said that they were inspired by others whom they had observed using a positive parenting approach with their own children. So, not only did they have the viewpoint that this approach worked for them, but they also felt motivated by how they had seen it working for others. For Sally it was the experience of growing up in a close relationship with her best friend’s family, whom she felt were very positive:

> Her mum and dad are very positive people, and I see how that impacts their family relationships, and how they interact with other people, and that's what I want for my family.

Nina commented on the importance of being around others who use a similar approach:

> I think you just need to surround yourself with a tribe that matches your vibe, and it just kind of gives you the confidence to keep going, because its working for other people.

Catrina found that she gained confidence by seeing that her friend (who has older children) had applied a positive parenting approach and that her children were thriving. She said that she can see it is working well for them.

In relation to this theme, the participants reported that they were motivated by the results that they saw from positive parenting. I now discuss this finding in relation to the current literature.

The participants in this study felt motivated by the positive results that they were seeing from applying a positive parenting approach. They felt their parenting approach improved the quality of their relationship with their child and they saw this relationship as important for their child's long-term success. Previous research found that a positive parenting style affects the parent-child relationship positively and fosters a secure attachment (Coste, n.d.; Eanes, 2016; Forgatch & DeGarmo, 1999; Juffer et al., 2012). What parents do now has an influence on a child's future (Latham, 1994). Naomi and Catrina believed that it is their good relationship with their children that will stand them in good stead in the future.

The mothers in this study also felt that the great relationship that they have with their children contributed to their child's positive behaviour, causing their child to be more compliant. This

is consistent with the view that authoritative parenting styles, such as positive parenting, are related to an increase in positive child behaviours and compliance, and a decrease in child problem behaviours (Aminabadi et al., 2015; Battistich et al., 1999; Baumrind, 1996; Bornstein, 2019; Kellam et al., 1998; Robinson et al., 1995). Eleven of the participants told me that their positive parenting approach "just works", that they can see the results of their efforts, and that this serves to further motivate them to continue applying this approach.

Fourteen of the 16 participants told me about their child's temperament. Among their descriptions were accounts of children who are sensitive, easy-going and kind. Eisenberg et al. (2005) attest to the idea that positive parenting has a positive effect on a child's temperament, which is likely due to the increased ability to self-regulate. Four of the mothers told me how empathetic their child was. Empathy allows us to identify the emotions of others, and is the motivator for prosocial behaviour (Guo & Feng, 2017; Riess, 2017). Although some aspects of empathy appear to be genetic and vary according to gender and culture (Ratka, 2018), research also shows that empathy is often a learned behaviour, nurtured by one's parents (Dunn et al., 1991; Loop & Roskam, 2016; Schrandt et al., 2009). In positive parenting, parents empathise with a child's emotions, even when instilling boundaries. In this way, parents model empathy for their children (Eanes, 2016; Nelsen, 2006; Ockwell-Smith, 2016).

Nine of the mothers reported feeling motivated by the feedback that they received from others, which validated their own view of their child's behaviour and character. Teachers, friends and even strangers often commented on their child's good behaviour.

Three participants were inspired by observing the positive results others achieved using a positive parenting approach, and preferred to surround themselves with these people. Whilst there is a wealth of information on the influence parental role models have on children (Jodl et

al., 2001; Stephens, 2007; Wiese & Freund, 2011), there is little information on the impact that observing other parents as role models has on your own parenting. Learning from others is called observational learning or social learning, meaning to learn by watching others (Bandura & Walters, 1963). This includes learning how to parent by observing both your own parents and other parents. Bandura's social learning theory also suggests that, in order to recreate behaviours we see in others, we have to be motivated to do so (Bandura, 2004). Therefore, observing the success of other parents may have motivated this study's participants to apply a positive parenting approach.

In summary of this theme: I have discussed the participants' views that a positive parenting approach works well for them. In the next section I report on and discuss the second theme of this category.

4.2.2 Other approaches did not work for us – Nor do we see them working for others

Parenting is an ever-changing and evolving process (Mowder, 2005), and not all the participating parents started out parenting from a positive parenting approach. Several participants experienced their parenting as adaptive, evolving from the realisation that what they were doing was not working for their child. Therefore, in conjunction with their reporting that they were motivated because the positive parenting approach worked for them, they were also motivated by the conclusion that other parenting approaches were not working for them. Thirteen of the participants described their parenting as evolutionary, changing with their knowledge and self-growth. Sarah said that she had to change her way of parenting to suit her first-born child's personality, and she pondered over whether it would have been different had her second-born, strong-willed child been born first.

> It's difficult to say if Katherine had come along first that I would have done it differently. It would have been fairly peaceful (laugh). I do try to be positive in general in life.

Monique felt the shift in her parenting was gradual. Naomi also thought her parenting "just gradually" shifted towards a positive parenting approach.

> There was always that conversation of, so this is what I've read. This is what I think would work for us and this how we will apply it. And I think just gradually it happened. – Naomi

Rachael felt that her parenting was constantly evolving and changing, and that her parenting now was different:

> … from the way I parented three years ago. Because you are changing all the time, and you can't beat yourself up about the fact that you have shifted and adjusted, because it's got to work for you and the child.

Sally also attested that her parenting "evolved quite a lot over the years".

Some of the mothers in this study told me that they did not think any other parenting style would work for their child due to his or her innate personality. Five of the mothers felt that their children were very sensitive. Because of this, some parents had to look for ways to parent that would be supportive of this sensitivity. They described their children as follows:

> My son is not your typical in-a-box boy, and I've had to look at different ways to guide him in the right direction, positively, because he is so sensitive. That, if I was negative, you know, obviously we are negative to some extent, but if that was my parenting approach, I would have massively damaged him. – Sally

> She is exceptionally sensitive. So, any other parenting style would not work for her. – Naomi

> My daughter is very sensitive, so I have kind of changed my way of parenting to suit her. – Sarah

Nine of the mothers recalled experiences where they had not been positive and peaceful towards their children. These moments had left them with a negative feeling and motivated them to change their behaviour and adopt a more positive approach to their parenting and discipline. Hannah recalled how upset she was about sending her child to the 'naughty corner' (a time-out strategy):

> I sent him to the naughty corner, and I've got a photo of him crying, because it upset him so much, it upset me so much. So that was decided, it just wasn't going to work for us.

May realised that using a punitive approach to discipline was not working for her, nor did it feel congruent with the person that she wanted to be. This caused her to look for alternative ways to discipline.

> There were a few smacks on the bum here and there. And then, eventually, I just one night cracked, and I said to my husband 'this is not working, this is really not working'. I can just remember once when I smacked my daughter just purely out of frustration and she just turned around and it was just that moment where, this is not me, this is not the person that I want to be.

Kiera summarised the sentiments of many of the mothers in the study, saying:

> So, definitely, I made lots of mistakes, which during parenting, has led me to change things.

Nina said that it is through these mistakes that you grow as a parent. She told me:

> I mean there have been a few instances, like that where it's been, somethings happened that doesn't really fall in line with how I want to parent. But, I think you grow, and you learn and think. We are probably all better for it.

Not only was the experience that other parenting approaches did not work for them a motivator, but some of the mothers also reported that they could see that it did not work for others either.

Most participants reported learning from the mistakes that they perceived other parents to have made. Sally said that it is "through different experiences and meeting different people" that one can learn more about others' parenting and decide whether you like or do not like their approach. She went on to say:

> I had seen enough examples of negative behaviour, or how the children had become a negative child, or um, the way that they perceive the world is very different.

Sally observed this difference by saying that she saw the children of authoritarian parents having a negative outlook on life and negative behaviour patterns. Nina felt it was obvious from the children she saw whether their parents used a positive parenting approach. She reflected:

> I think you learn a lot more from poor role models than you do from good ones. And, um, just seeing kids where you are like, oh, I can totally see where this behaviour is coming from. Maybe they just need an extra cuddle at home.

Like Nina, several of the mothers in this study said that they had observed the negative impact of authoritarian parenting approaches on children. They expressed seeing it resulting in

children who showed disrespect and were prone to bullying and yelling at their friends. Monique, Hannah, Rachael, and Kiera all mentioned that children model the behaviour that they see in their parents – both positive and negative. Just less than half of the participants used the word 'compare' or 'comparison' to describe why they felt a positive parenting approach worked better than other, more punitive or authoritarian. approaches. In comparison to other children, they thought their children were more "gentle", "thoughtful", "observant", "well behaved", and "less nervous".

> I compare to friends and family's children of similar ages, she is just a hell of a lot more behaved, she actually just listens. But, I think it's because there is that mutual respect, right, and trust. – Monique

> I see it in Jake, the way he is compared to maybe a child that does get hit or punished or humiliated or whatever. You can see the difference. – Rachael

> I'm seeing my two children really thriving and being able to manage the daily stresses that other children can't. – May

In this theme, "other approaches did not work for us – nor do we see them working for others", I have outlined the concept that the participants were motivated to parent using a positive parenting approach due to the perception that other approaches did not work for them. In the process of figuring out what does and what does not work for them, the participants in this study described their parenting as evolutionary or responsive to the results that they saw and the mistakes that they made.

According to Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 1991, 2006) parenting is an ever-changing process in which a parent's ideas and views change in response to their experiences and circumstances, as well as the child's developmental level and needs (Kobak et al., 2017;

Rodriquez, 2019). The participants reported that, when they had applied other parenting approaches, these had not worked for them. Some of the participants felt that approaches other than positive parenting would not work for them due to their child's sensitive temperament. Aron (2012), considered an expert in understanding sensitivity, describes sensitive people as individuals who often are more influenced by the environment, tend to reflect on their behaviour, are intuitive, creative, and conscientious. Aron (2012) feels that these individuals have differences in the way in which they neurologically process stimuli, meaning that sensitive people do not just behave differently, they are different. Parents' behaviours are often adjusted in order to accommodate their child's distinct temperament (Collins et al., 2000).

The mothers in this study acknowledged that they had made mistakes when it came to their parenting choices. They saw these mistakes as learning opportunities, or chances to change course. One of the ways parents learn is through practise and experience (Whiteman et al., 2003). According to Bandura's social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963), we learn by observing others. Often, we learn from role models who demonstrate a desired behaviour. However, we can also learn from observing the negative consequences of those who display undesired behaviour (Bandura & Walters, 1963). In the theme, "I am seeing great results – 'It just works'", the participants spoke about being inspired by observing others using a positive parenting approach effectively. In the same vein, the participants were motivated by observing others who did not use a positive parenting approach. Nina said she thinks we "learn more from negative than positive role models".

Through the observation of other parents, mothers in this study found the children of those who used an authoritarian approach to parenting to be both socially and emotionally impaired. They were able to see, by comparison, how much more gentle, considerate and resilient their own

children are. The negative effect of authoritarian parenting styles is well documented (Baumrind, 1971, 2012; Niaraki & Rahimi, 2012; Robinson et al., 1995). Children parented by authoritarian parents often have less social competence and are also seen as less happy than children whose parents use an authoritative style (King et al., 2016; Rettew et al., 2006; Stassen Berger, 2014; Sunil & Sunil, 2018; Vidourek & Merianos, 2016).

In summary of the theme, "other approaches did not work for us – nor do we see them working for others", the participants in this study did not all start out using a positive parenting approach, but saw their parenting as an adaptive process that evolved over time. Through experience and mistakes, they made gradual shifts towards positive parenting. When they had applied other approaches, these had not been successful. The participants had also learnt from observing other parents using authoritarian parenting approaches. They believed that authoritarian approaches result in children who, in comparison to their own children, are less socially and emotionally adept.

In summary of Category 2, two themes were identified. In the theme, "We are seeing great results – 'it just works'", the participants reported how well a positive parenting approach worked for them. They found this to be evident in their child's response to their parenting, the positive qualities their children possessed, and their good behaviour. In the theme "Other approaches did not work for us – nor do we see them working for others", the mothers in this study said that they did not think other, more authoritarian, parenting approaches worked for them and they also did not see them working well for others.

In the next section, I report on the third category that emerged from the data: "Gaining knowledge through parenting resources."

4.3 Gaining knowledge through parenting resources (Category 3)

This category has only one theme, namely "I am learning and applying my knowledge". When asked what motivated them to apply a positive parenting approach, more than half of the participants in this study discussed things they had seen, read, or learned through various channels of information. For some, this knowledge came prior to their parenting experience, while a few of the participants had some background in child development – either by way of experience or formal education. All the participants had completed secondary school, and most of them had some post-school education (see Chapter 3 for participant demographics). Sally named her degree in psychology as her biggest motivator, followed closely by her work in a school with children with autism spectrum disorder. She said:

> My biggest motivator has probably been my degree, and then working with the autistic children.

Two of the participants described their process of learning as "discovering things along the way", "stumbling" upon books, articles and blogs that resonated with how they are as parents and how they wish to be as parents. Pam described her process as a snowball effect, where reading one article led to reading more:

> I think the one flamed or boosted the other. I read an article and it led to another article, and it led to another. And by the end of a few weeks I read the basics of how to handle so called tantrums, toddler tantrums. So, that gave me the basics.
>
> You've made that decision and then you go looking for hints and tips. So, that was when I started reading up on 'what were the other options', and I stumbled on transformational parenting on Facebook, and some of the books. I can't remember what they are. – Anna

This was a popular view among the participants, who found that one resource recommended or quoted another, which awoke their curiosity to find more information. For Rachael, finding an attachment-parenting resource confirmed what she was doing naturally (linked to the theme, "my personality, nature and temperament").

> I started reading up about attachment parenting, and that just gelled with me, and I was like, okay, well, that's what I'm doing naturally. So, I'm just going to carry on, and that's what feels right for me.

Through these resources, the participants were able to identify that what they were reading was called positive parenting. Through this understanding, they were able to source and read more about a positive parenting approach.

Three of the mothers in this study could recall a key source of information that had made a huge impact on their way of thinking and parenting. Nina recalls a blog her sister sent her:

> There was a blog my sister actually found and sent it to me, and I've been following them for years. And what came up, a lot of it probably helped.

Hannah heard something on the radio about explaining things to your children from a young age, which made an impact on her. She told me that was the first time she had heard about a positive discipline approach:

> I heard it possibly on the radio one day, when somebody said, if your child is near the stove, don't tell them don't touch the stove, give them a reason. And then I thought, well that makes a lot of sense.

Pam remembered:

> I happened to read something relating to gentle parenting, specifically why not to spank or hit your children, or whatever the correct phrase is, and it hit home.

Two parents reported being motivated by reading popular parenting books when their children were in infancy, and finding that these books were not consistent with their view of how a parent and infant should behave.

> So, I read a few books and I read the traditional books. And they were just like, okay, no, not for me. I don't want to do that to my kid. – Naomi

Monique was disillusioned with the *Baby Sense* series of books:

> I think it would be wonderful if there was a book that competed with the likes of *The contented little baby*, or *Sleep sense* or *Baby sense* or whatever. Um, I think it's a marketing issue. I think that a lot of people are led to believe that those are the be all and end all and holy grail of parenting. And they are a big load of **** as far as I'm concerned, sorry.

Two other participants mentioned the Facebook breastfeeding support group, "La Leche League", as the starting point of their learning. This is a group that promotes attachment parenting, starting with the breastfeeding relationship.

> … when I started realising a lot of the La Leche League philosophies that are on parenting, are quite different to, um, what everyone else was telling me to do and what the books were telling me to do. And the books weren't sitting well with me, and everyone's advice was also not sitting well with me. Um, so, I kind of just started doing some more research into it. And just that, when I sort of read up on the positive parenting

> and attachment style of parenting, it just, um, it just made sense. It just totally clicks. I can't explain it any other way. – Monique

When participants were asked where they found their information, key resources mentioned were Google, blog posts, books, and 'Pinterest' (a website where individuals share ideas in the form of a virtual pin board) (yourdictionary.com, 2020). The participants' most popular answer was the social media platforms Facebook and Instagram. Clara explained that she felt that, once you subscribe to certain pages on social media, you receive more information targeted at your interests:

> … once you start thinking about things and you like a few articles on 'Facebook', or you follow a few people on 'Instagram', you know, it's like, this media targets you. So, you are more and more exposed to different articles that make you think about something.

Clara's sentiment was shared by other mothers, who spoke about how various positive parenting Facebook pages that they followed led them to other pages of a similar nature. Some of the pages mentioned were 'Raised good', 'La Leche League', 'Wild child', 'Peaceful parenting', 'Positive parenting', 'The national parent magazine' (their Facebook page), and 'Dr Sears' (an attachment parenting advocate and paediatrician).

> The most support for this would be from like a gentle parenting group on Facebook, which is like a world-wide thing and you kind of realise, it does work, because there's other stories. So, I think just relating back to that can also motivate you. – Catrina

Not only did participants learn through informational channels, but also from their own experiences, mistakes, and self-reflection. When asked what motivated her parenting approach, Clara said: "Well, its experience, to be honest", explaining that she has figured out what to

apply from past experiences with her children. Rachael added that her parenting "is evolving every day", that, as she gains experience, so her parenting becomes more effective. This aspect has been discussed at length in the theme, "Our approach works for us – We are seeing great results".

In this theme, participants explained the importance they put on continuously learning about and seeking knowledge on the positive parenting approach as a source of motivation for their use of positive parenting. Further on, I will discuss the findings of this theme in the context of the current literature.

A parent's knowledge of child development is of great importance in understanding child behaviour. This is why many organisations fund education programmes (De Graff et al., 2008; Juffer et al., 2012; Sanders, 1999). An important tenet of positive parenting is an understanding of what to expect developmentally from a child and being able to apply effective strategies to manage challenging behaviour (Eanes, 2016; Lansbury, 2014b; Seligman, 2002b). Parents with higher educational levels are better informed about developmental milestones, parenting strategies, and expectations of child behaviour (Bornstein, 2019; Huang et al., 2005). The literature attests that mothers who have more than average levels of knowledge about child rearing and development are more likely to engage positively with their children (Al-Maadadi & Ikhelf, 2014; Bornstein, 2019; Breiner et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2005). This would suggest that the commitment to reading and learning by this study's participants may have contributed to them applying a more positive approach to their parenting. Parents who are motivated to parent optimally are more likely to look for information about child development in order to parent in the best interests of the child (Krochek & Mowder, 2012). Four of the participants had a formal educational background in child development studies (see 'my participants' in

Chapter 3). Another two participants told me that they had uncovered information when reading one or two articles, which led to more information of interest being made available – one resource led to another. For three of the participants, one key source of information paved the way to learning more about the positive parenting approach.

Some of the mothers were disheartened by popular parenting books. Previous research shows that the advice in parenting books, which often dictate routines and guidelines about how parenting should be done, can lead to self-blame, a loss of confidence and an increase in maternal stress (Harries & Brown, 2019; Rallis et al., 2014; Reichel, 2016) and post-partum depression (Harries & Brown, 2019). The journey into motherhood is made overwhelming by the amount of contradictory information contained in different books, with some information suggesting a parent-led approach and others a child-led approach (Harries & Brown, 2019; Hoffman, 1999). One particular child-led approach that resonated with the parents in this study was that of attachment parenting – a parenting practice that overlaps with, and is incorporated into, positive parenting (Bowlby, 1979; Nelsen, 2006).

One source of information that was popular amongst the mothers in this study was social media. It is not surprising that the participants utilised social media as a source of information. In a survey conducted by *Today's Parent* magazine (Smith, 2017), of the one thousand parents consulted, 60% said they used social media as a source of information and advice, with 26% who felt that social media increased their confidence as a parent. The mothers in the current study told me that they found the advice of others on social media particularly helpful (reported and discussed under category 4, 'the importance of social support'). It is possible that the participants in this study would rather read about the experiences of other mothers online than

read an expert opinion that is not applicable to their specific parenting concerns (Harries & Brown, 2019; Mungham & Lazard, 2011).

To summarise: In this theme, the participants reported that they were motivated to use a positive parenting approach by things they had learnt and things they had read. For some participants, learning happened through formal education. Other participants were motivated to seek information in books, social media, blog posts, and the internet. A few participants could recall a single source of information that highly motivated them to use a positive parenting approach. A few participants said they rejected popular reading materials and 'expert' advice and sought out alternative advice that was aligned more with their positive parenting principles. Social media were a popular platform for this alternative advice. Some of the participants reported that they also learned from their own mistakes and experiences as a mother.

In the next section, I report on and discuss the impact of social support in motivating parents to apply a positive parenting approach (Category 4).

4.4 The importance of social support (Category 4)

The only theme in this category is "I couldn't do it without support".

With the exception of two, the mothers in this study spoke about the importance of social support in assisting them with remaining motivated to apply a positive parenting approach. Although most mothers felt supported, they also highlighted how lonely and isolating it was to parent in this way. Four types of social support emerged from this study, namely partner support, friend support, family support, and social media group support. These forms of support are reported on further and discussed.

With the exception of one single mother, participants in this study were married (13 participants) or co-habiting (two participants) with their child's/children's father. More than half of the mothers found *partner support* to be fundamental to the successful execution of the positive parenting approach. When asked what supported them in applying a positive parenting approach, Nina and Naomi said:

> The biggest supporting factors for me has been my husband. – Nina

> I think my husband is the most supportive. – Naomi

Although some mothers were the driving force behind parenting this way, most mothers described their partner as being as motivated as them.

> The whole idea of being a team is nothing if you are not involved, both of you. It can't just be the mom, and the Dad tags in afterwards … we kind of decided that we were going to be a team and that's how we were going to parent. – Anna

> The other thing in terms of parenting, is that my husband is very involved. We are actually so aligned on parenting things. So, I find that, from a consistency perspective, very helpful. – Clara

Participants reported that their husbands were actively involved in family life and parenting, and shared the responsibilities and workload.

> My partner is very actively involved, and you know, we are both at home together with her, both of us. So, we are both actively involved in her. – Tara

Eight of the mothers found their husbands to be particularly supportive when they felt burnt out or needed a break, portraying their husbands as having complementary skills and personalities to their own. A few mothers described their husbands as having a calmer

temperament than themselves. This was especially helpful when disciplining the children, as the parents were able to combine their strengths as individuals, which assisted them not to use physical punishment, even when angry.

> My partner (is supportive), yes because he's like, he's actually, probably a whole lot more patient than I am. And sometimes when I've had enough, and I need to just walk away, he's there. – Tara

> Having my husband is very helpful; we tag team [a term for taking turns]. Um, and generally speaking, if I'm feeling exhausted or overwhelmed. In the same way that we try to do positive parenting we also try to do similar strategies in our relationship. – Kiera

> He taught me how to talk and to talk things through in a calm way. He's got just a very calm temperament and way of dealing with matters. And like I said, he's a talker. So, he will also talk to the children. I think what's good about us is, we are a team. – May

Clara felt that her partnership meant that she did not feel that she was carrying the weight of parenting alone. She expressed it as follows:

> I feel like I don't have to do it alone, and I don't have to go through the whole day, just me try and figure them [the children] out, you know.

More than half of the mothers described their partners as being fundamental to their parenting approach. Fathers are increasingly involved with all aspects of child caregiving (Cano et al., 2019; Yogman et al., 2016). Partner support is important in reducing the stress of mothers (Crnic & Greenberg 1990; Eanes, 2016). Some of the participants in this study felt that their parenting was complemented by that of their partners, and they felt that they and their partner were on the same page when it comes to their parenting approach. According to Schofield et

al. (2009), parents have a strong influence on one another's approach, with parenting styles often merging over time.

Eight of the participants spoke of *friends* being a good source of support and motivation. Although most participants reported having few friends, the quality of their friendships is an important factor in supporting and motivating them in their parenting.

> We don't have that large support group, but we have a tiny friendship support group, that we just actually couldn't live without. – Rachael

> So, friendship has been really valuable, and our friends are great in terms of motivating us. I would absolutely say that social support beyond your husband and beyond your family unit is massive. – Kiera

For Pam, Tara, and Suzette, it was a single friend that they could rely on for advice, support, and even inspiration.

> So, there's no judgement for them [her other friends], but there is not a lot of support either. And what I found supportive was one, one single friend that I made that is also a gentle parent. So, we talk to each other whenever things upset us or when the one needs advice from the other. – Pam

> In fact, there is a friend of mine, she, um, she's inspiring to me as well. But, in the same breath I think she derives some inspiration from me in the way that I parent as well. – Tara

Kiera, on the other hand, told me she had "… a lot of family and friends who are on the same path". Meredith shared this sentiment, telling me that her son joining a Montessori school gave her access to other parents like her. She said:

> Well, it's amazing to be surrounded by likeminded people.

More than one participant used the term "tribe" and the proverb "it takes a village to raise a child". This was used in the context of surrounding yourself with others with similar values and parenting choices as your own. Other phrases used were finding "likeminded people" and "people on the same path".

> You just need to surround yourself with a tribe that matches your vibe and it just kind of gives you the confidence to keep going, because its working for other people. – Nina

When it comes to friends, the participants reported feeling both supported and socially isolated. Studies show that, for some, becoming a parent increases their social life and for others it intensifies their feelings of social isolation and loneliness (Nomaguchi & Milkie, 2003; Umberson & Grove, 1989). Whilst Meredith and Kiera (two participants) told me that they had a large group of friends who provided them with social support, four other mothers in this study said they only had a few friends or a single friend to whom they looked for support. It may be that the mothers in this study did not have large social circles, but rather a few friends who parent in the same way, and therefore are able to provide positive parenting support.

Although less prevalent than partner and friend support, four mothers in this study communicated that *family* was a good source of motivation and support. This is reported even though the majority of the participants' own parents did not use a positive parenting approach.

> She [her mother] probably came into her own as a mom a bit later than I have, but she has been awesome and super supportive as a Granny from day one, and just like, 'do what you need to do, do what feels right, don't listen to advice, don't listen to the

> textbooks, don't do what society says you should be doing, do what, as a mother, you feel you should be doing.' – Nina

Two of the participants also admitted that their parents expressed experiencing some guilt that they had not used this parenting approach themselves. The mothers in the study told me that the positive feedback about their children received from their own parents was motivational and gave the participants a sense of pride.

> I feel like my mom from word go was so awesome: 'do what you need to do, trust your instincts, trust your mom gut'. Um, for a little while my Dad was like: 'maybe you should be doing this and maybe you should be doing that'. But, then he's watched baby grow and seen how polite she is and how advanced she is. And he said to me on more than one occasion, 'I wish I knew then what you know now'. – Nina

> My Mom has also been a very good motivator. To be honest, she is very much part of their lives, when she has them or when she, you know, will always send me a message back, saying you know, 'good manners' or, um, 'hulle het sommer met my begin praat oor goed' [they randomly started to talk to me about things]. – May

> Both my parents have said that 'they can't believe what good parents we are'… it is quite nice to know. My Mom has kind of confided in me that she wishes she had taken more of this kind of line with us kids. – Anna

Despite their family being a source of support for some, there were four participants, including Pam, who did not find family members supportive. She explained:

> My own parents don't support us. They let us parent the way that we see fit. So, there's no judgement for them, but there is not a lot of support either.

Suzette described her family relationships as strained and explained that for her to parent this way she has had to instil boundaries for family members in order to protect her son from what she was exposed to in childhood. She said:

> I had to put up boundaries with my Mom because she was very manipulative. And I had to learn, and I literally had to come to the choice in my life where either I'm going to make this work, or I need to cut her out of my life.

Family was a source of social support for some participants and not seen as supportive by others. Those who found their family supportive seemed to derive the most support from their mothers. This support took the form of validation of their parenting style and affirmation that they were doing a good job, as well as positive feedback on the grandchild's behaviour. Those participants who found their parents unsupportive had emotionally distanced themselves from them. The participants had mixed opinions regarding the support they received from their families. One participant mentioned that her family was neither supportive nor unsupportive. There is a link between the theme, "It just works", in which the participants report seeing good results from their parenting, and the recognition of this from their own parents. From the comments, grandparents may initially have been less supportive of the positive parenting approach taken with their grandchildren, but as they witnessed the positive results they were able to give positive feedback. This is also indicated by some of the mothers in this study, who reported that their own parents experienced some sense of regret that they did not have such an approach (as expressed in the theme "my childhood experiences") when they parented the participants.

Parents are increasingly turning to *social media* as a source of support (Duggan et al., 2015; Moon et al., 2019) and education (as mentioned in the theme, "Educating myself and

learning"). Half of the mothers in the current study were able to connect with likeminded individuals and read about the challenges others have experienced in raising their children with a positive parenting approach. Facebook was the predominantly mentioned social media platform. The mothers 'followed' (a follower is a social media user who decides to see all of another user's shared written or visual content (BigCommerce, 2020)) content and were part of groups (large numbers of followers (BigCommerce, 2020) that made them feel part of a community of likeminded mothers. The ability to connect with others via social media helped the mothers who felt that they were not surrounded by many friends and family who used a positive parenting approach to feel less isolated. Catrina described a Facebook group as her most supportive resource, regarding it as her motivation to continue with positive (gentle) parenting, as she can see on Facebook that it is working for others:

> I think the most support for this would be from, like a gentle parenting group on Facebook, which is like a world-wide thing. And you kind of realize, it does work, because there's other stories.

Sarah also described it as helping reassure her that she is "on the right track".

> I just feel like, it does reassure me that I am on the right track, that other people are doing it and it is working.

Monique said that she first learned that her parenting style was called positive parenting through the Facebook breast-feeding support group, La Leche League (2020), and from there she found more groups and information.

> I got exposed to [positive parenting] on that Facebook group [La Leche League], about positive parenting. And that's where I really started learning more about it.

Through the use of social media, the participants in this study found likeminded individuals. Mothers in particular are more likely to view social media as a useful source of information about parenting techniques and use it as a platform to vent, offer and solicit advice, and seek validation (Archer & Kao, 2018; Duggan et al., 2015; Moon et al., 2019; Setyastuti et al., n.d.)

Human behaviour never happens in isolation of the social environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, social support is essential to humans (Maslow, 1943). Having the support of others may reduce stress, provide a sense of belonging and enhance mental health (Armstrong et al., 2005; Pennebaker, 1990). Social support can also result in a more positive approach to parenting (Respler-Herman et al., 2012).

In this study, the social support that the participants experienced can be defined as emotional, instrumental, and informational (Morse, 2010). Emotional support is the empathy, compassion, and concern we receive from others (Wessels, 2013). Instrumental support relates to the responsibilities and tasks involved in childcare. Informational support pertains to the advice, information, and guidance received from others (Armstrong et al., 2005).

The participants in this study seemed to find their partners to be sources of both emotional and instrumental support. Partners can share the childcare workload and provide practical assistance, as well as be there to support the mothers in times of need and when she is feeling overwhelmed.

The participants in this study valued their friends as sources of both emotional and informational support. They saw their friends as capable of providing advice and inspiration, as well as emotional validation and empathy. Social media was experienced mainly as a platform for informational support, but emotional support was also gained when asking the

advice of others on the platform. It appears that their family was only emotionally supportive for some participants, while for others family was not seen as a support structure.

To summarise this theme, entitled “I couldn’t do it without support”, I have reported and described how mothers rely on social support as a means to remain motivated to parent from a positive parenting approach. Four main sources of support were identified: partner, friends, family, and social media. I began by indicating how important partner support is for these participants, as this form of support is both emotional and practical nature. Participants also told me that their friendships, although often limited to one or two individuals, are a source of advice, inspiration, and emotional and motivational support. Less frequently reported by the participants was their family as a source of support. This source of support manifested as respect for their choices and validation that they were good parents. Social media was the last form of social support that emerged from the data. This is a source of information, but also gave the participants the opportunity to ask for advice, and to feel part of a larger community.

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have reported and discussed my findings in relation to the existing literature. My results are conceptualised in four categories, containing eight themes and two subthemes. When asked what motivates them to apply a positive parenting approach, the 16 participants had not just one, but multiple sources of motivation. This is consistent with the viewpoint expressed in the literature review (see Chapter 2), namely that human motivation is multifaceted and cannot be explained by a single theory alone (Weiner, 1989). According to Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005), parental development is a blend of the parent’s own experiences, needs, and life circumstances, in conjunction with the ever-changing needs

and development of their child. This seemed to be true for my participants as well, with four main sources of motivation derived from this study's data.

In the first category, I identified that the participants saw positive parenting as a reflection of "who they are". This is made up of their past experiences in childhood, their personality, nature and temperament, and their life views and desires. According to Parent Development Theory, a parent's own experiences guide their approach to parenting (Mowder, 2005, 2006). For the participants in this study, their experience of their own parent's parenting was predominantly negative. This experience motivated most of them to apply a different and more positive approach with their own children in order to spare them the adversity that they experienced in their childhood from the inadequate parenting they recall of their own parents' approach to them. Beyond their past experience being part of who they are, the participants also told me that positive parenting feels natural to them due to their own personalities, which are sensitive and gentle. These are qualities that are best suited to positive parenting, which requires parents to respond to child behaviour with sensitivity and non-violent means of discipline. Parent Development Theory (Mowder, 2005) also posits that parenting is a balance between the parent's experiences and needs and the ever-changing needs of the child. Participants in this study had a strong desire to meet the emotional needs of their child, which they regarded as being important to their child's development. They also desired to make a positive change in the broader society by raising their child with positive parenting values. Participants in this study had strong views against the use of punitive discipline and corporal punishment, as these views were core to their identity as a parent.

Secondly (described in Category 2), the participants were motivated by the positive results that they saw from their parenting approach. The participants told me that this parenting approach

was really working for them and that other parenting approaches had not yielded successful outcomes. The good behaviour and demonstration of positive qualities such as empathy, compassion, and kindness, which the mothers in this study reported experiencing and observing, are consistent with the present literature, which attests to the positive results a positive parenting approach can yield (Aminabadi et al., 2015; Battistich et al., 1999; Baumrind, 1996; Bornstein, 2019; Kellam et al., 1998; Robinson et al., 1995).

Thirdly (Category 3), the participants were motivated by what they knew and continued to learn about optimal child development, and they believed that their parenting was the most advantageous parenting approach to support this. Parents who are better educated in child development are more likely to parent their children more positively (Al-Maadadi & Ikhelf, 2014; Bornstein, 2019; Breiner et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2005). Furthermore, the mothers in this study were committed to continuously updating their knowledge of the most favourable parenting approach for their children.

Lastly (Category 4), the mothers felt that the social support they received from partners, friends, family, and social media was pivotal in supporting, inspiring, and helping them to be a positive parent.

In the next chapter, I provide concluding reflections on this thesis. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations of my study and, finally, recommendations for future research on the topic of positive parenting.

Chapter 5

Concluding reflections, limitations, and recommendations

In this chapter I reiterate the findings of this study and provide concluding thoughts and reflections. Following this, I discuss the limitations of the study and make my recommendations for further research on this topic.

5.1 Concluding thoughts and reflections

In Chapter 4, I reported the results and discussed them in relation to the literature. My research question was concerned with parental motivation for applying a positive parenting approach. It became clear from the literature that motivation is complex and multifaceted, while most research reveals that there is rarely a single motivation for most human behaviours (Bernard et al., 2005), and the findings of this study are no different. The mothers in this study had multiple motivations for applying a positive parenting approach. During the data analysis procedure, four categories of motivation emerged. Within these categories were themes and subthemes. I will now come to conclusions about the four categories and their respective themes and subthemes.

A key outcome of this study is that positive parenting speaks to who the participants perceive themselves to be, as comprised of their temperament and personality, thoughts, viewpoints, and past experiences. The way that the participants described themselves and explained their views is very much aligned with the positive parenting ethos, which encourages gentle and empathetic parenting (Ahmann, 2002). Due to their temperament and personality, the participants felt that positive parenting came to them naturally. The participants had strong views against the use of corporal punishment and punitive discipline. These views enabled

them to practise positive discipline, which, by its very nature, is non-violent and non-punitive (Nelsen, 2006). Some participants in this study were motivated by their negative childhood experiences to apply a different, more positive, approach with their own children than their parents did with them. From a positive psychology perspective, this means that these mothers were able to use their past distress to their advantage (Seligman, 2002b), even though the literature suggests that we often repeat the mistakes of our own parents in parenting our children (Morse, 2010; Schofield et al., 2014). Based on the reported thoughts, viewpoints and experiences of the participants, it seems less likely that they tried to fit their parenting into a positive parenting approach and more likely that the positive parenting approach fit into who they see themselves to be. At the very least, positive parenting aligns with who they wish to be, and thus learning more about the approach encouraged and enhanced their natural persuasion towards a gentler, less punitive and more sensitive way of parenting.

According to the findings, not all the participants' parenting behaviours were directed by their nature alone. They had an awareness of and were motivated to learn about child development in order to be supportive of what they understood that a child needs to flourish. Mothers who have more knowledge are able to apply better strategies to manage child behaviour and are more positive with their children (Bornstein, 2019; Huang et al., 2005). Therefore, by becoming more educated, the participants were better able to apply positive parenting, which is an optimal parenting approach (Eanes, 2016).

There is a lot of research that suggests that positive parenting is a favourable way of parenting, and the reported positive consequences are numerous (Ahmann, 2002; Danzig et al., 2015; Isen et al., 1987; Latham, 1994). In alignment with the literature, the participants in this study were motivated by the results that they see from their parenting, which for them indicated that their

parenting is effective and successful and. as they said, “it just works”. They saw the effects of their parenting approach as beneficial for their children and themselves. This may mean that they were encouraged and that their approach was the correct one (for them), which gave them confidence to continue using a positive parenting approach.

Social support is of importance to all human beings beyond just parenting. However, parents and mothers who experience social support are more likely to engage in positive parenting practices (Lippold et al., 2018; Taylor et al., 2015). Social support, and in particular partner support, was reported to be fundamental to the parenting of the participants in this study. Many of the participants explained that they could not have used a positive parenting approach without the practical, emotional, and informational support of their partners, friends and, to a lesser extent, family. Each of these sources supported the mothers in different ways. Partners were able to assist in the burden of responsibility and practically share the parenting load, but in the case of these participants, were also able to motivate them when they were feeling overwhelmed or burnt out. Friends could advise and provide emotional support. For some participants, family members were encouraging and supportive. However, this was not true for all the participants. In general, the participants explained that the social support they receive helped them to remain motivated in their positive parenting approach.

Finally, in this study I explored what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach, I found that these motivations are multiple and complex, and I have highlighted the importance of motivation in applying a positive parenting approach. These findings are of value in contributing to the under-researched field of parental motivation for applying a positive parenting approach, as well as the literature regarding positive parenting in general. By exploring what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach, this study’s findings

can assist professionals who are advising parents, or who are writing about positive parenting in self-help books, or who are developing positive parenting interventions.

5.2 Limitations of this study and recommendations for future research

5.2.1 Limitations

In the context of this study, I was able to identify four limitations. The first two are of a personal nature. and the last two are of a practical nature. I will now report on these.

It is of importance for a researcher to be aware of the limitations of their study, as research studies can never be unaffected by the researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I was able to reflect on my own preconceptions, bias, and knowledge (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Several limitations were considered. The first of these was that I had previously learned about positive parenting and had engaged with specific parenting techniques, such as those taught in the course I did offered by Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) International (PCIT, 2018) and Attachment Parenting UK (2018). These courses presented an individual and specific understanding of and techniques in the application of positive parenting. At the beginning of this study. I had to adjust my thinking to a broader understanding of the term positive parenting, rather than the teachings with which I was familiar. I needed to reflect on any preconceived ideas I had about the execution of positive parenting in order to remain open to the viewpoints of the participants, who may have practised different techniques within the positive parenting approach.

Leading on from this, at the time of data collection I was not a parent, and this may have limited my understanding of what it means to be a parent applying a positive parenting approach. However, I became a parent during this research, which then afforded me the opportunity to

view the responses of the participants from the viewpoints of both an objective researcher and a subjective parent. After becoming a mother practising both attachment and positive parenting, I was better able to relate to the viewpoints and opinions of my participants in a way that I could only have understood theoretically prior to motherhood. The strength of this is that I was able to examine how I viewed the participants' responses both before and after becoming a parent myself. This may have led to me being able to have multiple understandings of the analysed data. I was able to develop an appreciation of just how challenging the responsive nature of attachment and positive parenting may be, whilst being careful not to incorporate my own experiences into the research findings.

Lastly, due to the research question being specific, I wanted to work with an exclusive group of parents (with a positive parenting approach). Therefore, I used purposive sampling, which I employed by placing a Facebook advertisement that asked for volunteer participants who adhered to specific criteria. It happened to be that the respondents to my advertisement, who became the participants in my study, were all white, predominantly middle-income mothers, who may not be completely representative of the positive parenting population, and therefore may have limited the transferability of the study (Anderson, 2010). The study is also limited to the perspectives of mothers, fathers who practice positive parenting may have different viewpoints and experiences.

Furthermore, the criteria used to identify the participants as positive parents was both subjective and not a valid instrument for screening participants, due to this the findings should be interpreted with this in mind.

5.2.2 Recommendations

This study involved 16 participants, all of whom were mothers of predominantly middle-class status and all of whom were of the white race. It would be of interest for future studies to identify a more varied group of positive parents of different races and socio-economic class categories. It would also be of interest to research the viewpoints of fathers and single parents, as well as both parents who apply a positive parenting approach.

Furthermore, this study was done in South Africa, and it would be of interest to find out whether the findings differ in different geographic locations due to different societal norms and child-rearing practices. Due to the lack of available literature on parental motivation for applying a particular parenting approach, as well as the lack of literature on the viewpoints and motivations of those applying a positive parenting approach, it will be of value to do more studies with the aim of identifying parents' motivations to use a positive parenting approach.

It would also be of value to further studies to develop a reliable and valid instrument for determining whether participants meet the criteria to be defined as applying a positive parenting approach.

This study looks at what motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach, some of the participants mention that they did not all start off parenting this way. A study focussing specifically on parents who identify themselves as having changed parenting approach from a punitive approach to a positive parenting approach could be extremely insightful. It would be valuable to understand the motivation for changing parenting approach.

Although research on parental motivation to apply a positive parenting approach still has major gaps to address, it is my hope that this qualitative study provides further direction and purpose to the study of positive parenting.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Criteria for being Identified as a Positive Parent

Thank you for your interest in my study: Motivations for choosing a Positive Parenting approach.

The focus of this study is on positive parenting, an authoritative/democratic parenting style. Broadly speaking positive parenting may be understood as an approach committed to parenting with love, empathy, kindness and understanding. The approach emphasises creating a positive environment conducive to teaching and modelling behaviour to children in a way that is flexible, boosts self-esteem and creates a harmonious relationship.

In order to ensure the families in my study have the same approach to Positive parenting I have included below some criteria. To be included in this study, mothers must answer yes to all of the below questions.

1. Do you try to the best of your ability to parent with warmth, understanding and respect for your child as an individual with their own wants, needs and goals?
2. Do you find that your expectations of your child's behaviour take into consideration what might be considered normal at their stage of development?
3. Do you use non-violent discipline techniques, which aim to teach and guide rather than punish?
4. Do you use lots of positive praise and encouragement, trying to point out more of your child's strengths than the areas that they need to improve?
5. Do you focus on finding solutions to problems, which will be mutually beneficial to you and the child?

If you do not answer yes to all the above questions it does not mean you are not a positive parent but for the purpose of how I have defined positive parenting in this study you will not be able to participate. Thank you for taking the time to read and for your passion and commitment to positive parenting.

Appendix B

Facebook Invitation

Seeking Mom's to participate in an exciting Positive Parenting Study

Hi Mom's, I am a master's student in the psychology department of Stellenbosch University seeking participants for my thesis and I really hope that you can spare some time to help me. I know many of you are as passionate about Positive Parenting as I am. My research question is: *What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach? An exploratory study*. I am looking for mothers who identify themselves as using or trying to the best of their ability to use Positive parenting skills (none of us are perfect!) to chat about their experiences. Please inbox me via Facebook Messenger or email lexinor@gmail.com. If you are unsure of whether you are a positive parent, I have some criteria I can inbox you.

I am looking for parents whose oldest, or only, child, is under the age of 10. What I would need from you is a brief interview of approximately 30 to 60 minutes in which we would have an informal chat about why you follow a positive parenting approach. Your confidentiality will be protected and only I will know who the participants are (for this reason please email or inbox if you are interested rather than comment). If you, or someone you know would be willing to help me, please inbox me or alternatively email me at lexinor@gmail.com This research is very close to my heart and I would love to add to the knowledge about Positive parenting and through the findings of this study help other's adopt this parenting approach.

Thank you in advance.

Appendix C

Informed consent form

UNIVERSITEIT•STELLENBOSCH•UNIVERSITY
jou kennisvennoot • your knowledge partner

What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach? An exploratory study

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Alexandra Bradley for her Masters degree in Psychology from the Psychology Department at Stellenbosch University. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have been identified as a positive parent with a child under the age of six years old.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify what motivates parents to select positive parenting, as well as what is supportive of this decision. Positive parenting is seen as one the most optimal parenting approaches and is gaining popularity among parents. Knowledge pertaining to positive parenting and particularly parents' points of view on it is very limited, especially in South Africa. Generating more knowledge about parents motivations for being positive parents will contribute significantly to helping professionals and other parents alike, understand what precedes a positive parenting choice and what motivates parents to apply this approach in particular.

2. PROCEDURES

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be required to give information about what motivates/motivated you to apply a positive parenting approach, and what primary influences are supportive of this choice? I would ask you to try to provide information which is honest and true. We will meet at a time and place that is convenient for you. Before beginning the interview questions I will ask you some biographical information, which will be for my purposes only and kept confidential. I will ask you the research question; what motivates you to use a positive parenting approach? You can then choose to answer in any way that makes most sense to you. The interview will last for 45 to 60 minutes. When the interview is finished, nothing further will be required of you. With your permission I may need to follow up in order to expand on or clarify one of the answers you had previously given me.

3. POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The study should not pose any risks to you. It may be possible that some of the questions stir up some emotions for you. I will approach these questions with empathy, care and non-judgement. Should you feel emotional, or do not wish to discuss something, you may just let

me know and I will respect these wishes. Should you wish to discuss with a professional psychologist, you can contact:
Dr Joan Collett. Address: 10 Radloff Road, Somerset West, Western Cape – 7130. Telephone number: 082 531 9270; 021 851 3166. Email: counselling@joancollett.co.za, (this session will be at your own cost.)

You can also contact Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic, Tel: 021 80802696 Email: wcpc@sun.ac.za. Website: www.sun.ac.za/wcpc (This service will be free of charge).

4. POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

Participating in this study may have psychological benefits to you. You will have an opportunity to voice your parenting style choices, which may be very important to you to be heard. You may also realise how being a positive parent makes both you and your child feel good and is a positive life experience. Talking about positive parenting may remind you of why you started with this approach and so motivate you to continue. It may also possibly help you to realise how far you have come with your own parenting, from any approaches of the past that were less healthy for you and your child. Your answers in this study will greatly benefit the research community as a whole and may also help other parents. It could also be used by professionals who do intervention programs, to better understand the needs of their participants.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary and you will not be compensated for taking part in this study.

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

The information that you provide, which could identify you as a participant, will be treated as confidential. Only myself and my research supervisor will have access to this information. It is required by law to have your full permission to disclose this information. In order to ensure this is taken very seriously, once your biographical information has been collected, you will be assigned a numerical code. This will be used instead of names or personal information during data analysis and discussions in my thesis.
The completed biographical questionnaire will be kept locked inside my personal office to which only I have access. Interview transcripts will be transcribed and saved onto my personal computer This computer is password protected and only I have access to it and know the password.

I will request permission from you to capture your answers using a voice recorder. Should you not be comfortable with this, I will make notes about your responses – in which case I may need additional time and pauses in order to ensure I capture all the information. If you consent, audio recordings will be transferred to my password protected personal computer and then deleted from the audio recorder. Stellenbosch University policy dictates that data be kept for a minimum of five years. Upon completion of the thesis and any subsequent published works, the audio recordings will be removed from my personal computer and transferred on to an external hard-drive and locked in my personal safe for the stipulated time. This will be the only remaining copy of the data.

My final thesis will be viewed by several accessors to ensure it is of a quality standard. These assessors would not be able to identify you personally, as fictitious names will be used in place of yours and any children you may mention. It is likely that your responses will appear in the thesis alongside other participants' responses. Some of your words may be used in the thesis, as they may be extremely valuable in contributing to our understanding about parents' motivation to use a positive parenting approach.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

It is completely your choice as to whether you wish to be part of this study or not. You may even change your mind at a later stage and withdraw from participation, with no consequences or issues. If the questions asked are uncomfortable or you do not wish to answer them you can simply inform me of this and I will move on to the next question. If it becomes apparent that you do not fulfil the research criteria, it may be possible that your information would not be included in the study results.

8. IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATOR

Should you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact my supervisor Professor Awie Greeff, Tel: 021 808 3464, address: Wilcocks Building, Department of Psychology, Ryneveld Street, Stellenbosch. Also, please feel free to contact me, Alexandra Bradley. Tel: 0723426680; email: lexinor@gmail.com, address: unit 211, Somerset lakes, Somerset West.

9. RIGHTS OF PARTICIPANT

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this study. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, contact Ms Maléne Fouché [mfouche@sun.ac.za; 021 808 4622] at the Division for Research Development, Stellenbosch University.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT

The information above was described to me by Alexandra Bradley in English. I have adequate knowledge of this language, or the consent form was adequately translated for me. I have asked questions where I needed to and the answers provided were satisfactory.

I have received a copy of this consent form and I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	**Signature of Participant**	**Date**

SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR

I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____ [*name of the participant]*. She was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in English and no translator was used.

_____	_____
Signature of Investigator	**Date**

Appendix D

Biographical Questionnaire

Information in this questionnaire is strictly confidential and will be anonymously processed.

1. <u>Parent details</u>

1.1 Age: _____

1.2 First Language: _____

1.3 Ethnicity: Black ☐ Coloured ☐ White ☐ Not indicated ☐

1.2 Place of residence: _____

1.3 Highest level of education: _____

1.4 Occupation: _____

2. Do you consider your family to be, (☑) the correct box:

Low-Income	☐
Middle-Income	☐
High- Income	☐

3. Please tick one or more of the appropriate boxes (☑):

In a relationship, co-habitating	☐
Blended family co-habitating	☐
Married	☐

Other: _____

4. Child/children details:

4.1 Total number of children you have: _____

4.2 Number of children currently living with you: _____

4.3 Please complete the table below:

	Child 1	Child 2	Child 3	Child 4	Child 5
Age					
Gender					

Appendix E

Interview Schedule

The participants will be reminded of the criteria for a positive parent as defined for this study (see Appendix B)

Open-ended questions that will be used during the interview. I will begin the interview with an introductory question:

- Tell me about your parenting?

I will follow this with questions more specific to my research question.

- Tell me a bit about why you apply a positive parenting approach?
- What do you think motivated or motivates you to apply positive parenting?
- What do you find helpful and supportive of being a positive parent?

Probing questions that will be asked in order to gain more insight and understanding into the parent's answers, such as:

- How?
- What?
- Where was this?
- Why?
- What do you mean by that?
- You said … can you give me more information about that

If a specific supporting resource is mentioned, I may ask:

- Do you remember some of the names of the books that you read?
- What was the course/programme that you attended and can you tell me about it?
- What does this (Facebook) group entail?

Appendix F

Ethical Clearance

REC Humanities New Application Form

27 August 2018

Project number: 7398

Project Title: What motivates parents to apply a positive parenting approach? An exploratory study

Dear Miss Alexandra Bradley

Your response to stipulations submitted on 1 August 2018 was reviewed and approved by the REC: Humanities.

Please note the following for your approved submission:

Ethics approval period:

Protocol approval date (Humanities)	Protocol expiration date (Humanities)
28 June 2018	27 June 2019

Please take note of the General Investigator Responsibilities attached to this letter. You may commence with your research after

complying fully with these guidelines.

If the researcher deviates in any way from the proposal approved by the REC: Humanities, the researcher must notify the REC of these changes.

Please use your SU project number (7398) on any documents or correspondence with the REC concerning your project.

Please note that the REC has the prerogative and authority to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further

modifications, or monitor the conduct of your research and the consent process.

FOR CONTINUATION OF PROJECTS AFTER REC APPROVAL PERIOD

Please note that a progress report should be submitted to the Research Ethics Committee: Humanities before the approval period has

expired if a continuation of ethics approval is required. The Committee will then consider the continuation of the project for a further year (if necessary)

Included Documents:

Document Type	File Name	Date	Version
Recruitment material	Facebook Invitation- A bradley	29/05/2018	
Data collection tool	Interview schedule- A Bradley	29/05/2018	
Default	Response to REC stipulations Letter	01/08/2018	1
Research Protocol/Proposal	SUBMITTED PROPOSAL WITH ETHICS EDITS Proposal A Bradley- Motivations for choosing a Positive Parenting approach 29 May 2018	01/08/2018	2
Informed Consent Form	A Bradley Appendix D consent form with ethics edits	01/08/2018	2

If you have any questions or need further help, please contact the REC office at cgraham@sun.ac.za.

Sincerely,

Clarissa Graham

REC Coordinator: Research Ethics Committee: Human Research (Humanities)

National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) registration number: REC-050411-032.
The Research Ethics Committee: Humanities complies with the SA National Health Act No.61 2003 as it pertains to health research. In addition, this committee abides
by the ethical norms and principles for research established by the Declaration of Helsinki (2013) and the Department of Health Guidelines for Ethical Research:

Principles Structures and Processes (2nd Ed.) 2015. *Annually a number of projects may be selected randomly for an external audit.*