

**Navigating young motherhood:
A retrospective study into the reflections of the teenage motherhood
experience by mothers within a community of the Western Cape**

by

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*Thesis presented in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts (Psychology) in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at
Stellenbosch University*

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December 2022

Declaration

By submitting this thesis electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

December 2022

Abstract

The current study is situated within the overarching research area of maternal mental health. Sixteen to eighteen years prior, a larger study known as the Women's Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) was undertaken from 2002 to 2006. The current study aimed to follow up with a subset of the sample who were classified as teenage mothers. Therefore, this follow-up study explored the subjective experience of young motherhood over time as reflected upon by one group of low-income South African women. The first-hand experiences of young mothers have specifically been of marked interest in recent years. The literature comprises of various studies exploring topics such as the joys and challenges of motherhood, stigmatization, and social support. This has led to increased efforts to incorporate women's voices into the literature and the development of a more optimistic outlook regarding life outcomes. However, the literature exploring this outlook remains fractured at present. Few retrospective studies which explore the experience of young motherhood in low-income women from the perspective of mothers themselves have been conducted in South Africa and as it stands, very few specific to the Western Cape.

The current retrospective study was informed by social constructionist feminism and is of a qualitative nature. All participants resided within a semi-rural community encountering various social and economic vulnerabilities. The sample comprised of 7 participants, of whom one individual's interview could not be used owing to technical difficulties. Data collection was carried out by administering interviews, which were then transcribed and analysed according to the social constructionist grounded theory method.

The chief categories which emerged from the data included motherhood over time: participants' narratives at present, practical concerns and challenges, emotional experience of motherhood, coping, and the meaning of motherhood. These categories represent the challenges impacting upon young women's transition to motherhood as well as the range of emotional experiences from joy and struggle to the deeper meanings realised when reflecting on motherhood over time. Our findings suggest that a tension exists at the core of the women's narrative which is a result of and displays the multiplicity of the human experience in the context of a life experience as complex as teenage pregnancy.

Motherhood, particularly young motherhood as it progresses over time, is broadly characterized by both joy and struggle. Rather than occurring in isolation and as a linear

progression from one to the other, women interchange and hold space for a range of - sometimes conflicting - emotions, which results in this held tension. The findings of this study were not entirely novel in that the tangible difficulties of young motherhood have been addressed in previous studies of a similar nature. However, this study provided insight from a unique perspective compared to most research exploring teenage pregnancy in South Africa, by investigating the subjective experience of young motherhood of the same women over time within a qualitative paradigm.

Due to the multifaceted, complex nature of young motherhood, the exploration of the experience of motherhood from women's perspective can be expanded beyond the scope of this study. A multi-layered narrative within which there remains more to be discovered was revealed through this research. Limitations specific to the current study and recommendations for future research were considered.

Opsomming

Die huidige studie is geleë binne die oorkoepelende navorsingsarea van die geestesgesondheid van moeders. Sestien tot agtien jaar tevore is 'n groter studie bekend as die Women's Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) onderneem. Die huidige studie het ten doel gehad om 'n subset van hierdie steekproef wat as tienermoeders geklassifiseer is, op te volg. Daarom het hierdie opvolgstudie die subjektiewe ervaring van jong moederskap oortyd ondersoek soos weerspieël deur een groep lae-inkomste Suid-Afrikaanse vroue. Die eerstehands ervarings van spesifiek jong moeders was die afgelope jare van groot belang. Die literatuur bestaan uit verskeie studies wat onderwerpe soos die vreugdes en uitdagings van moederskap, stigmatisering en sosiale ondersteuning ondersoek. Dit het gelei tot verhoogde pogings om vroue se eie stemme in die literatuur te inkorporeer en die ontwikkeling van 'n meer optimistiese uitkyk op lewensuitkomst. Die literatuur wat hierdie vooruitsigte ondersoek, bly egter tans gebroke. Min retrospektiewe studies wat die ervaring van jong moederskap by lae-inkomstevroue vanuit die perspektief van moeders self ondersoek, is in Suid-Afrika uitgevoer en soos dit staan, baie min spesifiek vir die Wes-Kaap.

Die huidige retrospektiewe studie is deur sosiaal-konstruksionistiese feminisme ingelig en is van 'n kwalitatiewe aard. Alle deelnemers het in 'n semi-landelike gemeenskap met verskeie sosiale en ekonomiese kwesbaarhede gewoon. Die steekproef het uit sewe deelnemers bestaan, van wie een individu se onderhoud nie gebruik kon word nie weens tegniese probleme. Data-insameling was uitgevoer deur die geadministrering van onderhoude wat daarna getranskribeer en volgens die sosiaal-konstruksionistiese gegronde teorie-metode geanaliseer was.

Die hoofkategorieë wat uit die data na vore gekom het, sluit moederskap oor tyd, praktiese bekommernisse en uitdagings, emosionele ervaring van moederskap, hantering en die betekenis van moederskap in. Hierdie kategorieë verteenwoordig die uitdagings wat 'n impak op vroue se oorgang na moederskap het sowel as die reeks emosionele ervarings van vreugde en stryd tot die dieper betekenis wat besef word wanneer daar oor moederskap besin word oor tyd. Ons bevindinge dui daarop dat 'n spanning in die kern van die vroue se narratief bestaan wat 'n resultaat is van en die veelheid van die menslike ervaring in die konteks van 'n lewenservaring so kompleks soos tienerswangerskap vertoon.

Moederskap, veral jong moederskap soos dit oor tyd vorder, word breedweg gekenmerk deur beide vreugde en stryd. Eerder as om in isolasie en as 'n lineêre progressie van die een na die ander plaas te vind, ruil vroue om en hou ruimte vir 'n reeks - soms teenstrydige - emosies, wat tot hierdie vasgehoue spanning lei. Die bevindinge van hierdie studie was nie heeltemal nuut nie, aangesien die tasbare probleme van jong moederskap in vorige studies van 'n soortgelyke aard aangespreek is. Hierdie studie het egter vanuit 'n uniek perspektief insig verskaf tot dié van die meeste navorsing wat tienerwangerskap in Suid-Afrika ondersoek, waardeur die subjektiewe ervaring van jong moederskap van dieselfde vroue oor tyd binne 'n kwalitatiewe paradigma te ondersoek.

As gevolg van die veelvlakkige, komplekse aard van jong moederskap, kan die verkenning van die ervaring van moederskap vanuit vroue se perspektief buite die bestek van hierdie studie uitgebrei word. 'n Veelvlakkige narratief waarbinne daar nog meer ontdek moet word, is deur hierdie studie onthul. Beperkings spesifiek vir die huidige studie en aanbevelings vir toekomstige navorsing is oorweeg.

Acknowledgements

There are many who have made it possible for me to complete this thesis and to whom I would like to express my sincere gratitude.

To Prof. Lou-Marié Kruger, thank you for your effort, insight, and guidance throughout the process of both making this research possible and compiling this thesis. I have learnt a great deal from you throughout this year and have been inspired by your enthusiasm for the women's lives and stories upon which this work is based. It has been a privilege to learn from you as my supervisor and be a part of this meaningful research.

To the women who courageously and openly shared their life stories and experiences with me. It was an honor to be trusted with sharing your stories through this research. The lived realities of young mothering are deserving of acknowledgement, and the voices of young mothers integral to effecting change in the lived realities comprising mothering for every young woman.

To my family and friends, for your patience, continuous encouragement, and ongoing prayers spoken over me throughout this challenging process. Your loving support and belief in me have meant so much.

To Nicholas, thank you for your unwavering support, encouragement, and willingness to help wherever and in whatever way you can. I am so grateful to have you on this journey with me.

Always to my parents, my biggest supporters and greatest role models. Thank you for the many sacrifices you have made which have made it possible for me to pursue my aspirations. Your tenacity, determination, conviction, and resilience inspire me every day, and I am so proud to call you my parents. I have endless gratitude for you.

Finally, praise and thanks be to God for being my ever-present source of peace, wisdom, assurance, and provision amidst the obstacles and challenges which have presented themselves throughout the past three years. It has been a valuable experience that I could not have overcome in my own strength.

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Chapter one: Introduction

1.1 Background and context of the study

Eighteen years prior, from 2002 to 2006, a larger overarching study known as the Women's Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) was undertaken by Professor Lou-Marié Kruger in the community of Kylemore, Stellenbosch in the Western Cape. This project aimed to explore how low-income mothers subjectively experienced and navigated the emotional and practical aspects of motherhood within the South African context. Within this study, a subset of these mothers were teenagers who were interviewed throughout their pregnancy up until six months post-partum at various intervals. The original study was conducted over a period of four years and was thus, longitudinal. The current study aimed to follow up with as many of these teenage participants as possible to gain first-hand insight into their subjective experience as low-income mothers' having navigated both teenage and subsequent motherhood in the South African context over time.

1.2 Significance of research topic as an area of study

Teenage pregnancy has been and continues to be a phenomenon extensively researched and discussed in the literature, where it is dominantly portrayed as a social problem with strong ties to poverty and economic dependency (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). The dominant approach when addressing teenage pregnancy is that of framing individual adolescents themselves as the problem as opposed to the structural inequalities and economic deficiencies inherent to the communities they inhabit (Singh & Naicker, 2019). Thus, a negative representation of young mothers and specifically teenage pregnancy persists and contributes to levels of stigmatization and shame (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Pillay, 2020).

However, a growing body of literature has suggested that even though motherhood is a challenging experience, it is not impossible for young mothers to overcome the barriers presented by motherhood with the appropriate support (Malindi, 2018; Neiterman, 2012). The recent literature claims that some young mothers may actually have a positive experience of motherhood (Hoggart, 2012; Macutkiewicz & MacBeth, 2017; Malindi, 2018; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Ntinda et al., 2016). This also suggests that there is a chance that young mothers can be resilient and successful despite becoming mothers at a young age (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Singh & Naicker, 2019, Willan, 2013).

1.3 Purpose and rationale

The complex nature of young motherhood as a phenomenon together with young mother's subjective experiences of motherhood has gained marked traction in recent research (Erfina et al., 2019). The literature comprises of studies exploring the joys and difficulties of motherhood, presence of the father, personal experiences with health care workers, stigma, and the impact of social (mainly familial) support (Chohan & Langa, 2011; Harrison et al., 2017; Hunter et al., 2015; Mallette et al., 2015; Mangeli et al., 2017; Sheeran et al., 2015). However, as Erfina et al. (2019) state, "the current literature on this topic is still fragmented" (p. 222).

Due to the "moral panic" surrounding this phenomenon particularly within the public media, poor young mothers are often criticized and seen as lesser mothers (Pillay, 2021). This term was coined by Stanley Cohen as describing "a condition, episode, person or group of persons who emerge to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests" (Cohen, 2011, p. 1). In this way, the chief general belief is that outcomes are unpleasant for both mothers and children whereby linking this to isolated so-called bad lifestyle choices of individuals as if impervious to environmental and contextual circumstances (Breheny & Stephens, 2007; Chohan & Langa, 2011; Sidel, 2000). The phenomenon of young parenting is one that appears to affect young women the most should they fall pregnant as teenagers. This is because young parenting, particularly in impoverished communities which are already stigmatized within general reports and research, is significantly 'othered', with the weight of this ostracization falling predominantly on young women (Nkosi & Pretorius, 2019). This dominant pathologizing lens through which most young mothers are viewed holds to the assumption that early pregnancy and parenting only leads to a 'ruined' life outcome and that such mothers are inherently problematic. As such, the argument for research studies of a longitudinal design, which may contradict this school of thought and enable a better understanding of the long-term experiences of young mothers, is relevant.

Recent literature has suggested that there is a possibility that teenage mothers embark on a positive journey of self-discovery, new-found responsibility and renewed resilience shaped by their individual experiences of motherhood (Neiterman, 2012; Rolfe, 2008; Singh & Naicker, 2019). Emerging literature thus indicates that the life-course trajectories of pregnant teenagers should not so easily or despondently be generalized as negative, nor rigidly constructed as a default linear life path (Willan, 2013; Zito, 2016). Individual young mothers have, in some cases, been shown to view their experience as a positive life opportunity to alter their attitudes and lifestyle for the better (Hoggart, 2012; Macutkiewicz & MacBeth, 2017;

Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015). These kinds of findings have been documented in various countries around the world, including South Africa (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2015; Clarke, 2015; Hoggart, 2012; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012; Seamark & Lings, 2004; Sheeran et al., 2015; van Zyl et al., 2015).

More and more, young mothers are noting how the experience of motherhood has required of them to behave like responsible adults and cultivated a greater sense of responsibility and agency accompanying their newly found role as a mother, despite the very real difficulties of motherhood (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2015; Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018, Sheeran et al., 2015; Solivan et al., 2015). In so doing, they are motivated to direct their life in a new purposeful direction (Brubaker, 2007; Coleman & Cater, 2006; Singh & Hamid, 2016; Zito, 2016). The possibility of beneficial derivatives as an offshoot of young motherhood, such as the empowerment that accompanies overcoming challenging circumstances have not been extensively researched over time, specifically in South Africa (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Christofides et al., 2014; Payne & Anastas, 2015).

Macleod (1999) suggested that the lack of opportunity inherent within a scarce, poverty-stricken environment may be a more important variable to address as a preceding factor in teenage pregnancy rather than an outcome of the phenomenon of teenage pregnancy itself. The possible link between poor young women becoming young mothers because they are without opportunities as presented by their living circumstances has been consistently considered (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Ankomah & Konadu Gyesaw, 2013; Kearney & Levine, 2012; Singh & Naicker, 2019; Sisson, 2011; Timaeus & Moultrie, 2012). This supports arguments which contest a causal link attributed solely to teenage pregnancy and less desirable long-term socio-economical outcomes (Macleod, 1999; 2003; Marteleto et al., 2008; Pillay, 2021; Swartz et al., 2018). Despite concentrated efforts from government and non-governmental organizations to combat the incidence and the impact of teenage pregnancy itself, teenage pregnancy is specifically rife in low-income communities in the developing world (Ankomah & Konadu Gyesaw, 2013; Neiterman, 2012; Pillay, 2021). The spatio-specific occurrence of higher rates of teenage pregnancy in developing as well as developed countries points to the strong influence of socio-economic disadvantage to elevated rates of teenage pregnancy (Chung et al., 2018).

Although teenage pregnancy rates are lower in the Western Cape compared to other provinces in South Africa, it is still relatively widespread with higher levels evident amongst

particular race demographics and associated socio-economic statuses (African and Coloured populations compared to White populations) (Mkhwanazi, 2010). For the purposes of the current study, the categorical allocation of race will be purely for academic purposes and is in accordance with the historical classification used in South African society¹. This comprises of Africans (people of African descent), Indian (Asian descent), Whites (European descent) and Coloureds (mixed descent) (Clark et al., 2015; Makiwane et al., 2006).

Thus, the importance of determining the outcomes of such pregnancies and refining the support structures in place is paramount (Mkwananzi, 2017). It is particularly important to understand how women themselves in a multitude of contexts make sense of their experiences, especially regarding motherhood, as not all women experience motherhood in the same way. The implication is that these unique and heterogenous ways in which women experience motherhood will have an impact on their lives to varying degrees, both as mothers and as individuals (Kruger, 2020). Few longitudinal and retrospective qualitative studies which explore the experience of young motherhood in low-income women have been conducted in South Africa (Masuko, 2017; Rosenberg et al., 2015) and as it stands; very few specific to the Western Cape that explore this research area from the perspective of mothers themselves (Mkhwanazi, 2010; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; van Zyl et al., 2015).

1.4 Research questions, aims and goals

The current study is focused on the subjective experience of one specific group of low-income mothers' as they have navigated both teenage and subsequent motherhood in the South African context over time. Within the parameters of the current study, subsequent motherhood refers to childbearing beyond the adolescent years. This is a retrospective study in that the current participants were teenage mothers at the time of the original research study (WMHRP) conducted between 2002 and 2006. The operational definition of a teenager in the aforementioned earlier study was a woman in the adolescent stage of development; that is an individual between the ages of 13 and 19 (Branson et al., 2014; World Health Organization,

¹ In undertaking this research, I acknowledge the controversies surrounding the use of racial categories within academic research, particularly in a country with South Africa's political and historical context. That being said, the development of these terms through socially constructed mechanisms cannot be ignored as conferring a specific social understanding, and therefore carries significant social meaning within post-apartheid South Africa. In alignment with the features of social constructionism, the use of previous racial classifications under apartheid has been employed in writing up this thesis. The term 'Coloured' will thus be used to describe residents of South Africa who are of a "heterogeneous mixed ancestry ethnic group" (Clark et al., 2015, p. 6).

2017). Therefore, within the original study participants ranged from the age of 15 – 19 years old.

For the purposes of the current study, we followed up with and interviewed these same women regarding their experience of motherhood over the time that had passed since last interviewed. Thus, this research study aims to explore the manner in which this group of South African women, who will now be in their thirties, reflect on their subjective experience of motherhood as a low-income young mother and intends to delve into the first-hand experiences of these particular women up to the current point in time. The aims are aligned with the overall intent of the original Women's Maternal Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP).

In the current study we aimed to answer the following research questions/objectives:

- (1) How do women retrospectively reflect upon and frame their experience of young motherhood;
- (2) What impact do women think the experience of young motherhood had on their lives;
- (3) How do women think their youth impacted their manner of or approach to mothering;
- (4) How do women's subsequent experience of motherhood compare to the expectations, hopes and/or anticipations they had when they first became mothers; and
- (5) How have women experienced and/or navigated their relationship with their child(ren)?

In accordance with the goals and objectives stated here, this research is localized to the particular study sample and is context specific. This particular group of women are South African, originate from a low-income background and are currently actively taking on the role of mother. Importance and value are placed on the subjective account of the participants' experiences surrounding young motherhood and the progression of their experiences over time up to the present.

1.5 Outline of thesis

Chapter one introduces the research topic and the rationale for the current study. A brief overview of the dominant views surrounding young motherhood is provided as background to the study. After this I discuss in more detail the significance of the study, as well as the aims and objectives of this thesis.

In Chapter two I discuss the meta-theoretical framework informing this study. The use of both social constructionism and feminist research as a complementary lens through which to view and understand the current research is expanded upon. Lastly, the dominant discourses informing young motherhood are briefly introduced.

Chapter three constitutes a literature review of the current literature addressing early pregnancy and young motherhood. The purpose of this review is to summarise both the existing qualitative and quantitative research which aims to explore, understand, and elucidate the phenomena of young motherhood. Attention is drawn to the lack of qualitative longitudinal studies investigating the lived experiences of young mothers over time, particularly in South Africa. The fragmented nature of the current literature pertaining to subjective experiences of young motherhood in the diverse South African context is also addressed.

Chapter four provides a description of the methodological processes employed in this study. The social constructionist grounded theory approach is discussed as guiding the methods utilised, whereafter the research design, participant recruitment, data collection and analyses, and ethical concerns are addressed.

In Chapter five I report and discuss the findings of the current study. The study participants are briefly introduced after which the research findings are considered and discussed. Overall major categories which emerged from the data are compared to the existing literature illuminating similarities, differences, and nuances which led to the conceptualization of a possible understanding of the multiplicity of young mothers' experiences and the phenomenon of young motherhood.

Finally, in Chapter six I summarise the research findings and conclusion, while taking the current study's limitations into account. An understanding of young motherhood as experienced by young women themselves is presented, and practical as well as theoretical recommendations for future research are discussed.

Chapter two: Theoretical framework

The current study is situated within the meta-theoretical framework of social constructionism. This approach is appropriate for describing the lived experiences of individuals as shaped by their social interaction and conditioning within the world. The constructionist approach is complemented and enhanced by taking into account feminism. This social constructionist feminist approach compels us to consider both the sociocultural context in which young women are situated when becoming mothers and the discourses impacting on their experiences of young motherhood.

2.1 Social constructionism

Social constructionism is an epistemological framework which takes seriously our mutually constructed conceptualizations of the world (Charmaz, 2008). This framework holds to the stance that individual's and/or groups' experiences and interpretations of the world are a product of jointly constructed understandings that come to represent reality (Andrews, 2012; Charmaz, 2008). Within social constructionism, there is a focus on the meaning, context and discourse underlying the taken-for-granted notions which are prevalent in societies and communities (Charmaz, 2008). It is through human interaction shaping the social world that meaning is attached to various experiences, and as large groups of individuals or communities adopt certain social norms and understandings of the world, discourses develop which are accepted as the objective reality by wider society (Willig, 2013). Social constructionism is a dynamic approach to unpacking and elucidating how different individuals subjectively make meaning of and assess their lives in various contexts and social circumstances (Andrews, 2012).

This is due to social constructionism having its roots in postmodernism epistemology, in which there is a questioning and critique of the emphasis placed on objective reality in modernism (Andrews, 2012). This approach adopts a relativist stance to knowledge and epistemology as opposed to the traditional positivist paradigm (Cruickshank, 2011; Potter, 2003). The relativistic nature of knowledge is emphasized upholding that the meanings attached by individuals to their experiences and how they view the world is developed in a social context through the vectors of language and communication (Galbin, 2014; Robles, 2012). Furthermore, it is proposed that the prominent perceptions and widely held views of various communities are shaped, modified and upheld by shared understandings of ideas and constructs pertaining to specific historical and cultural contexts (Van Kham, 2013).

Social constructionism holds that the ways in which we understand the space we occupy in the world is influenced by and relative to the cultural and/or historical epoch we find ourselves situated in (Willig, 2013). We are thought to order and make sense of our world by constructing categories through the medium of language. The cultural milieu, traditions and practices occupying various community spaces drive and direct the meanings of these categories for the individuals constituting the community. Over time, through social modification and negotiation, categories develop into the dominant discourses which dictate the way individuals as a collective understand and exist in the world (Willig, 2013).

As such, shared assumptions about certain constructs or notions regarding various phenomena may not coincide with the experiences of certain individuals and groups, as they have been exposed to different belief systems salient in their communities (Andrews, 2012). Following this notion, social constructionists endeavour to concentrate their attention on the lived experiences of individuals within their social context as opposed focusing on the generalized knowledge of experts in the field (Andrews, 2012). For instance, the suitable and acceptable manner in which a woman should behave in modern society has been collectively shaped and propagated over time according to certain attributes salient within discourses relating to motherhood and feminism (Copenhaver, 2002; Kantor, 2006). Social constructionism is informed by various discourses prominent in specific contexts and is therefore, appropriate for the deconstruction of the preconceived and longstanding interpretations of and meanings attached to young motherhood (Andrews, 2012).

The image that wider society maintains of the pregnant teenager and her characteristics, morals and behaviours are largely shaped by social constructions present within her community and the cultural environment she inhabits (Macleod, 2002). Various perspectives on mothering and womanhood are the result of knowledge obtained as a product of social dynamics, and thus the societal constructs and universal accounts of women that have been normalised within society have been held up to be representative of all. These generalizations about young mothers would be critiqued if one works within a social constructionist perspective.

In the social constructionist approach the importance of several variables influencing teenage pregnancy and young motherhood such as context, culture, political history and gender power imbalances are highlighted and taken into account, rendering this approach fitting for the diverse complexities specific to South Africa (Cheteni et al., 2019; Kruger et al., 2014).

2.1.1 The South African context

South Africa is a country that is significantly diverse with a varied population made up of a plethora of ethnicities and belonging to multiple rich cultures. However, South Africa is also one of the most “socially fractured and unequal” countries in sub-Saharan Africa, albeit the most dominant one in terms of its politics and economy (Howell, 2019, p. 98). This is partly due to the complicated political history of the country regarding racial segregation and inequality during the apartheid era. Contemporary South Africa has also continued to see underhanded and ongoing corrupt governance in recent years which has altogether led to “deeply embedded structural forms of marginalization” (Howell, 2019, p. 98). Due to the separation of individuals according to artificial race characterizations under the regime of apartheid, there continues to be significant long-reaching disparities amongst racial groups and communities at present. Thus, this distinction can still be seen today in the economic and sociocultural patterns of South African society and shapes the overall political and sociocultural landscape that has structured this society as well as the “physical spaces of its urban society” (Howell, 2019, p. 98).

The political history of South Africa is most evident in the physical material structures of towns, cities and communities which influence the sociocultural profile of said locations (Lemon, 2016). An example of this in Cape Town can be shown by comparing Rondebosch suburb area to the large ‘township’ of Khayelitsha. Khayelitsha is found on the outskirts of Cape Town owing to the establishment of migrant housing during apartheid. The post-apartheid demographic profile of this area is evident when considering the numbers: 98.6 percent of participants belong to the ‘black’ racial profile and 18.8 percent are unemployed. Rondebosch, on the other hand, was designated as a ‘whites only’ area zone during apartheid. The remnant of this designation is evident in that 62.7 percent of the community belong to the ‘white’ racial profile, 84.3 percent speak English and there is a significantly lower employment rate of 14.3 percent (Howell, 2019). The ideal of equality within the South Africa Constitution is undermined by the alarming rates of unemployment, of which ‘black’ and coloured’ individuals are in the majority (Howell and Shearing 2017). Similar to the above demarcation, there are a number of ‘coloured’ communities, the majority occurring within the Western Cape, which have similar demographic profiles in terms of socioeconomic disadvantage (Clarke, 2015). It is within this system where women are particularly vulnerable, especially women of colour.

2.2 Social feminist constructionist framework

In feminist research the goals and beliefs underpinning feminism are applied to the research. Thus, one of its core objectives is to highlight the critical influence of gender in societal processes (Walby, 2005). In this regard, feminist researchers address the gendered nature of research by attempting to frame it within the socioeconomic, political, and ideological contexts women are operating within (Mollard, 2015). Specific to the current research, motherhood occurs within socio-historical contexts where marked power disparities at the level of gender, class and race exist (Tichenor et al., 2016). Scholars have argued that essentialist gender and cultural categories within society and, in traditional research, have functioned under the assumption that all women constitute “a coherent group identity within different cultures” (Jokela-Pansini, 2018, p. 518). In this way gender interacts and intersects with class, race, and location (sociocultural context) within the lives of South African women. This interaction is conceptualized as the term ‘intersectionality’. Intersectionality originated in Black feminist thought and was coined by Kimberley Crenshaw in 1989 (Mkhize, 2022). Intersectionality describes “the way multiple identities, based on race, gender, class, ethnicity, nationality, and sexuality, are systematically and structurally oppressed” (Mkhize, 2022, p. 8).

Within the sociocultural and political milieu of South Africa described in the previous section, a woman of colour generally encounters additional lifestyle challenges while inhabiting more volatile socioeconomic contexts that differ from that of the majority of ‘white’ woman within the country (Heitmeyer, 2019). It has been statistically shown that areas marked by socioeconomic disadvantage, limited resources, and poor infrastructure are dominantly comprised of individuals who would be classified as ‘black’ and ‘coloured’ (Strauss & Liebenberg, 2014). Thus, the interaction of gender and race represents a unique intersection where women of colour in the majority face the harrowing reality of economic struggle and impoverished lifestyles. This is comparable to the sociocultural landscape which the women in this study inhabit as ‘coloured’ women (see Appendix A). As such, while one’s gender identification as a woman has been characterized by historical systematic and structural oppression, said structures have “systematically oppress[ed] African women in ways that do not persecute African men or white women” (Mkhize, 2022, p. 8). Men of colour may face discrimination according to their race, while having gender privilege whereas white women face sexism but are afforded racial privilege (Mkize, 2022).

This racial and socioeconomic disparity that exists between white women and women of colour further augments the class divide between individuals and communities. As a result

of the socioeconomic disadvantage and political history that characterize women of colour's context within South Africa, most of these women belong to the working-class demographic while the middle- to upper class space is dominated by white women and men (Howell, 2019). Thus, the intersection of gender and class represents a unique social position that "shapes and influences identity formation" (Mkhize, 2022, p. 9) along with ethnic identity and sociocultural context, and affects one's experiences (Idahosa & Mkhize, 2021). Within the history of South Africa and during the apartheid regime, shame has been repeatedly attached to racialized identities (Womersley et al., 2011). This shame has continued to be inherent in the "complex matrix binding gender, class, and socioeconomic status" (Womersley et al., 2011, p. 878). In this study, the women belong to the working-class demographic, which is predominantly made up of black and coloured individuals within the Western Cape (Statistics South Africa, 2016). Therefore, these women's experiences of motherhood have been greatly impacted and shaped by economic strain and the complexity of navigating a narrative of disempowerment and disadvantage owing to their sociocultural context.

This leads to the last consideration of how gender intersects with location and/or the community environment women of colour find themselves inhabiting. The Western Cape comprises of the largest concentration of coloured citizens in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2016; Heitmeyer et al., 2019). Within this province, the majority of the coloured population reside in areas which are characterized by unemployment, elevated crime rates, and limited access to quality infrastructure. It is within this social milieu that women are still largely oppressed by men in their everyday life (Erfina et al., 2019). Furthermore, South Africa overall combats an alarmingly high rate of gender-based violence, which is concentrated in poverty-stricken areas such as these, where women are rendered more vulnerable, and enforced at a governmental level by powerful men who act as voices for the poor (Gqola, 2009). This vulnerability is as a result of educational derailment owing to high levels of school dropout, lack of autonomy owing to poor access to resources and limited, if any, financial independence and security for women of colour within these spaces (Erfina et al., 2019). Thus, intersectionality is important for revealing and interrogating the multiple ways in which various identities and categories are embedded within as well as overlap with each other and effect the experience of individuals occupying various spaces.

The notion of gender asymmetry describes how issues pertinent to women, as well as women themselves, are viewed as inferior and of diminished value compared to those of men (Worell & Remer, 2002). Thus, a shift has occurred within research undertaking to explore the

experience of and influences on motherhood. Whilst past research applied a critical lens to analysing the ideologies of motherhood, research in recent years has shifted its focus to empirical and qualitative research investigating the factors, influences, and experiences of mothers themselves (Terry, 2014). This has led to an expansion of the focus and emphasis of past literature and research which was predominately undertaken in the interest of child development outcomes (Terry, 2014).

Within feminism it is also argued that the psychological experiences of women across multiple domains of life and across various circumstances cannot and should not be separated from the social, political, and economic contexts in which they find themselves (Marecek & Gavey, 2013). These contexts were described in the previous two sections. Mothering exists within these various contexts and therefore will be impacted by them. As the tenets of social constructionism and feminist theory are grafted into this approach, the influence and validity of both sociocultural context and discourse should be addressed and acknowledged (Ussher, 2010). Therefore, in an effort to shed light on the subjective, lived experience of women, feminist research takes the context women find themselves occupying into account – this is complementary to the social constructionist approach (Van Loon & Kralik, 2006).

The social feminist constructionist framework draws attention to the fact that the experiences, interests, and contexts of all women are not linear and similar. As such, this approach considers the social power relations embedded in various dominant discourses which largely represent the etic meanings attributed to the young motherhood experience (Macleod, 2003). Concurrently, the importance of individualised experience and the emic perspective of young mothers can be acknowledged. The voices of women are valued and brought to the forefront, so that the knowledge gained is based on the insights and reflections of women themselves (DuBois as cited in Kitinger, 2004).

By utilizing this approach, the diversity in young women's' experiences can be recognized and highlighted. Following on, this approach is well-suited to the aims of the current study to cultivate an understanding of the participants' lived experience within the South African context.

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, the current study is situated within a social constructionist feminist theoretical framework which is fitting for the exploration of the subjective lived experiences of young mothers as they experience motherhood over time. The importance of

acknowledging the societal discourses which influence how young motherhood, and by extension young mothers, are viewed stands in good stead with the tenets of social constructionism and feminist research in incorporating women's voices into the research. This is doubly important when considering the sociocultural and political landscapes of the South African context.

Chapter three: Literature review

This thesis aims to explore the lived experiences of young mothers within a low-income setting with particular focus on how they have experienced, and navigated motherhood over time having begun their motherhood journey as teenage mothers. It is a follow-up study which is based upon the larger research project (WMHRP) that took place from 2002 to 2006.

An increasingly significant fissure regarding the view of young motherhood in the literature surrounding teenage pregnancy has developed over time. This divide has presented itself as an emerging discrepancy between the dominant theories surrounding teenage pregnancy in the literature, and the lived experiences of young mothers (Clarke, 2015; Neiterman, 2012). This chapter discusses the current literature available as well as the views and attitudes surrounding young motherhood. A brief background on the state of teenage pregnancy on a global level while focusing on the nature and occurrence of this phenomenon within South Africa is provided. It serves as a point of departure wherein we attempt to discuss and evaluate how young motherhood has been presented within both the scholarly and public domains according to the adopted definitions specific to this study.

3.1 Incidence of teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy as a global phenomenon has been discussed and deliberated about extensively across scholarly, political, and social domains (Neiterman, 2012; Ellis-Sloan, 2014; Sedgh et al., 2015). The term ‘teenage pregnancy’ (TP) refers to a woman who is between the ages of 13-19 years at the time of falling pregnant (Cook & Cameron, 2015). Teenage pregnancy is typically framed and conceptualized as a global social and health problem faced by wider society (Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Mturi, 2015; Santos, 2012).

According to the World Health Organization, as of 2019, approximately 21 million females within the age bracket of 15-19 years residing within low- and middle-income countries fall pregnant each year. It has been estimated that 12 million of those pregnancies resulted in births in the year 2016 (World Health Organization, 2022). The total number of births to adolescent girls comprise 11% of all global births (Siniša, 2018). With the growing number of adolescent populations, it is projected that by 2030 the number of adolescent pregnancies at a global level will increase, the greatest proportional increase of those occurring in West and Central Africa as well as Eastern and Southern Africa (Siniša, 2018).

3.1.1 Teenage pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa

Despite the steady global decline in teenage pregnancies since 1990, the occurrence of teenage pregnancy in Sub-Saharan Africa remains significantly high (Uwizeye et al., 2020). While the global number of teenage pregnancies have decreased over time, this gives little insight into the spatial distribution of teenage pregnancies across various countries, continents, and regions (Siniša, 2018). Sedgh et al. (2015) examined trends of teenage pregnancy, birth and abortion rates across various countries by making use of data estimates for 2011 compared with estimates published in the mid-1990s. It was found that the regional estimates for birth rates in 2011 pertaining to the developing world were especially high in Sub-Saharan Africa.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, most young mothers appear to reside in poor, impoverished communities and encounter difficult socio-economic challenges (Mkhwanazi, 2010; National Department of Health, 2016; Ramululo & Pitsoe, 2013; Sedgh et al., 2015). Empirical studies investigating the link between teenage pregnancy and the socioeconomical status of teenagers' households showed significant correlational results between teenage pregnancy and lower socioeconomical status (Ajala, 2014; Nyakubega, 2010; Odimegwu & Mkwanzani, 2016). This is echoed by Siniša (2018) who posits that the occurrence of early motherhood appears to be at its greatest levels among marginalized communities driven by poverty and poor socioeconomical resources and opportunities. Neal et al. (2020) found that while the percentages of adolescent birth vary greatly between countries of the Sub-Saharan region, the overall burden of first births among the adolescent population is significant particularly in the young adolescent age-group. Reasons for this have been shown to include elevated levels of poverty and an overburdened and depreciated health-care system characteristic of various countries in sub-Saharan Africa (Cheteni et al., 2019; Neal et al., 2020). The occurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic has further increased the risks, challenges and socioeconomical strain of Sub-Saharan countries, and by extension the burden placed on the young women who constitute such communities (Plan International, 2019).

3.1.2 Teenage pregnancy in South Africa

In South Africa, governmental bodies and the media have also deemed the high incidences of teenage pregnancy to be problematic (Gustafsson & Worku, 2007; Macleod, 1999; Mokwena et al., 2016; Ramululo & Pitsoe, 2013). The South Africa Demographic Health Survey (SADHS) carried out during 2016 revealed an adolescent birth rate of seventy-one births per thousand women in the age category of fifteen to nineteen years, while a recent finding by Statistics South Africa (2018) found that in South Africa many teenage mothers are

young teenagers, ranging from ages ten to fifteen years. The report detailing the recorded live births from the period of January 2017 to February 2018, showed that 3261 girls between the ages of ten and fourteen became mothers in South Africa during that time (Statistics South Africa, 2018). The serious concern surrounding teenage pregnancy has continued to rise over the years alongside alternative approaches aiming to attenuate higher than should be rates of teenage pregnancy.

The important influence of the cultural and political landscape wherein individuals are situated is crucial as the structural and social discourses embedded within societies shape how people view and navigate their experiences (Bhatia & Priya, 2018; Kruger & Lourens, 2016). By considering the social milieu in which individuals' function through their everyday lives, a wide-ranging and nuanced understanding of insights, experiences, and processes can be recognized and acknowledged (White, 2004). As a country, South Africa is known for the diversity of its citizens, made up of a plethora of ethnicities and cultures that comprise the affectionately dubbed 'rainbow nation' (Dubin, 2016; Jürgens et al., 2013). However, South Africa is also one of the most "socially fractured and unequal" countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as previously noted (Howell, 2019, p. 98).

Contemporary South Africa has consistently struggled with corrupt governance following the post-apartheid years, which has led to deeply entrenched marginalization of the vulnerable and disempowered together with the persistent effects of apartheid that can still be visibly seen today (Heitmeyer, 2019). This marginalization in the form of poverty, limited resources, and poor infrastructure is dominantly experienced by people of colour, the most vulnerable of those being women and children (Reid & Tom, 2006). These disparities are starkly visible amongst racial groups and communities both between and within the provinces of South Africa. Thus, this distinction can still be seen today in the economic and sociocultural patterns of South African society and shapes the overall political and sociocultural landscape that has structured this society as well as the "physical spaces of its urban society" (Howell, 2019, p. 98).

3.2 Discourses impacting on young motherhood

Differing views of this phenomenon are evident across various contexts and cultures (Cook & Cameron, 2015; Duncan et al., 2010; Macleod, 1999; Mokwena et al., 2016; Neiterman, 2012). The first viewpoint, being the most prominent, positions teenage pregnancy as a widespread social problem that is linked to poverty and economic disadvantage (Cense &

Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Ellis-Sloan, 2014; Neiterman, 2012; Pillay, 2021). The problematization of teenage pregnancy as a social catastrophe is evident globally as well as in South Africa (Hoggart, 2012; Ankomah & Konadu Gyesaw, 2013; Macleod & Tracey, 2010; Ramulumo & Pitsoe, 2013; Singh & Hamid, 2016). This phenomenon has been emphasized as a social and public health problem in terms of the associated consequences and outcomes for the mother and child as well as the historical moral inclinations attached to teenage pregnancy (Ellis-Sloan, 2013; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009; Mturi, 2015; Neiterman, 2012; Yardley, 2008). Additionally, the pregnant teenager is portrayed as a symbol of deviation from the moral standard dictated by western society's consensus and stands in direct opposition to the idealized 'good mother' (Macleod, 1999; Malacrida & Boulton, 2012; Neiterman, 2012).

Globally, governmental bodies including school bodies and policy makers have consistently worked with urgency to attenuate the ongoing incidence of teenage pregnancy owing to its impact on the current and future social, health, and economic well-being of adolescents and functioning of society. The economic burden that teenage pregnancy has been proposed to have on society through the responsibility of funding young, impoverished mothers and said mothers lack of contribution to the country's GDP as a result of stagnated educational progress, has been voiced as concerning (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018). Altogether, this adds to the amplification of a negative outlook on young mothers in recent times (Christofides et al., 2014).

However, an alternative viewpoint has emerged within the academic discussion, which maintains and suggests that it is possible for young mothers to experience motherhood positively and that it need not necessarily have a negative and detrimental long-term outcome (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Neiterman, 2012; Malindi, 2018; McMichael, 2013). The main justification for a more optimistic view of young mothers in light of considering the negative consequences of young motherhood, is that while the concern for the adverse impact of teenage pregnancy on multiple levels is warranted, the uncompromising depiction of and approach to young motherhood is somewhat driven by societal bias and the historical influence underlying strong moral inclinations and certain viewpoints (McMichael, 2013; Pillay, 2020). This breeds a harsh stigma within communities toward the individuals who fall pregnant as teenagers and results in harsh approaches of support and attenuation that lean toward shaming young mothers as opposed to uplifting and empowering them (Macleod & Tracy, 2010; Shefer et al., 2013).

Thus, the way young mothers are viewed within wider society are influenced by various discourses.

3.2.1 Ideal motherhood

The experience of motherhood has traditionally been constructed as a homogenous and universal experience for all women (Hays, 1998). This dominant discourse is characterised by notions of the ideal and good mother, ideals that all mothers should be measured by and should measure their own experiences and actions by (Kruger, 2006). Yet the experiences of motherhood, including functional, psychological, and emotional, have been argued as being context-specific and largely impacted upon by specific local discourses and ideologies (Kruger, 2003).

The discourse of ideal motherhood pinned much of contemporary societies' understanding of what constitutes 'good mothering'. Central to this discourse is the concept of intensive mothering as described by Hays (1998). This ideology posits that women who are mothers should adopt an attitude of selfless sacrifice regarding their offspring. Therefore, as a mother it is expected that one acts as the primary caregiver in attending to the needs of one's children and is overly generous with one's time and energy while lavishing one's children with attention. Furthermore, motherhood is framed as bringing ultimate fulfilment and satisfaction (Douglas & Michaels, 2005; Lanctôt & Turcotte, 2018). In this way, an image of the all-caring and self-sacrificing mother is perpetuated as an impossible ideal for which women should strive (Hallstein, 2006). Consequently, the myth of motherhood perpetuates this illusion of motherhood wherein the pleasure derived from motherhood far outweighs and overshadows the duties of motherhood (Kruger, 2003; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016).

This can have troubling consequences for women mothering in socioeconomically marginalized contexts. In their efforts to aspire towards ideal motherhood, they may internalize deep feelings of inadequacy and failure when they experience difficulties specifically motherhood-related struggles or maternal distress (Naqvi, 2016). Furthermore, such feelings of failure may develop into feelings of anger which may be directed towards one's infant or child (Kruger & Lourens, 2016; Littlewood & McHugh, 1997). Within an ideal where children are seen as a blessing to be cherished at all costs, this may evoke an amplified sense of failure within mothers who experience a range of emotions both toward their children and motherhood in general (Naqvi, 2016). As such, the discourse of ideal motherhood greatly influences how women come to understand and experience mothering in an integral way.

3.2.2 *Moral discourses*

The morality discourses surrounding young motherhood are centred on the premise that teenage mothers represent a deviant group in society (Chase, 2019). In this way, young motherhood is positioned as a moral transgression regarding what is the acceptable life course for young women as prescribed by societal discourses such as ideal motherhood, developmental discourses, and the moral discourse (Pillay, 2021). Young mothers are depicted as a threat to the ordered functioning of society and challenge the public understandings of what motherhood and adolescence entails. Interestingly, young women who have wed and conceived children within this institution are not met with the same condescension. Thus, the moral problematization associated with young motherhood within society appears to be less concerned with the age of the mother and more so with her status as an unwed mother (Chase, 2019). This is owing to the “disruption to the social ordering of time” which is represented by teenage pregnancy (Bute & Russel, 2012, p. 719).

Within wider society, a teenager who falls pregnant is perceived as a symbol of immoral and reckless behaviour, and therefore depicted in a negative light (Macutkiewicz & MacBeth, 2017; Zito, 2016). In this way, young mothers are positioned as immoral in character (Bute & Russel, 2012). Kelly (2000) proposes that the discourse of choices, which is related to moral discourse, further serves to demoralise young mothers by presenting them as having made a bad choice, and therefore positioning them as reckless. Thus, it has been argued that the full brunt of the shame attached to this immorality and recklessness is directed at and heavily carried by each young mother rather than being aimed at her circumstances and community environment. This fails to consider the gendered social and structural factors informing women’s choices and behaviour (Singh & Naicker, 2019). These include things such as poverty, gender-based violence within partnerships, age-disparate sexual intercourse, and general gender inequalities present as residues consequent of the socio-historical context of South Africa (Ranganathan et al., 2017).

The dominant view of the teenage mother is that she, herself, is a problem and thus, teenage pregnancy remains a critical public health concern in current society (Chase, 2019; Christofides et al., 2014). While the knowledge of teenagers’ participation in a degree of sexual activity is implied as ‘typical’ by most of society, the visible proof of such behaviour which explicitly acknowledges the activities which have taken place, appears to be unacceptable (Macleod, 2002; Santos, 2012). It appears the focus on sexual reproductive rights and the sexual health of young women is the general undercurrent of most research addressing teenage

pregnancy (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Nkani & Bhana, 2016). This is characterized by adamant attempts to elucidate factors and influences contributing to the spread of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STI) (Ngabaza, 2011). Thus, the lens of focus is often concentrated to the young women at risk of falling pregnant, young mothers who are pregnant or have been mothering children for a relatively short period after having given birth. In stark contrast, the visibility in the research of young mothers who have had children for an extended time — in other words long-term qualitative studies — is scant (Chigona & Chetty, 2008; Ngabaza, 2010; Sheeran et al., 2018).

3.2.3 The gendered nature of motherhood

In many of the discourses surrounding young motherhood, young men are mostly excluded or feature briefly in attempts made to highlight the gravity of this phenomena. This creates the connotation that it is the young girls' duty to bear the weight of and take full responsibility for righting the difficulties they face. By extension, the blame for larger problems commonly argued to have arisen in society because of teenage pregnancy are transferred solely to young mothers (Yadufashije et al., 2017). The result is a continual reproduction of restrictive and discriminatory sexual discourses targeting young women at its core (Singh & Naicker, 2019; Yadufashije et al., 2017). The undercurrent of many discourses maintain that young girls should know better suggesting a moral component as well as a call to practicing increased wisdom and better judgement (Bute & Russel, 2012; Chase, 2019). The implied understanding is that the 'problem' can be solved by simply a change of mind or attitude on the part of young women particularly regarding the value of education.

The absence of boys and young men in this narrative plainly exhibits the lack of accountability toward them as partners in the creation of the infant (Yadufashije et al., 2017). They feature as invisible victims of young parenthood where it is almost expected that they will not, and therefore, do not have to take responsibility for their actions or part in the narrative (Bhana & Nkani, 2014). This is ironic and problematic as father absence has been shown to have a negative effect on children's outcomes while engaged fathering produces positive effects on children's behaviour (Clark, 2015; Ward et. al., 2015).

3.3 Shift in the conceptualization of teenage pregnancy

While the adverse effects of teenage pregnancy on a social, economic and individual level are recognized, some regard the extremely negative view of teenage pregnancy as unwarranted, and almost degrading (National Department of Health, 2016; Neiterman, 2012;

Singh & Naicker, 2019). Despite most literature highlighting the negative aspects of teenage pregnancy, and the “dominant narrative of ruinous life outcomes” being salient in the public media, there appears to be growing evidence for individual experiences of teenage pregnancy as positive for the mother (Zito, 2016, p. 2). Two shifts have recently occurred in the positioning and conceptualization of teenage pregnancy; firstly, in terms of incorporating the experiences and views of the young mothers themselves into academic conversation, and secondly by the way in which the experience of motherhood can be regarded in a positive light and normalized by young mothers (Chohan & Langa, 2011; Clarke, 2015; Huang et al., 2014; Neiterman, 2012; Malindi, 2018; Santos, 2012).

The incorporation of previous and current young mothers’ voices into the academic conversation has allowed for an authentic depiction of individuals’ reality and experiences (Malindi, 2018). This is important because it addresses the concerns of young mothers who are themselves experiencing this life transition, and therefore can inform interventions that will assist them in the ways that they need (Mkhwanazi, 2010; Neiterman, 2012). In this way, appropriate support structures can be implemented to help ease the difficulties associated with teenage pregnancy and provide the possibility for improved long-term outcomes (Amod et al., 2019; Malindi, 2018; Singh & Naicker, 2019). In some recent academic literature concerned with teenage pregnancy, the traditional depiction of early motherhood as a life-long problem has been contested, with qualitative research suggesting that motherhood can be experienced as positive overall, despite the challenges associated with this transition (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2015; Arai, 2009; Hoggart, 2012; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). This is the possibility that we intend to explore and expand on.

Teenage pregnancy is a loaded and complex phenomenon, approached in different ways with multiple viewpoints and occurring in varied contexts. The aim that has been employed here is not that young motherhood and the complications, setbacks and circumstances associated with it, is to be encouraged or minimized but rather that the uncompromising and underlying structures, means of attenuation and debates surrounding these young mothers may be derogatory in framing the occurrence as a problem; more so a problem situated in the individual. This all-or-nothing approach may not be conducive to the way wider society perceives young mothers nor the preventative and/or intervention strategies that are implemented to support young mothers. This is reflected in how society has approached and attempted to rectify the concern surrounding elevated levels of teenage pregnancy.

Therefore, care should be taken not to mistake young motherhood for problematic motherhood as young women's experiences, social, cultural, and historical contexts, and beliefs are not homogenous, especially across Sub-Saharan countries such as South Africa (Neal et al., 2020). As such, the nuanced nature of the problems specific to young mother's experiences follow that there will be considerable heterogeneity between them because of multiple intersections in their daily lives. In this way the experiences of young mothers are a result of various lived realities, local specificities, and the social context wherein they inhabit the role of mother (Kruger et al., 2014; Macleod, 2014). While there may be a fair amount of research exploring teenage pregnancy in South Africa, much of such research adopts a more despondent view and focuses on using quantifiable measures to describe teenage pregnancy from an etic perspective. This is mostly discussed in relation to reproductive rights and sexual health of young mothers still in school (Nkani & Bhana, 2016).

In this thesis, I aim to explore teenage pregnancy from an alternative, more subjective perspective; that is by employing the voices of women who were young mothers themselves. By focusing on the lived experiences of motherhood, the feelings, thoughts and the attitudes of the women themselves toward teenage pregnancy and motherhood, we can, from a South African perspective, critique and challenge the dominant discourses regarding young motherhood. Having lived through the personal experience of motherhood, the voices of the women themselves should be acknowledged in framing their life trajectory over time in a positive or negative light – or both.

3.4 The emergence of the positively orientated view toward young motherhood

In relatively recent years an alternate approach to exploring young motherhood has developed and gained momentum in the literature. Researchers have attempted to discuss young motherhood in more positive or optimistic manner while highlighting the importance of the individual women's voices who have lived through this transition into motherhood (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2015; Arai, 2009; Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Pillay, 2020). The attention has particularly been placed on the long-term outcome of young motherhood as pertaining to young mothers' and their children's' futures. The belief is that the life trajectory of these women does not need to be viewed in a fatalistic light, and that with the right support and measures put in place, young mothers can be afforded the opportunity to achieve their aspirations and reach their life goals (Amod et al., 2019; Matlala, 2017; Morrell et al., 2012; Nkani & Bhana, 2016; Pires et al., 2014).

The all-or-nothing lens through which young motherhood is dominantly viewed has been contested owing to shifting the blame of a burdened and broken structural system onto the individuals constituting it (Yadufashije et al., 2017). The expectation is that young mothers face an inevitable and negative long-term outcome often characterized by economic struggle, lower education obtainment and poor mental health which further perpetuates a cycle of poverty (Mturi, 2015; Siniša, 2018). However, the personal narratives of young mothers have been found to present a different expression, where their disposition toward pregnancy is not entirely negative (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Clarke, 2015). As such some academics have proposed and advocated for a re-evaluation of the current discourses that dominantly inform teenage pregnancy and young motherhood (Chase, 2019; Macleod & Tracy, 2010; Neiterman, 2012).

The personal experiences of young mothers are valuable in giving insight into how they have understood and made meaning of pregnancy within the context of their lives (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014). This is important so that researchers and wider society can begin to form a well-adjusted understanding of the various points of intersection in the young mother's life. It appears the discourses informing and influencing young motherhood, are not specific nor nuanced in their applicability, and thus, lack a well-adjusted approach to accurately frame this phenomenon (Chase, 2019; Pillay, 2021). Two extreme dichotomies are presented where motherhood is a milestone to be cherished or is solely characterized by social and personal problems in the case of young motherhood (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018). Meanwhile, some young mothers have been found to welcome the role of mother as a valuable identity in the construction of their self-view as responsible and mature individuals (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Erfina et al., 2019; Neiterman, 2012; SmithBattle, 2007).

Motherhood is viewed as a fresh beginning which offers a new, purposeful direction. This has been the case particularly with young women from low-income communities (Clarke, 2015; Malindi, 2018; Sheeran et al., 2015). Many young women who find themselves in less-than-ideal marginalized communities marked by economic scarcity and perceived limited opportunity, see childbearing as means to bring a sense of achievement and self-fulfilment (Nkana & Bhana, 2016; Santos, 2012). Furthermore, ethnic background and the cultural context young women find themselves inhabiting influences the discourses that women are exposed to and the way in which they would interact with the prospect of motherhood (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Pillay, 2021). Therefore, the emerging view posits that the all-or-nothing negatively skewed approach dominant within literature is a short-sighted perspective

that positions the individual young mother as a problem in and of herself while disregarding the environment in which she operates.

In the following sections, I will outline the main motivations and tenets that underpin a more optimistic view of young motherhood. The importance of analysing both the dominant and emerging approaches of framing young motherhood over time is paramount to ensure an accurate understanding of the manner in which they interact with and compare to the lived experiences of women who have been or are young mothers. Various studies will be included to summarise the present arguments made for viewing teenage pregnancy from a more optimistic viewpoint. This will include studies from both South Africa as well as globally.

3.4.1 The connection between socioeconomic disadvantage and young motherhood

Teenage pregnancy has been construed both as a cause and consequence of social rejection within the literature, where childbirth is either a result of or leads to poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage (Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Sedgh et al., 2015). On one hand, these are represented as the dominant underlying influences which encourage and/or increase the risk of teenage pregnancy (Sedgh et al., 2015). Yet, majority of earlier studies focusing on young motherhood imply that the poor socioeconomic circumstances young mothers find themselves in are consequences of their falling pregnant as a teenager, and in so doing, suggest that teenage pregnancy always precedes and is the cause of poverty (Macleod, 2003; Mollborn & Morningstar, 2009). Much of the research exploring young motherhood begins with this assumption (Yadufashije et al., 2017).

However, Yadufashije et al. (2017) state that there exists a variety of complex socioeconomic factors impacting young motherhood which include but are not limited to poverty, community perception and attitude, family acceptance and support, and gender inequality among others. The counterargument has been made that long before pregnancy occurs, young women within impoverished environments may perceive a lack of opportunities and already be struggling academically, making the appeal of motherhood worthwhile (Erfini et al., 2019). As such, the presence of selection bias has been raised as a continual concern regarding the research pointing to the link between socioeconomic effects and maternal distress as consistent unidirectional outputs of young motherhood (Santos, 2012). Few studies, however, have attempted to explore the possibility of a bi-directional relationship when examining the contribution of the socioeconomic environment toward young motherhood

(Chase, 2019; Mohr et al., 2019; Santos, 2012). This appears to be changing with the development of a more nuanced approach to understanding teenage pregnancy.

This is one of the main arguments posed in opposition to the suggestion that young motherhood inevitably results in limited economic opportunities and lower educational attainment thereby perpetuating a cycle of continual poverty (Erfina et al., 2019; Sedgh et al., 2015; Siniša, 2018). The determinants of young motherhood have been extensively researched both at a global and national level (Sedgh et al., 2018). These include social, economic, and cultural factors which are thought to contribute to the occurrence of early childbearing. Considering this, higher teenage childbearing rates have been found to occur in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged and vulnerable groups in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) (Sedgh et al., 2015). This is mirrored in South Africa where teenage pregnancy is said to be driven by social and economic disadvantage as well as judgement and bias from health care workers (Malatji et al., 2020; Mkwanaenzi, 2017).

There is a noteworthy body of evidence which suggests young girls may have been struggling with poor performance at a school level or faced barriers to academic achievement prior to becoming pregnant and thus, faced increased odds of falling pregnant (Birchall, 2018; Brown, 2012). Siniša (2018) states that many young pregnant women who live in low-income or marginalized communities view discontinuing school as a more favourable option in light of poor circumstances and an environment marked by limited opportunity. As such, it is suggested that this does not necessarily support a causal relationship between teenage pregnancy and young women's abridged academic education (Birchall, 2018; Santos, 2012). Rather a lower economic status, living in the confines of poverty and lack of income position teenagers as more likely to become young mothers compared to their equivalent peer group (Chung et al., 2018). While poverty appears to be significantly interlinked with young motherhood, this does not constitute causality in terms of early pregnancy being the sole driver and determinant of unfavourable socioeconomic status (Birchall, 2018).

The same mentality has been applied when discussing the link between discontinued education and young motherhood. Often teenage pregnancy is anecdotally linked to be a cause of school dropout for young women (Birchall, 2018). However, while there may be a dearth of significant evidence examining these links, the evidence for direct and causal links remains limited (Birchall, 2018). Early childbearing and school dropout are irrefutably interlinked with socioeconomic inequalities and unequal gender norms in South Africa, and thus cannot be

simplistically separated from the niche in which they are embedded (Morrell et al., 2012; Singh & Naicker, 2019). The importance of disentangling the multiple factors that may be causally associated with unplanned teenage pregnancy as opposed to those correlated with such pregnancies is crucial to develop a more well-rounded and accurate attitude toward young mothers (Cense & Ruard Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Sedgh et al., 2015; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

3.4.2 Positive associations of teenage pregnancy

As previously mentioned, there has been a marked interest in undertaking research which explores the phenomena of young motherhood from the young mother's perspective. This has resulted in the unearthing of an alternative more optimistic view of how young motherhood is viewed and experienced. The lived experiences of young mothers have gained much traction in the literature owing to the intention to integrate their voices into the academic conversation. The reason for this being that the importance of including subjective experiences of young motherhood is critical for informing how society can better support young mothers in a meaningful way. It's believed that in this way the risks associated with teenage pregnancy, such as financial instability, mental illness, and health-related issues, may be somewhat alleviated (Reid & Tom, 2006; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

The moral discourses surrounding teenage pregnancy heavily inform the notion of a 'good mother' in contrast with a 'bad mother' (Sniekers, 2019). The tenets of this discourse perpetuate the belief that issues such as unplanned/unwanted pregnancies are as a result of the individual promiscuity and problematic sexuality (Moletsane & Mitchell, 2015). Yet this view lacks a social-ecological interpretation by depositing the entirety of the blame on young mothers and criticising them for their lack of self-control to refrain from such behaviours. The suggestion of a more well-adjusted view is brought to the forefront by literature which attempts to focus on the possibility of positive outcomes and approaches to young motherhood (Singh & Naicker, 2019).

The following sections focus on the positive associations that have been both communicated by and observed in young mother's narratives when describing their experiences of motherhood. As the focus of the current study is on that of low-income women situated within the context of socioeconomic disadvantage in South Africa, much of the research and evidence will be viewed through this lens and within this context. While literature from around the world as well as South Africa will be drawn on, the applicability of these

experiences regarding the nationality and ethnicity of the women who participated in the current study will be acknowledged and discussed.

3.4.2.1 Resilience in young motherhood

Resilience has been extensively researched within the context of young motherhood (Mukuna & Aloka, 2021; Shea et al., 2016; Singh & Naicker, 2019). Resilience can be described as the “process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426). The development of resilience and agency in young mothers has been at the forefront of research focusing on more positive outcomes of teenage pregnancy (Mukuna & Aloka, 2021). The societal view of young motherhood as morally wrong is deeply embedded and influential in the discussions surrounding teenage pregnancy (Clarke, 2015; Sniekers, 2019). Often the conceptualisation of young mothers as “helpless casualties” leads to them being positioned as victims of their own making as the problems they face as young mothers are argued to be the outcome of their own choices and volition (Singh & Naicker, 2019, p. 3).

This draws on a neoliberal view which unfairly positions the young mother as being solely responsible for the conception of her child while disregarding the role of the father as well as multiple factors embedded within her community context (Kruger, 2006; Sniekers, 2019). Neoliberal ideology conceptualises individuals as being competent in their capacity to practice autonomy regardless of surrounding circumstances. In the context of South Africa this is particularly problematic owing to the systemic gender inequalities and socioeconomical disparities rife in low-income South African communities (Pillay, 2021; Singh & Naicker, 2019). Since the discourse implies that individuals have complete authority and control over their life whereby the autonomous choices they make, the occurrence of unintended pregnancies is viewed as a foreseen consequence of reckless behaviour that falls entirely on the shoulders of young mothers (Bay-Cheng, 2015).

Resilience may not exclusively be understood as an inherent attribute of an individual but also a mechanism or trait that can be developed and strengthened within individuals across each level of the social ecology paradigm (Clarke, 2015; Solivan et al., 2015). Thus, environmental contexts of individuals may have a significant impact on resilience development as opposed to the impression that resilience occurs solely as a static trait in some and not in others. Despite dominant discourses equating young motherhood with being a ‘bad mother’ and a lack of control, young mothers in various cases have exhibited traits such as motivation,

responsibility, positive thinking, selflessness, and determination when adjusting to their new role as a mother and navigating the overall experience of motherhood (Malindi, 2018; Pillay, 2020; Shea et al., 2016; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

Clarke (2015) attempted to provide a counter narrative to the dominant negative discourse of teenage pregnancy where poor outcomes are most focused on. Among her findings was the discovery that competence in social and life skills were present as participants displayed self-awareness through acknowledging their strengths and weaknesses. Young women showed they were able to reflect on their difficult experiences and develop responsive strategies which formed the foundation for achieving positive outcomes both for their children and themselves (Clarke, 2015). One of the developmental tasks associated with resilience is that of social competence, which includes the ability of young mothers to recognize the important need for support as well as being willing to utilise available support structures (Amod et al., 2019). Previous studies carried out to explore resilience were in agreement with Clarke (2015) in recognising individual's motivation to work hard as a protective factor (Morales, 2008; Shea et al., 2016). Young women's willingness to accept their pregnancies in conjunction with a strong persistence to resist framing pregnancy as an adversity was found to be a strong adaptive strategy contributing to a more positive outcome and experience (Clarke, 2015).

Seamark and Lings (2004) suggest similar findings in that motherhood had given young mothers the momentum to entertain the possibility of pursuing a career and encouraged them to push on toward achieving educational goals. The children of young mothers were found to be a powerful source of motivation and encouragement, for whom young mothers desired to be role models and set an example (Malindi, 2018; Solivan et al., 2015). Their children acted as the "impetus for striving to improve their life situations" (Clarke, 2015, p. 480) resulting in determination to experience better outcomes than the existing negative outcomes for young mothers and their children (Singh & Naicker, 2019).

3.4.2.1.1 The impact of social support

Protective or buffer factors have been proposed as valuable tenets of the emerging optimistic approach to young motherhood (Amod et al., 2019; Malindi, 2018). Protective factors include the presence of good quality social support whether from friends or family (Solivan et al., 2015), positive and healthy relationships with partners, acceptance of one's newfound reality, religion (Malindi, 2018), employment opportunities and/or job satisfaction (Clarke, 2015).

Strong social support has been shown to have a significant positive impact on the long-term outcomes of teenage mothers owing to its potential as a resource (Amod et al., 2019; Clarke, 2015; Pires et al., 2014; Solivan et al., 2015). The presence of support proves to be a key component in making strides in educational achievement for young mothers as well as decreasing marginalization within society (Amod et al., 2019; Bhana & Mncambi, 2013; Shefer et al., 2013). Familial support in particular aids in the reduction of environmental shame and stigmatization, implicating more far-reaching goals like gender equality (Morrell et al., 2012). In most cases the maternal grandmother is found to act as the primary source of support (Huang et al., 2014). Additional sources of social support include other family members, the father of the child, and wider society such as health care workers (Wahn et al., 2005).

Luthar and Cicchetti (2000) state that in order to discern the effect of contributory factors on resilient outcomes among young mothers, one must gain a deeper understanding of adverse experiences these individuals have encountered and the protective factors that “modify the effects of risk in a positive direction” (p.859). In so doing, the negative long-term outcomes may be lessened or avoided (Solivan et al., 2015). Furthermore, the adaptability of young mothers to adversity is paramount as this tends to “typically encompass negative life circumstances that are known to be statistically associated to adjustment difficulties” (Luther & Cicchetti, 2000, p. 858).

Solivan et al. (2015) differentiates between resources which are factors occurring in the external social environment of the young mother, and assets, which refer to positive traits or factors within young mothers. This includes factors such as self-efficacy and coping skills and represents the trait of resilience. Additional research suggests that a lack of familial as well as paternal assistance can result in poor pregnancy and birth outcomes, while navigating the dynamic of young motherhood, validating the positive effect of social support (Alio et al., 2011; Ghosh et al., 2010). Thus, the presence of social support as a buffer or protective factor in aiding the development of resilience is a key factor when addressing the possibility of a positive outcome for adolescent mothers (Amod et al., 2019; Solivan et al., 2015).

3.4.2.2 Agency in young motherhood

A few studies which have presented young mothers as agentic individuals with goals and aspirations challenge the problem-orientated, normative discourses surrounding motherhood (Duncan, 2007; Mollborn & Jacobs, 2012; Pillay, 2021). The adaptation to what they perceive as requirements to mother well has been conceptualised as agency by Duncan

(2007). Through the experience of motherhood young women have been able to fine-tune their focus and establish structure and control in their life whereby rising to meet the challenges of newfound responsibility (Rosengard et al., 2006; Seamark & Lings, 2004; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

A commonly used understanding of agency entails taking responsibility for one's place in the world which is influenced by the perception of an individual's life and plans as his or her own (Madhok et al., 2013). Sniekers (2019) describes and adopts the concept of bounded agency. This concept proposes that the everyday practices and experiences of individuals are influenced as well as delineated by the various intersecting structures and social norms continually confronting and framing those individuals. Thus, this concept can be applied in conceptualising young mother's agency within socioeconomically disadvantaged contexts. Agency can be argued as being embedded in the everyday life of young mothers as they interact with various structures, contexts, and entities as they navigate motherhood (Bordonaro, 2012).

The commonly accepted concept of agency is characterized as assertive and framed as active in its expression, as well as being presented as the opposite end of two extreme dichotomies (Sniekers, 2019). However, this narrow-minded approach has been disputed and a more inclusive understanding of the concept of agency has been proposed. The emphasis is on the adoption of agency across a spectrum as opposed to two extremes (Davids, 2017; Madhok et al., 2013).

Bounded agency as a concept proposes an expanded understanding of how agency is traditionally conceptualised. This term challenges the default understanding that intentionally changing one's life or attempting to change social structures in wider society is the only representation of or manner in which agency can be actionized (Sniekers, 2019). Thus, bounded agency refers to the notion that agency operationalized does not require a radical change in action or perception but can also entail the stabilisation of an individual's life as expressed through daily activities and negotiations with the various people and structures forming part of daily living (Sniekers, 2019). Resiliency and agency extend far beyond the individuals' strengths in discovering renewed determination to fulfil the life aspirations she views as in alignment with the social space she inhabits (Boomkens et al., 2019). The way in which young women interact with, negotiate, and relate to the structures and norms within which they find themselves governed by are too a reflection of agency, albeit a more 'passive' one (Sniekers, 2019). This understanding can give credibility to an everyday agency that young women are

practicing in their daily lives by simply showing up in the best way that they deem possible within the system they operate in.

The literature on motherhood, agency, and gender which intersect in various ways show that young mothers take up multiple roles alongside that of mother while operating within different social spaces (Madhok et al., 2013). Falling pregnant as a teenager "challenges [the] socially assigned roles of adolescence" forcing the emergence of new roles and identities for young women in this position (Pillay, 2020, p. 190). These roles include the role of a student completing their schooling and/or an employer as they may join the working sector to generate income (Pillay, 2020). Furthermore, there are certain expectations within society relating to needs that only the mother can fulfil for their infant with motherhood encompassing many new social, emotional, and material responsibilities (Madhok et al., 2013; Pillay, 2020). All the while the young mother is charged with balancing the role of an adolescent and the experiences that accompany this developmental stage. The agency of young mothers may manifest in their navigation and manoeuvring of the structural norms and roles shaping their daily lives (Sniekers, 2019). It is through exploring these roles that young mothers inhabit while operating in specific socioeconomic niches and context-dependent pathways that everyday agency in young mothers can be examined (Pillay, 2020). Thus, everyday agency presents as the willingness of women "to take steps in relation to their social situation" (Goddard, 2000, p. 3) as well as relating to the way in which they pursue personal growth and transformation to integrate into a "particular historically embedded discourse" (Sniekers, 2019, p. 93). Specific agentic acts do not solely have to effect change but can also look toward stability.

Furthermore, self-agency can be defined as a component of one's identity which encompasses beliefs surrounding the extent of control one has over one's future (DeSocio et al., 2013). In gaining some sense of control from caring, providing for, and directing their child(ren)'s lives, young mothers may develop a positive sense of self-agency. They can gain satisfaction from exerting effort into creating a good life for their child and witnessing their child's successes or milestones because of their hard work and dedication. In this way the development of agency in teenage mothers may have a critical influence on positive outcomes for teenage pregnancy (Pillay, 2021).

3.4.2.3 Responsibility and Confidence

When adjusting to the role of mother, many young women have reported a renewed sense of responsibility and maturity that is fostered as inherently necessitated by motherhood

(Duncan et al., 2010). This is a common sentiment expressed by young mothers in the literature leaning toward an optimistic view of teenage pregnancy (Malindi, 2018; Sniekers, 2019). While young mothers may have dealt with feelings of inexperience in the beginning stages of motherhood, as time goes on, they find empowerment in making more responsible and mature decisions on behalf of themselves and their children (Chohan & Langa, 2011; Clarke, 2015). Through caring for their children, they discover a sense of purpose and achievement that they come to associate with motherhood (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016).

This has been found to be the case particularly for young women who find themselves in low-income communities (Santos, 2012; Sheeran et al., 2015). The development of a renewed sense of control is in direct contrast to the dominant view of young mothers' lives being marked by hopelessness and fatalistic outcomes (Shea et al., 2016; Singh & Naicker, 2019). It has been proposed that in a country such as South Africa with its unique socio-political history, multiple adversities, and cultural diversity (Kruger, 2006), the need for research that facilitates positive difference, advocates positive change and fosters a sense of hopefulness, is crucial (Singh & Naicker, 2019).

Motherhood within this context – referring to the disempowerment and perceived lack of opportunity that has been described by young women within adverse socioeconomic circumstances - may be framed as a mechanism young women use to reconstruct their view of themselves as being more responsible and having a sense of control over the direction of their lives, together with feeling morally accepted (Shea et al., 2016). A renewed sense of responsibility marked by motherhood can strengthen young women to overcome challenging obstacles and in so doing psychological benefits may be derived from the process of motherhood (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018). The necessity for and development of this responsibility evoked by becoming a new mother may also act as a catalyst/foundation for young mothers to embody a new identity and new directions for their future (Clarke, 2015; Shea et al., 2016). In a study carried out by Singh and Naicker (2019), many young women claimed that the role of mother had elevated them to adult status, which is typically a position granted more power and autonomy within society compared to that of the youth. This forced them to develop and adopt alternative ways of viewing themselves as well as their approach to life directed by the newfound perspective of a parent rather than an adolescent. This demonstrates a maturity and willingness to embrace the responsibility that comes with caring for a child.

Positive feelings associated with motherhood include the development of a greater sense of maturity and finding confidence in one's ability to adjust to and overcome adverse circumstances through the transition of the role into mother (Mohammadi et al., 2016; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015). This transition resulted in the cultivation of a positive self-view greatly influenced by individuals perceived identity of themselves as a responsible mother (Klingberg-Allvin et al., 2008; Shea et al., 2016). This was noted for a majority of qualitative studies reviewed by Erfina et al. (2019). Duncan et al. (2010) corroborated this finding stating that the responsibility of motherhood led to increased levels of strength and self-efficacy. As the experience of motherhood required of young women to evolve and adapt to their new role, it provided an opportunity for development which led to them behaving in a more mature and less ego-centric manner (Erfina et al., 2019; Mohammadi et al., 2016).

3.4.3 Personal growth, transformation, and empowerment

The cumulative effect of various positive associations that have been proposed as contributing to positive outcomes for young mothers is that of an empowered, resilient individual (Pillay, 2020; Shea et al., 2016). More and more researchers are attempting to uncover the personal narratives of young women who are mothers in order to gain insight into the lived experiences of these individuals (Singh & Naicker, 2019). The optimistic lens through which young motherhood is being viewed denotes a process of growth and development evident in young mothers (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2014; Erfina et al., 2019). Thus, the literature exploring the possibility of a more positive experience of young motherhood recognizes transformation taking place in the transition from teenager to mother within the individual woman's own perception of herself. In this way young women can establish self-agency, foster a renewed sense of responsibility and be motivated and inspired to change their lifestyles for the better. This can be viewed as a positive carryover resulting from the challenge of young motherhood (Clarke, 2015; Shea et al., 2016). Through being willing to embody and accept their newfound role as a mother, young mothers gain a sense of achievement and foster a sense of confidence in their capabilities (Malindi, 2018). This in turn can project into various other areas of their lives such as in the pursuit of educational goals and aspirations (Shea et al., 2016). The occurrence of this intrinsic transformation, if present, may be framed as an example of the empowerment of young mothers. Empowerment in this context is understood to encompass the positive qualities developed through the vehicle of motherhood, particularly within those women from a low-resource setting who may not envision a future within their immediate environment (Singh & Naicker, 2019; Solivan et al., 2015).

The value that can be found in young motherhood is thus seen in the positive traits the experience of motherhood fosters whereby personal growth and transformation taking place within the mother as an individual (Singh & Naicker, 2019; Sniekers, 2019). With the appropriate structural tools and support, the establishment of an empowered and resilient individual may be a possible outcome of this process, which in turn aids young mothers to gain confidence in overcoming challenging obstacles encountered throughout and beyond the boundaries of motherhood (Amod et al., 2019; Erfina et al., 2019; Matlala, 2017; Pires et al., 2014).

3.5 Criticism of positively orientated view of young motherhood

One of the chief critiques of the positively orientated view of young motherhood is the risk this view poses to minimising the structural societal inequalities and challenging aspects of motherhood inherent to navigating society as a young low-income mother (Singh & Naicker, 2019). While Singh and Naicker (2019) propose a shift away from approaches which have traditionally viewed young mothers as “helpless casualties” (p. 1) and in so doing perpetuated an “insidious form of victim-blaming” (p. 1), they emphasise the importance of recognizing the constraints of individual resilience. Rather, they propose the concept of resilience as a wider ecological notion. An alternative approach adopted in recent research focuses on a more contextualised meaning and understanding of the term ‘resilience’ (Theron et al., 2013). This understanding of resilience takes into account the social ecologies wherein young mothers are situated as opposed to viewing resilience exclusively as a trait that occurs in an individual or not. Resilience is suggested to go beyond the individual in that way (Masten, 2014).

While framing young mothers as solely responsible for the relatively high number of teenage pregnancies within South Africa is problematic, it cannot be denied that early childbearing poses a challenge to young women’s sexual and reproductive health in South Africa (Mkwanzani, 2017). Studies have reported that a third of South African females will have experienced giving birth by the time they have reached 19 years of age (Shefer et al., 2013; Willan, 2013). Furthermore, owing to the risk that poor socioeconomic circumstances pose for young women of which a major one is increased risk of early pregnancy, the challenges this context presents cannot be ignored nor should it be minimized in favour of individual resilience and positive outcomes (Singh & Naicker, 2019).

The influence of conditions of poverty, marked by social distress, on young women’s vulnerability to unplanned and mistimed pregnancy, needs to be acknowledged when

discussing empowerment and resilience at an individual and collective level (Morrell et al., 2012). Less urban areas have been characterized as facing higher rates of unemployment, poor physical resources, larger families with many offspring, diminished education levels and economic struggle (Pillay, 2020; Statistics South Africa, 2018). The proposition for adolescent pregnancy and young motherhood to be understood as an “embedded social phenomenon” is owing to the complex and differentiating social and cultural ideals across various locales (Jewkes et al., 2009, p. 685). This is important because it influences how young motherhood is perceived and experienced by both young mothers and society members (Mkhwanazi, 2014).

As such, concerns surrounding the more optimistic view of young motherhood cautions against a simplistic, one-sided presentation of young motherhood as being entirely owing to personal choice, leading to empowered individuals, and praising individualised resilience (Shaw et al., 2016; Singh & Naicker, 2019). The risk of this is undue pressure placed on young mothers to ‘perform’ well and the impediment of investigations and analysis into contributory social and contextual inequalities (Cense & Ganzeoort, 2018). One must be careful not to place a demanding burden on individual resilience and the capacity to overcome adversity which ironically reflects the same tenets constituting the negatively orientated view (Singh & Naicker, 2019). In so doing, the sole responsibility of young mothers’ own adversity is placed on their shoulders and produces shame within them for not being able to overcome difficulties in their own strength. This argument reinforces the inherent problematic nature of overarching structural systems (Shaw et al., 2016). Furthermore, this kind of thinking is dangerous for both the young mother and wider communities because it negatively impacts society’s general sense of social responsibility toward marginalized communities, propagating apathy at ‘best’ and stigma and shame at worst (Shaw et al., 2016).

Thus, promoting resilience and agency as positive associations of young motherhood may indirectly result in a greater emphasis on individual responsibility while turning a blind eye to inherent structural issues such as gender inequality and economic disparity (Macleod, 2001; Macleod, 2003; Singh & Naicker, 2019). This concludes a broad summary of the main criticisms of the positively oriented view.

3.6 Concluding remarks

The literature has demonstrated that there are two contrasting views of young motherhood, which by association governs how young mothers are viewed and framed in literature and wider society.

The potential negative effects of early pregnancy are evident in the literature and are to be considered seriously. The various interplay of factors *influencing* teenage pregnancy has been listed as low educational expectations, barriers to accessing contraceptive methods, peer pressure, and health staff bias (Singh & Naicker, 2019). However, within the past South African literature factors such as lack of knowledge surrounding contraceptive use, a diminished or low self-esteem, economic depravity and truncated education, absence of a father figure, the cultural value of children, and domestic abuse among others tended to be described as *causes* of young motherhood (Macleod, 1999). These factors are argued to limit the potential avenues of economic empowerment resulting in a perpetual cycle of poverty (Siniša, 2018). Thus, the harmful effects of young motherhood which impact the life paths and futures of young women cannot be denied. The negative outcomes of young motherhood are largely documented, and this has led to a negatively orientated view of young motherhood.

The positively orientated view of young motherhood shifts the focus toward young mothers who have developed and shown positive characteristics despite the negative settings they reside in (Singh & Naicker, 2019). This has been largely concentrated in studies investigating the experiences of young mothers in socioeconomically disadvantaged or poor circumstances within South Africa and other countries (Clarke, 2015; Santos, 2012; Sheeran et al., 2015; Singh & Naicker, 2019). Young mothers have been shown to exhibit resilience, renewed responsibility, and agency in their decisions leading them to face life as empowered individuals (Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Cherry et al., 2015; Shea et al., 2016). The main tenet of this view argues that there are complex social, economic, cultural, and structural factors at play regarding the occurrence of early pregnancy within young women (Hart et al., 2016). Young mothers are at risk of unequal gender power relations whereby entering into dependent relationships with their partners, who usually tend to be quite older than them and thus, take away from their power to dictate their own future (Shefer et al., 2013). It follows that the external influences impacting young women have a significant role to play. Furthermore, a more positive long-term outcome or experience is possible with protective or buffering factors such as familial support amongst other social support (Amod et al., 2019; Matlala, 2017; Mokwena et al., 2016). The critical influence of context and the development of collaborative approaches needs to be employed in addressing and disentangling the various aspects of young motherhood in literature (Singh & Naicker, 2019).

In conclusion young motherhood is described by Singh and Naicker (2019) as having “the potential to lock young women into unequal and dependent relationships that reduce their

power to navigate their future” (p. 14). A two-thronged approach is needed which combines the development of resilience and risk aversion within the adolescent population together with implementing strategies which address and challenge the inequitable structures in society (Hart et al., 2016). Therefore, the vulnerability of young women in low-resource environments to unplanned pregnancy should not be “fatalistically determined nor completely based on individual choice” (Singh & Naicker, 2019, p. 14).

3.7 Summary of research study focus

After reviewing the literature surrounding teenage pregnancy and young motherhood, we do not propose a dichotomous negative or positive view of this phenomenon but rather discuss a more nuanced, well-adjusted approach to young motherhood. The focus is on the complexities characteristic of this motherhood experience. Thus, we have adopted a qualitative approach and highlighted the subjective experiences of low-income mothers who have navigated motherhood over a significant period since first falling pregnant as teenagers. It is important for the research exploring the phenomenon of young motherhood to consider ways in which women already in the throngs of motherhood - who were young mothers - can be enabled and empowered from their perspective. We aim to present a more nuanced and inclusive narrative by incorporating the voices of mothers themselves into the academic literature. Lastly, teenage pregnancy remains a complex social phenomenon of which the strain is largely carried by young women, necessitating the importance of considering how women have subjectively navigated and experienced it over time.

Chapter four: Methodology

This chapter discusses the research aims and objectives of the current study as aligned with the overarching research project (WMHRP) which took place from 2002 to 2006. An overview of the methodologies utilized in the collection and analysis of data will be provided. This will be followed by a detailed breakdown of the practical implementation of the research design as well as the implication of researcher reflexivity. The methodologies employed in the present study are of a qualitative and exploratory nature and as such are informed by social constructionism.

4.1 Social Constructionism and feminist research methodologies

Social constructionism as a research method examines various phenomena from the viewpoint that dominant discourses present in society are a result of the social and cultural context wherein, they occur (White, 2004). Therefore, this is a conceptual framework which is rooted in the belief that the dominant knowledge surrounding certain phenomena has been socially constructed by the members of that society and as such knowledge is social in origin (Andrews, 2021). This suggests and maintains that multiple realities can co-exist and are accepted as valid through being shaped and influenced by the experiences of individuals within various social contexts (Galbin, 2014).

Language is proposed as the dominant means by which knowledge is generated, and meaning is conveyed. Since social and historical contexts are constantly changing, and continue to develop and metamorphosize over time, the social constructions surrounding various phenomena are themselves fluid and changeable (Robles, 2012).

Drawing from its roots in postmodernist epistemology, a relativistic approach to knowledge and reality is favoured over that of a traditional positivist approach when looking at experiences and phenomena through the lens of social constructionism. The focus is on the process by which meaning is developed and evolves through the constant influence of the social landscape (Andrews, 2012). While the individual themselves is central to the research, the cultural and political landscape wherein they are situated is crucial to grasp a wide-ranging and nuanced understanding of insights, experiences, and processes (White, 2004). The subjective nature of this study is thus perfectly suited to the social constructionist framework, particularly in allowing for the contextual influence of the community in which these women have found themselves for the past 16 38 multiplars.

The concept of motherhood interacts with and is influenced by various social contexts and societal structures at a practical instrumental level, meaning the experience of motherhood may possibly both contradict and support the ideal. As such, there are certain social expectations and experiences associated with the understanding of what it means to encompass the role of mother (Sniekers, 2019). An understanding of how motherhood is subjectively experienced and understood is particularly relevant to challenge the dominant social discourses which evoke a specific representation as the general everyday experience. The use of social constructionism as an analytical framework facilitates a deeper, more nuanced understanding of these women's experiences particularly pertaining to the dominant discourse of ideal motherhood, of which a core tenet is continual self-sacrifice (Lanctôt & Turcotte, 2018; Pillay, 2021).

Due to participants being viewed as a vulnerable group, both as teenage mothers and low-income women, the current study was conducted within a feminist theoretical framework which serves to deconstruct the power imbalances enforced by patriarchal origins within traditional research methodologies and approaches, and is complementary to social constructionism (Hesse-Bibir & Yaiser, 2004). The focus within feminist research is to reveal the diversity of women's experiences and the "social institutions which frame those experiences" (Allen, 2011, p. 24). A core tenet, thus, of such research is to facilitate social change by giving women a platform to have their voice be heard, and in so doing, empower them through learning about their personal experiences. This alternative approach to research methodology originated from the standpoint epistemology which was directed toward the generation of more holistic and connected knowledge (Allen, 2011). The personal knowledge and perspective of individuals are deemed as authoritative in framing the narrative of their social, psychological, or embodiment experience. In this way, power is transferred to them through the authority of their narratives. This is fitting as feminist researchers critiqued the lack of better representation of the lives of regular women, which historically were often overlooked or presented in a one-dimensional way in traditional modes of enquiry. Thus, the traditional approach to research esteemed a detached and analytical means of enquiry in the goal toward production of knowledge (Gurung, 2021).

As such, the intent of feminist empirical epistemology was to contextualise the social enquiry employed in traditional methods (Allen, 2011). The importance of the experiential, personal and subjective aspects of women's lives, which has historically been overlooked in male-directed research methods claiming absolute objectivity, is emphasized in feminist

methodologies (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007). This aim is neatly summarised by Maynard (1994) who stated that “feminism must begin with experience, it has been argued, since it is only from such a vantage point that it is possible to see the extent to which women’s world are organized in ways which differ from those of men.” (p. 14). Therefore, feminist thought migrated toward the construction of methodologies which were participatory in nature and took into account local knowledge or “knowledge traditionally held by local communities, commonly embedded in community practices and institutions” (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007, p. 202). It is argued that the most significant insights into how marginalized and vulnerable individuals experience and make sense of their lives, is drawn from these individuals themselves. Feminist scholars must constantly assess and engage with the intricacies of the relationship between what is universal and what is particular (Gqola, 2009). The necessity of nuance and context, as is highlighted within the feminist tradition, is even more important for interpreting the complexity of South African realities for women, which are accented by the intersection of gender, race, class and history amongst others (Allen, 2011).

A rich and valuable body of feminist research methodologies exist which are utilized within qualitative research (Allen, 2011). Feminist research methodology is understood as an approach or framework which seeks to consider the “multifaceted nature of gender” as one of its foundational aims (Beetham & Demetriades, 2007). Methods are employed which are most consistent with the broad goals of feminism ideology. As such, the consideration and astute interrogation of hierarchal power relations that exist between men and women are foundational in the research process. Women are, by default, rendered disadvantageous throughout this process and so careful effort must be made to recognize both the inclination of the research process to be gendered in and of itself and the occurrence of gender inequality in everyday society. Another research tool previously mentioned is the inclusion and integration of a diversity of experiences into the research, particularly considering how gender intersects with various categories such as race, age, and class to impact on individuals’ subjective experiences.

The value placed on analysing the relationship and interactions between the researcher and the ‘researched’ is of significant importance. This is a crucial step that is integrated into the research process when conducting studies informed by feminist methodologies. The incorporation of researcher’s self-reflexivity and the recognition of power dynamics is valuable within the current study as this affirms the production of valid and trustworthy research to as accurate a degree as possible when performing under a qualitative paradigm. The common use of qualitative methods, such as in-depth interviews and focus groups within feminist

constructionist research, provides a subjective and nuanced narrative from the women's own point of view.

4.1.1 Qualitative approach

A qualitative approach is used to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' subjective experiences having been young mothers and having had to navigate motherhood over a significant period of time. The exploratory nature of qualitative research provides the means for new information and insight to be uncovered as well as highlighting changes over time (Austin & Sutton, 2014). Due to the limited research specific to the geographical area and the retrospective nature of the study, a qualitative approach is particularly suited to generate a rich narrative of women's' experiences.

4.2 Research question

The current study is focused on the subjective experience of one specific group of low-income mothers' as they have navigated both teenage and subsequent motherhood in the South African context over time. Within the parameters of the current study, subsequent motherhood refers to childbearing beyond the adolescent years (>19 years).

4.3 Aims and objectives

The primary aim of this study, thus is to gain insight into the manner in which this group of South African women, who will now be in their thirties, reflect on how they have experienced and navigated teenage motherhood and motherhood overall up to the current point in time.

The Women's Maternal Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) was developed with the aim of focusing on the mental health, psychological distress and resilience of low-income women who reside in the community of Kylemore. This research was conducted from 2002 to 2006. For the purpose of the current study, we followed up with the original cohort of teenage women, specifically, who were interviewed as part of this larger project. As such, the present study is specifically focused on the subjective experience of the same participants as they reflect on both young motherhood and motherhood overall.

4.4 Research design

Therefore, this follow-up study is a retrospective study which forms part of the larger WMHR longitudinal project. Due to the descriptive nature of the research and the focus on individual experiences and accounts of motherhood, qualitative research methods were

employed. This was fitting as participants were asked to reflect on past experiences as well as encouraged to formulate and share their personal reflections regarding their varied experiences of motherhood over time. The research design used was well-suited and useful for encouraging ‘thick descriptions’ (Ponterotto & Grieger, 2007). A detailed description providing insight into the community of Kilemore has been included to familiarize the reader with the context the women forming part of this study reside in (see Appendix A).

As this study is informed by social constructionist feminism, it is of a qualitative nature and aims to provide an in-depth understanding of these women’s experiences of motherhood (Charmaz, 2008). An inherent purpose contained within the framework of a qualitative design, is to critically examine, attempt to understand and interpret various phenomena as they are informed and perceived by cultures, groups and individuals; more so seeing as they are always changing and evolving (Malagon-Maldonado, 2014). We aim to highlight the uniqueness of each participant’s narrative against the backdrop of their greater social context and community thereby exploring the possibility that women do experience motherhood in a myriad of ways.

4.5 Participant recruitment

When informed consent was originally obtained under the jurisdiction of the WMHRP 16 years ago, participants were asked whether they were comfortable with being followed up in later years. Thus, we were able to access participants’ demographic information on file as the initial means of contact. This comprised of but was not limited to contact numbers and home addresses of potential participants. The researchers approached this process with the utmost respect and sensitivity taking into consideration the substantial amount of time that had passed. Due to myself and the assisting co-investigator’s lack of involvement in the original recruitment process, we underwent an in-depth briefing on the background of the study and were made familiar with past interview transcripts.

Participant recruitment was implemented in three stages owing to the Covid-19 adjustment precautions. These stages were implemented as follows: telephonic contact, contact via social media, and in-person contact. Social media as a secondary means of contacting/tracking down potential participants was initially implemented in place of visiting potential participants at their residence. Thus, for the beginning stages of recruitment we utilized social media (specifically Facebook) to find and recruit participants when their contact numbers were incorrect, or telephones disconnected. Recruitment stages did not necessarily follow a linear process. They tended to overlap, merge and interchange with one another.

During the follow-up process, when contacting and speaking with past participants, it was clearly communicated to each participant that they were under no obligation to participate in the current study and could refuse to enrol even if they had agreed to being followed up 16 – 18 years prior. This was stipulated via telephone during the recruitment stage, within the message sent via social media, within the electronic informed consent form and stated both at the beginning and at the end of each interview with each participant.

4.5.1 Stage one of data recruitment

The first stage entailed contacting participants telephonically by making use of the contact details we had on file. We began by introducing ourselves as students from the University of Stellenbosch who are assisting in a project the participants took part in 16 - 18 years ago. We informed them that they were being contacted owing to them having agreed to be followed up. The original study was referred to and the current study was broadly described.

Participants provided their own phone numbers or those of neighbours/relatives. Of the 21 potential participants, majority of their telephone numbers were disconnected. We were only able to get a hold of one participant during the first stage whereby obtaining her contact number from her brother; the one to whom the contact number on file belonged to. As anticipated, the first stage yielded poor results. Thus, we implemented stage two.

4.5.2 Stage two of data recruitment

The second stage of recruitment comprised of employing social media as a research tool whereby searching for the participants' names on the social media platform, Facebook. Facebook was selected as the platform to be used as individuals can control the privacy of their profiles thereby controlling what the public has access to. Therefore, anyone coming across their profiles would have had access to the same information. The names of all 21 participants were entered into the search bar excluding the individual we had already contacted. The top three profiles for each name, that seemed most likely to match the past participants' information on file were selected. This included information about the area in which they reside, the school they attended, and their age. Majority of the profiles selected had limited contact information and no profile picture. Therefore, those participants with ties to Kylemore and the surrounding area were the main inclusion criteria used.

An identical message was then sent to each individual's profile whereby making use of Facebook messenger. This message included the researcher's name, the reason potential participants were contacted, a brief background of the study and an invitation to respond if said

individuals remembered taking part in the original study or not. A second round of messages were re-sent after a period of approximately one month to account for inactive profiles and/or the possibility that participants had not received a notification of the first message.

Of the 20 Facebook profiles, one profile had a contact number for a potential participant which was successful. Four potential participants responded to the Facebook messages sent out. Of those four, one individual was not a past participant, while the remaining three recalled taking part in the original study. Communication was maintained over Facebook messenger regarding any questions potential participants had. They were then asked if they would be comfortable providing their contact details and communication was maintained via WhatsApp or email. Two potential participants were comfortable to do so while contact was maintained with the third participant using the messenger platform. Electronic informed consent forms were sent by email or WhatsApp to each potential participant providing them with information surrounding the study. Of the three potential participants, two women agreed to participate after reading through the informed consent form with the third individual asking for more time.

Thus, we were able to successfully track down and recruit four of the past participants during the first and second stage. All four of these women agreed to take part in the current study.

4.5.3 Stage three of data recruitment

Due to outdated contact information and the unreliability of social media, we were unsuccessful in locating and contacting the remaining past participants within the first two stages. We applied for an amendment to our research protocol in order to request in-person recruitment. This amendment was granted in keeping with strict Covid-19 protocols which were adhered to. Thus, the third stage involved in-person recruitment in the community of Kylemore and surrounding areas. These site visits were undertaken as a team of two consisting of the assistant co-investigators. Investigators always wore face masks when communicating with potential participants as well as maintaining social distancing and making use of their own hand sanitizer.

Investigators made use of the home addresses on file to track down potential participants. The recruitment of potential participants at each of their physical address' took place over a total of five site visits. This was done over a period of a month and a half and we were able to find 13 of the past participants. While some participants were still living at their old address, some had moved within Kylemore to a different address. The investigators were

able to find participants at their new addresses by word of mouth as neighbours in the surrounding area often knew or recognized the name of participants. Most residents in the community knew each other owing to the small, close-knit nature of Kylemore. Majority of the participants who agreed to take part in the study resided in Kylemore.

When approaching potential participants, the original study was briefly explained, and participants were asked if they remembered taking part. The investigators presented potential participants with hard copies of the informed consent to give them time to read through it. Participants were asked if they were comfortable providing their contact details, and if so, details were noted on an information sheet. The consent form was left with potential participants whereafter investigators communicated that they would contact them via the number provided after they had had some time to read through the details of the present study.

Potential participants were then contacted by telephone approximately two to three days after the first introduction. Thereafter communication was maintained over WhatsApp in most cases as this was the most efficient platform to arrange interviews. Potential participants were then asked if they were willing to take part in the current study as a final confirmation. Five women agreed to be interviewed, while one woman did not want to take part.

In some cases, past participants were not at their homes either owing to being at work or having gone on an errand. In such cases, an informed consent form was left with an adult present at the household with my name and contact details on it. They were asked to deliver the consent form to the said individuals. One of the individuals present at the home address of the past participant was a relative and informed us that the past participant had unfortunately been struggling with drug abuse, and she was not aware of where she was at present. The remaining six potential participants either kept postponing interviews or did not answer follow-up calls. I attempted to call participants for a total of three times whereafter I considered them uninterested in taking part.

4.5.4 Summary of recruitment process

As investigators we attempted our best to navigate the specific challenges that this follow-up study posed. In the context of a community such as Kylemore, it seemed that most residents and families tended to stay on in the town or continued staying on in the family home.

In total, we were able to locate and/or contact 16 out of the 21 original participants. We did not find the remaining five participants because we could not locate their place of residence

or recover any information regarding their current status. Due to potential participants either being uninterested in taking part or pending interview arrangements, a total of seven participants were interviewed for the present study. We had intended to conduct additional secondary interviews with the seven participants. However, owing to time constraints we were unfortunately unable to do so.

Thus, the current participants are adult women ranging from 30 to 38 years of age, with a mean age of 34 years. All participants currently fulfil the role of mother and participated in the original project (WMHRP) as teenagers. The children whom they gave birth to at the time of participating in the original study are now approximately between 16 and 18 years of age. Although all women participated in the original study, they do not constitute a homogenous group. A detailed summary of all the demographic details of participants has been included (Appendix B).

4.6 Data collection instruments

Due to the qualitative nature of this research study, open ended semi-structured interviews were used to collect data. The interview schedules have been included as Appendix C. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and a half to two hours. The interview covered topics such as the participants' subjective experiences of motherhood, how they navigated their role of mother as it evolved throughout the years that had passed and the mother-child relationship dynamics of mothers with their children, within a low-income setting in South Africa.

Interview questions were open to interpretation by the participants and under the guidance of the interviewee regarding the aspects focused on. Thus, the interview schedule was designed in such a way that questions were intentionally open-ended and I, as the interviewer, let participants lead the direction of follow-up questions to a certain extent. That being said, participants were explicitly asked about differences regarding their experiences of young motherhood and motherhood in general over time. The responses of participants were used as points from which to depart from and in some cases led to topics which while not directly addressed in the study objectives, did influence and contribute to the topic of maternal mental health. Virtual basic interview skills training was facilitated by the principal investigator and supervisor, Professor Lou-Marié Kruger. Interviews were carried out over two stages somewhat identical to and as a result of previous changes to the research protocol as mentioned.

Thus, in the beginning stages of data collection, interviews were conducted telephonically with each participant. This was done for the first two participants we were able to contact. Thereafter, the remaining interviews were done in-person either on campus or at the participants' homes. A private room in the Krotoa building was used as the interview venue, while as much privacy as participant's homes allowed was adhered to.

Interviews were conducted in participants' home language, Afrikaans. We knew this to be the case because of access to the demographic information of past participants from the original study. All interviews were audio-recorded using sound-recording software on a password protected laptop for consequent analysis. As an additional measure, a password protected android smartphone was used as a back-up device.

4.7 Data management

All audio-recordings were uploaded to a password protected laptop and stored under the applicable pseudonyms. All audio recordings were deleted from the smartphone immediately once uploaded onto the computer. Only the senior researchers working on the project had access to the audio files and subsequent transcripts stored on the password protected laptop. The interview transcripts were grouped into folders named according to participants' pseudonyms. The data was backed up by making use of the OneDrive system to which only the supervisor/principal investigator and co-investigators had password access to. These folders were also uploaded onto and stored on Atlas-ti 22.0 for analysis purposes. Thus, Atlas ti was used as the management tool.

4.8 Data analysis

Subsequent to the interview, audio-recordings were transcribed. The transcriptions were completed in the same language in which interviews were conducted (Afrikaans). Following data analysis, the quotes included in this thesis were translated into English. As such, direct translation was not always possible. However, effort was made to be as accurate as possible in capturing what participants were trying to communicate. All translations were checked by a high school educator who spoke Afrikaans as her first language and was teaching Afrikaans as a subject across grade levels at the time. This individual had completed her language studies at the Honours level and had substantial experiential knowledge of both formally taught Afrikaans as well as colloquial dialects of Afrikaans in the Western Cape.

The transcriptions of the interviews conducted during the present study acted as the primary data on which this study is based. Analysis of the data subscribed to the grounded

theory approach under the broad scope of social constructionism, with which it is well suited (Charmaz, 1995). As this is a qualitative study and addresses a developing area of interest within the scope of young motherhood, this approach stands in good stead for the inquiring nature of the posed research questions and is best utilized in an area of limited research.

The data were rigorously analysed in accordance with the steps prescribed by the Grounded theory approach which is as follows: line-by-line coding, focused coding and lastly, selective coding. Line-by-line coding entails attaching a one-word code to each line which encapsulates the essence of what is being conveyed. Secondly, focused coding involves grouping these codes into appropriate concepts which have surfaced across the interviews of all participants and are most common. These are known as key categories. The final stage substantiates the core categories salient across the participant pool which form the backbone of the results obtained from the research (Charmaz, 1995). This was done both manually and by making use of Atlas ti. software, particularly, when analysing and comparing multiple interviews of various participants at later stages of data analysis.

By utilizing this approach, we aimed to establish an understanding of and gain insight into the lived experiences of participants. The inclusion of participants' voices in the current study allowed for a more personal and applicable narrative to be revealed and validated for these women; rather than the dominant narrative of media and society. The lived experiences of participants both supported and contradicted literature and societal views in various ways.

4.9 Process of validation

Grounded theory is said to establish validity within the social constructionist perspective when the observations and conclusions drawn from the data are situated to as great an extent as possible within the contexts in which the phenomena have occurred (Willig, 2013). The goal of social constructionism is to represent the phenomena of interest within the research as it has been constructed under particular conditions postulated by the individual's social context (Charmaz, 2008). We attempted to do so in this study by analysing teenage pregnancy within a low-income context, which was the socioeconomic context most of the women found themselves inhabiting at the time. Furthermore, in an attempt to represent the experience of motherhood as a teenage mother in society, we aimed to explore participants first-hand subjective accounts of this experience within our research. The sociocultural and political contexts of this area of South Africa the women inhabited were considered and included so as

to reveal how this has impacted women's motherhood experiences. In this way, we hoped to be as accurate as possible in presenting the women's narratives.

The importance of implementing memo writing which encompasses checking, re-reading, questioning, and applying theoretical knowledge to the phenomena aids in ensuring the quality of the data. This process practiced within the social constructionist Grounded theory approach provides a method to revise the applicable theory as the research process unfolds (Charmaz, 1995). I attempted to implement this in the data collection process by reaffirming and rechecking participants' answers through repeating back to them what they had shared while conducting the interview. By doing this, I hoped to clarify their points and ensure that I was understanding what they had meant accurately. I also compiled reflective journals following interviews with participants, wherein I noted personal reactions or thoughts pertaining to the overall interview experience as well as observations regarding the demeanour and impression I had of participants after that hour to 2 hours that I spoke with them.

When it came to data analysis, I read through each interview a few times before beginning the coding process so as to familiarise myself with the data as a whole. Upon completion of line-by-line coding for my first three interviews, Professor Lou-Marié Kruger checked my codes and provided feedback as well as made applicable changes. As such, I made use of her expertise as my supervisor as a validation strategy. Both the categories and sub-categories were also reported on, refined and validated during supervision. Had there not been pressing time constraints, I acknowledge that an optimum validation strategy would be to meet with participants a second time and have them read over the interviews and/or profile reflections to ensure that their narratives had been accurately captured. However, I believe the strategies mentioned above were sufficient to validate the data at this level.

4.9.1 Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important process that was incorporated into the interview procedure. Reflexivity refers to the process used by researchers to constantly reflect upon and maintain an awareness of his/her influence on and interaction with the research processes and outcomes, particularly as the research is being conducted (Haynes, 2012). Thus, the researcher must give attention to the impact their own biases, beliefs and prejudices may have on the way responses from participants are received and interpreted. Furthermore, the impact of the interviewer's presence on the validity of the collected data should be considered. Seeing as a significant amount of time had passed since participants were last interviewed, it was possible that their

living circumstances and socio-economic demographic might have changed. However, all participants interviewed were still situated within the same socio-economic demographic as when they were first interviewed. Therefore, addressing the possibility of power relations that may have been implicitly present was particularly important and accounted for.

Due to myself as interviewer being a middle-class scholar pursuing her tertiary education, participants may have presented as subdued owing to their identification as women of colour with a limited or delayed educational trajectory in comparison. The incidence of belonging to the same ethnic group, yet different class bracket may also have added to the power dynamic at play during the interview process. In this instance, gender intersected with the social categories of class and demographic location, and not race. Within the interview space, the power imbalance could have been somewhat neutralised, however, when considering the intersection of gender with age. I, myself, being younger and having less life experience, had the impression at times that I was receiving wisdom from an older, more mature women. One of the participants made a comment at one point in the interview, stating that I would not be able to understand, as she went on to describe a particular experience. This portrays a type of power exchange from myself as the experienced researcher to a young woman never having gone through the experience of raising a child; my academic knowledge compared to that of experiential knowledge of the women. Thus, while the differences in class and demographic context between myself and participants outside of the research are striking, it can be argued that within the interview space the authority of knowledge held by the women and the intersection of gender and age, allow women to exert power within the research space.

That being said, the transparency of the data might still have been affected, and the subjective experience inaccurately construed, leading to limitations concerning the richness of the narrative. Within the current study, the accounts of participants which were presented remain selective in nature and as such, are limited by my own background. Although the research methodologies which were utilized sought to cultivate a sense of familiarity and ease with participants I, as the interviewer, remained an 'outsider' (Heitmeyer, 2019). In an attempt to navigate these power dynamics, interviews were as far as possible conducted in a manner that made participants feel most comfortable in terms of venue and/or personal preference, was sensitive to their unique life circumstances and respectable at all times. As previously stated, interviews were conducted in the participants' home language. To monitor and recognize the impact of my own subjectivity on the data, personal reflections were recorded in a journal following the interview. These journal entries were used as case notes to understand the data

at a greater depth regarding the responses of participants and the dynamics at play. Swartz (2006) highlights the notion that even if these are often clumsy, they expose important, underlying subtleties which are useful and provide insight into the subliminal and submerged. Therefore, I continually referred back to these notes during the writing process. All journal reflections as well as the interview transcripts for each participant were reread multiple times by me when analysing the data and checked at various points by my supervisor throughout the entire data collection and analysis process.

4.10 Ethical considerations

The current research project was undertaken in the form of a follow-up study under the previously established MHRP project. Ethical clearance for this study was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee (REC) of Stellenbosch University.

Electronic or hard-copy informed consent (Appendix D) was obtained from all participants who were willing to take part. Before presenting participants with an electronic/hard-copy informed consent form, information was verbally given regarding the research objectives, purpose and the nature of the current follow-up study in relation to their previous interviews. Each step in the research process was clearly laid out and explained to participants including the possible benefits and drawbacks should they agree to participate. Participants were made aware that participation was entirely voluntary and therefore, they were free to withdraw at any point throughout the research process should they feel uncomfortable. Furthermore, they were not required to provide a response to any question they felt uncomfortable answering. After ensuring that all the participants' questions had been addressed, the electronic informed consent form for inclusion in the current study was sent by email or text message to each participant to sign electronically. The form was sent back to the investigators thereafter. Those who participated in face-to-face interviews signed a hard-copy informed consent form before commencing with the interview. The identity of each participant was kept entirely anonymous as the pseudonyms used in the larger study (WMHRP) were either re-applied or new code names were chosen by participants. As such, the confidentiality of participants was ensured in every respect.

Participants were given a typed-out document detailing their rights upon agreeing to take part in the study. A directory listing accessible counselling services, should anyone have required referrals or assistance, was made available to all WMHRP participants. This was implemented and upheld in the undertaking of the current study. Where necessary, participants

were referred to Kylemore Clinic or the Banghoek Care Centre for emotional support or mental health care. There was found to be no need for referral within the current study sample. Referrals occurred under the supervision of Professor Lou-Marié Kruger, a registered clinical psychologist, who has been working in the Dwars River Valley for more than 20 years.

Chapter five: Results and discussion

This study is a follow-up study which aimed to explore the subjective experiences of motherhood over time from the perspective of past teenage mothers. These women were originally interviewed from 2002 to 2006 as part of the WMHRP. The experiences of these mothers will be explored and examined in the current chapter. From the data analysis, five major categories and 26 subcategories emerged (Table 5.1).

Our findings suggest that the experience of motherhood over time is marked by both joy and struggle and is therefore, not linear, or static within this context. The ability of these women to hold space for both represents a tension of motherhood. Embedded within these women's narratives was a process of continual growth and refinement. Even in sharing their unique experience of motherhood, the women's experiences continually intersected, to formulate various meanings and understandings of motherhood. It is clear, however, that the ideal of motherhood continues to impress upon the way in which mothers understand and exercise mothering. Thus, even in their differences, the women's' experiences maintained a common thread. The importance of continuously situating the individual within the social, political, economic, and cultural contextual realities cannot be ignored in illuminating the multifaceted nature of young motherhood.

The five categories comprising of the 26 subcategories which emerged from the data are presented below:

Table 5.1*Outline of Categories and Subcategories*

Categories	Subcategories
Motherhood over time: Participants' narratives at present	Joey Nathalie Millicent Poppie Shahieda Blondie Josephine
Practical concerns and challenges	Falling pregnant and giving birth Parenting Fathers Community
Emotional experience of motherhood	Anxiety, desperation and feeling overwhelmed Feelings of helplessness and shame Loneliness and isolation Frustration, anger, and rage Joy
Coping	Support as buffer Religious practices
Meaning of motherhood	Motherhood as duty and responsibility Power, control, and agency Resilience Knowledge Selflessness, sacrifice, and privilege Performance Development, growth, and maturation Motherhood as identity

5.1 Motherhood over time: Participants' narratives at present

In this section the personal stories of each of the mothers forming part of this study will be shared. As this is a follow-up study of a retrospective nature, I hope to show how the young mothers negotiated, experienced and understood motherhood over time. The purpose of this is to highlight the uniqueness of the biographies and to provide a more holistic view of the participants. This means that the data and findings analysed below can be orientated for the reader within each participants' context.

5.1.1 Joey

Joey was the only participant to have chosen a new pseudonym. In the previous study she was known as Candy. She spoke openly about her experience of motherhood over time and expressed that she was happy that her story is of interest to us. Joey had her first child at the age of 18 years which was her age at the time of the original interviews sixteen years ago. Currently she is 34 years old and has two sons, aged 16 and 7 years. The sons have different fathers. Joey is currently engaged to a man who is neither of the boys' father, but she asserts that he accepts both her boys as his own. She completed a short three-month course after finishing matric whereafter she immediately entered the workforce. She currently works as a receptionist at SANParks offices in Stellenbosch central. However, she continues to reside in Kylemore at the same address listed in our records. She and her two sons stay in a two-bedroom bungalow behind her mother's house. Joey describes her mother as being very supportive. Her mother encouraged her to remain in school with the first pregnancy and has offered instrumental assistance in raising her second child. She continues to help and support Joey currently.

In her interview, Joey specifically highlighted her present financial strain as a stressor and stated that motherhood is now more difficult even than when she was a young mother – for financial reasons. She did, however, verbalize the pride she has herself for how far she has come and expressed great love for her children despite the financial burden of mothering. She described the effort and perseverance that led to her getting her eldest son to finally live with her after a long legal battle. When her eldest son was born, he originally went to stay with his biological father and his father's family so that she could work and support him financially. She reported with delight that this son finally chose to return to live with her approximately four years ago and that their relationship is now in a good place.

Joey's demeanour was one of soft confidence, but a fierce protectiveness towards her sons and their life together could also be discerned. She expressed an adamant desire to get out of Kylemore and to secure a more stable career path that would ensure financial security. While it was clear that she was determined to be strong and positive for her children's sake, a certain heaviness and sadness also seemed to be present. While she spoke about being overwhelmed by her life situation and allowing herself to cry at times when on her own, she also said that she typically coped and would simply tell herself to get it together.

5.1.2 Nathalie

Nathalie was 18 years old when she was interviewed for the original study and is currently 37 years old. She works as a domestic worker. She still resides in Kylemore at the same address as she did when first interviewed, now in a wendy house. She lives with her two children, an 18-year-old boy (matriculated in 2020) and an 11-year-old girl (still enrolled in school). At the time of the interview, she was pregnant with her third child. All her children were fathered by the same man. She married this aforementioned man after the birth of her first child, but they divorced when her son was ten years old.

Nathalie described her motherhood journey as difficult, particularly over the last ten years when her son struggled with the divorce. Following the divorce, Nathalie's son became very withdrawn and kept to himself. She described him as having a very close relationship with his father prior to the divorce. However, this changed, and they took him to a psychologist as she was devastated to see him struggling. According to her, things started getting better in the last year.

Nathalie stressed the importance of having to work through her feelings of resentment and forgive her ex-husband. Her focus seemed to be her son and his struggles, rather than on herself. It was apparent that she found the last ten years of mothering more stressful than the years in which she became a young mother.

5.1.3 Millicent

Millicent was 19 years old when she was first interviewed and is currently 38 years of age. She speaks lovingly about her three sons, now aged 18, 12 and four. They all stay with her and her husband in Kylemore. She seemed in awe of her sons, particularly when she spoke about her eldest son and his resilience. Due to unpleasant living circumstances at the time of having her first child, she moved in with the father of her child soon after giving birth. They were later married. Millicent was the youngest of four siblings living with her father at the time

of her first pregnancy. Her mother had passed away when she was 16 years old, an event that left her with a deep sense of loss and longing. Millicent managed to complete matric despite her pregnancy and was working at a factory in Kylemore until she was retrenched because of Covid-19.

Millicent reported being conflicted about her first pregnancy, deliberately trying to cause a miscarriage - drinking, smoking and going out while pregnant. She reflected that the prospect of any other man wanting her with a child that wasn't his seemed unlikely. She and her boyfriend at the time had broken up, leaving her with no option but to try and miscarry. However, upon finding herself in the hospital bed after a serious threat of miscarriage at seven months, she realised she had to change her behaviour and proceeded to take better care of herself for her baby's sake. Millicent had her first two children with her boyfriend who became her first husband. However, owing to circumstances of abuse she decided to divorce him. She maintained that currently they had a good co-parenting relationship for the sake of their two boys, and both have made the effort to be present for important events involving their children. At the time of this interview, she was married to the father of her third child who is her second husband.

Millicent stated she had extremely challenging birth-related experiences with all three of her children. After the complications with her first child, her second son was born prematurely at 26 weeks, and both he and she had to remain in hospital for an extended period. She initially thought she had given birth to a stillborn baby. Furthermore, she herself stated that she was dealing with postpartum depression. With her third child she was admitted to hospital a month before the due date and owing to high blood pressure was forced to remain in hospital until giving birth. These seemed to be traumatic birth experiences for her, and she asserted that she would not be having another child again. Similarly, to Joey, she also pointed to financial difficulties, exacerbated by her retrenchment because of Covid-19.

5.1.4 Poppie

At the time of this interview, Poppie resided at her mother's house in Kylemore with her four children, husband, and her younger sister. She stayed at the same address as she did at the time of the original study. Her mother, however, did not live with the family. She was 19 years old when first interviewed, and at the time of the current interview 37 years old. Poppie has two sons, aged 17 and 14 and twin daughters aged five. She was pregnant before the birth of her twins but had given birth to a stillborn infant. Poppie was unemployed at the time of this

interview as her contract at the factory was suspended in July of 2020 owing to Covid-19. She is married to the father of her children, an older man.

Poppie told of how the personal experience of motherhood had been very challenging for her over the years. She had experienced many health complications surrounding the births of her children. As such she spent quite a bit of time in the hospital with both her first son and her daughters who were all born prematurely. Poppie recalled how it was an extremely difficult time for her and yet, she noted that as she reflects on what she went through it could only have been God that enabled her to overcome it. She described the difficulties she currently had with her sons in terms of disobedience and smoking, which appeared to be a big stressor for her. In contrast to this, Poppie was very loving and affectionate toward her daughters who were much younger. Poppie's story of motherhood is a paradoxical one as she speaks of both trauma and hope.

5.1.5 Shahieda

Shahieda was 19 years old when interviewed for the original study. At the time of the interview, she was 36 years of age and lived in a wendy house in her mother's backyard with her two sons, aged 16 and nine. Shahieda was on a disability grant, and thus, not employed. She had been in an eleven-year long relationship with her youngest son's father. She completed her schooling up to Grade 9. However, she was in hospital for a time resulting in her having to discontinue her schooling career. She suffered from a neurological condition which she described as half-brain disability. The medical term for this is Hemimegalencephaly (HME). As such Shahieda had had a uniquely challenging motherhood experience. She reflected on her experiences of raising her first child and noted that this was much more challenging than raising her second child. During the interviews she shared that her eldest son has been diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) which proved to be difficult to handle at times. She described him as being aggressive and easily losing his temper. This was difficult for her to manage when he was younger owing to the combination of not understanding the underlying reason for his temperament and her own neurological condition.

While Shahieda felt that current circumstances were better than in the past, she still struggled with her eldest son's temperament and related that the challenges as a result of her unique condition remained a hurdle that she must continuously fight to overcome. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, Shahieda's interview was unintelligible at times and difficult to transcribe.

5.1.6 Blondie

Blondie was first interviewed at the age of 17 years after just having completed grade nine. At the time of the current interview, she was 35 years old with three children: two girls (aged 18 and eight) and one boy (aged four). She married the father of her third child before the child was born. She resided in Kylemore with her husband and three children at the same address as listed for the original study. She was employed as a domestic worker in Stellenbosch.

Blondie described the difficulties of having to support her first child independently, which meant having to go into working full-time shortly after giving birth. She was solely responsible for providing financially for her child, and thus, reflected on being exhausted during the years of raising her first child. Blondie displayed her initiative and drive to provide for her daughter in describing how she had tried to find a better job than the one she had in the past. Blondie came across as being indifferent to her first child's father which can be attributed to his having married someone else and described as not making an effort to be present in her daughter's life. The father of her first child passed away when her daughter was two years old. Despite this, his family is still present in her daughter's life.

Blondie appeared to be content with the life that she had built for herself up until now. She reflected on the special friendship that she had found in her marriage and her appreciation for her husband. She described herself as caring deeply for other people and her loving concern for her children was evident. She admitted to current challenges being present particularly those of a financial nature. However, her underlying tone appeared to be that of pride for the life she had built.

5.1.7 Josephine

Josephine was 14 years old at the time of the original study. While the records show that an interview was scheduled during that time, it appears it did not go forth as there is no interview on record. At the time of the current interview, she was 30 years old. While Josephine still resided in Kylemore, she had moved to a different address within the town. She was married with two children, one of whom is 16 years old and the other who is six years old. Her marriage was to the father of her second child as she and her first child's father ended their relationship a year after their child was born. She was unemployed at the time and living in her mother's house with her husband and two sons.

Josephine described her motherhood experience as one marked with ups and downs. She mentioned being very close to her grandfather and how her first pregnancy had put a strain

on their relationship. Despite this, she recalled him being one of her greatest support systems. Josephine's narrative was dominated by the joy she had found in motherhood. While she expressed that there were challenging moments in raising her child, she tended to focus on the joy of having given birth to him and stressed the importance of having support. She specifically mentioned her mother as a prominent source of support in different ways. In contrast, she described the father of her first child as being a bad influence, and therefore, had tried to shield her son from him in the past. However, she had given him the choice of whether he would like to pursue a relationship with his father as he'd grown older.

Josephine's demeanour was one of ease and she was eager to speak and share about her experience of motherhood. She herself stated that she loved to talk with people and tended to talk too much. She stated that becoming a mother and being a mother felt as if it came naturally to her.

5.1.8 Summary of narratives

In this section I attempted to introduce the participants and to provide some details about their life stories, giving some context for the data presented and analysed below. While all the participants were found to remain in similar circumstances to when they were first interviewed, their stories have evolved with time and are very different.

5.2 Practical challenges and concerns

The first category that could be discerned when interviewing the women related to the practical challenges and concerns they faced as mothers. These practical challenges seemed to have been prominent both when they first became mothers as young women, as well as currently. It is interesting to consider the extent to which shifts in society values together with the advancement of technology may have practically impacted the experiences of these women. Teenage pregnancy is more publicized in terms of its negative impact which by association can lead to increased stigmatization toward young mothers. This has also led to increased attention given to the phenomenon of young motherhood at a governmental level as an issue of concern. In this regard, five subcategories were identified as salient within the women's rhetoric. Participants' emphasis on words within quotations is indicated in italics.

5.2.1 Falling pregnant and giving birth

The topic of birth and pregnancy was not explicitly asked about when conducting the current set of interviews. Yet, it was a topic that many of the women spoke about when reflecting on their experiences as young mothers. Many of the mothers described the anxiety

and stress surrounding childbirth as a result of premature birth, high blood pressure, and a painful and complicated process of labour and pregnancy. Thus, when sharing their experiences of childbirth a few of the women seemed to reflect on it as a traumatic experience. This was in relation to the birth of their first child as well as subsequent births. Joey conveys a sense of being lucky in having carried small and this allowed her to complete matric as she gave birth early in the year.

Joey: So, I was actually in Standard nine when I became pregnant with him or grade 11 when I became pregnant with him. I got him in grade 12 but luckily it was early in the year...I could at least reach full-term {laughs}

She describes the differences in giving birth as surprising as she assumed that childbirth would be a similar experience with each child. However, this was not the case for Joey.

Joey: As a parent you think that, that every child will be the same way at birth but like this- the second one's birth - his childbirth was more intense for me or more- how can I say it {sucks in air} *Oh* just too unbearable

Interviewer: Oh sho

Joey: But that I won't have a baby after him again or- it was worse, worse than the first one. But the *feeling*

Joey's reaction displays the intense experience of giving birth, causing her to not want to have another baby.

Nathalie recalls being happy about her first pregnancy overall but remarks that she cannot remember specific details from that time since it was so long ago.

Nathalie: I think I was- I was very, very happy

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: And happy and and {pause} I know I was very happy back then when he {pause} was born

Interviewer: That's beautiful.

Nathalie: And when I was pregnant with him.

Millicent states that her birth experiences with all three of her children were complicated and even traumatic. Furthermore, she reflects on her regret regarding the unhealthy way she behaved when pregnant with her first child.

Millicent: But to think, if I *look back* at that, then I am, I was regretful of the things which I {pause} that time I lived so unhealthily *with* him. The things I

did to myself to put my child's uh uh risk, to put him at risk {pause} to also put his life in danger

Interviewer: Hm sho

Millicent: It bothered me a lot.

Millicent recounts her second birth experience where her son was a bridge baby and as a result was born with very limited oxygen supply at preterm delivery. Thus, she was unprepared for his untimely arrival at 26 weeks.

Millicent: He's {pause} big, he's a bridge baby {pause} he came out with his feet, with his feet first. And then {pause} he is almost, so to say, he was stillborn.

Interviewer: Ah no

Millicent: And they had to um um {pause} give him oxygen, put the pump-thing on him, to get him to regain consciousness because he was very blue {pause} like to- when he then came {pause} and I didn't even *know*, I didn't even know he was {pause} a boy. I didn't know the gender.

She goes on to share the traumatic and tumultuous emotions she clearly remembers experiencing during that time. Childbirth as well as pregnancy was clearly a very difficult and traumatic experience for Millicent.

Millicent: Yes. We stayed in hospital for the month and then they discovered he had jaundice.

Interviewer: Oh no, I am so sorry

Millicent: And then they had to now transfer him to Tygerberg hospital {pause} Then there was not a vein in his body {pause} They couldn't find a vein. So then they had to now shave his hair to find a vein in his head, and they put a drip in his head. All of that was too much for me

Millicent: I was very emotional. I *cried* a lot {pause} because

Interviewer: I can only imagine

Millicent: Um {pause} Yes I {pause} endured so much stress with Mike.

Poppie's experience of birth is like Millicent's. The birth of her first child was a preterm delivery and thus, they spent much time in and out of hospital owing to him struggling with taking up oxygen due to poor lungs. Her third child was a stillborn baby girl. Her twin daughters were also born prematurely, with one of them having had to undergo an operation while she was still an infant. Thus, Poppie's birth narrative is one that appears to be marked by trauma.

Poppie: When I arrived at the hospital, the nurse asked me what must I do, what must she do with a child that's already dead. And then a

Interviewer: Wow

- Poppie: I will never forget the doctor but she, her surname was Doctor Roussouw {pause} and she ended up {pause} all of his veins fell flat and, and here by his feet {extended pause}
- Interviewer: Oh my...
- Poppie: Then she found a vein in his head and {pause} I will be forever grateful to her that she acted so quickly and as a result of her quick thinking his life was spared.
- Poppie: And then we were in hospital and out of hospital a lot {pause} So yes {inhales} The peo- the nurses jokingly said of us; here come our, here come our family again {laughs}

However, Poppie's birth story is also marked by inner strength and beauty. Later she recalls the surprise she received when her twin daughters were born on the same birthdate as her previously stillborn baby girl.

- Poppie: But the same day that I was heartbroken, the Lord made me happy again. That *on* the 11th of August, Lily decided she's done growing. Then the doctor said we must now, I need to..they now call it accouchement. And so then we went to the theatre. Then they took them out. As I lay there {pause} then I think {pause} I hear the nurses talk {inhales} They were saying it is the 11th Of August. Then I realized that's {pause} Jenna-Lee's date of birth.
- Interviewer: Sho
- Poppie: And {pause} and I can only praise the Lord that He {pause} made me happy again on that very same day.

Blondie also mentioned the fact that her first child was a colic baby and as such she found early motherhood to be extremely challenging as her daughter did not sleep through the night for the first three months.

- Blondie: And then my child was also a colic baby as well
- Interviewer: Oh no
- Blondie: Yes where she..didn't sleep at all at night {laughs}
- Interviewer: Hm so I heard
- Blondie: For the first three months, hey
- Interviewer: Ooh
- Blondie: So yes, it was rather difficult.

Josephine recounts her first and second childbirth, expressing similar sentiments to Joey. Her second experience of childbirth was worse than the first resulting in a desire not to have any more children. Interestingly, she emphasizes the pain experienced during childbirth as opposed to downplaying the difficult times she experienced during motherhood.

- Josephine: So yes, I won't say it was easy {pause} and um...but I can also not say it was very difficult.
- Interviewer: Okay

- Josephine: Yes, to give birth was difficult {pause} um very difficult and sore and {laughs}
- Interviewer: {laughs} No I can just imagine
- Josephine: I think with the second one it was worse. Ooh I said never again. I am done but um {pause} yes.

For all participants who shared about their childbirth experiences in this study, the experience appeared to be one marked by traumatic experiences. This was owing to various medical complications that arose both during pregnancy and in the process of giving birth. Much of these complications seemed to evoke emotional distress. The distress experienced by mothers because of traumatic childbirth has been noted in literature (Dahlen et al., 2010; James, 2015). The clarity of these women's memory surrounding the specificities of the birth of their children is juxtaposed with a greater degree of vagueness surrounding the specificities of the toddler years. This may indicate an individual emphasis on the intensity of the birthing process and the powerful emotions that accompanied these women's experiences - whether positive or negative - so much so that the years following it are less striking in memory.

The experience of childbirth is viewed as a cherished life transition by many women (Elmir et al., 2010). This experience is often marked by joy and triumph. However, this is not the case for all women. The literature documenting adverse obstetric outcomes and risks for teenage mothers and their infants is extensive (Abebe et al., 2020). Research demonstrates that complications occurring during pregnancy or childbirth of young mothers remain to be high in low- and middle-income countries (Mohr et al., 2019; Omar et al., 2010). One of the primary adverse complications noted in research is that of preterm delivery and low birth weight (Abebe et al., 2020). These findings are somewhat reflected in this study as many of the mothers in this study described their experiences of giving birth prematurely, giving birth to a stillborn infant, and the difficulty surrounding caring for a colic baby. Pregnancy-induced hypertension is also noted as a prominent risk for young mothers in the literature (Mphatswe et al., 2016). This is reflected in Millicent's experience of having had to remain in hospital owing to high blood pressure and thus, undergoing a high-risk pregnancy.

In the mothers' narrative within this study, it appears that birth and pregnancy was framed as a practical and emotional challenge characteristic of motherhood which they needed to overcome. Almost two decades after having given birth mothers spontaneously brought up childbirth itself as one of the most difficult things about motherhood. The women described childbirth as an experience sometimes marked by intense emotion and physical pain as well as characterized by surprise and unexpected delivery. It would be interesting to see whether

childbirth would be emphasized as one of the distinct difficulties associated with motherhood by all mothers as opposed to being limited to young mothers.

What remains remiss in the literature is the subjective perceptions of young mothers surrounding possible complications they may have experienced during the birthing process and how they come to frame and understand it. It seems the possibility of physical and psychological birth trauma following childbirth may be a more common experience for young mothers (Ankomah & Konadu Gyesaw, 2013).

5.2.2 Parenting

Mother-child relationship dynamics and mother-child communication was a topic that was extensively discussed. All the women within this study were adamant that the relationship between their children and themselves was one of open communication, transparency, and closeness. Furthermore, the mothers' expressed that it was and had been their desire to cultivate close and open relationships with their children. The implementation of open communication was evidenced in their assurance that they made intentional effort to speak to their children about sensitive issues such as sexual health, finances and even, gender-based violence. This was important to them owing to the lack of transparency and openness surrounding sexual health communication in some of their own homes growing up.

The approach that mothers used when discussing these topics varied from being proactive to reactive. While some communicated that they intentionally pursued conversations with their children, others described how they would discuss these topics as they came up or when their children specifically asked them about it, or when being exposed to it through the media. This speaks to adherence to a more modern discourse of parenthood which favours openness and communication as a priority. Blondie describes the relationship she has with her daughter as an open one where they can speak comfortably with one another and understand each other. She stresses that this is how it should be.

Blondie: Yes, we understand each other and if we do not understand each other, we will try to understand each other.

Interviewer: Mm, okay.

Blondie: We will always ask {pause} See, I always want my children to be open with me

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: Because I will always be open with them. I will always be straightforward {clears her throat} sorry

Blondie: Speak straightforwardly with them. I will not beat around the bush. I will not {pause} say: It MUST be like this, but it is alright, we will do it like that.

While her statement shows that this is an ideal she values and adheres to at the very least, one is not able to evaluate whether this has been achieved.

Millicent mirrors this sentiment in a description of her and her son's relationship, emphasizing the importance of taking an interest in what her children enjoy and the activities they spend their time doing. She expresses her deep desire to have a loving, open relationship with her sons.

Millicent: And I like to give my children *love*. I love cuddles and I like {pause} I like that open relationship that we have amongst my children. I, I chat with them a lot. I *really* want us to have that open relationship. He mustn't hide things from me.

Millicent: I am willing to do join them in {pause} their activities that they want to do; dancing. Mike likes dancing. I will dance with Mike. Chris likes karate. I will

Interviewer: Ah cool

Millicent: I-will be Chris' - how can I put it – his punch bag; if he wants to train or if he wants {pause} almost as if he wants to train with me or he wants to practice something or try out something new {pause} will help him or whatever.

Her desire for an open and transparent relationship is evident in her responses. She describes her compulsion not to repeat what she viewed as shortcomings in her relationship with her parents. She desires a different dynamic with her sons to the one she grew up with.

Millicent: He must be able to tell me what is bothering him, this is what makes him {pause} that little bit uncomfortable. He must be able to tell me 'Mamma I met a girl today, Mamma I have' {pause} I, I want – I really desire that which I didn't have with my parents {pause} What I really *wanted*, I didn't get from them but I really want that with my *children*.

Millicent: I really want to have that *bond* with my children. This is what I want- and I differentiate myself as wanting {inhales} I want to make a *change*.

Josephine too maintains that she and her children have an open relationship as she does not want them to hide things from her. Her description of her son conveys a sense of familiarity and knowing regarding changes in her sons' demeanours.

Josephine: Yes, we have an open and pleasant relationship. There's nothing that I hide from them and I also don't want them to feel that they need to hide things from me either. But Jesse is not actually a person that will have deep conversations with you.

- Interviewer: Okay so you have to ask, if something...
- Josephine: Yes, I have to ask, yes. 'Jaden, are you okay?' Or– I now know my child because I know he is someone that likes to make jokes.

Josephine actually describes that whereas she has a certain ideal of openness and communication that she tries to adhere to, it is not always possible to live up to this ideal.

Joey shares how she and her boys enjoy spending quality time together and the contentment that she feels in having all three of them together as a family under one roof. She assures that she and her eldest son have a good understanding within their relationship. While she describes things being difficult in the beginning of her and her eldest sons's relationship owing to them living apart, their relationship appears to have strengthened over time .

- Joey: That's why I say {pause} in the beginning, things were difficult in my life. But now that my child is back with me and {pause} the two of us, the three of us live alone here.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: We do a lot of things together. We can laugh together, we can chat. We can be serious, we can share like at night; things like that and for me it is very, very nice. This is all that I wanted. All these years.

Regarding open communication pertaining to sensitive topics discussed between Joey and her children, she is adamant that she makes an effort to speak to her sons transparently about topics such as finances and sexual health.

- Joey: No, I {inhales} A lot of parents are uncomfortable with talking to their eldest child about sex
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: But I *must* say {inhales} here by us it is not a case of discomfort or something. We easily speak openly about it, we can be serious about it but just so that he basically knows what the facts are from what I tell or teach him. It is not uncomfortable. It is not uncomfortable so we can talk frankly and openly
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: with each other about the topic. I tell them about the advantages and disadvantages.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: I ask them what their affection is or whatever {pause} Yes, we talk openly about *everything*.

Nathalie describes her and her son's relationship as being stronger now than it was following the divorce of her and her ex-husband. Her son became very withdrawn following the divorce and so she felt distanced from him as she didn't understand his sudden change in demeanour.

- Nathalie: He then started {pause} to become closed off and, and then I asked myself but am I the problem. Am I or the father the problem, what is the problem?
- Interviewer: Hm
- Nathalie: Because I couldn't understand why the child now suddenly become so withdrawn {inhales deeply}

This is contrasted with a shift in their relationship following him having received psychological assistance.

- Nathalie: So far it did, it did, yes. It was a very difficult time and, and after that {pause} and then when everything was now cleared up, our relationship was in a good place and he could then talk to me about everything, and I could speak to him if I wasn't happy about something that he did.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Nathalie: And then we could again speak {pause} sort out that which he now did wrong in my eyes. Or he would say but 'Mamma I know, I am sorry, I know it was wrong of me to do it.'

She also describes how she tries to motivate her son to plan for his future and make the right decisions.

- Nathalie: It is better to plan your life now *properly* then you know what you need to progress forward the next day and the day thereafter.

When the topic of communication between Nathalie and her daughter was being discussed, Nathalie stated that she would be the one to make sure that her daughter knows what is going on regarding changes in her body. This is contrasted with Nathalie's own experience with her mother when she first started menstruating.

- Nathalie: And {pause} I do not think my mom and I had the same relationship that my daughter and I have now.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Nathalie: Because I know I was too scared to tell my mom because I didn't know what was happening. I, *I could not* explain to her what had happened.

Her comment is underscored by embarrassment at not having similar knowledge to her friends regarding sensitive topics. This was due to lack of communication between herself and her parents.

Nathalie: Yes especially, especially when you have friends or, and they speak to you and say but my mom says this or my dad told me this {inhales} and then here you now stand but you can't contribute to the conversation because your parents did not talk to *you* about these things.

Blondie suggests that the closeness in age between herself and her eldest daughter has had a positive impact on their mother-daughter relationship and fosters a deeper sense of understanding.

Blondie: It did make a difference. We understand each other better because I can still think on her level.

Interviewer: Okay. Yes.

Blondie: Like the things she experiences now um I can still remember.

It is interesting to note that I found no qualitative research undertaken which explored mother-child relationship dynamics specific to young mothers and their offspring within South Africa. Most research tends to concentrate on the fractured or strengthened mother-daughter relationship between young mothers and *their* mothers because of young motherhood and early childbearing, or on the decreased capacity of young mothers to parent appropriately which is mostly restricted to the period during infancy (Chico et al., 2014). This ranges from co-parenting dynamics (Denny et al., 2016) to familial dysfunction or conflict impacting negatively on young mothers' psychological wellbeing (Edwards et al., 2012). As such, the responses of participants will be drawn upon to demonstrate findings.

Literature has prominently documented the lack of communication around sexual topics as a risk factor for teenage pregnancy among marginalized communities (Amod et al., 2019; Makiwane et al., 2018). This has been connected to cultural ideals labelling these topics as taboo (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016; Thobejane, 2015; van Zyl et al., 2015). This was witnessed in Nathalie's case.

The women in this study appear to have a strong desire to adhere to a different parenting ideal than the one that their parents followed. This ideal seems to be a more democratic and open style of parenting, with a huge emphasis on communication. This ideal includes how they speak to their own children regarding sensitive topics such as sex and reproductive health. Furthermore, one of the participants reflected that the inclusion of sexual health in their school curriculum was vague and therefore, offered little help in navigating sexual issues. This was mirrored in a study carried out by Amod et al. (2019) where young mothers noted their desire

for open communication between themselves and their caregivers regarding sexual health. The compulsion not to repeat the faults of their own parents is consciously stated.

While we can't be sure how successful the women are in living up to the stated ideals, it is clear that the women in this study, even if they became mothers at very young ages, are extremely reflective about parenting. They take parenting seriously and think about it consciously. This concurs with findings in a study by Malindi (2018) wherein the same intentions are communicated by current young mothers. The mothers in this study are adamant to change the narrative regarding open communication between them and their children. They are motivated to actively pursue and cultivate a healthy mother-child relationship. The data appears to reflect that these women are not afraid to discuss sensitive topics with their children, whether it be proactively or reactively. This showcases the ways in which they have learned from their own upbringing and adapted in order to apply this knowledge in their own parenting. There appears to be little research focusing on ideals of parenting specific to teenage mothers. This would be interesting to explore within the context of South Africa and across varied cultures.

5.2.3 Fathers

A topic that has often been overlooked concerning its influence on various dimensions of mothering, is that of the involvement and presence of the father. While literature has vaguely and minimally addressed the part the father of the child has to play, it has not extensively considered the impact this has on various aspects of mothering for the mother herself. Some studies have begun to explore the experiences of young fathers (Bhana & Nkani, 2014; Clark, 2015). Within this study, various issues surrounding the father of the child was discussed. Many women noted the difference in age between herself and her child's father where majority of the fathers were significantly older than them. In this case, Josephine was the exception as the father of her child attended school with her. Most of the mothers in this study also appeared to have had a negative experience with the father of their first child ranging from abusive behaviour to lack of responsibility and presence in their child's life.

Blondie, Millicent and Poppie noted the significant difference in age between themselves and the father of their first child.

Blondie: How can you just impregnate a young girl and leave her just like that {pause} He was quite a bit older than me.
Interviewer: Oh okay
Blondie: So um yes he was {pause} I will say forty.

Millicent: See, my um my boyfriend that I had, he was very- he is seven years older than me.

Poppie: And like um I now took an older man and {pause} they- it is difficult with an, an older man {pause} I do not know how it would be like with a younger man but *he* is very responsible

While Blondie and Millicent's attitude toward the father of their child being much older hints at a sense of self-consciousness, Poppie views having chosen an older man as a positive experience owing to his sense of responsibility. This is reflected in literature where older men are often found to responsible for the impregnation of teenage girls in socioeconomically disadvantaged communities or areas (Clark, 2015).

On the surface Blondie appears to be indifferent toward the father of her first child. However, as she shares his lack of physical presence in her daughter's life owing to him having married someone else with whom he had no children, she appears to see him in a negative light.

Blondie: So- and he was also not actually physically in her life.

Interviewer: Oh okay

Blondie: He went and got married to someone who he, who he didn't have children with.

Millicent shares that while the father of her child did support her and the baby financially, this was not much help. He was able to support her and the baby physically through providing a place to live. However, she describes him as being detached and insensitive toward the baby and his needs.

Millicent: With every last bit that you perhaps get from the father, you now just had to put pressure for that; just for nappies and medicine, *milk* {pause} whatever the child needs {pause} the money that his father gives to us- it, it's not really of some sort of help.

Millicent: It's maybe now just for that week {pause} but it's, it didn't last for the *month*

Millicent: So yes, many times the father will be there but then he is also just not *there*. We are married but we are {pause} he will never hold up his side when it comes to discipline. 'Ag do what you want or do what you want to do'. When my baby is, is sick then he will remark 'Ag he is just pretending'

Implicit here is also an ideal of fatherhood that is not simply one of physically providing, but also of a father that is emotionally present and involved. Millicent goes on to share that her first marriage was an abusive one, and thus, resulted in divorce. She married the father of her first two children when her eldest son was 5 years old.

Millicent: I, I was- I come out of a very {pause} abusive um {pause}
 Interviewer: Marriage?
 Millicent: Yes

Josephine voices the unreliability of the father of her child as a source of support. She describes him as being unwilling to take up his fatherly duties responsibly.

Josephine: Like the father wasn't actually there to support me.-I just felt um - he was probably about a year old; I am just not willing to go on with you anymore because you also don't really want to do your part, to go work and to provide for your child.

Joey ended relationships with both fathers of her children. She describes having structural support from the father's family of her eldest son in that he went to live with them. However, she reassures that she was and is solely responsible for caring for both her sons financially.

Joey: Because when his dad and I ended our relationship, he ended up staying with his father.
 Joey: Yes. With his dad and with his, his grandma and grandpa.
 Interviewer: Oh okay
 Joey: But I still provided for him financially.

She describes feelings of heartache surrounding her failure in not being able to provide for and physically care for her son.

Joey: For me, it was a very difficult and sad situation {inhales} and because he was also more attached to his father's people {pause} It actually made me even more sad, so, because I knew I wasn't {pause} I wasn't strong *enough* to have him live with me at that time

Joey's relationship with the father of her first child is described as very complicated. She shares that he did not work and therefore, the brunt of childcare apart from physically raising him fell onto her after they broke up. She alludes to a custody battle taking place in

court between herself and the father of her first child as she desperately desired for him to live with her.

Joey: Okay {inhales} so there were a lot of complications between me and the eldest one's father

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Over {pause} um over him not working. I basically raised the child alone and everything else...because, yes, we fought over the child in court

Joey: And *after* that, after that he also just realized that I also just really wanted *him* with me

In contrast to this, the father of her second child appears to make no effort to see him and is painted as detached and callous.

Joey: The youngest one's father; he stays next to us {inhales} there are no *feelings* that show or give the impression that we have a child together or that he's even interested in his child. He is {pause} the father is just concerned with himself. He's worried about his own feelings {inhales} on weekends he wants to party with his friends and things

One woman's description of mother/father relationship dynamics digressed from the overall depiction of father's being absent, abusive, and/or callous. Nathalie describes her relationship with her ex-husband as amicable and healthy after having forgiven him following the divorce.

Nathalie: From then on, things just got *much*, much better. The communication channels between the father and I are very good, we can talk about *anything*

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: About what's going on with the children. And even now he will ask me how it's going with *me* and so on

Interviewer: Ah

Nathalie: {pause} I can ask him how it's going with him and *his* wife, and his children {inhales} nobody feels angry. That's all {pause} it's gone

In line with literature, most of the young mothers in this study mentioned that the father of their child was much older than them (Clark, 2015). The attitudes of the women in this study toward the fathers of their children tended to be mostly negative. This presented as indifference or nonchalance in some cases, and as resentment and anger in others. The situation of young

fathers within the research regarding young motherhood has been relatively absent in the past. More recent research focusing on the father's role in young motherhood has begun to develop (Clark, 2015; Bhana & Nkani, 2014; van Zyl et al., 2015). One of the main findings which have been emphasised in the literature regarding young fatherhood is the beneficial influence of the father's support on the young mother's psychological wellbeing (Amod et al., 2019). Furthermore, the involvement of the father throughout the pregnancy and after has been shown to have a significant positive effect on young mother's maternal identity (Malette et al., 2015). This contributes to the cultivation of a positive self-perception within young mothers in carrying out their parenting duties (DeVito, 2007).

Within South Africa, the lowest rates of co-residence in the world exist with respect to father and child (Posel & Devey, 2006). Children who are under 14 years of age constitute the sixty percent who do not reside with their fathers (Posel & Devey, 2006). This appeared to be the case for most of the participants' children within the current study who had had varied living arrangements over time, staying with either the mother or father for most or part of their lifetime. Poppie was the only woman who had married and resided with the father of all her children. It has been noted in literature that both co-residing and fathers living separately from their children have a positive effect on child outcomes when active in their children's lives (Carlson & Magnuson, 2011). Thus, they play a crucial role in the well-being of the child. This was present in Nathalie's narrative. The presence of the father is both beneficial to child and mother (Clark et al, 2015). A study found that the impact of closer mother-father relationships on the involvement of the father in the child's life was positive resulting in the father being more actively involved in childcare (Fagan & Palkovitz, 2011). Meanwhile fathers being absent or uninterested appeared to be associated with feelings of distress and anxiety in mothers (Gee & Rhodes, 2003).

In the current study, the fathers of the children appeared to offer support in some cases during young motherhood. This support was provided through financial assistance, physical presence and caring for the child, and tangible living accommodation. In Nathalie's case, the positive effects of the presence of the father as well as the negative effects of his absence is shown both in her and her son's distress. The diminishing effect on Joey's psychosocial well-being owing to the financial strain that she faces as a single parent together with both her sons' fathers not being interested in making an effort is clear in the data and consistent with previous the research (Gee & Rhodes, 2003). This is an applicable example of the negative effects of an absent father over an extended period. Of interest is a finding by Madhavan et al. (2014) which

suggested that the degree to which the father is involved is dependent on the age of the child. In this study, financial support offered to the children of fathers in Johannesburg declined as the children got older. The findings from our study expands on this by showing that participants clearly had an idea that fatherhood implies not only financial support, but also emotional support throughout their children's' adolescence.

A significant development has occurred in research exploring the parenting experiences of both mother and father which appears to discredit the typical belief that all young fathers are disinterested in their children. Rather, it has been found that young fathers may desire to be involved in their offspring's lives and to assist in caring for them (Bhana & Nkani, 2012; Mkhwanazi, 2014; Morrell et al., 2012). Ratele et al. (2012) speak to the occurrence of "narratives on fathering that are illustrative of positive fathering and that contest the normative assumption of the absent or 'bad' father" (p. 561). However, this was not the case for one of the women in the current study. Josephine and the father of her child had been in a long-term relationship for two years while in school together before falling pregnant. Thus, he was a young father. She describes him as being disinterested and a bad influence. In contrast, a healthy co-parent relationship has also been suggested to contribute to healthy communication between the mother and father of the child which is witnessed in Millicent and Nathalie's case (Clark et al., 2015).

5.2.4 Community

The women were asked about their experiences within their community specifically relating to community perception, views and attitudes toward teenage pregnancy and young motherhood. The variety encompassed within the women's retelling of their community experience was interesting specifically since they resided in the same community during the period of their first pregnancy. Participants' narratives regarding their experiences ranged from encouragement and support in completing their education to ostracization from traditional church practices such as baptism. Participants who felt degraded and judged expressed feelings of deep shame and anger at how they perceived to be treated. This clearly showed the extent to which community perception and attitude affects young mothers' experiences, self-worth, and self-efficacy.

Nathalie and Joey reflected on the positive interactions they had with the surrounding community when they were first pregnant. Joey shared the encouragement and positive response she experienced within her school setting.

Joey: So I only, I only heard positive things the year I passed. When the eldest one was born in December, I passed and one of the, the tannies told me she's so PROUD of me, just for the fact that I was pregnant, but I still continued on and finished my matric year. And then the...And then it was the school principal because I actually wanted to leave school

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: So, then he said to me 'No, why do you want to do that. Finish your matric year.'

Nathalie's narrative regarding her experience of the surrounding community is one that she framed as positive and supportive although the description of the nature of support is vague.

Interviewer: So, I just want to ask {pause} yes, do you know or...were there any specific feelings that you could pick up on or {pause} something like that in the attitude of the people in your community?

Nathalie: Not at all

Interviewer: Hm okay

Nathalie: I have never experienced or seen anything along those lines

Nathalie: It made me feel very good to know that um {pause} no one- and I mean, a parent expects that once a girl turns twenty-one, she must then make every decision and look after herself well, and then maybe...but {pause} no one ever told me you made a mistake or, or pointed fingers at me.

An alternative community experience was evident in Millicent, Poppie, Blondie and Josephine's narratives. Millicent described the judgement she felt from the community and the ostracization she experienced from the church.

Millicent: My child's baptism {pause} my eldest child. We are um our *church* {pause} pointed a lot of flers regarding...marriage, before marriage

Interviewer: Ooh okay hm

Millicent: Before marriage {pause} I um what do they call it {pause} children who are born out of wedlock

Millicent: It, it's almost like, there was a lot of discrimination around that and I lived with my child's father now after a time. And they didn't want to let the child be baptized

This led to Millicent dreading being out in her community and a desire to stay inside.

Millicent: Yes {sighs} a lot of the time it- I didn't even want to come out, out of the house when I got Chris. But the people always {pause} stared at me and...

- Millicent: You could *hear* people always had something to say
- Millicent: You know people always like to point fingers. And they – ooh – it’s *funny* words and stuff that come out of your mouth; it’s terrible... Words that break you down and {pause} some of the um {pause} Look, my, my boyfriend that I had, he was very- he was seven years older than me.
- Millicent: Yes, and then they used to say, ‘*Yoh* you have an *old* man.’

Poppie’s experiences within her community were similar. She emphasized the negative treatment of young mothers.

- Poppie: Many would say, ‘look here, it’s because of trying to be too grown-up that she now walks around with a tummy’ and so on. It’s {pause} here it’s very, *here* {pause} people are very demeaning toward young people {pause} and ugly and so on.
- Poppie: ...Rather than trying to help this young girl, *help* and take their hand and {pause} Look if you can now *see* the child is going down the wrong path, then you must now {pause} how can I say it, interfere and get involved and say but you’re on the wrong path and it’s going to, it’s going to cause you to end up pregnant or you’re going to- Understand?
- Poppie: But here, they’re rather going to gossip about you and speak ugly about you and make up stories and {pause} and humiliate you and so on.

Like Poppie, Blondie mentioned the fact that everyone in the community was aware of what was happening in each other’s lives. Thus, there was a lack of privacy amongst the community and gossiping was commonplace. For those who participate in gossip, it can often be experienced as a source of power leading to indulgence. It remains, however, a destructive force for the subjects of such gossip (Hamman & Kruger, 2017). This was witnessed in the women’s descriptions when they reflected on how they were treated.

- Blondie: But in this community, even ‘teenage pregnancy people’ are very cruel toward children
- Interviewer: Really?
- Blondie: Ooh it’s terrible {inhales} How people can, toward children...yes, it’s from a place of {pause} maliciousness and you know, that type of stuff. No, especially
- Interviewer: Yes
- Blondie: *Our* community ooh no hm-um
- Interviewer: So, you would say it’s, it’s more a negative
- Blondie: *Yes* {pause} People create so many negative impressions of you. And it is not nice.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Blondie: It’s not nice at all

- Blondie: Yes, every month you get looked at funny when you walk into the clinic; people's faces {pause} and questions, 'Who's the father?' and 'Have you bought clothes for your child already?'. You know? That type of stuff. And then I just give the people a look, and then they say to my mother, 'Your child is stubborn but she's walking around with a w***e child'. You know?
- Interviewer: Okay {pause} yes
- Blondie: That type of stuff {inhales deeply} It was horrible.

Josephine echoed Millicent's sentiments of not wanting to leave the house while pointing out that currently young motherhood was commonly accepted as part of the community. However, Josephine disagreed with the indifferent acceptance of teenage pregnancy as a commonplace and thus, untroubling occurrence in today's community. She maintained that she still views it as a shameful experience and irresponsible behaviour.

- Josephine: Yes. It was a scandal. I mean, for your, your household. Um that's how they would look at your family: 'can you believe it?'. The people now gossip, they talk. But {pause} back then you were shy; I didn't even want to show my face outside of the house.
- Josephine: No one talks about it because it's almost like an everyday thing. It isn't an issue or whatever anymore but
- Interviewer: Yes, it's just something that happens?
- Josephine: Yes, but like for me it's, it's shameful and that is how I still see it. Because back then it was- that's how I felt.

One of the most researched areas contributing to qualitative research exploring young motherhood is the stigmatization of young mothers (Zito, 2016). Teenage mothers have often reported feeling judged and ostracized in and by their communities leading to social exclusion and marginalization (Amod et al., 2019; Bhana et al., 2008; Cherry et al., 2015; Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016). The presence of negative and judgemental remarks and attitudes have also been found in the school environment to be coming from teachers (Amod et al., 2019). A common perception of wider society and amongst various low-resource communities is the notion that young girls fall pregnant simply for the acquisition of the financial benefits afforded by the child support grant (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016; Udjo, 2014).

The findings of the current study were interesting to note as there were varying accounts of interactions mothers had had within the community. While majority of the participants shared that they had had negative experiences within the community regarding their first

pregnancy, two women noted how they felt supported by the surrounding community as well as within the school context. Seeing as participants inhabited the same cultural and social contexts, the differences in their experiences of the community attitude toward young motherhood was interesting. Those women who had encountered negative reactions described the shame that accompanied this judgement, and as such preferred to avoid entering the community altogether. This has been observed in other studies such as Mkhwanazi (2014) where one of the participants changed schools in order to avoid the stigma attached to young motherhood. These levels of social stigma owing to the perpetuation of young motherhood as problematic in dominant societal discourses has been widely documented in the research (Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016; Yardley, 2008).

In contrast to this, the positive reactions experienced by Nathalie and Joey, resulted in their feeling encouraged and enabled to rise to meet the challenges of motherhood and complete their schooling. This demonstrated and reinforced the positive effect that social support and encouragement from the surrounding community can have on the advancement and wellbeing of young mothers (Singh & Naicker, 2019). The diversity in these experiences may reflect an ambivalence present in the community where despite knowing that young women become mothers, they continue to be judgemental of young mothers in the public domain.

5.3 Emotional experience of motherhood

While participants were asked directly about their emotional experience of motherhood, it was a theme that they themselves brought up repeatedly in the interviews. Quite remarkable was the diversity of emotions experienced by the young mothers. Similar to the previous theme, these emotions were not isolated but rather presented as occurring on a continuum. The oscillation between various emotional states when relating their stories was clear in reflecting the ambivalence which has been proposed as characteristic of motherhood for all women. As such the sub-categories comprising this category include; Anxiety, desperation and feeling overwhelmed, Helplessness, discouragement, and shame, Loneliness, Frustration, anger and rage, and Joy.

5.3.1 Anxiety, desperation and feeling overwhelmed

Feeling anxious, overwhelmed, and desperate seemed very prominent in many of the women's descriptions of early motherhood. Anxiety can be defined as a mood state characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts and accompanied by strong negative affect (Grant et al., 2012). Overwhelm occurs when an event affects an individual very strongly

and one struggles to know how to manage it. Lastly, desperation can be defined as “loss of hope and surrender to despair” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). While these feelings were still present for some mothers during their current stage of motherhood, the intensity of these emotions seemed less when compared to earlier years. Also, a shift seems to have taken place regarding where these feelings may currently be stemming from.

Often these emotions were attached to having to provide, care for and attend to the incessant demand of attention required by new-born infants. This appeared to be amplified in different ways for participants. A major stressor that continued to emerge were health concerns for their infants. Particularly relating to the premature birth of their babies, mothers struggled with witnessing their infants being in pain as well as struggling to cope with the demand of colic babies. This led to feelings of anxiety and even desperation for a few mothers. Blondie recalled far too many visits to the doctor with her first child.

- Blondie: You don't know; it doesn't go exactly {pause} something, like that now. With Candice I went *many*, many times to the doctor
- Interviewer: Okay
- Blondie: *Terrible*. Sho I was- later I couldn't keep up anymore. Man, it was too much.

She described having cried profusely during young motherhood which can be framed as desperation considering her living circumstances. She remembered being very emotional when having to care for a colic infant.

- Interviewer: Yes. Okay um so that was more- did you, as in, was it overwhelming in the beginning?
- Blondie: Oh terrible, I cried a lot.
- Interviewer: Ah I'm sorry
- Blondie: {inhales deeply} And then my child was a colic baby as well

Joey, upon reflecting on young motherhood, recalled the doubt she had regarding whether she would be able to or should return to school. The impact of ensuing motherhood had already led to feelings of uncertainty.

- Joey: Because {pause} I had {pause} I also had *my* doubts because
- Interviewer: Yes

Joey: What will the people say and it's not a good look for the school; you're a learner and you're pregnant while in school and- it also wasn't fitting for *me* back then. I also thought, no man it, it won't work. I told my mother: Mammie, it's fine, I'm rather going to go and look for a job.

Millicent also described how she suffered with feelings of desperation as she struggled with her second child who was a colic baby.

Millicent: Mike had colic. Mike didn't want bre- I breastfed Mike. Mike didn't want to breastfeed. Mike didn't want the bottle. Mike cries and cries and cries and cries and cries and {pause} and suddenly I clicked, I tripped in my mind {pause} and it's almost as if I burst. Almost like something that implodes

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: Because I, I get, I cannot anymore. I don't get that help anymore from anyone. No one can help.

Her feelings of overwhelm were captured in her account of caring for her second child – the language she used indicated the desperation she felt.

Nathalie recalled her feelings of desperation surrounding her son's condition after the divorce. She also described the many times she had felt overwhelmed with the task of having to navigate young motherhood.

Nathalie: There were many times when one, that I felt like that, yes, but um then we just got back up and said but the children, my children are there. I must, I must {pause} get up. I – the overwhelm, I must now just {pause} disappear, it must just go away, and we must now just look ahead and be positive.

From Nathalie's excerpt, we also saw the need to bypass these feelings, almost as if there was no time to stay with the anxiety, process it and deal with it. She coped with anxiety by trying to be positive.

Poppie referred to the circumstances she found herself in at the time as a difficult period. She likened this to her experience of young motherhood which she also described as being very challenging owing to unemployment. She mentioned that the reason they were staying in her mother's house was because they had no other place to live.

Poppie: Like with him, I didn't work and that was when I found out I was pregnant. And {pause} it was *difficult* for me, and now we live here, us

here in, in this house because we don't have a place to stay {inhales}
And {pause} it is {pause} there were good times and then there were,
then it's {pause} very difficult sometimes like, like now.

While as young mothers', participants seemed to be overwhelmed by the demands of the baby, at the time it appeared the financial strain of raising a child itself had continued to be a major stressor for mothers. This was emphasized by Joey:

- Joey: I know for me *now*, at this moment, it feels a bit heavier than those years. I don't know why. Life is just so hectic now, confusing and all over the place. Everything
- Interviewer: *Yes*
- Joey: Is expensive and you must basically get to everything, and because it's JUST my salary {inhales deeply} I have to basically cover everything {pause} which for me actually makes it very difficult {inhales deeply} I have *no* other financial help.

For her, the financial strain of the present-day expenses together with a sole income acted as a major stressor weighing heavily on her. This conjured up feelings of uncertainty around basic needs such as food to eat.

- Interviewer: No, I can imagine especially with the situation now with Covid, after everything as well
- Poppie: Hm one can't find work and {pause}
- Interviewer: *Yes*
- Poppie: It's every day's worry what we will eat tonight {pause} what tomorrow.

Blondie also noted the contribution of financial stress and one's surrounding circumstances to feelings of overwhelm. At the time, she used the example of her family having to make do with damaged household appliances and foregoing Christmas presents to describe the far-reaching effects of limited finances.

- Blondie: Look, the finances aren't there {inhales deeply} There is also not- Okay the biggest sign is now the finances because one needs finances to be able to get a house *to* improve your life. Look like we've been struggling now for more than a year, more than a year and a half {pause} with our fridge because our fridges freezer's band broke.
- Interviewer: Ah no
- Blondie: So, we can't use the bottom part of the fridge
- Interviewer: *Yes*
- Blondie: So now we've kind of pushed it closed and put a brick in front because there's now no other way. But now we are going to have to draw a line or something somewhere. The children must just now be told 'sorry,

there are no Christmas clothes this year'. There aren't Christmas presents. We can't help that now but there's a fridge {laughs} which will sustain us for a few years and then we can buy Christmas presents for you again for a few years.

Joey expressed how the uncertainty of life often dragged her down, and she had to fight to prevent herself from being totally overwhelmed.

Joey: But if you take a moment to be still and think, then sometimes you get so {pause} in your own feelings

Interviewer: Yes

Joey: You try to keep your head above water. You don't where you can still cut down, or what you must still change or what even but

She stated that she didn't view her children as hindrances to the pursuit of the aspirations she has, but rather the fear surrounding taking risks and trying something new. In this instance her uncertainty was rooted in fear.

Joey: But that's not to say that because I have children, it holds me back from being able to do that.

Interviewer: Yes

Joey: I just have to be more positive about things and look up- but I'm always so scared. I am, I am {pause} I don't have, I'm just the kind of person that when I'm comfortable with something, I'm too scared to take on something different, I'm like that

The feelings of anxiety, being overwhelmed and being desperate during early motherhood have been relatively well documented in growing qualitative research focusing on the experience of teenage mothers (Kruger & Lourens, 2016; Mokwena et al., 2016; van Zyl et al., 2015). This is usually because of the demands on young women's time and attention that present immediately following birth. This was found in a qualitative study by van Zyl et al. (2015) exploring the lived experience of teenage pregnancy and the transition into motherhood. They noted that feeling overwhelmed and anxious was common to young mothers. This can be compounded by lack of support, stigma, having to care for one's infant as a single parent and attempting to complete schooling (Amod et al., 2019; Cherry et al., 2015). As such the feelings shared by the mothers even as they reflected on past young motherhood were reflective of the literature.

Currently, all the mothers shared that their feelings of anxiety were mainly due to financial hardship. The financial strain of childcare and daily life was continuously brought up

as a point of concern. This gives credibility to the research associating long-term economic strain with young motherhood (Wood & Hendriks, 2016). However, it does not denote a causal link and should be framed within the historical contextual circumstances from which the participants stem. It was not at all suggested by them that becoming young mothers limited their financial opportunities as they were poor to begin with. Although they were anxious about providing for their children, they did not directly articulate motherhood as a financial obstacle. In other words, they didn't seem to regret becoming mothers at a young age and did not link young motherhood to their current financial difficulties. Their desire to provide a better life for their children than the one they had is echoed in studies exploring motherhood from the subjective view of young mothers (Chohan & Langa, 2011; Malindi, 2018). Thus, it appears this has remained a constant intention for the mothers over time.

The impact of poverty on young mothers has been increasingly addressed in the literature regarding its long-term and far-reaching effects (Branson et al., 2014; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016; Timaeus et al., 2013). However, it is not clear that young motherhood exclusively leads to poverty, even though the two are intertwined. The mothers in this study did not link their current financial difficulties to becoming mothers at a young age, even if they were very aware of the stress of poverty then and now.

5.3.2 Feeling of helplessness and shame

Feelings of anxiety and being overwhelmed highlighted the sense of helplessness and led to feelings of shame. Helplessness is defined as “a state of incapacity, vulnerability or powerlessness associated with the perception that one cannot do much to improve a negative situation” (American Psychological Association, n.d.). The shame attached to this may be understood as a sense of humiliation stemming from one's perception of acting in a dishonourable or immoral manner (Brown et al., 2016). This was compounded by a combination of factors such as presence of support, community attitude toward teenage pregnancy, financial struggle, and perceived loss of opportunity.

Josephine's words implied feeling shame around her first pregnancy which seemed to emanate from within herself. She framed returning to school while being pregnant as a scandal, and thus, would not have returned to school even if she had been allowed. This may reflect the view of the community surrounding young motherhood in the past.

Josephine: Yes. It's a different time, yes because I myself, or even though they told me back then I can go to school, I wouldn't have done it because I mean,

that shame and that scandal and whatever else. No, I wouldn't but it's more common these

She also recalled feelings of guilt surrounding her first pregnancy. Guilt is related to doing something wrong or perceiving oneself as having done something wrong. Josephine specifically noted a combination of guilt and resentment that may occur within the parents or caregivers of young mothers. The guilt and resentment perceived to be from her caregivers seemed to give rise to her own feelings of guilt. This could be interpreted as relating to shame particularly when combined with the perceived resentment of one's parents/caregivers.

Josephine: It is a heavy thing, yes. Um you see that resentment on your parent's faces, but they won't now tell you. Maybe {pause} they also feel bad about it or guilty or whatever, and I felt very guilty about it back then.

Nathalie addressed the difficulty of young motherhood when one acts as sole provider for your child's needs. In contrast, she suggested that while the difficulties of young motherhood remain present, the pressure to provide children with the things they desire can be self-imposed. Thus, her statement encompassed feelings of both shame and freedom from that shame.

Nathalie: Hm not anything specific but I know I can say this; it is difficult as a young parent and {pause} especially when you are the only working person in your house and, and the children long for this and long for that. And in some households, I could always see that the children would want a pair of Nike tekkies and – it's an example I'll make – the children want a pair of Nike tekkies but then again, those children are also so easygoing

She described the feelings surrounding her divorce and the impact she perceived it to have on her son in later years.

Nathalie: Um like I said, hey, I {sighs} You feel as if you {sighs} have failed your child. You haven't, you, you, you feel *you* have failed your child even though you weren't the one who was wrong {pause} And that, it's a big big part of you that feels {pause} I can't anymore, I don't want to anymore {pause} but because the children are there, and you're their mother so {pause} They're for you, they've been put in your care {pause} you have to stand firm.

Her sentiments implied a sense of shame attached to feeling so helpless and letting her son down. Yet, she maintained that she must find a way to carry on for her children's sake.

Joey echoed feelings of discouragement as she recounted the emotional exhaustion accompanying motherhood marked by economic strain. She lamented her efforts to do her best which never seemed to be enough. This can also be reflective of the shame that she has in failing to provide for her children in the way that she feels she should. Her efforts continued to fall short causing her to be greatly discouraged.

Joey: But at times it's emotionally exhausting. To think that you try to do everything, put in your *best* (.h) and it doesn't even look good enough.

Joey: Understand? It's just never good enough.

At the time, Joey appeared to be in a continuous struggle with feelings of helplessness owing to lack of financial security. Her desire to give her sons the best was undercut by financial restrictions which caused her to feel as if she was failing them.

Joey: But like I said, I make, I make it comfortable for them at least

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Even though I don't always feel happy

Interviewer: Sho

Joey: Because I know I can, for my children I can, or I *must* one day for my children; I just want them to have the best but at the moment I can't do that or I can't afford it.

She appeared to be someone who prizes her independence and struggles to ask for help. She described how she when she struggles with unpleasant feelings, she simply lifts herself up out of it. She reassured me that she was not 'depressed' but rather experiencing an isolated period of difficulty. Thus, it appeared she experienced shame around struggling with negative feelings in motherhood. In this way her coping mechanism was one of staying positive.

Joey: So, I have never really {pause} gone for help or for anything else. I just pulled myself out of that negative hole and I just try to be more positive.

Joey: But I never actually felt the need to now go {pause} lay out my whole business because

Interviewer: No, I understand

Joey: I wasn't depressed. It was just that that was a bad time or a low *point* in your, in your life, like that

Poppie's statement reflected Joey's of financial restriction and feelings of discouragement. This could be implicitly interpreted as a sense of shame attached to her inability to provide for her children in the way that she believed she should.

Poppie: They are clean every day and everyday there's something to eat *but* {pause} what's now, the problem *now* is, it's now just the financial side that {pause} that's the problem. I don't get to, to all the things in order to {pause} especially if you don't- So at the moment, he's now seventeen – he's a young man – and a lot of the time I can't buy him the things that HE wants like {pause} his friends maybe now have um Vans on. Now I can't buy Vans for him because at the moment {pause} it's now been a few months that I have to take their Allpay to buy food and I can't buy them what they *want*.

The helplessness of not being able to give her sons the things they desired was clear in Poppie's statement. She further reflected on the fact that her life had turned out quite differently to the picture she had of how it would be. This statement seemed to have implied that her life had followed a negative direction as she noted how challenging the current season personally felt for her.

Poppie: But that which I expected how my life would be, today it's {pause} not like, like I expected it would be
 Interviewer: Hm back then
 Poppie: That which I wanted it to be, how my life should have been didn't, didn't- it didn't work out like that.
 Interviewer: Hm
 Poppie: And I'm not giving him, I'm not giving him the blame because I fell pregnant and so on but {pause} it's just, it's very difficult {pause} if you don't work

While she didn't blame her son for her circumstances, she highlighted the challenge of unemployment and how this affected one's experience of motherhood overall. Thus, this wasn't the life she envisioned for herself and felt powerless to alter it. This can be interpreted as feelings of helplessness.

A sense of helplessness consistently underscored the narratives of the mothers in this study when reflecting on young motherhood. This seemed to stem from the realisation that they were pregnant and had no choice but to care for their infant. This sensation was further intensified when facing moments of desperation and being overwhelmed during the process of raising their child. This helplessness was also reflected in some of the women's narratives framed by present circumstances as relating to financial strain. While the emerging literature

reflects the determination of young mothers to complete their schooling and pursue the careers they envision for themselves, it seems time has led to some mothers in the current study feeling discouraged at the possibility of even being able to pursue goals such as studying further (Branson et al., 2014). SmithBattle (2007) suggests the failure of young mothers to “actualize their heightened post-birth educational aspirations” (Zito, 2018, p. 1103) is largely owing to a lack of structural support. This may be applied to the participants in this study.

The influence of young motherhood on educational attainment has long been debated in the literature (Marteletto et al., 2008; Morrell et al., 2012). Truncated education is a key concern that has been argued to be deleterious to the future of young mothers owing to its negative effect on their future economic status (Branson et al., 2014; Jewkes et al., 2009). The circumstances the mothers in this study found themselves in at the time appeared to be in agreement with previous findings such as above: participants particularly struggled to overcome financial barriers. This can be partly attributed to their having either discontinued schooling or lack of tertiary qualifications. Consequently, they were left feeling restricted by their finances, helpless in being able to change their circumstance, and discouraged as they carried the burden of it all (Nkani & Bhana, 2016). This led to feelings of shame due to a perceived failure to adequately provide for their children in the way they desired to.

The presence of shame appeared to underlie many aspects of motherhood. This included the shame of not being able to provide for their children (Kruger & Lourens, 2016), the implicit self-imposed shame attached to them having been young mothers, and the shame derived from community attitudes and perceptions toward young motherhood (Bhana et al., 2008; Phaswana-Mafuya et al., 2016). These findings are identical to what is experienced by young mothers when feelings of deep shame are evoked due to ostracization and judgement from their surrounding community (Bhana & Mncambi, 2013; Field et al., 2020; Leerlooijer et al., 2013; Ngabaza & Shefer, 2013; Sheeran et al., 2015). It appears that despite the significant amount of time that has passed, participants continued to internalize this image of themselves as constructed by the community surrounding them.

5.3.3 Loneliness and isolation

Loneliness and feelings of isolation as a young mother were communicated both by participants themselves as well as detected as an undercurrent in participants retelling of their young motherhood experience. Loneliness is a state of mind occurring when one feels alone and socially isolated from others and is linked to desiring social interaction (Schrempft et al.,

2019). Oftentimes loneliness was felt in relation to rejection from the father of the child and feeling removed from peers their age. The limited ability afforded to mothers regarding taking part in activities during the period of the first few months after childbirth seemed to lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness. This extended into and was a component of having to care for their infants alone, without help from the father of the child.

Millicent recalled feeling left out when she was younger owing to her mother being absent from her life, and therefore, could not provide for her in the ways she would have liked. This led to her not wanting her sons to experience the same feelings of loneliness and isolation.

- Millicent: When I, when I was sixteen years old, there was no one who could buy me clothes or- I'm young, I then also want to be in fashion. I then also want to try on {pause} and there is no one who you can tell my mother bought this for me or- you as you are, you must now like you are
- Millicent: Because I know that feeling {pause} I know that feeling of feeling like you don't fit in and {pause} You just don't want to be involved with that because you, for you it feels as though you don't *fit in*.

In her reflections surrounding young motherhood she mentioned that her days were mostly spent with just herself and her baby. Due to his age, she was not able to leave the house much and as such spent much time removed from the surrounding community. Since she had lost her mom, and had a strained relationship with her father, Millicent mostly had to care for her baby by herself. This depicted the loneliness and isolation that could arise from having to care for one's baby alone particularly during early motherhood.

- Millicent: So that was the only outings we had together, me and my baby now. But {pause} other than that I have to stay in the house with my baby because {pause} there's no other choice.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Millicent: Raise your child because that's the path that you chose

She noted that this was not the way that she would have liked to raise her baby; by herself.

- Millicent: ...And that's not what you wanted for yourself, to raise your baby on your own

For Millicent, her loneliness preceded her pregnancy and extended into early motherhood. Joey described how she removed herself from her friendship group when she was pregnant with her first child. Even though her friends were accepting of her pregnancy, she felt

she would no longer be able to take part in activities with them. Her responsibilities as a mother were seen as most important.

Joey: But when I began getting more pregnant, I put {pause} *myself* in their shoes {pause} and I said but I *can't*, I don't fit in there anymore because I'm going to become a mother now. So, I can't do things which we as *young* girls do, anymore. So, I withdrew from our friendship because I knew I had much more or greater responsibility on my shoulders now.

Blondie emphasized that she had to raise her first child alone owing to the father of her child passing away when she was two years old.

Blondie: Because look what happened to me. I use *myself* {pause} as an example

Interviewer: Yes

Blondie: Because I had to raise you alone. Your father wasn't there. Your father died when you were two years old.

However, Blondie implied that she was solely responsible for raising her first child even before his passing.

Josephine indicated feelings of loneliness and isolation in terms of not wanting to leave her home owing to the perceived shame of her first pregnancy. She described the humiliation attached to young motherhood within the community in the past which led to her isolation.

Josephine: They finish matric but back then by us, it wasn't like that. It was a scandal; you, I couldn't show my face at that school, no one was supposed to even see me. I stayed in the house because I mean that, back then, it was shameful.

Joey described her heartache when she had to raise her second child alone owing to the lack of interest and effort shown from his father. This resulted in feelings of loneliness and periods of isolated emotional release. She maintained that she raised her second child alone throughout motherhood with little help from the father.

Joey: I was very sad. I cried *alone* many times.

Joey: It's basically just been me all the way.

At the present time, Joey didn't appear to have any emotional support from someone on whom she could depend on and trust with her personal feelings of overwhelm and difficulty.

She felt as if she must be the steady one that her children can depend on. Thus, it appeared the feelings of loneliness had persisted with subsequent children.

Interviewer: So, I actually want to ask you; did you feel as if you were supported personally? Did you have someone who you personally- yes, that you could personally

Joey: Personal

Interviewer: Cared?

Joey: No...

Interviewer: Really?

Joey: No {pause} I always felt that I must, I'm the only one who must provide for everything here.

Joey: I had to walk that extra mile so that they, like I {pause} I didn't physically have that, I felt more emotionally depleted because it's difficult, man, and I can't get to everything

Thus, Joey's narrative seemed to be marked by feelings of loneliness and emotional isolation as she has had to care for her son independently and did not feel as if she had someone with whom to share her difficult emotions surrounding motherhood with.

The experience of young motherhood appeared to be marked by periods of loneliness and emotional isolation. This was not confined to one incident but emerged as a general experience for most mothers who felt they were solely responsible for the care of their infant in all respects. Young mothers mentioned loneliness as a result of decreased opportunities for social outings and lack of familial support (Govender et al., 2020). The absence of the father, whether it be emotional or physical, also contributed to feelings of loneliness and emotional distancing, which as previously discussed can have adverse effects on mothers' transition into motherhood (Amod et al., 2019). This was also described as resulting from the stigmatization of their community toward them when they were first pregnant, which has been described as contributing to young mothers' withdrawal of themselves from the community (Bhana et al., 2008; Naidoo et al., 2021). Loneliness has been reported by other studies exploring subjective experiences of young motherhood (Govender et al., 2020). It is interesting to note the persistence of loneliness in these women's lives.

A few participants spoke about their value for and the necessity of independence within motherhood. This is corroborated by young mothers' intention to provide for and care for their infants themselves (Malindi, 2018). While this is a positive trait, it can become problematic when affecting mothers' ability to ask for help which they may desperately need. This may

lead to isolating oneself and as such experiencing feelings of loneliness. This appeared to occur in Joey's case as she noted feeling like she had no one on whom she could offload her emotional burdens.

5.3.4 Frustration, anger, and rage

The difficulties that mothers faced at present seemed to be accompanied by feelings of frustration, anger and rage. However, it was not limited to motherhood presently as participants described their frustration both in current and past circumstances. Frustration may be defined as an emotion exhibited owing to an unresolved and persistent stressor and can be characterized by defensiveness and hostility (Jeronimus & Laceulle, 2017). Anger can be described as an "emotion characterized by tension and hostility arising from frustration, real or imagined injury by another, or perceived injustice" (American Psychological Association, n.d.) while rage is defined as "intense, typically uncontrolled anger" accompanied by "excessive expressions" rather than destructive actions (American Psychological Association, n.d.). Once again, these emotions appeared to exist on a continuum and were interchangeably aimed toward the community perception of young motherhood, fathers of their children, and their infants.

Josephine described how her anger was directed at herself and her own incapability when doing certain motherhood tasks incorrectly when caring for her first child. She explained her frustration when having to learn from her mother how to practically care for her first child.

- Josephine: So, with David I didn't struggle; I knew everything by then and so on but, yes, with Jesse back then it was actually {pause} look you {pause} also don't get everything completely right the first time. My mom would maybe explain so and so. Now you won't do it right, then she'll come and then she'll say: '*No man* not like that, come let me show you again' and 'not like that' – back then. Maybe the nappie isn't folded correctly – 'look here at the back, the child's bums are a hobbeltjie it must now first go like this'. Then...you become angry. You're not getting the thing right like you want it to be but yes
- Interviewer: So, it was more with the practical things
- Josephine: The practical things, yes
- Interviewer: which were actually more of a challenge?
- Josephine: Yes {pause} practical things

She further described the unreliability of and lack of interest from her first child's father. Her recount seemed to show that not much had changed in his behaviour over time.

Underlying feelings of anger toward him regarding his failure to make an effort and his poor influence appeared to be salient.

Josephine: Like the father wasn't actually there to support me. I just felt um- he was probably about a year or so old. I just don't have any more energy for you because you also don't really want to do your part, to go and work and to provide for your child.

Josephine: He doesn't bother much with his son. Now and then he'll come there and come show his face and say hello but also not really, because he's actually also on a wrong path. He checks in, now and then when he...feels like it or whatever his problem is but I always kept him away from Jesse. Because for me in the beginning, yes, when he was younger um {pause} for me it was just you're not doing your part. So why must I then share a child with you and you want to show up when you want, you want to give what you want um and you're going down a wrong path, and I don't think you're a good influence. I mean, he is definitely your child but I don't want my child to be that way.

Nathalie recounted her feelings of anger belying her uncertainty about the difficult time her son was having surrounding the divorce.

Nathalie: It isn't. It wasn't, let me rather say, an easy task because you're angry, you don't really know why {pause} and for what reason did it happen to me because you ask and you ask, and you ask God why then, why then {sighs} Then you'll never get far. You just answer yourself.

This anger appeared to be aimed at God as well as her husband. Thus, her anger seemed to have stemmed from multiple places of frustration surrounding her life circumstances, hurt from her divorce, and concern for the negative way in which this had affected her son.

Joey demonstrated her anger and frustration at the debt she needed to pay off. In her case, her anger was directed toward the financial burden that she felt pressed under, as framed within her narrative.

Joey: Like, like last, like last weekend

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: I just felt screw this debt, man!

Interviewer: {laughs}

Joey: I'm not going to pay the debt.

She appeared to be both hurt by the callous behaviour of her second child's father as well as housing feelings of anger toward him. Her frustration at his lack of effort and unreliability toward his child was evident. She couldn't fathom how he could behave as irresponsibly as he had as an adult.

- Joey: But seeing as you're now already supposed to be grown and sensible, why can't you *think*
- Interviewer: Hm
- Joey: To just act fairly toward your children

Blondie referred to the anger one may experience toward one's child resulting in giving him or her a hiding. She described this as an irregular occurrence, and thus, the implication was that some days one experiences anger toward one's children more intensely. However, she maintained that physical consequences should not occur in isolation but that children should be given an explanation by their parents regarding why they were punished. Thus, in Blondie's case her anger was framed as a normal emotion that occurs toward her children.

- Blondie: I {pause} I, there are some days that one, you know, you get angry and then you give him a hiding...or so but you still SPEAK. You still say but {pause} I don't expect that from you. Don't do that, it's not nice.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Blondie: Or you know, you explain *why*.

She seemed to be more enraged when speaking about parents who were inattentive to their children, as well as the infliction of excessive physical punishment on children. This scenario depicts both anger directed toward mothers who may behave violently toward their children, as well as anger projected toward one's children.

- Blondie: I almost grabbed someone in the street the one day, and the person *sees* that the child is going to fall {pause} and I also shout: 'Your child is going to fall'. The child is small, what does the child know. You must, you must keep hold of a child's hand. Not the child hold *your* hand and if that child holds your hand, that child will let go of your hand, and then you want to now chase after the child like what. And there the child fell. And there the mother grabs the child and there the mother hits the child {pause} Yoh but I grabbed that child out of her hand, and I say to her: 'Are you *mad*?'
- Interviewer: Yes
- Blondie: *You* are responsible for your child, not your *child* for *you*. Because *you* must now see what will happen.

Poppie's feelings of anger were less explicit in her rhetoric. However, she described the intense difficulty of her current circumstances for herself specifically. Her mention of not wanting to constantly scold her children indicated that feelings of anger and frustration toward the circumstances she found herself in caused her to do just that.

Poppie: It's *difficult*, it's very difficult for me. A lot of the times it's, many times then {pause} I don't want to shout or scold and so on but {pause} then it's, sometimes things get to be too much and then, then it's again those days that- Because it's difficult

Poppie also described her eldest sons' relationship as being marked by incessant arguing, which appeared to be a point of both concern and frustration for her.

Poppie: And those two {refers to two older brothers} fight a lot again {pause} every morning

Interviewer: Really, the eldest ones?

Poppie: Now the two of them are older and they – *oh* the two of them fight a lot. In the mornings, they, they {pause} they have to begin their day with- The two of them are going to now hurt each other, and they're going to {pause} We're now going to; you, I'm now going to make you this in your *that* and the other one says 'I'm not scared, why don't you come at me' - *every morning*.

Interestingly, participants' dialogues focused more on current anger than on anger they may have experienced as young mothers. They did not explicitly refer to experiencing anger owing to becoming young mothers but rather at their community's treatment of them. It appears that anger has developed over time in response to the circumstances described in early motherhood, which were marked more by anxiety, loneliness and helplessness. The experience of anger and rage is little spoken about and incompletely explored in the literature surrounding young motherhood and motherhood overall (Kruger & Lourens, 2016). It's interesting that no one has specifically explored the possibility of feelings of anger or rage faced by young mothers. Of the research that could be found, the focus tended to be on the effect of maternal anger on the outcomes of children, wherein the mother's anger is problematised and pathological (Kruger & Lourens, 2016; Tobe et al., 2020).

In the development of relatively recent qualitative research exploring teenage pregnancy, young mothers have been positioned in a place of power and agency. At the same

time, through largely quantitative research approaches, young mothers have also been framed as victims of their own making representing a wider social problem (Singh & Naicker, 2019). It seems that the urgency directed toward decreasing elevated rates of teenage pregnancy by wider society fosters a degree of anger and judgement consequently aimed at young mothers. However, internal feelings of anger experienced by young mothers has been largely ignored. This is reflective of the way in which women's anger toward her children, as with other 'negative' emotions, is sanctioned by most of society (Kruger et al., 2014; Kruger, 2020).

The mothers in this study expressed their anger toward the fathers of their children, the derogatory handlings of their community toward them, and toward their children in moments of frustration and desperation. More often than not, anger was not explicitly stated but rather featured as underlying expressions of frustration. The ability of women to separate their feelings about the experience of motherhood or aspects of motherhood, as well as the status afforded by motherhood, from their love for their child appears to be a challenging endeavour (Mayer, 2012). This too appeared to be a challenge for participants in this study, albeit less conspicuously. As they spoke about difficult and challenging moments, they were quick to assure the joy they had found in motherhood and the love they felt for their children.

5.3.5 Joy

Joy can be exhibited as passive and/or active in its expression. The definition that will be employed in this research will be passive joy. Passive joy describes "a feeling of contentment with things as they are" (American Psychological Association, n.d., *Joy section*). Joy seemed to underscore and appear as an ever-present undercurrent in the mother's description of their experiences until now. Interestingly, this was more concentrated when reflecting upon where they found themselves currently compared to the past. Having experienced motherhood over time, it appeared that while there were clear challenges, they found joy in what it meant to be a mother to their children.

As Poppie reflected on special and joyful moments shared with her children as a family, she noted a duality of motherhood that extended into life overall. This insight appeared to bring her comfort and underscored the bittersweet joy of motherhood.

Poppie: Some of the times when we're all together in the house and {pause} we're now watching TV and {pause} then we'll maybe; Jason will sometimes come inside. Then he'll now {pause} want to be funny and then we all laugh together and {pause} make jokes and {pause} and then he'll speak now a lot of the time about how his dad did something or-

yes it's, it's things which are funny and then we'll now *all* sit and laugh together as a family and

Interviewer: Hm {pause} yes, that belly laugh

Poppie: But {pause} sadness isn't unavoidable. There has to be days when it {pause} goes downhill and there must be, there is- it can't just be moonshine and roses.

She expressed her gladness that she was a mother, grateful for the ways in which she felt it had shaped her personhood for the better.

Poppie: If I think back, the person I was {pause} it's better to me now that I'm a mother than if I {pause} still {pause} had that, that life, led the life that I led when I was young; for me it's {pause} I am glad I am a mother.

She went on to share a special moment between herself and her twin daughters as she reflected on times when the difficulty of motherhood overwhelmed her.

Poppie: Like the two of them {pause} Zara and Lily, for me they will always; if they see I look, I don't look okay. They're so young but they {pause} will *always* just come tell me 'Mummy, we love mummy'

Interviewer: So precious

Poppie: Give me a kiss. Or they steal the people's flowers here down along the road, then they bring it to me, like that, and then I forget again why I was scolding now again

Millicent described the joy she derived from taking an interest in what her children enjoyed and being involved in her children's lives.

Millicent: So, um {pause} I want to be more involved; I like to be involved in their, in their lives.

Interviewer: Ah yes

Millicent: That, for me, is very nice; to be involved in what they do

She also shared the joy she derived from feeling appreciated and loved by her children. She fondly expressed how she cherished their loving nature and acts of affection which made her feel valued.

Millicent: Every time I, if I buy something for them {pause} *all* three of them, they are all very fond of giving hugs and giving kisses. Now for me that is {pause} THAT'S for me very {pause} it stands out to me a lot because they have that love for me and they have {pause} They cherish me, they *appreciate* me.

Millicent: That is what it is. That's for me what stands out *a lot* about them; that they're those loving children. They're *very* loving; they like {pause} they are those hugging children. It really warms my heart because they appreciate *any* small thing, whether it's small or big. They appreciate anything I give them even if it's just an old beanie

Another example of an area where Millicent found joy was in teaching her youngest son at home. She described the sense of pride and joy she experienced when seeing her son implement the things she taught him.

Millicent: And I can *see* a lot of the time, then you feel proud of the things that you taught him. He can say to me 'my dad's car is grey' and then he goes and points to that and its now things that I taught to him.

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: And then {pause} you feel so proud

Joey found joy in the simple activities and special moments that she shared with her children. She expressed her joy as being the result of seeing her children happy. Thus, her children's joy was seen as an extension of her own despite the obstacles she faced in her current season.

Joey: But the special times that we do have together is when we can watch a movie together. I dish us out popcorn. Or we sit and chat {pause} just. Or we play a small game or whatever else, just to create some *fun* in, in the small place that we're in.

Joey: We went to the beach this Saturday and the Sunday, we went to the Waterfront {pause} to Spur, to eat out. Just {pause} so that we could spend time together with the boys. And that is the best feeling ever when you see your children laughing and they're happy.

Nathalie recounted the emotional experience of finding out that her son had passed matric. She expressed a deep sense of pride and joy in her son's achievement. This could be framed as a source of joy she derived from motherhood in witnessing her son succeed owing to her efforts in raising him.

Nathalie: I- I, I cried, and I said thank you to the Lord {pause} and I said to him {pause} I am *very*, very proud of him because that which he achieved um on Tuesday, his results in 2020, what he went through {pause} was incredible to me and it was just so fantastic for me and I, and I can only give thanks to the Lord for that {pause} for that which he now achieved

While not outrightly stated, Blondie's narrative reflected the love that she had for her children and her desire to want to be close to and spend time with them. Her joy in motherhood was encapsulated in the value she attached to quality time spent with her children and her husband as a family. She mentioned her reluctance to leave her children to go to work and her desire to return home to them when out of the house for a function or event.

- Blondie: I want to lie cozily with them. I {pause} would rather spend my time with them than I would...like that kind of thing
- Interviewer: Okay, yes, okay
- Blondie: Because the time that I'm at work is, is already too much for me
- Interviewer: Hm {pause} yes
- Blondie: Okay one *must*, one *must* work. You *must*. Your children *must* attend school. But for me it feels too long

Josephine appeared to emanate an overall joyful outlook on motherhood. While she assured me that the difficulties of young motherhood were indeed challenging, her focus tended to be on the positive experiences she'd had as a mother and she viewed it as something to be cherished.

- Josephine: {Laughing} I don't know what to say. Motherhood means a lot to me.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Josephine: A lot, a lot, a lot. Because it's something precious. Because I think about um...women who {pause} I mean, who now can't have children.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Josephine: And then are now us who can, who have a lot; easily five, six. Then the children are neglected. And it's sad because {pause} why do you do that when there's a woman who is longing for a child.

Poppie echoed her sentiments despite her discontent regarding her sons' disobedience. Her pride in her children was a further reflection of the joy she derived from motherhood.

- Poppie: It means a lot to me {pause} and its many things, times where I {pause} besides the, the, their disobedience
- Interviewer: {laughs} Yes
- Poppie: It's; there are many times when I can be proud of my children

The optimistic attitudes adopted toward motherhood amongst young mothers has gained increasing attention in qualitative studies exploring the lived experiences of women

(Clarke, 2015; Malindi, 2018, Seamark & Lings, 2004; van Zyl et al., 2015). Joy was commonly operationalized by the mothers in this study through their descriptions of the day-to-day time spent with their children, special moments shared, and the sense of pride they took in witnessing their children succeed. Thus, their joy in motherhood was derived from their children as the source despite currently facing challenges in mothering and life overall (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Chohan & Langa, 2011). This was similar to the dual nature of motherhood described by Sheeran et al. (2015). While not dismissing the adverse effects recorded in the literature regarding young motherhood (which appears to be salient in some ways within this participant pool) the deconstruction of the image of young motherhood as inherently marked by an inevitably and entirely tragic life path is questioned.

5.4 Coping

The theme of coping describes the various means by which mothers' themselves have navigated their experience of motherhood. Many of the women referred to how certain practices and assistance from family and friends enabled them to overcome some of the challenges they faced in mothering. This was found to be in the form of emotional, practical, functional, and instrumental assistance (Pillay, 2020). Furthermore, this critical element appeared to be the difference between negative, and more positive outcomes for young mothers specifically. Coping has been referred to as action-directed efforts employed to navigate and manage demands that arise due to stressful life events (Taylor & Stanton, 2007). The interaction of coping and support has been given substantial attention in literature, whereby it has been proposed that the adoption of healthy coping mechanisms in conjunction with support following stressful life events can interact to positively influence individual's mental health outcomes (Amod et al., 2019; Erfina et al., 2019; Pillay, 2020). The presence or absence of the father as well as the level and type of support was found to have a significant influence on how the mothers' conceptualized their experience of mothering over the years.

5.4.1 Support as a buffer

The importance of support as a buffer was evidenced in a few of the mothers' beliefs that the presence and availability of support made a significant difference in whether young mothers felt they would be able to cope with the pressures and difficulties of young motherhood. By extension, this could act as a prominent factor regarding the long-term outcome of young motherhood. A support system was seen as crucial in defining the type of motherhood experience one would have. Nathalie shared her strong belief that without the right

support system, the experience of motherhood, and by implication its outcome, would be an undesirable one.

Nathalie: If you have the right support system and, and then {pause} then it is a very good thing. But if you don't have – look for – the right support system then it will go very wrong because then it {pause} if you {sighs} for me it's you begin right. If you aren't going to choose well then that child also won't grow up right.

She made mention of a 'right' way to begin raising a child and the importance of making the right decisions to the benefit or the detriment of your child. Poppie described the support system she had in a close friend who had become like family, and one which she deeply valued.

Poppie: I have, I can at least {pause} My mother always comes and then she brings a little something and then it's now um {pause} They have, I have a friend who I've been friends with for eighteen years now and {pause} she, me and her are very close and we're like sisters. I take her to be my eldest sister and her mother like my mother.

Interviewer: Ah, that's so sweet

Poppie: And they've been {pause} most of the time they are always there {pause} If they now- she will, she will give her last to me. We have a very good understanding. She {pause} she will- if I'm wrong, then she will tell me. Or if I now get angry {pause} then it must, she just got right again but the two of us have a {pause} n'ce understanding; she's both their godmother.

Poppie: The two of theirs are, are {pause} I didn't {pause} so difficult {pause} it wasn't so difficult for me with them

Interviewer: With the first?

Poppie: with those two, like with these two {pause} with, with Jason and James

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: There were times when their dad didn't have a job but {pause} I had a lot of support with the two of them, with the two of them I had a lot of support.

Poppie: Yes so, so my mother supported me a lot of the time and then it's now, also now um my children, their godmother.

Poppie's reflections seemed to support what Nathalie was saying regarding the importance of the right support system and how this can act as a buffer for the difficulties of young motherhood.

Poppie: Hm there are times where I {pause} where I, where I get discouraged..

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: If {pause} if you have support in life then you can take on anything that life- like they say {pause} A lot of the time the old people said; the old people said this um {pause} you can take on anything that life throws your way. I think about that a lot actually. If, how it would have, would have been if, if I didn't have them in my life. Then I feel {inhales} I actually feel very sad actually because

Poppie: If I look at my life now and the support that I have now, that I still have from back {pause} that to me; they are very valuable to me and {pause} I don't think I would've come this far if they hadn't supported me.

Joey reflected on the support she had in the father of her first child as well as his family. This was in the form of physical support as previously mentioned. At the present time she emphasised that she drew support for herself and both her sons from her side of the family.

Joey: With the, with the eldest one, it was now his father, and it was actually his aunty's, his grandmother and his grandfather. So, he had a *whole* bunch of family.

Interviewer: Ah, that's nice

Joey: With this one it's basically me, *my* mother, my sister, my brother in *this* environment where we now live. So, it's {pause} the two of them have the support circle of *my* people

She specifically mentioned her children's godparents as reliable sources of support whenever she found herself struggling most. It was clear from Joey's demeanour throughout the interview that she valued her independence and seemed to prefer not asking for assistance except in necessary instances.

Joey: So, if I need a little something, that being when I'm now really feeling that pressure

Interviewer: Yes

Joey: And then you must now put your pride aside; and then I will always ask her. Send a message and she will help me, or whatever else, with everything.

Blondie and Josephine specifically mentioned their mothers as crucial sources of support. This included helping them both practically with their motherhood duties and offering informational support in terms of teaching them how to care for their babies in the beginning stages of motherhood.

Blondie: But {pause} at least my mother was there a lot to {inhales deeply} My mother always- my mother helped me a lot and especially her brothers

Interviewer: Okay
 Blondie: Her brothers and {pause} one or two of their wives {laughs} helped me a lot.

Josephine: Yes, there were ups-and-downs and tough times but I, for me it was just um {pause} you must have support. Like my mother supported me a lot with things that I didn't know about babies; how to rub the child, to wash the baby. If the baby maybe now- which medicine he must have, what must go into his bottle. That sort of stuff.

Josephin': Because, there wasn't anybody else. My grandmother had passed away a long time ago, a few years before that. So {pause} yes, my mother actually helped a lot with that child of mine and he was just so small. He weighed 1,7kg.

Josephine reiterated the importance of support as a young mother as mentioned by Nathalie and Poppie.

Josephine: Um... what can I say now {laughing} up and down um sometimes it was tough but I think... look, if a person is young, you must have support and that's what actually I had.

She expressed her appreciation and gratitude for both her mother and her grandfather with whom she was very close. While her mother's assistance was instrumental, practical, and informational, her grandfather supported her financially.

Josephine: But what I now really can say from back then is; I was stupid and I don't know what I would've done without my mother.

Interviewer: Yes?

Josephine: Okay, my grandfather supported financially but, I mean, that which she knew, I didn't now know. How does one do this, how does one do that, how do you rub the winds out, what do you pour into the bottle if he's maybe a certain way or what do you do if it's like this, or if he's like that or his mouth, or what do you do. That sort of thing.

However, this was not the case for all mothers. Millicent, particularly, felt she had to carry the weight of motherhood by herself. She described having limited avenues of familial support when raising her first child, specifically from her own family. Due to unpleasant circumstances living with her brother, her mother having passed away when she was 16 years old, and a complicated relationship with her father; she had to rely on herself to care for her baby. She mentioned her first two children's paternal grandmother as a prominent source of

support and a big help in alleviating some of the burden characteristic of her motherhood experience particularly as she experienced postpartum depression.

- Millicent: Um um um my ex-husband's- just say my children's grandmother
Interviewer: Hm okay
Millicent: She was a lot more {pause} she always helped me a lot especially, when um Mike was born. When Mike was born, then Chris was on his way to primary, to primary school. And um we had just gotten out of the hospital and she helped me a lot because Chris still needed that attention. And I needed to give the baby attention.

That being said, she reflected on the lack of support she experienced with her first pregnancy and having to go to appointments alone. The father of her child was absent during this time owing to them ending their relationship.

- Millicent: ...And appointments you have at the clinic and afterwards- you're *alone*. The father of the baby isn't there with you to hold your hand, you don't have that support of- It's all those *difficult* steps that you have to go through.

The presence of support was noted by some of the women to offer some alleviation of the tasks and responsibilities of early motherhood. This support was present in different forms and believed to have aided the mothers in managing the load of motherhood. While assuring that the bulk of the burden in terms of mothering and providing for their children were carried by themselves; women mostly acknowledged the help and support they did have in the beginning of their motherhood journey.

Support has been consistently highlighted within the literature into young motherhood as a protective factor which can aid in buffering against negative parenting outcomes (Amod et al., 2019). This support ranges and extends from family support, peer group support and within the community context (Craft et al., 2016; Huang et al., 2014; Mlotshwa et al., 2017). Amod et al. (2019) notes that there is relatively limited research focusing specifically on young mothers and their systems of support. I also found this to be the case when undertaking this research where most of the studies attempting to specifically address the supportive strategies implicating teenage mothers in South Africa were situated within the domain of HIV research. An exception was a study carried out by Malindi (2018) focusing on protective factors for young mothers facing the dominant negative long-term trajectory attached to young motherhood.

The development of research elucidating the function of social support within young motherhood has found that there are various types of support young mothers receive. The nature of this support ranges from differences in the source from which it is received and the manner in which mothers are supported in order to provide a degree of guidance or assistance (Denny et al., 2016; Matlala, 2017; Pillay, 2020). In many cases of young motherhood, particularly in a low-income setting, young mothers lack sufficient resources such as finances and time for childrearing while still attempting to finish school (Bearinger et al., 2007; Naidoo et al., 2021; SmithBattle, 2007). Thus, their mothers will often fulfil some parenting obligations. This type of support has been demonstrated to have positive associations with young mothers' mental health and improved outcomes (Denny et al., 2016). The two other most important and direct sources of support for young mothers as found in the literature is the child's father and the maternal grandmother or grandmothers (Huang et al., 2014; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Pires et al., 2014). Erfina et al. (2019) found an existent relationship between the presence of various social support and the development of a positive maternal identity particularly relating to the transition stage of young motherhood.

This finding is reflected in the current data as many participants referred to the support they had received from their mothers. Maternal grandmothers feature as important sources of support in assisting with the upbringing of young children within the South African context. This has especially been noted for unmarried daughters (Madhavan et al., 2013). Furthermore, most of the women in our study were either residing with their mothers, where the property was under their mothers' name, or in a house owned by their mother while she lived at another address. This is another example of structural support provided by the maternal grandmother which also demonstrates a longevity characteristic of maternal support.

Additionally, women mentioned their reliance on the child's father as a source of support in some respects, especially during the period following childbirth. This again reflects the literature pointing to the child's father being an important direct source of support for young mothers (Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Pires et al., 2014). This was seen in different ways in our study where some women mentioned the child's father assisted financially, while others mentioned functional support in terms of providing accommodation. In addition to familial support, support garnered from friends and one's community has also been noted as beneficial to the well-being of young mothers (Wahn et al., 2005). This was reflected in Poppie's case as she described the significant support she had found in her close friend who was like a sister to her.

As we can see from the findings and the literature, there are different ways in which support can be extended toward young mothers which comprises of financial, functional, informational or emotional support (Denny et al., 2016). The spectrum upon which support is offered to young mothers was exhibited in the current study in terms of financial support from partners, functional and knowledge support from their own mothers, and emotional support from friends. Erfina et al. (2019) states that for effective support to be offered to young mothers regarding the transition into motherhood, the experiences of young mothers themselves throughout the process of motherhood should be examined. This is specifically important for cultivating positive long-term outcomes for young mothers (Sheeran et al., 2015). While we have not spoken to the women in our study at regular intervals throughout their motherhood years, our study has allowed us to speak to women who have been young mothers themselves and lived through the early motherhood years. As such, the sentiments of the women in our study somewhat reflected Erfina et al. (2019) statement when they shared about the importance of support in various ways in their personal lives and how it has helped some in a positive way over time.

5.4.2 Religious practices

A second way in which a large majority of the women appeared to cope was through religious practices such as prayer and utilizing their faith as a source of hope and comfort. While not explicitly stated as a means to cope by all participants, it was observed in the women's rhetoric in relation to other topics discussed. The use of religious practices as coping mechanisms was most prominent in Nathalie and Poppies' narratives. Nathalie related how she employed prayer in asking for the strength to forgive her ex-husband, as well as when she found herself facing feelings of uncertainty and concern at witnessing her son's pain following the divorce.

Nathalie: And {pause} it was a very difficult time for him but, um when I started realizing but, um, I will have to forgive the father so that my child can get better.

Interviewer: Yes

Nathalie: And I asked the Lord; Lord just help me, that we can just get out of these circumstances and the Lord heard my prayer and my child was healed, he was healthy. He communicated much better with friends {inhales} with the help of the psychologist he saw.

Nathalie also recounted looking to God for strength in overcoming generally challenging moments.

- Nathalie: And then I just always prayed and said, ‘Lord, just help me, just *keep* me on the path so that I can just be there for my children and {pause} the Lord carried me through and, and
- Interviewer: Yes
- Nathalie: Until He opened my, my eyes and changed my way of thinking and {pause} I could forgive their father.
- Nathalie: Today, I can say that a person {pause} you cannot build your life without God.

Poppie continuously referred to God as her source of strength and provision. She attributed her ability to overcome challenging circumstances in the past to God. For Poppie, her faith was a source of encouragement and comfort. As she reflected on the many difficulties of her past, she viewed overcoming these obstacles through a lens of faith.

- Poppie: So then they look’d and the’ saw but it’s the, it’s an infection in the intestines. She’s also made it through a lot of things. She’d also already had an operation when she was {pause} three months old. Then she had an operation for her intestines {inhales deeply} But the Lord carried us through all of that and it was a difficult time for me but {pause} when I was at the hospital, I didn’t struggle with things {pause} I really didn’t have- I also didn’t work that time - I really didn’t have the means to, to buy things for myself but the Lord always sent in someone that now also came to have a child and then we became friends.
- Poppie: As I see it *now*, if I think back to it now, then all I can think {inhales} then all I can think is, it’s no one other than the Lord who helped me during that time.
- Poppie: Look for example, I’ve been praying a long time now for work. So {pause} it’s *difficult* for me to to to {pause} keep my eyes focused on Him. But then there come times when He again comes *through* for me like with...where He maybe {pause} we don’t struggle this week with something to eat and then {pause} then, then it again proves to me that He *is* there for me and
- Interviewer: Hm he sees you
- Poppie: Yes

She often mentioned prayer as a means of coping amidst difficult situations such as an operation that needed to be performed on her son as an infant.

- Poppie: And um {pause} when, when the Sister now took him {pause} and went there into the room where they now did the emergency operations and so on. Then I went out and I prayed and I asked the Lord to carry my child through.

Joey expressed the same sentiments of faith and used prayer to cope when feeling discouraged and hopeless over current obstacles or difficult circumstances.

- Joey: We keep- we, we have hope. We pray, we {pause} then pray to a living God so we accept that things will one day become easier for us {inhales} So they're positive together with me. So, it's not; I can't lose heart now.
- Interviewer: Can I ask what gave, what um {pause} gave you, what gave you that push? What gave you, like, the strength to go on?
- Joey: I don't know {pause} To tell the truth, Sinead, I just started praying more.

Blondie described her gratitude to God for the circumstances in which she was currently able to raise her children. Coming from an abusive home where her father was the perpetrator of the abuse, she shared her thankfulness for the current life she had with a husband who loves her and her children.

- Blondie: It wasn't a pleasant experience to grow up like that {pause} but, I *pray* every day, I say thank you to the Lord that I don't raise my children like that.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Blondie: I am married to a very wonderful man. We, he *can't* now give me the moon, sun and stars but he loves me and my children. So that for me is {pause} really a great, great miracle that the Lord has blessed me with after all my struggles {laughs}

Millicent mentioned praying to God for a long life so that she would be able to witness her children growing up. Having lost her mother at a relatively young age, these sentiments appeared to stem from concern and fear surrounding her premature departure from her children's lives. As such, it appeared prayer was utilised to provide a sense of comfort and assurance.

- Millicent: Now I want my children- I ask the Lord that {pause} the day when I have to close my eyes, that they must be at an *old* enough age, that they can for themselves, {pause} be able to stand on their own two feet.

The research regarding the impact and influence of religion is concentrated within the area of risk and protective factors in leading up to teenage pregnancy and yields mixed results in terms of negative and positive influences (Chung et al., 2018; Yakubu & Salisu, 2018). One area in which religion has been associated with being a risk factor for young pregnancy is through the vehicle of early marriage (Neal et al., 2015; Parsons et al., 2015). Within certain

religions women can be forced or co-erced into an arranged marriage at a young age. In this instance early pregnancy is perceived as morally acceptable despite the associated health risks and/or personal choice of the mother (WLUM Laws, 2013). This can be somewhat likened to the manipulation of young women by older men within disadvantaged socioeconomic communities where gender inequality is rife, and thus, a transactional marriage is appealing to young women owing to the financial support and provision it confers (Singh & Naicker, 2019). Women are often expected to be the ones who care for the child at home thus restricting their educational opportunities and by extension economic agency and independence (Amod et al., 2019). Religion has also negatively been associated with determining the degree of support garnered from the surrounding community. Religious beliefs of the community can lead to negative reactions toward and treatment of young women owing to the moral regression they represent. Lastly, the restriction of certain sexual discussions as taboo because of religious beliefs can augment instances of early pregnancy and/or judgement and ostracization toward those who do fall pregnant as a teenager (Amod et al., 2019; Mkhwanazi, 2014; Malindi, 2018; Thobejane, 2015).

In contrast, another argument has been made for religion as a protective factor since having no affiliation with religion whatsoever may also contribute positively to early pregnancy (Haragus, 2011; McKinnon et al., 2008). This may be the case because of the lifestyle practices encouraged by various religions such as abstaining from sex before marriage. Thus, young women belonging to a religious group adopt these same values and in so doing remove the risk of early pregnancy. As such the literature concerning the role religion plays in young motherhood whether negative or positive, appears to be largely descriptive as opposed to explanatory.

One study found noted the value of religious practices and beliefs mentioned by young mothers in acting as a source of enablement whereby prayer and deriving purpose for their lives. This was employed by current young mothers to cope with the demands of motherhood and school (Malindi, 2018). While not identical to participants in the aforementioned study in terms of their stage of motherhood, this study demonstrates the comfort participants gained through adopting religious practices to cope with feelings of being overwhelmed and helpless surrounding the challenges of motherhood presently. Research which attempts to elucidate the multiple ways in which religion may impact and be associated with young motherhood, both negatively and positively, is lacking particularly owing to its inclusion in much of the research

addressing factors associated with young motherhood (Chung et al., 2018; Mkhwanazi, 2010; Parsons et al., 2015; Thobjane, 2015; Yakubu & Salisu, 2018).

5.5 Meaning of motherhood

The women were asked what being a mother meant and has meant to them throughout their motherhood experience over time. Meaning was obtained and interpreted in various ways throughout their personal motherhood journeys. This appeared to intensify most profoundly when the women reflected on their journey from young motherhood to how they view, and where they find themselves presently. Two of the women had witnessed the completion of their first child's matric year, which was expressed with pride and joy over having raised them to this point. Other women reflected on the personal changes they had witnessed in themselves as becoming more self-assured and confident. With that, the difficulties participants still found themselves facing in having taken up the role of mother at an early age were not remiss.

Thus, in this section I will discuss the various ways in which these women have framed and given meaning to motherhood for themselves. It will be shown how motherhood is understood and experienced in a variety of ways while there are certainly common experiences – maybe particular to this specific social and cultural context.

5.5.1 Motherhood as duty and responsibility

All the women in this study, either directly or indirectly, emphasized responsibility, obligation, and duty as being inherent to motherhood. The various tasks of motherhood in caring for and raising one's child was understood to be the responsibility of the mothers themselves. Motherhood was conceptualized as a duty constituting certain practices and ideals. Thus, certain ways and certain beliefs with which children should be brought up were salient. This responsibility was taken seriously by the women who felt obligated to ensure their children grew up to be respectable and assured individuals.

Underlying this narrative was the notion of this being the mother's obligation in having given birth to her child, and therefore, could not be opted out of. Her obligation to the community, therefore, was to raise her child well, while her obligation to her children was to teach and provide for them. Pressure to fulfil and uphold these duties and responsibilities often seemed to accompany this.

Joey spoke about practical responsibilities of motherhood in terms of her duties to fulfil. She described the childcare arrangement between her and her first child's father. She referred

to caring for her child in the way that only she specifically can, as her motherhood duties. Her commitment to schooling and motherhood is showcased here.

Joey: So, the father physically looked after him and then it's now his father's parents {inhales} who looked after him. So, when I now used to come back from school then I would take over my basic mothering duties

Millicent's words indicated the obligation of motherhood to care for one's child. The provision of financial and physical care was viewed as a duty that must be fulfilled. She reflected on the weight of this responsibility which appeared to be daunting for young mothers.

Millicent: But when I fell pregnant, then I couldn't now go do that, and I had to go and work around that time {pause} of my pregnancy; I had to go work in the factory. Just to get some baby things together and prepare myself now for the baby. It's really a lot of responsibility.

She further elaborated on the notion of duty and obligation by stating that the mother was required to care for her own infant and could not simply abandon this task.

Millicent: I had to look after my own baby, I had to {pause} that which I wanted to do; I had to with my dancing if I wanted to go dance {pause} You can't, you have a baby. Who's going to look after your baby? You must look after your own baby. You, you should have thought of that BEFORE you um {pause} what do the grown-ups say- we, we speak very wild, us grown-ups.

Interviewer: Yes? {laughs}

Millicent: You should have thought before you went and slept

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: With a man. You should have thought about that. You can't now want to go leave and {pause} go leave and dance. Who must look after your baby? Here's your dance lying, here's your baby; you can't dance now.

Poppie mentioned the necessity of being responsible as a mother. This could be framed as an obligation to one's children especially in the instance of young unplanned pregnancy. Poppie encapsulated this idea that her children were brought into the world as a result of her behaviour, and therefore, she had certain duties she needed to fulfil in caring for them.

Poppie: I was very {pause} a lot of the time very irresponsible and now I'm, I'm more responsible because {pause} they, they didn't ask to be here and {pause} I have to be responsible for them, for the two of them.

Blondie recalled young motherhood when it was just herself and her daughter. She mentioned her affinity for spoiling her daughter as she was her first and only child at the time. In this way, Blondie appeared to have tried her best to provide for daughter as a single mother.

Blondie: I just bought everything that I could buy for you because {pause} you were my only child. So, SHE was literally {pause} the, the Queen, the princess

Interviewer: Hm {laughs}

Blondie: Let me put it like that, because she got *everything*

However, she modestly maintained that she simply tried and continues to try her best to be a good parent to her children.

Blondie: Yes, but I won't, I won't; I'm won't say I'm perfect {pause} not at all. It's just a thing of {pause} yes, I try to be a good parent.

Josephine's description of what motherhood meant to her displayed the important role of a mother as a source of comfort and security for her children. Thus, she framed the mother as a firm foundation upon which her children depend.

Josephine: *Yes*. So, for me, motherhood is something um very deep. Deep {pause} and {pause} I think it's one of the most important things. Because look, children who grow up without a mother; it's not nice. Or the mother now dies

Interviewer: Hm, it's so sad

Josephine: It's sad because that steadfastness that was there is no longer there.

Josephine: For a, for a child, if someone hits you: 'I'm going to tell my mother now'

Interviewer: Yes {laughter}.

Josephine: It's not: 'I'm going to tell my daddy'. When you get hurt its '*Mummy*, or it's; like that. You never hear 'Daddy' or whatnot being called for there in my house. It's just, 'Mom! *Mummy*

Another responsibility discussed by participants was teaching children about being responsible. Joey suggested there are certain things one should teach one's children indicating the responsibility of motherhood through sharing knowledge with and raising your children well. Her excerpt suggested that one can fail in this duty of motherhood where the weight of one's children's failure is carried by the mother.

- Joey: So, one must share these things with your sons because {inhales} I mean because it then won't be nice for me to see or to think that you put in all that effort and energy
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: To raise your boys so nicely and then, there suddenly something happens. How will you feel as a parent?
- Interviewer: Hm
- Joey: You're going to feel you've made a mistake in life. Because where did you go wrong raising your child or wherever. Understand? But like I said, I just have to stay positive {pause} and put in where you have to or are able to.

The use of the word 'have' indicated some form of obligation that needs to be fulfilled. Nathalie described the responsibility she had as a mother to prepare her daughter for important physical and emotional transitions. Her words of caution to her son regarding having a child implied the obligations that would arise with being a parent which would implicate his current aspirations.

- Nathalie: You're going to have to take responsibility {pause} *and* then you won't be able to achieve the dreams/aspirations which you currently have as a young person because {inhales} as soon as you have a child, your mindset and, and everything in your life will change.

This was stressed by her sentiments that she remained their mother and therefore, they had been entrusted to her care and responsibility, a task that needs to be met with reliability and consistency.

- Nathalie: And you're their mother so {pause} they're yours, they're in your care {pause} you have to stand firm and secure
- Nathalie: Then she's now {pause} eleven years old and because I am helping her adjust {inhales} and it happened with me; so I thought I must prepare her.

Blondie expressed what it meant to her to be a good mother. This could be summarized as being an available and caring mother who made time for her children and continued to show up for them. Furthermore, she mentioned the importance of communicating one's love for them.

- Blondie: {inhales deeply} To *me* what it means to be a good mother {pause} is just to be there for your children

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: To {pause} look one can't *always* but {pause} if you can, to give your children a hug every day. To tell them how much you love them every day. *What* you think of them and what you expect from them. *But* you can also always include a little something about, you don't *have* to try to be the best, to *always* have to be the best

Shielding and protecting one's children was another core duty of motherhood. Joey emphasised the importance of being strong for one's children. Thus, motherhood required of her that she did not show weakness in front of her children. Her duty as a mother was to be a strong foundation on which they could rely.

Joey: I'm not always strong but I, *in front* of my children I make sure that every day I, they believe that that I *am* a strong woman so.

Being a role model for your children and setting an example was another component of motherhood that was identified as a duty that the mother must fill. Millicent spoke about the importance of her influence noting that her children would look to her to model their behaviour. Thus, she was indirectly responsible through her behaviour for her son's treatment of others.

Millicent: A lot of the time, then it's also about respect and discipline

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: It's about how *you* treat your children, how you treat your husband, how you treat *other* people

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: Because your children look up to *you*.

In addition, Millicent framed her performance as a mother from an alternative vantage point. By referring to a display of strength in front of her sons, she put on a type of performance with their benefit in mind. This related to how they would then observe and model her behaviour.

Millicent: Because I must be able to show them that I am very strong. Because if I {pause} go sit there in a corner, then they will also begin to think but

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: Why, why is it like that {pause} Then they, then *they* also feel but that which they are going to do in life, it *must* just now be like that.

Poppie mirrored Millicent's thoughts when describing the importance of modelling behaviour for one's child. She cautioned against failure to recognize the influence one's behaviour has on one's children. In this way, a mother was obligated to be a good role model as her behaviour was believed to impact on society through her children.

Poppie: And {pause} but its, it's also not easy to raise a child because um {pause} you also always have to pay attention {pause} to what you're doing in front of the child or along those lines because, so that on the path ahead it doesn't um {pause} how can I now put it; it can {pause} it can be against you on the, on your path because {pause} Like, like um they do experiment with a lot of things in life.

Josephine further went on and described the importance of influence one has in this role, and the obligation that comes with it to teach your children right from wrong. Thus, one needs to be a good example for them, as well as lay the right foundation on which they can build.

Josephine: I'm not um {pause} that type of strict that my grandpa was where it was just strict-strict; you're not going anywhere, door gets locked, you must stay there, or you're grounded or what not, but {pause} it's just that I speak sternly with them when it comes to manners and so on

Josephine: You can know your place, especially with life being so all over the place and so that they; I must actually lay the foundation for them so that they can know

Interviewer: Hm

Josephine: What are the right decisions and what is wrong.

Josephine also referred to displaying responsibility in her own behaviour so that her children could learn from her and practice those same traits.

Josephine: What then happens now here at the house; I mean, one must be responsible so that your children can learn that same responsibility too.

Nathalie also conceptualized the duty one has as a mother in terms of disciplining one's children well. She previously mentioned the importance of teaching one's children to have respect for all individuals. Thus, it was expected that by fulfilling these duties, a mother had fulfilled the requirements entailing motherhood. In this way, one aspect of motherhood was understood as a fulfilment of certain predetermined responsibilities and obligations.

Nathalie: To see my children grow. *Yes*, how one disciplines and, and {pause} to keep them on the right path.

While Josephine mirrored desiring the best for her children, she also stated the importance of discipline in one's role as a mother.

Josephine: A good mother is someone who gives everything for her children or does {pause} and {pause} like, like we now spoke about; I think the majority of the answers are included in there. I mean, you just want the best for your children, and I think a good mother is one that also disciplines a child.

Poppie's statement here encapsulated the notion of motherhood being synonymous with responsibility. As a mother one was automatically held to a higher standard which constituted various duties and obligations.

Poppie: Now, I won't just do something that's irresponsible without thinking because {pause} I'm now a mother.

Blondie enthusiastically noted the importance of a mother performing how a mother should. This was summarized in her statement which disparaged mothers who shifted their responsibility onto their child.

Blondie: *You* are responsible for your child, not your *child* for *you*.

The understanding was that a specific role of responsibility and duty needed to be fulfilled by the mother. This was a core tenet of what constituted the meaning of motherhood.

Lastly, Josephine likened mothers to the captain of a ship, responsible for steering their children in the right direction and acting as the focal point for them. This implied both the duty of the mother in steering her children successfully along life's path and the obligation that came with taking up the role of mother or 'captain'.

Josephine: So, I could say the mother is, so to say {pause} almost like a ship. She's probably the captain.

Interviewer: Hm no that- I love that

Josephine: Or whatever, but she's the leader, is more what I wanted to say

In the literature exploring the positive traits exhibited in young mothers, a heightened sense of responsibility has been reported as being salient in mothers' narrative (Amod et al.,

2019; Clarke, 2015; Chohan & Langa, 2011; Pogoy et al., 2014; Santos, 2012). By way of contrast, this has also been framed as an increased burden of responsibility that falls on young mothers' shoulders when making the transition to motherhood (Erfina et al., 2019). This appeared to reflect the positions of the women in the current study in coming to frame motherhood as a responsibility and duty to fulfil over time. As exhibited in a study by Coombe et al. (2019) their role as a mother was positioned as foremost in relation to other responsibilities which translated into an intention to always perform at their best. Furthermore, modelling good behaviour and being a role model for one's children has also been described as an aspiration of young mothers (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2014; Hoggart, 2012; Malindi, 2018; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

While not necessarily negative, mothers placed a demand on themselves to carry out the array of obligations they had in embodying their role of mother and in so doing demonstrating a strong commitment to their children (Sniekers, 2019). Motherhood was understood to be a social duty constituting certain tasks and expectations for which the mothers were responsible and could not fail to carry out (Shloim et al., 2019). This could be reflective of hegemonic ideologies which maintain the mother as being primarily responsible for childrearing leading to elevated pressure felt by both young and older mothers (Dow, 2016).

5.5.2 Power, control, and agency

The participants' awareness of the huge responsibilities they had as mothers led to a sense that they did have power and control, over their children, their children's behaviours, and the outcome of their children's lives. This led to a sense of agency, which was starkly in contrast to the feeling of helplessness surrounding their circumstances. Agency can be understood as inhabiting the belief that one's life plans are under one's own control and acting on that knowledge to create a life reflective of one's ideals (Hemmings et al., 2013; Madhok et al., 2013). The concept of bounded agency attempts to encapsulate the navigation and intentional regulation of daily practices and experiences of individuals as a form of assertiveness in exerting power and control over the direction of their lives (Sniekers, 2019). Where most of the mothers were experiencing unemployment, financial strain, and difficulties coping with the present challenges of motherhood, they were able to derive a sense of control and power through being entrusted with the task of managing their children's lives. In this way, they were able to exercise and develop agency in an area of their lives which countered feeling powerless in others. This was exhibited in Millicent's case wherein she derived a sense of control by exerting authority in her children's lives.

Millicent: You feel as if there's someone listening to *you* and not you now having to listen to someone else, because there's someone beneath you who must obey your commands. You feel as if you've – let's say – in *that* moment {pause} you're *still* a child but you feel big and you feel you're an adult because how else

Interviewer: Yes {laughing}

Millicent: Because you {laughing} Ooh you can, it, for me it almost feels like um {pause} yes...She or he, or she must now just- I've said you're not allowed to do that and you; it's finished. So now if you don't {pause} if you go *against* those rules, then you get a hiding. So for *me* it feels as if I'm {pause} I'm still young but I'm a mother. I feel big, I can overcome everything because *my*, my my- um what I say is law.

Millicent seemed to have derived a sense of achievement and confidence from the outcomes of motherhood over time. This was evidenced in her description of her capability to have navigated motherhood until presently. She demonstrated self-efficacy and agency in framing motherhood as something that one can decide the outcome of and insisted that what you made of the experience was important. Thus, she demonstrated her agency through the manner in which she mothered and made a decision regarding what she intended to gain from her overall experience.

Millicent: So um...yes, that is- it's, many times it's; motherhood isn't actually really {pause} it, it really costs someone {pause} a mother to {pause} I'm- everyone can be a mother. Everyone, every woman, can be a mother but it depends on you what you want to make of it.

Millicent: Yes. You feel um you feel like you can get everything right.

She continued to describe how her experience of motherhood had made her a better person. She noted that a strong will was crucial especially when one is young. Through taking up the role of mother, it appeared she gained a sense of power and control which she implemented in certain areas of her life. This stands in opposition to the implied lack of control she experienced as a young woman facing many temptations.

Millicent: For me it uh it made a much better person out of me because the temptation is strong and {pause} it's, you must have a strong will if- especially if you're young. You're still inexperienced regarding having men in your life {inhales} It, it really, it takes *a lot* from, from {pause} especially from a woman.

Nathalie exhibited agency in fulfilling her desire to complete her matric certificate. It is interesting that this was following her divorce which may have evoked feelings of powerlessness. Yet, she was able to take control of and exert agency in an area of achievement which she felt strongly about.

Nathalie: And {pause} and I never thought about completing it but {inhales} when the time for my divorce came and I got divorced; probably about a year or so thereafter, and then I realized but {pause} did that now actually hold me back because I feel I want to *finish* my um matric now

Interviewer: Yes

Nathalie: And {pause} and then I did.

Interviewer: Ah great

Nathalie: I finished up my matric about three years ago.

Overall, she demonstrated contentment with what she had achieved till now and exhibited a sense of pride and belief in herself for what she had accomplished. She appeared to have gained empowerment from her role as a mother which gave her confidence regarding new potential possibilities or avenues to explore.

Nathalie: I feel very happy in that which I've achieved, in that which I still *can* be, can do

Interviewer: Yes

Nathalie: And I feel very, very satisfied with that.

Joey also expressed feelings of pride in herself for what she had accomplished in bringing her and her sons together as a family. Her strong desire to have both her sons living with her led to agentic action and in so doing she was able to gain a sense of satisfaction and empowerment in witnessing her efforts come to fruition.

Joey: And I feel- *Yes*, I actually feel *a lot more* proud of myself

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: That I began to accept responsibility to say but I want to have *my* children with *me*

Interviewer: Yes

Joey: And they must grow up under *my* roof.

Joey later shared that she felt as if she had gained a sense of control through motherhood and appeared to be content with the place in which she found herself, which was what she'd

always wanted. She demonstrated agency in having taken action to achieve the outcome she desired, and ultimately achieved.

- Joey: Do I feel empowered?
 Interviewer: Yes, do you feel um as if {pause} like, yes, do you feel more as if you
 Joey: Are in control?
 Interviewer: Yes {pause} if you can put it like that
 Joey: Yes, I do {pause} Yes, I am in control and it's, like I said, it's what I've wanted all this time.

Still, Joey asserted that she had pursuits yet to be realised. In the interview she mentioned her love for drawing and designing clothes. She seemed eager to clarify that though she still had unfulfilled aspirations, this did not mean she was regretful or ungrateful for her children. Her agency was displayed in her assertiveness regarding this point.

- Joey: That's how I feel as a mother
 Interviewer: Okay
 Joey: Not that I'm negative or something like that but there's things I still *want* to do.

Joey also stressed the importance of having goals for oneself. While she expressed her intention to study further, she seemed to be hesitant of going in the wrong direction. She implied that one should and could still have goals toward which one may be working, even after becoming a mother. I could see that she valued goal setting as an important tool and source of motivation for personal growth and development.

- Joey: And {pause} I plan to study further next year. I just want to go in the right direction.
 Interviewer: Yes ah yes
 Joey: And if you're not going to *still* set or make goals for yourself, you'll *stay* where you are. So, one must just now be a little positive.

Blondie explained how motherhood had given her confidence and contributed to increased courage in the face of otherwise intimidating situations or tasks. She described a shift that occurred when one is entrusted with a child to care for which can contribute to feelings of empowerment.

- Blondie: Yes. It is like that {inhales} I do because yoh sometimes then it feels as if you are so small and then
 Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: When you know that you are responsible for something and for someone...then you will {pause} with all your might and force you will take someone on who maybe wants to hurt you or your child.

Thus, she described how motherhood had shaped her for the better by making her a stronger individual. As a young woman, she tended to let people walk all over her. Motherhood, however, had led to her feeling more empowered and standing her ground.

Blondie: But {clears throat} yes, I, I can tell you that I've changed a lot. I've become much stronger

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: I don't let people walk *over* me {laughs}

Poppie was less forthright in her depiction of agency when addressing having to make choices for oneself in life which are not always easy. However, her reflections indicated individual agency in making tough decisions for the benefit of her children and their provision.

Poppie: It's not always diff- easy, the decisions which one does, makes in your life. It's not always easy

Interviewer: Yes

Poppie: But sometimes it's for, for *them* or for the sake of money, around which you make the decision.

Josephine demonstrated the value she placed on independence. While she had been willing to ask her mother for assistance, she maintained that if need be, she would have been able to make a plan herself. Thus, she appeared to take initiative as an agentic individual in her own life.

Josephine: 'Mummy, can't mummy help me with this or that' or so on but if it, if it isn't possible, then; it's it's a very – how can I now say it – I'm someone who, I like standing on my own two feet, like that.

In agreement, Blondie emphasized the necessity of being independent and exercising agency in this way as one is in control of one's own life as well as one's children's.

Blondie: And um yes {pause} but you must also try and stand on your own two feet so that you can be strong {pause} because you can't just be dependent on other people, because you must remember there is a child who is dependent on you as mother. So, you must try to stand on your own two feet.

The agency of young mothers has been prominently noted in the research exploring the possibility of more positive outcomes associated with teenage pregnancy (Pillay, 2021). This was reflected in South African as well as global studies where the agency of young mothers in desiring to take control of their life and be a role model for their children had been exhibited (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2015; Cense & Ruard Ganzevoort, 2018; Chohan & Langa, 2011; Clarke, 2015; DeSocio et al., 2013; Pillay, 2021; Santos, 2012; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

The mothers in this study, while still confined by the socioeconomical disadvantage of their circumstances, showed and exhibited agency in their daily lives. They did this through navigating and interacting with the various structures, contexts, and individuals they came across to intentionally and consistently direct their efforts toward the life they envisioned for themselves (Bordonaro, 2012). It appeared that the agency noted in young mothers can be developed and sustained in motherhood over time with the adequate support structures and coping mechanisms (Sheeran et al., 2018). This may be present along a continuum as opposed to being a static concept. Still, Cense and Ruard Ganzevoort (2018) show the challenges young women face when trying gain control of their own narrative agency in the context of “female dependency, individual responsibility and blame, and moral judgements” (p. 581). These challenges also appeared to extend to the older mothers of this study, particularly considering their classification as low-income South African women within the diversely, complex context of South Africa (Kruger & Lourens, 2016).

5.5.3 Resilience

The concept of resilience as previously stated can be described as the “process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances” (Masten et al., 1990, p. 426). Resilience was exhibited in the participants’ ability to navigate their daily lives thus far. Many of the women demonstrated resilience in having overcome multiple obstacles characterising young motherhood as well as navigating the challenges in their lives at present. This was typified in the participants’ motivation to do what must be done to provide for their children, as well as displaying a strong will in the face of financial and structural challenges.

However, sentiments of just having to be strong, and potentially toxic positivity raised concern for an over-reliance on individualised resistance and participants avoiding or denying ‘negative’ emotions by not fully processing their feelings as they arise. In this case,

individualised resistance refers to the concept that individuals should be able to overcome difficulties they experience out of their own sheer will while disregarding the nuance of social and economic impact on the lived context (Singh & Naicker, 2019). Toxic positivity reinforces this belief by maintaining that the admittance of ‘negative’ emotions or personal difficulty, is viewed as synonymous with weakness or failure (Jocelyn & Tennley, 2021). It was clear that women were still facing various obstacles and challenges today as an extension of young motherhood, which both exemplified their resilience and eclipsed it. Millicent shared that motherhood had led to a positive change within herself. She claimed her challenges both in young motherhood and recent years had fortified her inner strength.

Millicent: It makes you a stronger person for the things you have been through.

She echoed participants’ sentiments that her experience of motherhood had shaped her into a much stronger assertive women who refused to be defined by others’ actions or words toward her.

Interviewer: No really, yes, okay {pause} Okay, so would you say that it influences your life now?

Millicent: Yes {pause} it affects my life now because um I am much stronger having gone through it.

Millicent: So, I have to show them that I am {pause} *stronger*. I don’t, don’t let anyone get me down, I don’t let people say things to me or humiliate or {pause} whatever else.

As previously demonstrated, Blondie’s agency as well as resilience could be observed here. She asserted that one should learn from one’s mistakes and favour self-improvement. She spoke to practicing resilience through making an effort to overcome unpleasant circumstances.

Blondie: But {pause} I mean, one just grows. I always say, ‘One shouldn’t go from good to bad. You have to make better things out of your bad habits.

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: You cannot just um {pause} want to stay in those bad circumstances

Joey displayed her resilience in her self-motivation to push herself at times when she felt emotionally exhausted. She mentioned the heaviness of emotion that accompanied and continued to accompany the absence of her child’s father. However, she urged herself daily to put as much as she could into motherhood. Thus, her resilience appeared to be a daily practice linked to her coping mechanism of being positive.

- Joey: I don't know, you probably won't understand but it's, it was difficult for me emotionally
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: But every day I still gave myself {pause} just that extra *push* to put in a little more than I had to.

Joey spoke of developing responsibility and independence in her sons as the pressure of life's difficulties was inevitable. Yet, she referred to building resilience and how these circumstances also contributed to developing one's strength.

- Joey: So that's why *I* felt that *I* must just stand strong enough so that I can buy a bungalow for myself and get my child back with me. Fortunately, I cultivated that understanding in them to be *responsible* on their own *and* to accept how life pushes them {inhales} because um it actually makes a person stronger.

Nathalie recounted how the events of her life including those of early pregnancy and her divorce had all shaped the person she was today as well as made her stronger in the process. She beautifully described her past as a mirror through which she could look back on and learn from.

- Nathalie: It just made me a lot stronger because it taught me that um {pause} it was a mirror for me. I could
- Interviewer: Yes
- Nathalie: I can now look back in that and then I can say but {pause} those things which happened, happened. This is what {pause} *must* happen and, and just put it right... You just have to pick yourself up and move on.

She enthusiastically described the capability and inner resilience she believed was present in every individual to overcome difficulties.

- Nathalie: Because any person *can* {pause} You can grow and you can only become stronger. That which you feel is in your way, you *can* overcome.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Nathalie: You *can*; that, that bridge that's there, if there's a bridge, you can get over that bridge

The literature exploring the resilience of young mothers has gained much attention as a topic of interest in the last few years, particularly exploring the possibility of positive outcomes for young mothers and teenage pregnancy (Lévesque & Chamberland, 2016; Singh & Naicker,

2019; Zito, 2016). Resilience within young mothers has been put forward as protective or buffering factors for positive long-term outcomes as well as an output trait fostered in young mothers through the experience of teenage pregnancy (Pillay, 2021; Shea et al., 2016). Global as well as South African qualitative studies have reported teenage mothers as possessing educational and adaptive resilience in the face of adverse circumstances or the challenges of young motherhood (Anwar & Stanistreet, 2014; Clarke, 2015; Malindi, 2018; Mukuna & Aloka, 2021; Singh & Naicker, 2019; Santos, 2012; Sheeran et al., 2015). This resiliency was noted in the present study findings as women communicated their motivation and determination to change their current circumstances and pursue unfulfilled aspirations. Interestingly, their children have continued to be a source of resiliency and motivation as the years have passed causing them not to become discouraged regarding the challenges they have and currently face.

In qualitative studies which have explored young women's lived experiences of motherhood, women's resilience has been noted as an important trait influencing the experience of motherhood in a positive way (Malindi, 2018; Cherry et al., 2015; Singh & Naicker, 2019; Sniekers, 2019). Resilience was demonstrated in their daily life as they navigated the many structural and contextual inequalities inherent to their social, cultural, and economic spheres. While the resilience of women should be highlighted as this gives recognition to their agentic selves, this should not be at the expense of women's health and wellbeing (Singh & Naicker, 2019). As such it is crucial to give heed to the limits of women's individual strengths in the context of poor sociocultural and economic contexts (Kruger, 2006).

Thus, while the individual resilience demonstrated by the women in this study was evident, it should not lead to an over-reliance on individual mothers (Moletsane & Theron, 2017). The suggestion of a gendered understanding of resilience is proposed whereby the way young mothers negotiate and navigate their lives through accessing available resources should be investigated. This is particularly important for the development of resilience in young women who find themselves inhabiting a context rife with structural and gender inequalities (Moletsane & Theron, 2017). The effect of these structural inequalities characterized by economic strain was seen in this study as women remained entrenched in the structural contexts wherein, they had found themselves approximately seventeen years earlier.

Despite these limitations, they continued to display resilience and determination in the intended pursuit of their aspirations. This resilience could be framed as taking place through

significant social relations rooted within their families and communities (Singh & Naicker, 2019). An alternative view proposing resilience as a wider ecological notion broadens the focus to include the impact of inequitable structures in society on young women compared to the limitation of a narrow lens which overextends women's internal capacity and personal obligation (Hart et al., 2016).

5.5.4 Knowledge

This sub-category points to the knowledge and wisdom women have gained from the experience of mothering. Most of the women's narratives when reflecting on their experience of young motherhood in comparison to the present, contained sentiments that they had accumulated wisdom over time through the process of mothering. By sharing this they implicitly carried forward the notion that mothering is not simply an instinctual practice, but rather that knowledge is accumulated and deposited as time progresses. Most of the mothers found value in being able to share the wisdom that they had gained over time. Poppie shared how her present-day knowledge is the cumulative result of drawing from her experiences over time. Thus, she gained wisdom throughout experiencing motherhood.

Poppie: That I came to learn {pause} If one maybe still, if you still have a baby on a plan, then it's still different from if you have a certain type of plan because {pause} and if you, especially if you don't have work, then it's difficult to raise a child during this time. Because now today I know what he likes, how he {pause} what he struggles with in life and so on. I alone taught *myself*. Um she taught me some things and some things I taught myself.

She mentioned how she shares the knowledge and wisdom that she has accumulated through her experience of both motherhood and life overall with her sister and her brothers. Poppie identified this with being a mother to all, in that she was guiding them and giving them advice to better navigate their life experiences. It appeared motherhood was associated with having a wealth of knowledge not exclusive to motherhood practices.

Poppie: I'm actually a {pause} it feels to me that I'm just a mother because um my sister is now here by me and {pause} a lot of times she struggles with things – how she's changing in life – and then I must now explain: you're a young woman now and all that

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: And then it's now my brothers, the two of them. They don't go to my mother; they come complain about their issues to me and then I will now {inhales} I'll maybe now give them advice

This was also observable in Joey's statement. She referred to her inexperience during the beginning stages of motherhood. It could be argued that some degree of implied struggle belied her claim that she didn't necessarily find it challenging. As she mentioned, she still had a lot to learn then, which framed motherhood as more challenging in the beginning stages. However, the implication was that in attaining knowledge through her experience of motherhood throughout the years, some difficulties had been lifted.

Joey: Okay, in the beginning {pause} it wasn't; I wouldn't say it was difficult. I was definitely ignorant so I still had to LEARN a lot of things. Understand?

Blondie reflected on the knowledge she gained from her mother when caring for her first child as an infant.

Blondie: You- I didn't know about {pause} if the baby is sleeping, you must sleep
 Interviewer: {laughs} Yes
 Blondie: So, I had; afterwards my mom told me: 'No man-*leave* it. Don't clean the house if you aren't able to. *leave* it.'
 Interviewer: Hm
 Blondie: Don't make food if you aren't able to- leave it. When the baby sleeps, then you also go sleep.

She then went on to propose the exchange of knowledge that occurred when she was able to give her mother advice regarding marriage. This showed how knowledge and wisdom was shared across time and experiences, particularly relating to motherhood.

Blondie: Then I'll say no um {pause} and look, there are many times when I can also teach my mom something about the, about marriage especially.

Lastly, her personal experiences have allowed her to glean knowledge that could be shared with others besides her mother. Thus, throughout her experience of motherhood, she appeared to have been acquiring knowledge.

Blondie: Um I can now at least also give people advice
 Interviewer: Hm?
 Blondie: I can also speak from first-hand experience.

Josephine also reflected on how her need for her mother's knowledge when she had her first baby was no longer necessary with her second. This knowledge was fostered over time

and Josephine was able to apply and amalgamate both her and her mother's knowledge in the process of caring for her second baby.

Josephine: Tomorrow I'm not here or I'm not at the house, I'm at work or wherever; I don't know what's going on and, that's also how I learnt and then I again now taught her. And like, with David, my mother just came the day that we were at the house: 'Is everything okay? You know what's the story here'; then I said no it's alright, mummy can actually go. So, then she went because I now knew everything, I know how and what.

Like the others, Millicent felt she had gained knowledge from her experiences throughout the years. Thus, her knowledge had accumulated over time as she had migrated through various seasons. She shared how she was able to offer advice and pass on knowledge to her nieces who often came to her for it.

Millicent: It's from experience that you picked it up {pause} through the years. It's the *experience* that I picked up and you can tell other people

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: Where {pause} um a lot of the time – I'm making an example – a lot of the time, then it's my brother's daughters who will always want to come ask me for advice

Interviewer: Ah that's nice

Millicent: And I will be able to explain very nicely to them.

Later, she also referred to how she was able to pass wisdom on to her sons. Thus, the knowledge gained could be used as a tool to prevent her son from making the same mistakes she did. Her statement that she could not protect him from every hurtful experience in life except by offering him wisdom suggested that sharing knowledge can be viewed as a means that mothers in this study employed to protect their children from making the same choices they did.

Millicent: I can maybe give him {pause} *wisdom*

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: But I can't *protect* him at all times.

Millicent shared her excitement about having the opportunity to share knowledge with her youngest son. She enjoyed teaching her son and spending time with him by building and sharing knowledge. It was clear that this was something she cherished.

Millicent: I {pause} I adjust to how he is now and how- it has, it makes it {pause} it makes it nice and interesting

Interviewer: Yes

Millicent: For me it makes it- it makes my day

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: To keep them busy. For me it feels like I'm teaching them um {pause} much *more* at home.

Lastly, Poppie referred to the learning process that early motherhood was in terms of practically caring for her new-born infants. Thus, gaining knowledge occurred in the everyday mothering practices as an active and ongoing process. She spoke about having to learn that her son had to breastfeed in a specific way.

Poppie: On the one side it was a, it was alright and then on one breast, the other one {pause} sometimes it's alright, as I now learn that he must drink from me.

She proposed that there would always be things that one has to learn as a mother, whether young or older. In this way, she positioned all mothers at a similar level requiring the necessary development and attainment of knowledge through life experience.

Poppie: It doesn't make a difference if you become a mother at a young age and, or if you become a mother at an older age {inhales} If you're a mother {pause} there's lot of things that you learn if you're a mother

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: Which you didn't know if you now maybe haven't had children yet

The notion of gaining wisdom and growing in knowledge throughout the process of motherhood is not characteristic of the ideal discourses and societal view surrounding mothering as instinctual (Kruger, 2003; Shloim et al., 2019). Rather, one of the ways in which the mothers in this study contributed meaning to motherhood was through knowledge. In this way, it could be argued that knowledge may shape, impact on, and form part of the meanings attributed to motherhood by these mothers. Furthermore, Lévesque and Chamberland (2016) propose that knowledge is to play a part in promotive processes which are said to contribute to individual resilience. Promotive processes are described as “factors and processes associated with adaptive success, independent of risk or adversity exposure, in that an interaction with risk is not necessary” (Lévesque & Chamberland, 2016, p. 7). As with participants in their study, the women in this study had to overcome many obstacles and adversities throughout their motherhood journey over time. It was in going through this process, however, that they were able to acquire knowledge that could be utilized and reinvested in navigating the

challenges and demands of motherhood as they emerged over time (Lévesque & Chamberland, 2016).

Furthermore, knowledge and wisdom are commonly depicted as and understood to be characteristically found in mothers according to wider societal perception, a notion that can be argued to have been derived from the discourse of idealised motherhood (Shloim et al., 2019). While this may be the established notion perpetuated within dominant societal discourses, these women are shown to have acquired this wisdom through the learning experiences encountered as they mothered (Erfina et al., 2019; Sheeran et al., 2018). This was not an instantaneous transition which occurred upon giving birth but a process which shaped mothers over time. Thus, the attainment of knowledge was central to how mothers in this study attributed meaning to motherhood and drew a positive maternal identity therefrom.

5.5.5 Selflessness, sacrifice, and privilege

The necessity and inevitability of sacrifice for one's children's benefit was central to the view of motherhood within the present study. Furthermore, it was relayed that this sacrifice comprised of and should be exercised in a selfless manner while recognizing it for the privilege that it was. Thus, all the mothers reiterated the importance of putting their children first as a priority and desiring to provide them with the best life possible. In most cases this was expressed as desiring to give their children a life of greater opportunity than they themselves had had. Their children appeared to be their sole focus and acted as the main source of encouragement when they found themselves struggling to find the strength to continue considering various obstacles.

Joey made the argument that as a mother, your children should always be your first priority. Thus, everything else, even oneself should come second to them and their needs. She referred to her children as her everything and acknowledged the fact that they were powerless in deciding their existence.

- Joey: So, there are many things which you *must* {pause} move aside in order to put your children first and my children are my first priority. I don't know how their father feels about them
- Interviewer: Hm
- Joey: It- I don't actually give any attention to that but as long as I know my children are my everything
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: They didn't ask to be born.

Furthermore, Joey placed motherhood and selfishness at odds. Therefore, they could not co-exist within the intricacies of motherhood. She gave reference to a rebirth that needs to take place within herself before being able to step into the role of mother characterized by selfless sacrifice.

- Joey: I can't
 Interviewer: Yes
 Joey: Be a person like that anymore, like {inhales} I now have children that I need to think of so I can't *think* {pause} like that anymore or be selfish or whatever else.

She also described motherhood as being a privilege indicating that it is something to be thankful for, and yet maintained that it has its difficulties.

- Joey: Okay to be a mother is basically, it's a great privilege
 Interviewer: Hm
 Joey: ...It's not always easy

In line with this, she succinctly summarised the sacrifice that motherhood required of her. This sacrifice consisted of giving up activities which she could no longer take part in as a young mother. Her priorities now lay with her children, and thus required of her to sacrifice her youth.

- Joey: Okay um *my* challenge which arose uh arose out of my life as a young mother was that I had to give up a lot of things {pause} You can't enjoy a party like a young girl anymore, drink or go out because you know you now have a child who needs your attention first so
 Interviewer: Yes
 Joey: That that is now the first priority so.

For Poppie, she felt her sacrifice and effort were not appreciated by her children, which appeared to be quite painful for her.

- Poppie: But according to them; some days to them it looks; it's, I {pause} I don't {pause} it's like *that* {pause} it's- look then to me it feels they, they don't appreciate what I do

Below, Josephine encapsulated the traits of selflessness and sacrifice in her description of what constituted a 'good mother'.

- Josephine: There are many answers which I can give but basically it's, a good mother is someone who cares for her children; I mean {pause}
- Interviewer: Okay
- Josephine: Cares in the sense of {inhales deeply} you're always there for them, you care about them, you provide for them, you always think of them *first*, because if you don't think of your children first then I don't know.

She mentioned putting one's children first and focusing on their needs. Thus, a mother was meant to be selfless when it came to her children. Josephine seemed at a loss as to why a mother wouldn't automatically give all attention to her child. By implication, such an individual was painted as a 'bad mother'. By lamenting the many cases in which women were unable or struggled to have children, she positioned motherhood as a privilege to be cherished. As such, she believed this privilege needed to be appreciated and handled responsibly.

- Josephine: Very, very, very much. Because it's something precious. Because I think about um...women who {pause} I mean, who now can't have children.
- Interviewer: Hm
- Josephine: And then are now us who can, who have a lot; easily five, six. Then the children are neglected. And it's sad because {pause} why do you do that when there's a woman who is longing for a child. Who's been trying for years, I mean.

Millicent described a scenario to demonstrate the selflessness of motherhood. She mentioned receiving money for her birthday from her husband so she could get something for herself. She recounted how her first instinct was to scout articles for her sons.

- Millicent: I had my birthday now um the first of June. Okay, my husband gives me money; I must go buy myself something {pause} Okay, I'm in the shop but I don't see anything for me, at the moment I've seen nothing for me but I see something for my children, all three of my children. Because my children have- I *myself* see my children; I myself see my children in them. I put myself last and I; I'm rather not going to buy anything for me- I'll rather buy for my children.

This showed how Millicent's thoughts were constantly focused on her sons and their needs. She would have rather sacrificed her own wants to provide for sons' needs and/or wants. In this way, Millicent aptly captured the sacrificial selflessness of motherhood. Alternatively, she reflected on her first pregnancy and the many things which she had to give up. She described her pregnancy as having withheld her from certain aspirations she desired to pursue. In this case, she was required to sacrifice her youth to raise her child.

Millicent: And {pause} when I began, when I was still pregnant, it withheld me from young {pause} from living my young life, from that which I wanted to do and {pause} I had to just wait until my child is maybe three or four, and says to me ‘mummy, I am hungry’.

These two examples of sacrifice appeared to differ in tone. While the first was an apparent and welcome sacrifice, the second appeared to have been offered up begrudgingly. Thus, through the experience of motherhood over time, it could be reasoned that the sting of sacrifice had transformed to come to represent a token of motherly love. Josephine echoed Millicent’s view of sacrifice being characteristic of young motherhood when she described the diminished freedom that came with not being able to do as one pleases. This was presented as a key sacrifice in motherhood.

Josephine: You’re going to have to sit up with that baby, you’re going to have to do it, change your whole routine. Look you’re a fifteen-year-old; you go, you go out, you come when you want, you do what you want; you can’t go now anymore, you can’t come and go when you want to anymore because you have to sit the whole day with this baby or you must- I mean your whole, everything changes.

Josephine also described her captivation with her first child when he was born. However, she limited the intensity of this to a specific phase of early motherhood where she described him as being central to her life.

Josephine: Yes, um yes I think for me it was also like that especially in the beginning with Jesse. It was just everything is for my child, for my child. We’ll be at work then my friends will make fun of me; they buy chips and so on, then I’ll say no I’m going to take this for my child. Any type of thing is for my child. Then they say, ‘Everything is your child, your child; we don’t even know what you’re doing here or eating or what. Eat the chips’ or something like that. Then I’ll say no it’s for my child because just that, when I get home in the evening and I take something out of my bag for him, and that um {pause} expression on his face of my mom brought me back something. He’s already happy to see me but now I also bring him something and it’s precious and he’s still little. So that was for me um yes- I cannot say I feel the same as them {inhales} In the beginning one feels like that, yes.

The ideal of the self-sacrificial mother was characteristic of ideal motherhood discourses incorporating the concept of intensive mothering (Hays, 1998; Kruger, 2003;

O'Brien Hallstein & O'Reilly, 2012). This ideal represents the dominant societal view as informed by the ideal motherhood discourse of what being a 'good' mother entails and presents as (O'Brien Hallstein, 2017). Mothering at its core was understood to revolve around the sacrifice of self at all costs for the benefit of one's child (Kruger, 2003). Thus, in order to satisfy the requirements deeming one a 'good' mother, one needed to be exclusively committed to the mothering role (Ward & Wolf-Wendell, 2016).

Furthermore, this sacrifice was to be selflessly undertaken with the normative standards of good mothering being described as one who is devoted to her children and gains joy and fulfilment through her mothering role (Lanctôt & Turcotte, 2018). The underlying belief of ideal motherhood was reflected in the mother's insistence on their children being their first priority, and the importance of putting one's children first. This gave the impression that a 'good' mother was someone who should sacrifice all she could to maximise the benefit afforded to her children, and who was ultimately fulfilled by her mothering role (Coombe et al., 2019). This has been demonstrated in literature where young mothers were determined to make their children their first priority and positioned them as central to their efforts to make something of their life (Malindi, 2018).

Motherhood is often framed as a privilege with children being an undisputed gift. This is reflective of dominant western ideals of maternal sacrifice (Hays, 1998). This can make it difficult for mothers to express 'negative' feelings such as discontentment or anger for fear of being viewed as undeserving and ungrateful. Thereby she is automatically defined as a 'bad' mother (Coombe et al., 2019). Mothers are constantly inundated with messaging through media and society denoting what is considered 'good' and 'bad' motherhood. This undoubtedly leads to elevated stress and pressure as women strive to reach the ideal of the self-sacrificing mother which is largely perpetuated (Douglas & Michaels, 2005). This sub-category showcased the underlying existence of the ideal motherhood discourse as it informed and operated in these women's experiences of everyday motherhood. As such, the meaning of motherhood was conceptualized as selflessly sacrificing oneself for one's children's benefit in the lives and understanding of participants.

5.5.6 Performance

A key finding in the current study was the women's adurance to give their best as mothers. This was one of the characteristics noted in their descriptions of a 'good' mother. The women across the participant pool reassured me of their efforts to give their best for their

children in a variety of ways. It was evident that this was a means of communicating their care and concern for their children, as well as demonstrating that despite unfavourable circumstances, it was not for their lack of effort. Joey shared that her understanding of a ‘good’ mother was simply trying to do and give her best for her children every day.

Joey: I must actually ask my children that because I don’t know {laughing} I just actually try to do my best every day. I want to give them the life I never had.

Joey: I am educated. I don’t actually have the experience or the education behind my name but I know that as a mother I only give my best. So, I think I’ve matured a lot in my 34 years.

Joey also referred to the pressure of having to perform in all the aspects motherhood entailed, especially when she experienced difficulties or emotional exhaustion.

Joey: Sometimes {inhales} then it’s also so difficult to get to everything {pause} Motherhood is a very nice experience

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: But it’s also what you put in.

She continued to share that while motherhood was enjoyable, it was not without its challenges and therefore was contingent on the effort one put in as a mother.

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: With my money

Interviewer: Sho yes

Joey: But I’ll always try to cover them and to give them the best.

Nathalie’s account was similar. Her humble desire was to be the best mother that she could be to her children as well as desiring the best life for them.

Nathalie: Oh um {inhales} you know, hey {pause} I’ve always just wanted to be the best mother to my children

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: I’ve still always just wanted for him, always just wanted the best FOR them.

This was again echoed in Millicent’s sentiments of wanting to give her child the best. She expanded on this by mentioning her desire to give her children what she had never had.

Millicent: You are, you really want to live a healthy life, you want to give the *best* to your small baby. Oh that is what I {pause} for my children, I {pause} I really just want to give them the best, which I didn't know what it was like to have.

The desire of the women in this study to perform well in their motherhood role on their children's behalf was mirrored in the literature (Naidoo et al., 2021). The desire of young mothers to give their best in their newfound mothering role has been recorded as one of the findings in qualitative studies exploring young women's aspirations (Malindi, 2018; SmithBattle, 2007; Stapleton, 2010). This intention was clear through the commitment birthed from wanting to give their children a better life than they themselves had had (Naidoo et al., 2021). This was a common sentiment of mothers of all ages but particularly in the case of low-income women who desired more financial security and opportunities for their offspring than they themselves may have had (Malatji et al, 2020; Nkani & Bhana, 2016).

Furthermore, in motherhood, giving one's best effort for one's child's betterment was one of the traits presented as synonymous with being a 'good' mother and was praised. Whereas the failure to do so consequently designated one as a 'bad' mother. This was the case for the mothers in the current study who believed that modelling favourable behaviour was a means of ensuring that they were performing in a way that benefitted their children according to society's expectations. The act of performing in the best interest of their children was one of the ways the women in this study derived meaning from motherhood, as well as understanding to be integral to what motherhood entails. Thus, motherhood was conceptualized as a performance for which they would either be celebrated or shamed.

5.5.7 Development, growth, and maturation

For most women, the notions of development, growth and maturation featured prominently in describing their experience of motherhood over time, particularly the process of developing as a person in terms of emotional development and maturation. In this way, it seemed to encompass all the previous sub-categories. Related though not identical to the subcategory of knowledge, personal growth and maturation as a mother and as an individual was framed as an incremental and long-term process. Thus, this sub-category pointed to the transformation of the whole person that had taken place over time. It could also be interpreted as indirectly challenging the notion of motherhood as instinctual. Participants showed and reflected on the ways in which they had matured and transformed since first giving birth. In so doing they were able to navigate the current circumstances much better than in the past, and

more so, felt equipped to do so. The process of motherhood had, thus, resulted in personal growth and maturity as well as them feeling more confident in their abilities as mothers over time.

Poppie referred to the inherent wisdom garnered by an older individual compared to one in their youth. This was in response to whether she personally had encountered specific challenges exclusive to young motherhood.

Poppie: But like an older, an older person is now going to act more wisely than a younger person

Interviewer: Okay. So, you would say it's {pause} the, the immaturity

Poppie: Hm

Interviewer: Being a young mother, there's much more you have to learn

Poppie: Hm compared to if you're now {pause} already a grown, grown woman.

This hinted at the process of development and growth that also occurred for the mother during motherhood. Millicent described how she had changed over the years. She asserted that she had learned how to stand up for herself as well as developed a deeper understanding of life. She expressed her fondness for offering advice which was based on maturing as a mother over time.

Millicent: To the point that someone could say anything to me and I began to {pause} retreat into my own shell and {pause} I learnt to stand up for myself. Not for *me* but for my children's sake because they're the children who, they are the dependents who look up to me

Millicent: I feel {pause} that which I've made it through until, up until now; I am much stronger than that. I am *very* much stronger; I am much more {pause} how can one say it {pause} I have a greater understanding of what life entails. I can {pause} I can um let's say, I can, I *can* give advice

Interviewer: Yes?

Millicent: I like to give advice. I can be an ear to listen, I can {pause} I can, I am almost like a psychologist for others {laughs}

Blondie fondly recalled her past behaviour and implied growth to be a passive process that just happened with time. However, she did refer to the agency one possessed over one's own life when it came to making a change to one's circumstances.

Blondie: I got up to those things back then so {laughing} But {pause} I mean, one just grows. I always say, 'One shouldn't go from good to bad. You must improve on your bad habits.'

She went on to describe how she had learned much through various life experiences of which a central one had been motherhood. She expressed gratitude for the way in which these experiences had shaped and contributed to her growth.

- Blondie: They want to be awake *late* {laughs} But what I've learnt is {pause} in m- life – *Yes* I had my fun - I got up to enough mischief, you know?
- Blondie: But I mean, yes, I learnt a lot. And I'm actually quite grateful {pause} for all the things I went through because I wouldn't be the person I am
- Interviewer: And that's, I think, yes. If you can look back on what you thought of as your mistakes or along those lines {pause} and say, you know, you tried to do better {pause} that's all you can do.
- Blondie: It is like that.

Blondie displayed her strong agreement regarding learning from one's mistakes and making an effort to improve oneself. Upon reflection, she noted how with time passing she had grown stronger as a person through motherhood.

- Blondie: To, to think back now {pause} When I was a mother for the first time; I was literally {pause} you know, still a child, like I said to you {inhales} but with the years I became much stronger.

From Joey's perspective, she believed there was purpose in everything when alluding to the challenges and growth that she had experienced during motherhood. Despite having had difficult periods, she expressed that she could not picture life without her children.

- Joey: But I always say that everything in a person's life happens with a purpose
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: If I were to say now {pause} I cannot actually imagine life without my children.

Furthermore, Joey was confident of how she had grown in maturity throughout her years of mothering. Again, this somewhat gave validity to the developmental nature of motherhood.

- Joey: I will say that I've changed a lot. I became more mature. I am educated. I don't quite have the experience or the education behind my name but I know that as a mother I only give my best. So, I think I've become much more mature in my 34 years.

As such, she had no regrets as she believed that everyone had made mistakes. However, this could be framed as a learning process wherein she, herself, had to continually engage in, to grow.

Joey: But I'm not regretful

Interviewer: Yes

Joey: I mean a person makes wrong decisions in life {pause} or the choices that you make. I'm not sorry {pause} yes.

Joey: Yes, and a person {pause} yes and one learns from your mistakes {pause} It's just something you, *yourself*, have to come to terms with. Understand?

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: And that you try to avoid not making the same mistakes in your life over and over *again*

Development, growth, and maturation were mentioned by the mothers within this study as outcomes of their experience navigating motherhood over the years. Once again this contrasts with the message underlying ideal motherhood, which is that mothering is an instinctual process for all women and therefore, should come naturally to all women (Hays, 1998). Rather, the data demonstrates that motherhood has been a continual process of refinement and growth over time. Life experience was framed as something to be learned from while mistakes were not seen as fatalistic but as building blocks which when utilized correctly could lead to making better decisions in the future.

The women expressed gratitude and attached value to the processes which they had had to overcome in their lives, emphasizing the importance of these events in shaping them into a person whom they could be proud of presently. Due to the paucity of longitudinal qualitative studies exploring young motherhood in South Africa over time, this group's perception could not be compared to mothers who may find themselves in an identical position. One longitudinal study carried out by Sheeran et al. (2018) did note the importance of stability in young mother's lives in influencing the extent to which they can actualize their growth and development. Thus, the stability and availability of sufficient resources in young mother's lives across particular life domains have a significant impact on their personal growth over time (Sheeran et al., 2018).

The belief that everything happens for a reason belied many of the participants' narratives, demonstrating the comfort these women derived from the notion of divine purpose and/or fate orchestrating their lives. In this way the meaning of motherhood could be

understood as a process of learning, development, and growth for women of all ages through participating in the active process of mothering over time. This appeared to contrast with dominant societal discourses and ideals predominantly reflected in the literature which depicted mothering as effortless (Lanctôt & Turcotte, 2018; Tincknell, 2005; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). The South African qualitative literature documenting the lived experiences of young mothers over a period extensive enough to elucidate long-term outcomes and represent life trajectories of these women appears to be scant. Sheeran et al. (2018) argues that it is crucial to reveal the long-term lived experiences and outcomes of young mothers over time in order to better support them and aid in more favourable outcomes.

5.5.8 Motherhood as identity

While women were explicitly asked how their role as mother impacts on how they view themselves, this sub-category was implicit across other sub-categories. All the women in this study exhibited an inability to separate their identity from that of being a mother. Thus, the role of mother was upheld as a core identity. Even without meaning to, the women would resort to centring on their children's needs and wants as the main drivers of their schedules, action, and behaviour. Motherhood was represented as an all-consuming identity whether consciously or subconsciously. Joey described the emotional exhaustion she felt more so for her children than for herself. Her focus was on her children's emotional health and well-being which positioned them as the priority. Thus, Joey experienced her children's pain as her own.

- Joey: Toward my child. So {pause} actually it's, I feel – that's why I say – I feel more emotionally exhausted for the children's sake
- Interviewer: Yes
- Joey: Than for *myself*.

This extended to Joey's desire for a better job, house, and lifestyle in her efforts for financial security. While this statement reflected her own desires and aspirations, it also pointed to a core driver of these aspirations: her children. Her identity rooted in motherhood could then be seen as a key motivation encouraging this agentic sentiment. Thus, the desire to provide a better life for them was central.

- Joey: I want to have my own house, I want my {inhales} I want to have a better job. I want to have my own car so that I can be financially strong {pause} in order to provide for my children.

Nathalie asserted that once a woman became a mother, her identity as a mother was permanent and exclusive.

- Nathalie: For me personally, hey, as soon as a woman becomes a mother
 Interviewer: Hm
 Nathalie: {pause} She won't think of herself as anything other than as, as a mother.

She continued to describe the way in which her children consumed her thoughts. She once again reiterated the cemented nature of being a mother according to her conceptualization of the role. However, she argued that by implication, not having your thoughts focused on your children, disqualifies you from the role of mother. Thus, motherhood was framed as a persistent all-consuming identity.

- Nathalie: I don't think there's, I don't think there's any way that you can for *five* minutes or for, for a second of the day
 Interviewer: {chuckles}
 Nathalie: Can say but I am, I am {pause} I'm not. You are a *mother*. You are constantly a mother.
 Interviewer: Hm
 Nathalie: You think about your children all the time. Because it's just; if you don't think about your children then what are you thinking about then. Then it now means you're not a mother.

Poppie confined herself to being 'just' a mother as she described how she 'mothers' both her sister and her brothers by offering motherly wisdom and advice. She seemed to view herself as mother to all based on her experience of motherhood with her own children. In this way the role of mother overshadowed all other roles in her life.

- Poppie: I'm actually a {pause} it feels to me that I'm just a mother because um my sister is now here by me and {pause} a lot of times she struggles with things – how she's changing in life – and then I must now explain: you're a young woman now and all that.

Blondie shared her strong desire that she would rather spend time with her children as opposed to attending events without them, as this would mean being apart from them. In a way, she seemed to have displaced her womanhood with her role as a mother. Through her rhetoric, she indirectly implied that being a mother took away from her being a woman. She felt she was much more 'mother' than 'woman'.

- Blondie: I want to lie cozily with them. I {pause} would rather spend my time with them than I would {pause} like that kind of thing {pause} So I'm going to say I'm not much of a woman {laughs}
- Interviewer: Ah no man
- Blondie: I am, I am very much a mother {laughs}

She also described her paranoia regarding her children's whereabouts and activities. She desired to be ever-present and involved in their day-to-day lives. Her feelings represented an all-consuming rumination with her children. Thus, motherhood dictated her thoughts and actions showcasing the permeance of the all-consuming motherhood identity.

- Blondie: I can't *imagine*- okay {pause} a person also can't, a father may also do it but a *mother* is the prime caretaker. How can you just abandon your child like that? For me it's, it's no {pause} too much. I become paranoid if I'm at work and I can't get a hold of one of my children on their cellphones or something because I want to know what's happening in their lives.
- Interviewer: Yes
- Blondie: I want to know what you are busy with. What are you all doing? Um, have they already eaten? You know? To me it feels as if I am still at the house or I- even though I'm at my work, I want to {pause} I want to {pause} I want to know where {laughs} my children are every second, what they're doing, are they safe {pause} You know?

Josephine stated that the desire of every woman was to be a mother, reflecting the underpinnings of the ideal motherhood discourse. In this way, motherhood was presented as a supreme and ultimate identity (Kruger, 2003). She stressed that one should give anything that one could to raise one's child. Thus, while not explicit in her statement, the notion of a mother being solely focused on her child's needs was implicitly presented as integral to motherhood. Consequently, this would mean that the identity of 'mother' could be described as a core identity shaping all others.

- Josephine: Its, its, it's just not- {pause} and that's not what motherhood is about. You must {pause} Motherhood is about um {pause} every woman wants a child, or wants to be a mother. And when the child is there, you must give everything you have, or can, for that child. Attention, love, *everything*. That's what motherhood is to me.

Thus, even in instances where the mothers were challenged in asking how they viewed themselves apart from the role of mother, they struggled to place their identity outside of this

role. This extended even unto their own goals. Aspirations or feelings of accomplishment always appeared to be dictated by and situated within the framework of their children as first priority. Thus, every decision they made appeared in their children's best interest while negligent of their own. This all-encompassing nature of motherhood as an ideal and the role of motherhood had been investigated within the literature but research exploring the development and establishment of this identity over time particularly in the case of young mothers appeared to be absent.

The mothers in this study all appeared to fully embrace motherhood as their core entity, both in how they related to the world and in how they viewed themselves. Being a mother was presented as a fundamental identity which women could not remove themselves from once they had accepted this role and further, posed a threat to additional roles in their life. In this way, motherhood was cemented as central to women's identity as seen in an Australian study by Coombe et al. (2019). This is aptly reflective of the ideal motherhood discourse extensively debated and discussed in the literature (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2016). Mothers are expected to be consumed with and provide for all their child's needs before themselves, and the priorities of the children are encouraged as being most important (Douglas & Michaels, 2005). The notion of intensive mothering is situated within this ideal, which maintains that the mother should be constantly available, at the beck and call of her children, giving endless love and attention at the expense of her own energy and time (Hays, 1998). This concept of ideal motherhood was salient in the participants' reflections on young motherhood as well as their present rhetoric surrounding motherhood.

5.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to explore a group of past teenage mothers' subjective experiences of motherhood within in a low-income setting over time. The complexity and multifaceted nature of motherhood and how it influenced the women's self-imposed identities was evident from these narratives. There appeared to be commonalities throughout the practical challenges they had faced over the years when evaluating their experiences of motherhood. However, differences in their current realities approximately 17 years later were also evident amongst the women. The contextual challenges characteristic of a socio-economically disadvantaged setting such as gender inequality, gender-based violence and unemployment proved to have far-reaching effects which the women in this study were facing at the time.

The women's accounts reflected the complex relationship between the meaning of motherhood as informed by society and culture, and the development of women's personal meanings attributed to motherhood. While there was definite overlap between cultural and personal meaning, each woman appeared to have experienced being a mother in a variety of ways. However, it became clear that the underlying connotation of many of the women's narratives of a 'good' mother appeared to be informed by the ideal motherhood discourse. Women's experiences over time were framed by four key categories which were as follows: practical concerns and challenges, emotional experience of motherhood, coping, and meaning of motherhood. These categories reflected a transition from the practical aspects of motherhood as they developed into more profound insights gleaned from women's experiences.

What became apparent in the women's narratives was the distress associated with childbirth, the impact of presence and absence of the father, the tension of motherhood, everyday agency and resilience, and the value of support. This was reflective of the qualitative literature which addresses young motherhood both from a negatively orientated and optimistically orientated posture. Of interest, was an underlying sense of tension that was held in these women's stories as mothers. This was conceptualized as the tension of motherhood. This tension suggests that motherhood exists as a continuum as opposed to being a static concept. As such the women in this study appeared to express and hold space for joy and struggle in different ways throughout the various stages of mothering over time.

Each theme was presented categorically in order to present a detailed and systematic breakdown of the various processes and experiences shaping the overall experience of motherhood over time. This does not, however, indicate that these processes occurred independently in a vacuum but rather represents the complex interactions which occurred to shape women's experience of motherhood as they made sense of it at the time. Due to the multifaceted and complex nature of young motherhood as influenced by and interacting with multiple variables, this exploration of women's experiences intended to conceptualize and provide insight into the how these women have come to frame their experience of motherhood over time.

Chapter six: Conclusion

This study aimed to explore a group of past teenage mothers' subjective experiences of motherhood within a low-income setting over time. This was done in the form of a follow-up study comprising of a subset of participants who took part in the Women's Maternal Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) from 2002 to 2006. In the current study, this specific group of women were asked to reflect on their current and past experiences of young motherhood. The present section provides a summary of the objectives and main findings of the current research study. Thereafter the limitations of this study are examined and suggestions regarding future research are considered.

6.1 Aim and objectives of the study

A review of the research regarding young motherhood appears to show that there is a paucity of longitudinal qualitative studies which incorporate the voices of the women who form part of this demographic. While there has been a noteworthy development in the amount of qualitative research studies investigating the lived experiences of young mothers, particularly from a more optimistic perspective, the literature is in its early developmental stages and requires significant depth, expansion, and refinement. An example of this being the need for nuance regarding the specificity of spatial distribution data which would show the rates of teenage pregnancy across differing socio-economic regions and/or districts within various countries. This is particularly the case within South Africa wherein the economic discrepancy even within various provinces of the country is significant. Furthermore, the dominant tone within global research exploring early motherhood as well as in South Africa, tends toward a pessimistic stance regarding the long-term outcomes for young mothers.

As mentioned, in this study we aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of and insight into young mothers' subjective experiences of motherhood as time had passed. To accomplish this, the young mothers who were classified as teenagers in the original overarching research project (WMHRP) which investigated the psychological and emotional experiences of motherhood, were now followed up with approximately 16 – 18 years later. The objectives guiding the exploration of various aspects of women's personal experiences of motherhood included the impact of motherhood on their lives, their perception of themselves through mothering, their personal reflections and insights into young motherhood in comparison to the present, and the nature of their relationship with their children.

The study was theoretically informed by feminist social constructionism which was apt to validate the personal experiences of women while recognizing their unique sociocultural contexts (Ussher, 2010). Social constructionist Grounded theory, being in alignment with this, was implemented in the collection and analysis of data findings.

An array of emotions, perspectives and insights into motherhood were revealed in the data. From women's descriptions of motherhood as a young mother, it appeared there existed an underlying tension. This held tension was exhibited in the constantly merging and interchanging narratives of; struggle and overcoming, sadness and joy, uncertainty and empowerment, and helplessness and resilience. Furthermore, mothering in the complex social and cultural contexts the women had found and still did find themselves in, posed intricate challenges which these women had had to navigate, often without the support of their children's father. As illustrated in this study, the experience of young motherhood and motherhood over time was undeniably shaped by the socially constructed ideals and society's expectations of motherhood as well as the socio-economic environment the women inhabited.

This study, therefore, highlighted the multipart interaction of various factors which combined to influence women's experiences as young mothers over time. These women shared their experience of motherhood from a range of differing emotions and insights as they had evolved over the years in their role as a mother. This gives credibility to women's experiences of motherhood as expressed from their perspective as opposed to the majority of quantitative statistics-driven approaches which have attempted to investigate young motherhood thus far.

6.2 Summary of findings

This study allowed for the long-term lived experiences of young motherhood to be reflected on by women who had been young mothers themselves. The findings exhibited how the experience of motherhood has led to the transformative development of individuals through navigating this role. A consistent and enduring tension held within constant flux between the joy and struggle of being a mother was implicitly present in women's dialogue and reflections.

6.2.1 Mothers over time

The purpose of including a summary of the life stories of each women forming part of this study was done to showcase and cultivate a holistic understanding of the women's experiences as mothers over the time which had passed. As previously mentioned, this aided in giving a sense of fluidity to the constantly progressing nature of personal experience particularly in this context of exploring motherhood over time. This study's findings showed

the challenging circumstances these women have had to overcome throughout the progression of motherhood which appeared to be conceptualized as a refining process and had led to transformation in various aspects of their lives. However, it had not been without its challenges as was clear from the women's descriptions as low-income young mothers. The influence of community perception and attitude, socioeconomic difficulties and complex relationship dynamics emerged as the main areas which affected women's experience of motherhood in a negative way.

For research purposes, the totality of the women's overall narrative was broken up to focus on comparing and extracting the various influences impacting upon women's experiences of motherhood over time. In this way, the overall intent of the current study was to give credibility to women's individual and unique motherhood journeys while identifying shared or similar tenets relating to the experience of young mothers in challenging socioeconomic circumstances.

6.2.2 Practical concerns and challenges

The practical challenges relating to everyday motherhood were salient in the women's descriptions of their experiences over time. There appeared to be a sense of apparent continuity regarding the challenges accompanying motherhood as time had passed, while holding space for joy and purpose derived from their experiences. In this regard, there were similarities and differences in the challenges which ensued in young and later motherhood. The financial strain accompanying the responsibility of providing for a child was a prominent concern across each of the women's narratives. Equally, the experience of childbirth stood out in the women's descriptions as being characterized by traumatic and physically taxing recollections. This extended unto childbirth experiences succeeding the birth of the first child. Therefore, there appeared to be much angst surrounding the childbirth process owing to various complications. This may have been an emotionally charged experience inherent to motherhood which women believed they had to overcome.

The importance of the mother-child relationship dynamic was clearly important to all the women in this study. It became evident that the women desired to cultivate close and open relationships with their children in contrast to their own experience of childhood regarding discussions around sexual health and reproduction specifically. The women's approaches to discussing various topics such as finances, sexual health, and gender-based violence varied from being proactive to reactive. However, the sentiment of all the women to adopt a flexible

and open avenue of communication was apparent. The women were adamant to ensure and cultivate an environment of open discussion in their home. They seemed to have gained a sense of empowerment through actively changing the taboo narrative surrounding discussions about sex and reproductive health.

Furthermore, the involvement of the father was portrayed as a source of stress and anger for most participants owing to negative experiences with their first child's father. One participant described the positive relationship she had with her children's father as an amicable friendship. Some fathers in the study offered support to varying degrees and in various ways over time. The involvement of the paternal family in the cases of some of the women was of interest. This means of support included financial assistance, physical care, and provision of living accommodation. However, this was not the case for all women. The narratives of the women represent varying participation from the fathers of their children which has necessitated a sense of independence while simultaneously placing strain on mothers. For some this was improved by finding stability in new long-term relationships while others found themselves unconcerned regarding the father's involvement.

Interestingly, contrasting experiences of the community's attitude toward teenage pregnancy was found. Most of the women summarised this as mostly negative which led to feelings of isolation, shame, and low self-worth. Participants' experiences were characterized by stigmatization and judgement from within the community. However, two participants described the uplifting nature of the community's attitude toward them, which was said to have had a positive impact.

These practical challenges were noted as significant to the manner in which young mothers experienced motherhood and the recollection of those experiences appeared to have remained visceral for most participants at the time. As such, the practical concerns and challenges accompanying young motherhood over time seemed to have had a lasting impact on the experience of mothering as challenging for these women.

6.2.3 Emotional experience of motherhood

A range of emotions were apparent within the women's narratives, and appeared to occur across a spectrum. These emotional experiences seemed to be present both over time and encompassed within the day-to-day activities and responsibilities rather than being clearly demarcated to a specific period of motherhood. Participants painted a vivid picture of the complex and conflicting emotional states characterising motherhood through their accounts.

The overall narrative was coloured by a series of emotions ranging from frustration, anger and rage, to desperation, loneliness, and uncertainty. However, joy was interwoven with these expressive accounts of emotional turbulence.

Thus, while the apparent reality of motherhood appeared to be marked by times of struggle, participants seemed to maintain a likeness of inner joy reminiscent of the deep love they felt for their children. This sense of joy appeared to be derived from the meaning attached to mothering their children, although not explicitly stated. The emotion of joy could correspondingly be recognized in their expression of pride in their children and their accomplishments. Therefore, the women in this study appeared to have actively created joy through their efforts so as to ensure their involvement in their children's lives. This was an extension of their children's joy. Lastly, the women gained joy through how they had witnessed themselves changed for the better and in the purpose added unto their lives.

The dual nature of motherhood for all mothers was represented by the range of emotional experiences reflected here as opposed to a consistently dichotomous experience. Thus, there was great variation amongst the emotional states experienced by all women in this study, which extended along a continuum.

6.2.4 Coping

Two primary means in which women appeared to have coped with and navigated their experiences of motherhood was found. This was both directly and indirectly mentioned regarding past and current experiences. The employment of social support particularly during young motherhood was noted as significant, while religion appeared to be a primary tool utilized by mothers at the time.

The presence of different types of support including emotional, financial, and instrumental means of assistance came to the fore in the women's accounts. In most cases this support had mainly been received from the maternal grandmother and/or the child's father. Most of the women described the significant difference having this support had made in their attempts to navigate young motherhood. Thus, the presence of social support to act as a protective buffer against negative long-term outcomes for young mothers was significant, as has been noted in other research (Amod et al., 2019; Malindi, 2018; Pillay, 2020).

Religion was conceptualized as a means of coping for almost all the women in this study. Although one participant described an experience of feeling judgement from the church as a

young mother, an alternative experience of religious reaction was simultaneously presented. Religion was presented as a form of coping based on the women's descriptions of faith-related practices which they utilized when they felt overwhelmed or anxious. This included employing prayer and drawing on their faith in God during challenging circumstances or as a source of encouragement and hope, when navigating their current seasons of motherhood. Thus, participants utilized religion as a positive means of coping with the challenges and demands they faced at the time.

6.2.5 Meaning of motherhood

I attempted to interpret the meaning of motherhood according to the women in this study by inferring from the insights underlying participants' accounts. The women's meaning of motherhood appeared to be drawn from both positive and negative experiences encountered by participants over time. The participants framed their overall motherhood experience as one broadly marked by a fluctuating tension between joy and sorrow; struggle and overcoming. On one hand the women in this study derived a sense of purpose from motherhood, which produced renewed self-confidence in some areas as well as pride in themselves upon reflecting on how far they had come. The women testified to the self-assurance, tenacity, and resilience they witnessed in themselves and expressed gratitude for how they had changed for the better as women because of their children. However, the incessant struggles women faced and their unrealised status as a 'good' mother at times, according to their themselves, was in tandem with this, which led to the creation of this overall tension. These challenges included but were not limited to the struggle encountered in disciplining their children, shielding their children from the same misgivings they had faced, and providing for their children, particularly in the areas of financial strength and security.

Participants framed responsibility and duty as inherent to motherhood. This was due to the women's belief that they had to uphold certain expectations governed by society upon taking on the mothering role. Women appeared to be comforted and gain encouragement from the development of agency and having a sense of control over an aspect of their lives through their mothering role. They also valued the cultivation of self-assurance from having poured into their children's lives. Furthermore, the positioning of motherhood as a learning process characterized by a developmental nature as opposed to the historically instinctual one perpetuated in society was evident. The attainment and sharing of knowledge and wisdom garnered over time were key in framing what motherhood meant to them.

The mothers in this study desired to provide their children with the best quality of life, reflecting the earnest desire to perform at their best as mothers. It was apparent that it was important to them to ensure that their children inhabited better circumstances than they had. The longing to protect and shield their children tied into this. Alternatively, the sacrifice required of motherhood was undoubtedly present in the women's dialogue. While this sacrifice was recognized by all participants as a necessary gateway to the fulfilment of their motherhood role, it was not without its cost. Many of the women described the sincerely felt sense of loss for their youth. However, they understood motherhood to inherently be comprised of inevitable sacrifice, which provided them with some degree of comfort and comradery. That being said, it may be possible that this sense of sacrifice has simultaneously softened and intensified in participants' reflection upon motherhood.

The all-consuming identity of motherhood was evident in women's embodiment of their role, which was reminiscent of the tenets comprising the self-sacrificing mother and ideal motherhood. The women gained substantial meaning from being a mother and situated their children as their source of happiness. The implication, then, was that their children were their primary motivation in life. The identity constructs of 'women' and 'mother' were interchangeable, with most women defining themselves by their role as mother and what that role entailed.

The women's resilience was evident in their ability to have overcome the obstacles pertaining to low-income young motherhood. Furthermore, their resilience at present displayed itself in their desire to change and overcome present unfavourable circumstances they still found themselves in. In the cases of some women, this was paired with the determination to continue pursuing unfulfilled aspirations. It appeared that as time had passed, their children continued to act as motivation and encouragement for them. Thus, in this study, the everyday resilience of the women to provide and care for their children by continuing to show up in their role as mother, acted as an incentive for them to persevere in everyday life. However, an over-reliance on individual resilience must be guarded against in the literature concerning a more optimistic long-term view of young motherhood. The important influence on and effect of the surrounding social, cultural, and political contexts these women continued to find themselves in could not be ignored nor dismissed. It was evident from the current study's findings that these contexts and environments have a long-lasting impact on the quality of life of low-income young mothers over time.

6.2.6 Conclusion

The findings of this study were not entirely novel regarding the claims which have been made by much research exploring young motherhood. Young motherhood remains a challenging endeavour with tangible obstacles to overcome. However, this study provided insight from a different, more extensive perspective to that of most research exploring teenage pregnancy in South Africa. This was done through the exploration of subjective experiences of young motherhood over time within a qualitative paradigm. The experience of motherhood, particularly that of young motherhood, cannot and should not be analysed and interpreted in isolation from the circumstantial contexts' women find themselves in (Kruger, 2006). What was different about the current findings was the conceptualization of the tension surrounding the multiplicity of the human experience which was revealed in the reflections of past teenage mothers themselves and objectively present in the women's conveyed experiences. This multiplicity is even more complex in reference to the lived experience of teenage motherhood and motherhood overall. This could be argued as unique within the research context of exploring motherhood over extensive time periods.

This underlying tension appears to exist at the core of women's narratives. Over time, young mothers may feel overwhelmed with their need for assistance when encountering the difficulties within motherhood. Simultaneously, they may feel as if they need to prove their ability to overcome and remain strong in light of these obstacles in an attempt to redeem the disdain associated with having been a young mother. They may be attempting to guard against the hostility, shame and stigmatization that is often directed toward young mothers, still carrying this within themselves, by emphasising the joyful experience of motherhood and the necessity of being strong for their children. Thus, by anticipating the necessity to portray themselves as entirely resilient and self-sufficient, the support that past young mothers need may be overlooked over the course of time passing. The result being that they do not receive the adequate help, support, and assistance they actually need and deeply desire. This is not to say that the joy of motherhood for the women in this study was not present and sincere but rather that in the midst of this joy, they have continued to experience stress-inducing challenges which negatively affect women's overall experience of motherhood and quality of life.

It appears mothers can, and in the case of young mothers, have no choice but to hold this tension of the multiplicity of young motherhood, characterized by a spectrum of emotional and cognitive experiences under the broad umbrellas of joy and grief. Their joy stemmed from what they had gained through the upbringing of their children which co-existed with grief for

lost youth and the sacrifices of motherhood. This showed the importance of accommodating a balance between individual resilience and institutional action when attempting to improve young mother's quality of life, which may lead to more positive long-term outcomes for young mothers. The inclusion of women's lived experience and voices within this research added dimension and brought significant awareness of the difficulties that emerged as well as extended through time. Their accounts were complemented and coloured by their own insights upon reflection of their motherhood journey, particularly young motherhood. This study revealed a multi-layered narrative within which there remains more to be uncovered and analysed with further research.

This study could be used to gain a more extensive understanding of the first-hand experience of young motherhood within a challenging socio-economic context. This knowledge may inform improved support systems for young mothers in navigating the uplifting and challenging aspects of motherhood as drawn from the accounts of past young mothers themselves. The fact remains that our knowledge is limited to the current output effects of early birth, and not necessarily the intricacies of the processes which have occurred over the long-term. As such, the current reality of past young mothers may not directly translate into what current young mothers are experiencing (Hart et al., 2016). Therefore, the importance of illuminating the voices and experiences of past as well as current young mothers from a qualitative perspective may prove more useful than placing the focus entirely on outcomes. The development of specific and more inclusive approaches to understanding young mother's needs for support in a variety of ways is paramount to aid in better long-term outcomes. This is somewhat reflective of and consistent with previous similar studies exploring the lived experiences of young mothers in South Africa and other countries (Hoggart, 2012; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Macutkiewicz & MacBeth, 2017; Ntinda et al., 2016; Malindi, 2018; Singh & Naicker, 2019).

6.3 Limitations

The first limitation regarding the current study was the homogeneity of the participant group. The women comprising this study were all from the same sub-district of the Western Cape province, South Africa. The women had all remained living in Kylemore and belonged to the same demographic group. Additionally, the sample size of the women who participated in the study was small limiting the variety of motherhood experiences which could be included. Due to the nature of this being a follow-up study, the findings could not be generalized to a larger population so as to make general inferences about all young mothers' experiences but is

limited to conceptualizing the experience of this particular group of women in one area of the province and country. Representation regarding the original participant pool was limited as not all the women interviewed in the original study were included in the current study. Due to time constraints and obstacles which arose in attempting to conduct interviews with some women, the sample size was reduced. The number of participants who took part in the original study were 21, while the sample size comprised of seven participants. Thus, the women were all situated within the same racial, socioeconomic, and cultural group.

A further limitation was that of my own subjectivity as researcher. While sincere effort was made to acknowledge this by incorporating the social constructionist theoretical framework and approach, the potential of alternative categories being extrapolated from the data by other researchers remains a possibility. Furthermore, while belonging to the same racial group as participants may have been helpful, my being a young woman in her mid-20's belonging to a different social class and having never been a mother, is acknowledged to have impacted upon various aspects of the research process. I made great effort to ensure that the views of the women in this study were reflected, interpreted, and presented in as accurate a way as possible so as to align with the sentiments expressed.

Regarding the retrospective nature of the current study, participants were only followed up with at one time point following the original interview 16-18 years ago, during which a substantial period had passed. This appeared to have affected the women's recollection of past events, experiences, and life stages. A change in the intensity and nature of emotions associated with certain events may have faded over time resulting in an alternative outlook than perhaps would have been salient had women been interviewed while undergoing various life transitions. Thus, longitudinal research which consistently follows up with young mothers at set periods over a certain timeframe would prove to be fruitful, more insightful, and more accurately depict the emotions of women in real-time.

6.3.1 Implications for future research in recognition of limitations

The present study identified certain areas or aspects that require further exploration and interpretation within discussions surrounding young women's motherhood experience. The paucity of nuanced research investigating the phenomena of teenage pregnancy and young motherhood has been acknowledged in the literature (Barcelos & Gubrium, 2014; Christofides et al., 2014; Erfina et al., 2019; Payne & Anastas, 2015). Research tends to predominantly approach the phenomenon of young motherhood from a one-dimensional perspective where

negative long-term outcomes are viewed as inevitable, and focus is placed on identifying the factors that contribute to less-than-ideal life courses as opposed to explaining how they interact and the young women's experience of this phenomenon. The incorporation of young mother's voices into the academic conversation remains an area ripe for development and exploration. Although such research is gaining traction, studies still fail to consider the intricacies of young motherhood. By default, the experience of young motherhood for the women navigating this significant life transition is overlooked. The importance of exploring and presenting a variety of experiences and perspectives of young motherhood, particularly in terms of positive outcomes, is needed. Furthermore, qualitative studies of a longitudinal nature which centre on understanding the dynamics of young motherhood and conceptualize women's experience of young motherhood as having a possible positive outcome, are rare.

The development of research around mothering as an ambivalent emotional experience for mothers of all ages as well as the unignorable impact of socio-cultural variables intervening with young motherhood necessitates a more nuanced outlook. Mothering across a variety of contexts and different stages of life needs to be explored at a greater depth. The outcomes of young motherhood over time need to be given greater attention and their experiences utilized to better support current young mothers, particularly regarding mothering in poverty. Therefore, it is important and useful to explore young motherhood from the perspective of women themselves allowing their conceptualizations to come to the fore.

The comparison of young motherhood across different class, racial, and cultural groups is particularly important in a country as diverse and unequalised as South Africa. This is necessary to increase society's understanding at multiple levels of what can contribute to more positive long-term outcomes for young mothers in diminished socioeconomical contexts. Future research comparing past and current experiences of a fixed sample group, as well as the comparison between aged young mothers as opposed to current young mothers may be of interest. In this way crucial information surrounding personal experiences, support structures, contrast in expectation versus reality, and complementary tools to prepare and uplift young mothers in motherhood may be discovered.

6.3.2 Implications for future research in recognition of findings of this study

The subjective experience of young motherhood over time appeared to be complex and multifaceted within the scope of the current study and its key findings. There are many variables at play which could influence the nature of the motherhood experience for young

mothers. The practical challenges and the emotional experiences entwined with them had a significant impact on mothers' self-efficacy, self-confidence, and overall mental health. While the experience of young motherhood may be amplified by additional adolescent developmental tasks, the challenges themselves do not appear vastly different from the novel experience of motherhood across older age groups. Mothering is multifaceted spanning across the age span, and carries with it the responsibility of health care, economic obligation, and the provision of education for one's child. The effect of socio-cultural variables and economic struggle appears to confer a greater influence and poses additional burdens which low-income young mothers must adjust to and overcome. The necessity of exploring their subjective experiences may be even more important. Therefore, more research exploring the lived realities of low-income young motherhood specifically within South Africa, is warranted.

Key areas which stood out as influential in women's personal experience were adverse experiences of childbirth, the co-parenting relationship, and challenging emotions surrounding motherhood. Further research investigating the interplay of factors which shape these experiences and can provide insight and practical preparation for young mothers from a more integrative vantage point, is recommended. The effect of a more complicated childbirth experience on their approach to and experience of motherhood, for example, would be an interesting aspect to further explore. Lastly, the nature as well as the clarity of the memories that stand out from motherhood for different individuals across the age spectrum may be grant further research and provide valuable insight.

The function of support, both the presence and lack thereof were in line with other studies' findings (Copeland, 2017; Denny et al., 2016; Malindi, 2018; Ngum Chi Watts et al., 2015; Wahn et al., 2005). Different types of social support were articulated by participants themselves as crucial in making the difference between poor and improved long-term outcomes. As such, more supportive strategies and interventions need to be developed and refined through extensive research not only for early stages of young motherhood but also for young mothers as they transition into their new role over time (Erfina et al., 2019).

The multitude of ways in which struggle and joy, helplessness and resilience, and powerlessness and agency, can interact and interchange as time passes was revealed by the women's conceptualization of the meaning of motherhood. Further research into a more ecological understanding of resilience grounded within the complex social, cultural, and

political contextual landscape is needed. While the women in this study clearly demonstrated their sustained resilience over time, an over-reliance on individualised resilience should be avoided through research which places dual focus on the development of collective resilience approaches (Singh & Naicker, 2019). The overlap of resilience, agency and coping also constitutes further research, particularly in elucidating the tenets of the framework which young mothers use to perceive, navigate, and operationalize agency both in the early and latter stages of their motherhood experience.

6.4 Implications for practice and policy

Considering this research, the main levels at which the enactment of practice and policy can be improved in South Africa is within healthcare and school settings. The atmosphere within the healthcare setting and amongst healthcare workers has been consistently brought forward as a cause for concern regarding the way in which young women are treated (Harrison et al., 2017; Mkhwanazi, 2010). Health worker bias and the assumptions surrounding young motherhood need to be guarded against and critically assessed within the healthcare setting particularly regarding the stigmatisation of young mothers. Thus, the implementation of hospital policies surrounding the treatment of young mothers as well as programmes tailored to young mothers' needs can be informed by research such as this.

A more integrated understanding of young motherhood and subjective accounts of young mothers from research can be used and acknowledged in reforming the guidelines as well as implementation of policy. Such an integrative framework can promote a more nuanced understanding of the multifactorial phenomena which is young motherhood (Chung et al., 2018). This may also inform proactive intervention approaches at a prenatal level, specifically regarding the nature of support systems available and tailored to young mothers within healthcare and school settings (Bhana & Mncambi, 2013).

6.5 Concluding thoughts

This study aimed to explore young mothers' subjective experience of motherhood over time in a group of low-income South African women. This was done by carrying out a follow-up study which took place approximately 16 to 18 years after the women were first interviewed for the Women's Maternal Mental Health Research Project (WMHRP) from 2002 to 2006. This research aided in illuminating the challenges, joys, and resilience of young mothers as they navigated motherhood until now. Furthermore, we gained insight into the unique experiences of mothers within a challenging sociocultural-economic climate and context. The

extent to which the influence of the sociocultural environment the women inhabited could be explored was limited within the scope of this thesis. However, we proposed the potential of an integrative and holistic framework of the motherhood experience, which is specific to young mothers within a low-income setting based on findings. This can provide a starting point from which to refine and/or develop similar or alternative theories.

The access and/or barrier to financial resources, the availability of support, and women's everyday resilience were recognized as crucial to navigating the experience of motherhood for this group of women. The women's narratives alluded to the existence of a sustained tension in attempting to balance the struggles and joys of motherhood, revealing the complex interaction of various factors which converged to influence women's daily experiences. The long-withstanding display of tenacity and realised agency in their everyday life was evident in narratives marked by increased self-confidence and self-efficacy over time. However, this also presented as a point of contention in light of the over-reliance on individual mother's resilience at the expense of necessary shifts which should occur at an institutional level. This particularly concerned the dominant ideologies surrounding motherhood overall and the gendered nature of this phenomena.

For this group of past young mothers, motherhood was broadly conceptualized as an experience marked by a tension of multiplicity underlying the overarching experiences of joy and struggle. By bringing these women's experiences to the fore, it has allowed for a more inclusive understanding which welcomes diverse meanings of the construct of motherhood, and by extension young motherhood. Grounded within the current research findings, the experience of mothering and its outcomes is understood to be a constantly shifting phenomena heavily influenced by the social, cultural, and political landscapes within communities and wider society.

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Addendum A

Research context: Kylemore Settlement

Kylemore is a well-established yet economically and socially vulnerable semi-rural community settlement located just outside Stellenbosch, South Africa. This settlement falls under the Cape Winelands District municipality in the Western Cape. Kylemore has an approximate population of 4000 inhabitants of which the majority are classified as Coloured (91.7%). The remaining demographic minority comprises of Black African (4.9%), White (2.2%), Asian (0.5%) and Other (0.6%) according to racially classified groupings. The predominant spoken language is Afrikaans (94.6%) with English (2.7%) being the second (Statistics South Africa, 2011; Visser 2009).

This relatively isolated community is characterized as socio-economically at risk with limited social infrastructure and facilities available to its inhabitants. This has resulted in majority (60%) of residing individuals facing unemployment (Kruger et al., 2014). While employment in the form of agricultural labour on the surrounding wine farms is an available means of income for the inhabitants, this is seasonal and thus, limited. The unemployment burden is further exacerbated by a shortage of opportunities that foster employable skills for those leaving school. Largely owing to financial restraints and a shortage of resources, young high school graduates typically do not pursue a tertiary education and find themselves demotivated and derailed when attempting to enter into the job market. Thus, individuals are caught in a vicious cycle of unemployment and poverty. Furthermore, there is a deeply embedded problem regarding the abuse of drugs and alcohol within the community (Kruger et al., 2014; Visser, 2009).

Within this community, one will find one high school, one primary school, a municipal community clinic, a crèche and aftercare centre. Educational as well as recreational community facilities and programmes, particularly for the youth population, are absent. However, there are plentiful churches scattered throughout and a large Christian community of devoted churchgoers. This highlights the stark contrast contained within Kylemore, and the conditions of living that may hinder individuals' general chances for success in life.

Addendum B

Demographic information of participants

Participant No.	Code name	Age	Language	Education status	Employment /Job	Income p/m	Religion	Partner	No. of people in house	No. of children	Ages of children
K1	Joey (Candy)	34	Afr	Matric 3-month course	SANPARKS Stellenbosch: Receptionist	R9049,32 (H)	Christian	In relationship: Engaged	3	2	16 years 7 years (boys)
K2	Nathalie	37	Afr	Matric	Housekeeper work	R4800 (H)	Christian	Divorced	3	3 (pregnant with 3rd when interviewed)	18 years (boy) 11 years (girl)
K3	Millicent	38	Afr	Matric	Unemployed: let go as factory worker due to Covid last year July (2020)	R5000 - R6000 (Home): Husband works at Spar + side jobs	Christian	Divorced first husband (2 sons father) Married again (youngest)	6	3	18 years (boy) 12 years (boy) 4 years (boy)
K4	Poppie	37	Afr	Standard 5 (Grade 7)	Unemployed: contract suspended due to Covid	R0 (both husband + her not working)	Christian	Married	7	4	17 years (boy) 14 years (boy) 5 years (twin girls)
K5	Shahieda	35	Afr	Standard 7 (Grade 9)	Disability grant /payment	R4204 (H)	Christian	With second child's father for 11 years	3 (stays in place at the back of mom's house with 2 boys)	2	16 years (boy) 9 years (boy)
K6	Blondie	35	Afr	Standard 7 (Grade 9)	Household work (Stellenbosch)	R3100 (P) R7000 (H)	Christian (Old Presbyterian)	Married	5	3	18 years (girl) 8 years (boy) 4 years (boy)
K7	Josephine	30	Afr	Standard 7 (Grade 9)	Unemployed	R8000 (H) (from husband)	Christian	Married	4	2	16 years (boy) 6 years (boy)

Addendum C

Semi-structured interview schedule – Teenage/Young motherhood

Identifying information

Name: _____

Codename: _____

Physical address: _____

Home Telephone: _____

Cellphone number: _____

Age: _____

Some background information:

Children (names/ages):

Current job:

Relationship status (are you currently in a relationship?):

Tell me about your household (Where are you living - do you stay in a house/flat?):

Personal Income: _____

Household income: _____

Who lives with you in the household?:

How many rooms?: _____

Who do you share a room with (if do): _____

Introduction

Hello, how are you? My name is (interviewer name) and I will be the one interviewing you today. We're speaking today because you took part in a previous study about your experience of motherhood 16 or so years ago. I would now like to learn more about your experiences over the last few years of raising a child, the challenges as well as positive encounters and your overall experience of living in your community: what has it been like

for you as a young mother looking back now and how have you adjusted to and found motherhood throughout the years. I hope to find out more about your personal experiences of being a young mother.

(Prior to this, the participant and myself will go through the consent form together, and I will explain to them their rights and the confidential nature of the study. These questions are fairly open-ended, and my follow-up questions will be driven by responses of the participants as the interview progresses.)

1. Reflecting on the experience of young motherhood

1. How have you experienced motherhood over the past 15 years?
 - What are your some of your negative and positive experiences?
 - How did you feel in those moments?
2. Has anything changed in how/what you thought being a mother mean since then...?
 - How do you remember feeling then?
 - What feelings are coming up now?
 - Do you feel as if you have grown when looking back?
- How would you describe yourself as a mother?
 - Has motherhood changed or affected how you see yourself as a woman?
 - In what way?
- What does being a good mother mean to you?

2. Experience of raising a child

- How old is your first child now?
 - Have you had more children since the last interview?
3. Was the reality of raising your child the same as the expectation you had?
 - Can you compare the two experiences of having raised your first and second born? (if had more children since the last interview)
 - What moments with your child(ren) have stood out as a mother?

3. Development of relationship with child

- How would you describe your relationship with your child(ren)?
 - Would you say you have an open/honest/pleasant relationship?
 - Do you feel you have a close relationship with your child(ren)? Why do you say that?
 - Do you feel this relationship is strained?
- Do you feel like you understand/can relate more to what your child may be going through because you were a young mother?
 - In what way?
 - If so/if not, why do you think so?
- Do you feel comfortable/are you open discussing sensitive or personal topics with your child e.g., sexuality, sexual health?
 - Have you?
 - How did you do this?
 - How did it/does it feel to talk about these things with you child?

4. Shift in perception of self: greater empowerment and self-agency/responsibility?

- Do you feel more empowered having gone through the experience of raising your own child?
 - Describe these feelings?
 - What does this mean for/how does this influence your life now?
- How have you personally handled the responsibility of raising a child?
 - Do you feel more experienced now compared to early motherhood?
 - What does motherhood mean to you?
- How do you feel now about having had your child(ren) at a young age? Do you think differently about young motherhood now?
 - If yes, how did raising a child change it?
 - Do you have any regrets?/Would you do anything differently?

5. End-off questions:

4. Do you think you had any particular challenges being quite a young mother?
 - What were some of the main challenges for you personally?
 - How did you deal with this practically?
 - Did you have support? And from who?

- What is the attitude of the people in your community toward teenagers falling pregnant?
 - Do you agree? Why do you think so?
 - How does that make you feel?

- 1. Ask participants if they would be willing to be interviewed again?**
- 2. Ask if participants would be open to the possibility of their child(ren) being interviewed by you/colleague at a later stage as part of the overall project.**

All interviews will follow the general flow of the abovementioned discussion points. However, these needn't be strictly adhered to should participants lead the dialogue elsewhere while still pertaining to the topic area of interest.

Addendum D

STELLENBOSCH UNIVERSITY CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

You are invited to take part in a study conducted by Professor Lou-Marie Kruger and Sinead Boshoff from the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. You were approached as a possible participant because you took part in a previous study exploring the subjective experiences of mothers as they navigate the process of motherhood.

1. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The current research study aims to investigate how women have experienced motherhood over time. I am interested in trying to understand the possible positive and negative aspects that form part of this experience. I would like to highlight the personal experiences of young, low-income mothers.

2. WHAT WILL BE ASKED OF ME?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to undergo face-to-face interviews of approximately 60-90 minutes each. You will be interviewed for a number of interviews, the number of which we will arrange with you. A graduate student in Psychology (Stellenbosch University) will be conducting the interviews. This interview can take place at either your residence or at the Department of Psychology of the University of Stellenbosch (Wilcocks building) at a time that is suitable for you. Transport funds will be provided if needed. All interviews will be conducted in a closed, private room with only you and the interviewer present. Social distancing will be maintained throughout our meeting as well as hand sanitizer and surface disinfectant provided. All interviewers will have masks on throughout the entire interview process, and you will be provided with a disposable mask for the duration of the interview should you prefer it to making use of your own.

During the interview, you will be asked questions regarding your experiences of motherhood thus far. This will include your negative and positive experiences, whether personal or relating to attitudes/experiences you have encountered/had within the community. I would like to gain an understanding of your experience and opinions.

3. POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

In the event that any questions asked during the interview process bring up painful or unpleasant memories; and you feel the need to talk about these feelings, a list of services that you can contact will be made available to each participant. I, as the interviewer, can also arrange that professional help be made available to you as the participant, if during the interview it comes to my attention that psychological support is needed. This will be in the form of a referral to the Welgevallen Community Psychology Clinic, a community service initiative of the Department of Psychology at Stellenbosch University. This will be free of charge.

We acknowledge the potential risk that is posed regarding Covid-19 infection and plan to reduce this risk as much as possible by making use of and providing face masks, sanitization equipment (hand sanitizer) and tools (thermometer) and maintaining our social distance at all times during the course of contacting, speaking to and conducting interviews with you.

4. POSSIBLE BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS AND/OR TO THE SOCIETY

We hope to give you a platform to share your own personal story and experiences in a way that will be meaningful for others who find themselves in the same circumstances. In this way, this could hopefully lead to better psychological and general health support for future mothers, young and older, who may feel overwhelmed and unsupported in larger society.

5. PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION

You will be directly compensated for your time and efforts whereby a cash payment of R50 per interview. This will be given to each participant in the form of cash upon completion of the interviews. Should you decide to withdraw before having taken part in an interview, you will not receive compensation.

6. PROTECTION OF YOUR INFORMATION, CONFIDENTIALITY AND IDENTITY

Any information you share with me during this study will be strictly protected. All the data gathered from the interview, as well as your personal information will be stored on a password protected laptop that will only be accessible to the leading researchers involved in the current study.

As part of the data collection process, the interviews will be audio-recorded for data analysis purposes. If you, as the participant are willing to give permission, the information collected may be used as secondary data in future studies looking into the personal experience of low-income mothers and developing possible intervention programmes to overcome some of the challenges of adjusting to motherhood. If, at any time, you decide you would like your information not to be shared, your data will not be included in the study and will be erased from all devices immediately. Due to the information gathered for this study being concerned with sensitive aspects of women's lives, all audio recordings as well as the list comprising of the code names will be deleted from the password protected laptops upon the completion of this study. Hard copy files will be kept for the records and stored in a locked cabinet within the department offices as well as uploaded to OneDrive for storage within a password protected file. Only Professor Lou-Marie Kruger will have access to this information thereafter.

Results obtained from this research study, including any material that is published, will not state any of the participant's actual names or details. Throughout the entire process of compiling this research report, you as a participant, will be addressed according to the code names previously chosen and assigned to you in the previous study. The list matching each participant's true identity with their assigned code name will be kept safe and secure in a locked cupboard within the office at the Department of Psychology. Descriptions of participants will be altered to ensure that they are not identifiable to anyone reading about the research study. No information obtained from the study can be associated with or traced to a specific person or family unit.

7. PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. It is important for you to remember that you can stop the interview at any time and have the right not to answer any questions you don't feel comfortable answering throughout the course of the interview. Thus, you may refuse to answer any questions you don't want to answer and *still remain* in the study. If you decide to withdraw from the study, you have the right to ask that all the data collected from you or related to you (including audio tapings and the transcriptions), be discarded in which case we will do so. The researcher may withdraw you from the study if your interview is not substantial enough to analyse owing to lack of material or faulty audio-recording.

8. RESEARCHERS' CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please feel free to contact Professor Lou-Marie Kruger (supervisor), Sinead Boshoff and/or Josephine Greenhalgh at the number: 0218083460.

9. RIGHTS OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without any penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research 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.

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT

As the participant I confirm that:

- I have read the above information and it is written in a language that I am comfortable with.
- I have had a chance to ask questions and all my questions have been answered.
- All issues related to privacy, and the confidentiality and use of the information I provide, have been explained.

By signing below, I _____ agree to take part in this research study, as conducted by Professor Lou-Marie Kruger and Sinead Boshoff.

Signature of Participant

Date

DECLARATION BY THE PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

As the **principal investigator**, I hereby declare that the information contained in this document has been thoroughly explained to the participant. I also declare that the participant has been encouraged (and has been given ample time) to ask any questions. In addition, I would like to select the following option:

--	--

	The conversation with the participant was conducted in a language in which the participant is fluent.
	The conversation with the participant was conducted with the assistance of a translator (who has signed a non-disclosure agreement), and this “Consent Form” is available to the participant in a language in which the participant is fluent.

Signature of Principal Investigator

Date

Addendum E

Quotation index

5.2 Practical concerns and challenges**5.2.1 Falling pregnant and giving birth****(p. 60 – 64)**

Joey: S:o ek was actually Standaard nine toe ek swanger raak met hom of Graad 11 toe ek swanger raak MET hom. Graad 12 het ek hom gekry maar dit was gelukkig vroeg in die jaar.

Joey: Ek kon darem nog ń tot voltyds loop {laughs}

Joey: Jy, jy dink as ouer dat jy (.h) dat, dat um elke kind dieselfde manier op geboorte sal wees (.h) maar (.) dieselfde met hierdie – die tweede een se geboorte sy bevalling was vir my meer intens of meer – hoe kan ek sê {sucks in air} OEE net te kostelik

Interviewer: Oo sho

Joey: maar dat ek nie weer na hom sal ń baba of- dit was erger (.h) erger as die eerste een maar die GEVOEL

Nathalie: Ek dink ek was, ek ek ek was baie baie bly

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: en gelukkig en en (.) ek weet ek was baie gelukkig daai tyd toe hy (.)

Nathalie: gebore geword het

Interviewer: dis pragtig

Nathalie: en toe ek swanger was met hom.

Millicent: Maar om te dink, as ek TERUGKYK na daai, dan is ek, ek was spyt vir die dinge wat ek (.) tyd wat ek so ongesond gelewe het MET hom. Die dinge wat ek gedoen het aan myself om my kind se uh uh risiko, risiko te maak (.) om sy lewe ook in gevaar ge- um te stel.

Interviewer: Hm sjoe

Millicent: Dit het vir my baie gepla.

Millicent: H:y's (.) groot, hy's ń brugbabatjie (unclear) hy't met sy voete uitgekom. Hy met voetjies eerste. En dan (.) hy is amper so te sê, hy's doodgebore gewees.

Interviewer: Ag nee

Millicent: En hulle moes um um (.) vir hom asemhalings, die pompie-ding op hom sit, om vir hom weer by te kry want hy was potblou (.) soos om toe't hy nou kom (.) en ek het nie eers GEWEET, ek het nie eers GEWEET hy is um (.) ń seunskind nie. Ek het nie die geslag geweet nie.

Millicent: Ja. Ons is (unclear) het in die hospitaal gebly vir die maand en toe ontdek hulle hy't geelsug

Interviewer: Ag ek's so jammer

Millicent: En toe moes hulle nou vir hom deur vat um Tygerberg hospitaal toe (.) Toe is daar nou nie n aar op sy lyf nie (.) Hulle kry nie n aar nie. Toe moes hulle nou (.) sy hare afskeer en n aar in die kop, hulle moet vir hom drip in die kop sit. En dit is alles wat vir my so

Millicent: Ek was baie emosioneel. Ek het baie GEHUIL (.) want

Interviewer: Ek kan dink

Millicent: um (.) Ja ek het (.) baie baie stres gehad met Mike.

Poppie: Toe ek by die hospitaal kom toe vra die nurse vir my wat maak, wat moet sy maak met n dooie kind. En toe het n

Interviewer: Sjoe

Poppie: um (..) Ek sal nooit die dokter vergeet nie maar sy, haar van is Dokter Roussouw gewees (.) en sy het toe (.) al sy are was platgeval hier en, en by sy voete.

Interviewer: O gits

Poppie: Toe het sy in sy kop n aar gekry en (.) ek is vir ewig dankbaar aan haar dat sy so vining gespeel het en (.h) as gevolg van haar vinnigegeid het (.) sy lewe, was sy lewe gespaar

Poppie: En toe um (.) het ons baie hospitaal in en hospitaal uit. So ja (.h) Die men- die nurses by die hospitaal het sommer gesê hier kom ons, ons huismense kom al weer aan {laughs}

Poppie: Maar dieselfde dag wat ek hartseer gewees het, het die Here vir my weer um bly kom maak dat dit OP die 11 Augustus toe voel Lily sy groei nie meer verder nie. Toe sê die dokter maar ons moet hulle maar nou, maar nou vir my- hulle noem dit mos ontlas (.) En toe gaan ons maar (.) teater toe. Toe haal hulle vir hulle uit. Toe het ek daar lê (.) toe dink (.) hoor ek hulle, die nurses praat (.h) Toe sê hulle (.) dis die 11 Augustus. Toe dink ek dis mos (.) La- um Jenna-Lee se (.) geboortedatum.

Interviewer: Sjoe

Poppie: En (.) ek kan net dankie sê vir die Here dat Hy (.) vir my weer gelukkig gemaak het op daai selfde dag.

Blondie: (.h) En toe is my kind nog n koliek kind ook

Interviewer: Ah nee

Blondie: Ja waar sy (..) glad nie in die nag slaap nie {lag}

Interviewer: Hmm ek het gehoor

Blondie: vir die eerste drie maande nê

Interviewer: O

Blondie: So, ja, dit was maar moeilik

- Josephine: So ja, ek sal nie sê dit was maklik nie (.) en um...maar ek kan ook nie sê dit was baie swaar nie,
 Interviewer: okay
 Josephine: Ja om te kraam was swaar (.) uhm baie swaar en seer en {lag}
 Interviewer: {lag} nee ek kan dink
 Josephine: Ek dink met die tweede een het ek nog erger, ohh ek het gesê nooit weer nie ek is klaar maar um (.) ja.

5.2.2 Parenting

(p. 65 – 69)

- Blondie: Ja, ons verstaan mekaar en as ons mekaar nie verstaan nie, gaan ons probeer om mekaar te verstaan.
 Interviewer: Mm, okay.
 Blondie: Ons gaan altyd vra (.) Kyk, ek voel altyd my kinders moet openlik met my wees.
 Interviewer: Hm.
 Blondie: Want ek sal altyd met hulle openlik wees. Ek gaan altyd *straight* {maak keel skoon} sorry {maak keel skoon}
 Blondie: reguit met hulle praat. Ek gaan nie doekies omdraai nie. Ek gaan nie (.) sê: Dit MOET so wees, maar dis oraait, ons doen dit so.

- Millicent: En ek hou va:n my kinders LIEFDE gee. Ek hou van drukkie en ek hou van (h) ek hou van daai openlike verhouding wat ons het tussen my kinders. Ek, ek praat baie met hulle. Ek wil GRAAG hê ons moet daai ope verhouding HET. Hy moet nie goed vir my wegsteek nie.
 Millicent: Ek is bereid om saam met hulle in (.) hulle aktiwiteite wat hulle wil doen; dans. Mike hou van dans. Ek sal saam met Mike dans. Chris hou van karate. Ek sal
 Interviewer: Ah cool
 Millicent: Ek sal Chris se - hoe kan mens sê – (.) se slaansak; as hy wil oefen of hy wil (.) amper soos hy wil met my leer of hy wil IETS uitoefen of iets uit-try:. Ek sal vir hom help of watever.

- Millicent: Hy moet vir my kan sê dit is wat hom pla, dit is wat vir ho:m um daai bietjie ongemaklik is. Hy moet vir my kan Sê (.) ‘mamma ek het vandag n meisie ontmoet, mamma ek het’ (.) Ek ek wil- ek soek graag dit wat ek nie by my ouers gehad het nie (.) dit wat ek graag WIL gehad het (h) het ek nie gekry maar ek wil graag dit met my KINDERS hê.
 Millicent: Ek wil graag daai BAND (.) met my kinders hê. Dit is wat ek wil- en ek verskil myself as (h) ek wil um (.) n VERANDERING doen.

- Josephine: Ja, ons het 'n oop en aangename verhouding. Um, (.) daar's niks wat ek vir hulle wegsteek nie, en ek wil ook nie he dat hulle moet voel hulle iets vir my moet

wegsteek nie. =Maar Jaden is nie eintlik iemand wat, (.) um (.) diep goed met jou sal praat nie.

Interviewer: Okay, jy moet vra, as iets

Josephine: [JA, ek moet vra, ja. "Jaden, is jy oraaait?" Of - Ek ken mos nou my kind, want ek weet hy's iemand wat vol grappe is

Joey: Dis hoekom ek sê (.) in die begin was dinge moeilik in my lewe (.) maar nadat my kind terug is by my en (.) ons twee, ons drie is alleen hierso

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Daar's baie dinge wat ons saam doen. Ons kan saam lag, ons kan gesels (.) Ons kan ernstig wees, ons kan vertel soos in die nag, goed soos daai en dit vir my is baie baie nice. Dis net wat ek wou gehad het. Al die jare

Joey: Nee ek (.h) baie ouers is ongemaklik om oor seks met jou oudste kind te gesels

Interviewer: ja

Joey: maar ek MOET sê (.h) by ons is dit nie van ongemaklik of (unclear) ons praat maklik daaroor, ons kan ernstig wees daaroor maar sodat hy net basies weet wat is die feite van dit wat ek vir hom sê of leer.

Dis nie ongemaklik nie. Dis nie ongemaklik nie so ons kan franklik, openlik praat

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: met mekaar oor dit (.) Ek sê vir hulle wat is die voordele en nadele daarvan.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Ek sê vir hulle wat is hulle affection of watever (.) Ja, ons gesels openlik oor ALLES.

Nathalie: Het hy begine (.) TOE raak en, en dan het ek mos nou vir myself gevra maar is ek die probleem. Is ek of is die pa die probleem, wat's die probleem.

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: Want ek verstaan nie hoekom die kind nou so ewe skielik teruggetrokke raak nie (.hh)

Nathalie: Sover het dit, het dit- ja, dit was 'n baie moeilike tyd gewees en, en na dit (.) en toe alles mos nou (.h) opgeklaar was, het ons verhouding net baie goed bygekom en hy kon dan toe met, met my praat oor enigiets en ek kon met hom praat as ek nie tevrede was met, met iets wat hy gedoen het nie.

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: En dan kan ons sê nou weer (.) opklaar dit wat hy nou verkeerd in my oë gedoen het. Of hy sal sê maar 'mamma ek weet, ek is jammer, ek ek weet dit was nie reg van my om dit te gedoen het nie.'

Nathalie: Dis beter om jou lewe nou REG te beplan en dan weet jy waarvoor jy um vorentoe moet gaan vir môre en oormôre

Nathalie: En (.) ek dink nie ek en my ma het die verhouding gehad wat ek en my dogtertjie het nie

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: Want EK weet ek was bang om vir my ma te sê want ek het nie geweet wat aangegaan het nie. Ek ek KON nie vir haar verduidelik wat het gebeur't nie.

Nathalie: Ja veral, veral vir wanneer jy vriende het of en hulle praat met jou en sê maar my ma het dit gesê of my pa het dit gesê (.h) en hier staan jy nou maar jy kan nie saam praat nie want jou ouers het nie vir JOU dit gesê nie.

Blondie: (.h) Dit het n̄ verskil gemaak. Ons kan mekaar beter verstaan want ek kan nog steeds op haar *level* dink.

Interviewer: Okay. Ja.

Blondie: Soos dinge wat sy no:u (.) ervaar, um, kan ek nog onthou.

5.2.3 Fathers

(p. 70 – 74)

Blondie: Hoe kan jy n̄ jong meisie net swanger maak en haar net so los (.) Hy was bietjie baie ouer as ek

Interviewer: O okay

Blondie: So um (.) ja hy was (.) wil vir jou sê veertig

Millicent: Kyk my um (.) my kêrel wat ek gehad het, hy was baie- hy's sewe jaar ouer as ek.

Poppie: En soos um ek het nou n̄ ouer man gevat en (..) hul- dis moeilik om met n̄, met n̄ ouer man (.) Ek weet nie hoe n̄ jonger man gaan wees nie maar HY is baie verantwoordelik en

Blondie: So- en hy was ook nie eintlik fisies in haar lewe nie

Interviewer: Okay

Blondie: Hy het gaan trou met iemand waar hy by, wie hy nie kinders gehad het nie

Millicent: Met elke bietjie wat jy dalk miskien kry van die pa af moet jy maar nou net so aandruk daarvoor, net vir um (.) doeke en medisyne, MELK (.) wat ook al die kind

nodig het...die geld wat sy pa vir ons gee- dit dit is nie, is nie eintlik rêrig soort van n hulp nie.

Millicent: Is dalk nou net vir daai week (.) maar dit is dit het, dit het nie vir die MAAND

Millicent: Nou ja, baie kere dan is die pa daar maar hy is ook dan ook net nie DAAR nie. Ons is getroud maar ons is (.) hy sal nooit (.) sy: kant bring as dit kom by dissipline. 'AG maak wat jy wil of doen wat jy wil'. As my baba, as hy siek is dan is dit 'AG hy sit maar net aan'

Millicent: Ek ek ek het- ek kom uit n baie (.) abusive um (.) um

Interviewer: Huwelik

Millicent: Ja

Josephine: Soos die pa was nie eintlik daar om vir my te ondersteun nie, um ek het net gevoel uhm hy was seker so jaar oud. Ek sien nou net nie meer kans vir jou nie want jy wil ook nie jou deel rerig doen nie, om te gaan werk en vir jou kind te sorg nie.

Joey: Want toe ek en sy pa opbreek het hy toe op ou end by sy pa ge- gebly (.)

Joey: Yes. By sy pa en by sy, sy ouma en oupa.

Interviewer: O okay

Joey: maar ek het nog steeds finansieel vir hom onderhou.

Joey: Vir my was dit n BAIE moeilike, hartseer saak (.h) en omdat hy meer geheg was ook aan sy pa se mense.

Joey: Dit het actually vir my nog meer hartseer gemaak (.h) so, want ek weet ek was nie (.) ek was nie sterk GENOEG om hom daai tyd by my te hê nie.

Joey: Okay (.h) so daar was baie komplikasies tussen my en die oudste een se pa.

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Oor (.) um (.) oor dat hy nie werk nie. Ek het basies die kind self grootgemaak en alles die...want, ja, ons het op die hof baklei oor die kind

Joey: En NA dit, NA daai het hy ook maar net besef dat ek wil HOM net baie graag by myself wou gehad het.

Joey: Die jongste enetjie se pa; hy bly langs ons (.h) d aar is nie enige GEVOELENS wat wys of TOON dat ons n kind saam het nie of dat hy even belangstel aan sy kind nie. Hy is (.) die pa is net n mens op sy eie. Hy's geworry oor sy eie feelings (.h) naweke wil hy party met vriende en goed

Nathalie: Dinge het van daai tyd af net BAIE, baie beter gegaan. Ek en die pa het n baie goeie kommunikasie, ons kan gesels oor ENIGIETS

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: aan wat die kinders aangaan. En hy sal even vandag vir my vra 'hoe gaan dit met MYSELF al en

Interviewer: Ah

Nathalie: (.) Ek kan vir hom vra hoe gaan dit met hom en SY vrou, en SY kinders (.h) niemand voel (.) kwaad. Daai is alles (.) is WEG

5.2.4 Community

(p. 76 – 78)

Joey: So al, al iets positief wat ek gehoor het, die jaar toe ek slaag, Desemberjaar toe die oudste een gebore is (.h) het ek geslaag en een van die, die tannies het vir my gesê sy's so TROTS op my

=net vir die feit dat ek is swanger maar nog steeds het ek voort gemaak, my matriekjaar klaar en dan was die

Joey: En dan was dit die skoolhoof want ek wou eintlik skool gelos het

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Toe't hy vir my gesê nee hoekom wil jy dit doen. Maak jou matriek klaar

Interviewer: So ek wil net weet (.) ja, weet jy of hoe het jy gev- was daar enige gevoelens wat jy soos kon sien het of um (.) iets soos daai in die houding van mense in jou gemeenskap?

Nathalie: Glad nie

Interviewer: Hm (.) okay

Nathalie: Ek het nog nooit so iets ges- ervaar of gesien nie

Nathalie: Dit het my baie goed laat voel om te weet dat um (.) niemand en (.) ek bedoel um n ouer verwag mos dat n meisie elke keuse moet maak om een-en-twintig jaar oud te word en vir haarself mooi oppas en dan miskien maar (.) niemand het ooit vir my gesê jy't n mistake gemaak of of vinger gewys nie.

Millicent: Die doop van my kind (.) my oudste kind. Ons is um ons KERK (.) um het baie vinger gewys na um (..) huwelik, voor huwelik se

Interviewer: Oo okay hm

Millicent: voor huwelik se um (.) ek um (.) hoe noem hulle dit um (.) kinder wat voor die huwelik gebore is

Millicent: Dit het, dis amper soos dit was baie gediskrimineer oor dit en um ek het saam gebly met my (.) kind se pa mos nou na 'n tyd. En hulle wil NIE die kind ge- (.) laat doop nie.

Millicent: Ja {sighs} baie keer het dit- ek wil nie eers uit, by die huis uitgekóm het toe ek Chris by my gekry het nie. Maar die mense het altyd vir (.) gekyk aan my en...

Millicent: Jy kon GEHOOR het daar het altyd iets te sê

Millicent: Jy weet mos mense wys mos maar altyd vinger. En hulle't – OO - dit is SNAAKSE woorde en goed wat uit by jou mond uitgekóm het; dis verskriklik. Woorde wat vir jou afbreek en (.) van um (.) Kyk my um (.) my kêrel wat ek gehad het, hy was baie- hy's sewe jaar ouer as ek.

Millicent: Ja en (.) dan het hulle gesê 'O jy't 'n OU man' {claps hands}

Poppie: Um (.) baie sal sê kyk hierso, dis van ougatgeid wat sy nou met 'n pents loop en so. Is (.) hiers dit baie (.) HIER (.) is die mense baie neerhalend op (.) jong mense (.) en lelik en so.

Poppie: As wat jy die een moet nou aan die help vat, HELP en die hand vat en (.) Kyk as jy nou SIEN die kind is op 'n verkeerde pad dan moet jy mos nou (.) hoe kan ek sê (.) INMENG en sê maar jy's op 'n verkeerde pad en dit gaan, dit gaan veroorsaak laat jy met 'n pents sit of jy gaan- Verstaan?

Poppie: Maar hier hulle gaan jou lieverste beskinder en lelik praat van jou en stories maak en (.) venederend wees teenoor jou en so.

Blondie: Maar in die gemeenskap self tienerswangerskap-mense is baie lelik met kinders

Interviewer: Is dit?

Blondie: Ooh dis verskriklik. (.h) Hoe mense kinders um (.) ja dis van (.) slegheid en jy weet sulke goed. Nee veral in

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: ONS gemeenskap O:E uh uh

Interviewer: So jy sal sê dis, dis (.) dis meer soos met 'n negatiewe?

Blondie: JA (.) So klomp negatiewe um indrukke wat mense skep van jou. En dit is nie mooi nie.

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: Dis glad nie mooi nie.

Blondie: Um (.) ja elke maand word jy snaaks gekyk as jy by die kliniek instap, mense gi:s (.) en vra: Wie's die pa? en (.) Het jy nou al vir jou kind klere gekoop? Jy weet?

Blondie: Sukke goed (.) En dan kyk ek net die mense so en dan sê die mense vir my ma: Jou kind is harregat, maar sy loop met 'n hoerkind rond. You know?

Interviewer: Okay ja

Blondie: Sukke goed. (hh) It was niks lekker nie

Josephine: JA. Dit was 'n skande (.) Ek bedoel, vir jou, vir jou huishouding. Um, dis hoe hulle jou familie aankyk, haai, die mense skinder mos, hulle praat. Maar (.) destyds was jy skaam; ek wou nie eers my gesig by die deur uitgesit het nie.

Josephine: Niemand praat daaroor nie, want dis amper soos alledaags. Dit is nie nog 'n issue, of wat nie, maar

Interviewer: Ja, dis net iets wat gebeur.

Josephine: Ja, maar soos vir my is dit, is dit n skande, en dit is hoe ek dit nogsteeds sien. Want destyds was, het ek so gevoel.

5.3 Emotional experience of motherhood

5.3.1 Anxiety, desperation and feeling overwhelmed

(p. 80 – 83)

Blondie: Jy weet nie, gaan dit mos nou nie heeltemal (..) dinges nie, so. Met Candice het ek BAIE, baie dokter toe gegaan.

Interviewer: Okay

Blondie: VERSKRRIKLIK..Jissie ek was- Ek kon nie meer later bygehou het nie {lag}. Man dit was te veel.

Interviewer: Ja. Okay um (..) {klap lippe} so dit was meer, het jy (.) soos (.) was dit oorweldigend in die begin?

Blondie: O verskriklik, ek het baie gehuil

Interviewer: Ag sies tog

Blondie: (.h) En toe is my kind nog n koliek kind ook

Joey: want (.) ek het (.) ek het ook MY doubts gehad want

Interviewer: ja

Joey: wat gaan die mense sê en dis nie n mooi te lyk vir die skool, jy's n leerling en jy's swanger op skool en- dit was nie vir MY van toepas ook daai tyd nie. Ek het ook gedink nee man dit, dit gaan nie werk. Ek het vir my ma gesê: mammie dis okay, ek gaan maar eerder n werk uitsoek.

Millicent: Mike het koliek. Mike wil nie bor- ek het vir Mike geborsvoed. Mike wil nie borsvoeding hê nie. Mike wil nie bottle hê nie. Mike huil en huil en huil en huil en huil en (.) En net skielik het ek ge-click, in my MIND het ek getrip (.) en (.) is amper soos ek het uitgeBARS. Amper soos iets wat ontplof.

Millicent: want ek (.) ek kry, ek kan nie meer nie. Ek kry nie meer daai hulp van NIEMAND af nie. Niemand kan my help NIE

Nathalie: {laughs} (.) Daar was baie tye wat 'n mens, wat ek so gevoel het, ja, maar um (.h) dan het ons nou net weer opgestaan en gesê maar die kinders, my kinders is daar. Ek moet, ek moet (.) opstaan. Ek- die oorweldigend, ek moet maar nou net (.) verdwyn, dit moet net verby gaan en (.h) ons moet maar nou net vorentoe kyk en positief wees.

Poppie: Soos met hom het ek nie gewerk nie {clears throat} en dit was wat ek uitgevind het ek was swanger. En (.) dit was MOEILIK vir my en nou bly ons hier in, in die, in die huis dat, omdat ons nie 'n plek het om te bly nie (.h) En (.) dit is: (.) daar was goeie tye en dan daar was, dan's dan's dit (.) partykeers baie moeilik soos soos nou.

Joey: Ek weet vir my NOU op die oomblik, voel dit vir my bietjie swaarder as DAAI jare. Ek weet nie hoekom nie.

Joey: Die lewe is nou so woës, deurmekaar. Alles

Interviewer: J:A

Joey: is duur en jy moet basies by alles kan uitkom en omdat dit NET my salaris is (.h) moet ek basies alles cover (.) wat vir my dit nogal (.) baie moeilik maak (.h) Ek het NIE ander (.) finansiële hulp.

Interviewer: Ja. Nee, ek kan dink veral met die situasie nou met Covid wat na alles ook

Poppie: Hm mens kry nie werk nie en (.)

Interviewer: Ja

Poppie: dis elke dag se worry wat gaan ons vanaand eet (.) wat môre.

Blondie: Kyk die finansies is nie daarna nie (h) daar is ook nie (.) Okay die (..) grootste teken is mos nou die finansies want 'n mens HET mos nou finansies nodig OM 'n huis te kan kry om (.) jou lewe TE verbeter...Kyk soos ons sukkel nou al meer as 'n jaar (.) meer as 'n jaar en 'n half (.) met ons yskas want ons yskas se vries se band het gebreek

Interviewer: Ai

Blondie: So ons kan nou nie die yskas onder gebruik nie

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: Nou het ons hom so toe gedruk en 'n baksteen daar voor gesit want ons kan nou nie anders nie. Maar ons gaan nou êrens moet nou (.) 'n lyntjie trek of iets. Kinders gaan maar nou moet die jaar se *sorry* daar's nie *Christmas*-klere nie. Daar's nie *Christmas*-geskenkies nie. Ons kan nou nie daarvoor nie maar daar's 'n yskas {lag} wat

vir ons vir 'n paar jare gaan hou en dan kan ons weer vir 'n paar jaar vir julle Kersgeskenkies koop.

Joey: Maar as jy stil sit en dink dan is jy sommige tye so (.) in jou eie gevoelens

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Jy probeer kop bo water hou. Jy weet nie waar moet jy nog afknuip, of waar moet jy nog verander of wat even maar

Joey: Maar dit wil nie sê omdat ek kinders het dat weerhou my om (.) dit (.) te doen nie.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Ek moet maar goete net meer (.) positief wees en uitkyk of- maar ek is altyd so bang. Ek is, ek (.) ek het nie, ek is net so 'n mens as ek gemaklik is met iets, is ek te bang om iets anders aan te (.) te vat so

5.3.2 Feeling of helplessness and shame

(p. 84 – 87)

Josephine: Ja dis 'n ander tyd ja, want ek myself, of al het hul destyds vir my gesê jy kan maar skool toe gaan, ek sou dit nie gedoen het nie want ek bedoel daai skaamte en daai skande en wat ookal, nee ek sal nie maar dis deesdae maar algemeen

Josephine: Dit is n swaar ding ja, en uhm jy sien op jou ouers se gesig daai verwyf, maar hulle gaan dit mos nou nie vir jou sê nie, miskien uhm (...) hulle voel ook sleg daarvoor of skuldig of whatever, en ek het destyds baie skuldig gevoel daarvoor

Nathalie: Hmm nie iets spesifiek nie maar ek weet ek kan so sê; dit was, dit is moeilik as 'n jong ouer en (.) veral as jy alleen werker is in u huis en, en die kinders verlang vir dit en verlang vir daai, en in sommige huishoudings kon ek altyd sien dat um die kinders wil 'n paar Nike tekkies hê en - dis 'n voorbeeld wat ek sal maak - (.h) die kinders wil 'n paar Nike tekkies hê maar dan is daai kinders weer so gemaklik

Nathalie: Um soos ek gesê het nê ek {sighs} jy voel jy het jou kind {sighs} um gefail. Jy't nie jy jy jy voel JY het jou kind gefail al was jy nie die een wat verkeerd was nie (.) en, en dit (.) dit is net 'n groot, groot, groot (.h) DEEL van jou wat voel um (.) ek kan nie meer nie, ek wil nie meer nie maar (.h) um omdat die KINDERS daar is en (.) jy's hulle ma so (.) Hulle's vir jou, hulle's in jou sorg (.) jy moet staande bly.

Joey: Maar sommige kere is dit emosioneel uitputtend. Om te dink dat jy probeer alles doen, jou BESTE insit (.h) en dit lyk nie eers goed genoeg nie.

Joey: Verstaan? Dis net nooit goed genoeg nie.

Joey: Maar soos ek sê ek maak, ek maak dit maar vir hulle gemaklik.

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Al voel ek nie altyd gelukkig nie.

Interviewer: Joh sho

Joey: want ek weet kan, ek kan vir my kinders of ek MOET eendag vir my kinders, ek wil net hê hulle wil, moet die beste hê (.h) maar op die oomblik kan ek dit nie doen nie of ek kan dit nie bekostig nie.

Joey: So ek het nooit regtig (.) gegaan vir hulp of vir engiets anders. Ek het maar myself uit daai negatiewe gat uitgehaal en ek probeer net meer positief wees.

Joey: Maar ek het nie eintlik die need gevoel om (.) my hele besigheid nou op die lappe te gaan sit nie {laughs} want

Interviewer: Nee ek verstaan

Joey: Ek was nie depressed nie. Dit was maar net daai tyd n swak tyd of n swak PUNT in jou, in jou lewe so

Poppie: Hull:e is elke dag skoon en daar's elke dag iets om te eet MAAR um (.) wat NOU is (.) NOU my probleem met is, is nou net die finansiële kant wat um (.) wat die probleem is. Ek kom nie by al, al die dinge uit nie (.) om (.) om om (.) veral as jy nie- Soos op die oomblik nou, hy's mos nou sewentien – hy's n jong man – en baie kere kan ek nie vir hom die goed koop wat HY wil hê nie soos (.) sy vriende het, het miskien nou (.) um Vans aan. Nou ek kan nie vir hom Vans koop nie want op die oomblik (.) is nou al n paar maande wat ek nou hulle Allpay moet vat om mos kos te koop en ek kan nie vir hulle koop wat hulle wil HÊ nie

Poppie: Maar (.) dit wat ek ver- ver- (.) verwag het hoe my lewe gaan wees, dit (.) is nie vandag soos, soos EK verwag het dit sou wees nie.

Interviewer: Hm daai tyd terug

Poppie: Dit wat EK wou gehê dit moet hoe my lewe moes gewees het, het- dit het nie so uitgewerk nie.

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: En ek gee nie vir hom, ek gee nie vir hom skuld nie omdat ek swanger geraak en so nie maar (.h) is net, dis baie moeilik (.) as jy nie werk in die

5.3.3 Loneliness and isolation

(p. 89 – 91)

Millicent: Toe ek, toe ek sestien jaar oud was, daar was niemand wat vir my kan klere koop nie of ek is jonk, EK wil mos ook in die fashion wees. Ek wil ook mos aantrek. (.) en daar is niemand wat jy kan sê (.h) my ma't vir my dit gekoop of- jy daar, jy moet maar nou soos jy

Millicent: Want ek ken daai gevoel (.) Ek ken daai gevoel van uit wees en (.) Jy wil net nie betrokke wees met daai want jy, dit voel vir jou jy PAS nie IN nie.

Millicent: So dit is maar al uitstappie wat ons gehad het met mekaar, ek en my babatjie nou. Maar (.) verder moet ek in die huis met my babatjie want (.) daar's nie ander keuse nie.

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: Maak maar jou kindjie groot want dis die pad wat jy gekies het

Millicent: En dis nie wat jy vir jousef wou gehad het nie, jou babatjie op jou eie groot te maak nie.

Joey: Maar toe ek begine swanger raak, het ek (.) MYSELF in hulle skoene gesit (.) en gesê (.h) maar ek KAN, ek pas nie meer daarin nie want ek gaan darem nou n ma word. So ek kan nie meer dinge doen (.) wat ons doen as JONG meisies nie. So ek het my onttrek uit ons vriendskap omdat ek geweet het ek het nou baie meer of groter verantwoordelikheid op my skouers

Blondie: Want kyk wat het met my gebeur. Ek sit MYSELF (.) (.h) as n voorbeeld

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: Want EK moes jou alleen grootmaak. Jou pa was nie daar. Jou pa's dood toe jy twee jaar oud was.

Josephine: Hulle maak matriek klaar, ma' daai tyd by ons wassit nie so nie dit was 'n skande jy, ek kannie my gesig by daai skool wysie niemand mag my eers sien nie, ek bly in die huis want ek bedoel daai, destyds was dit skande.

Joey: Baie hartseer gewees. Baie kere ALLEEN gehuil

Joey: Dis basies nog net ek al die pad gewees.

Interviewer: So um ek wil eintlik vir jou vra het jy PERSOONLIK gevoel dat jy ondersteun is? Het jy iemand gehad wat jy persoo- ek, ja, wat jy kon (.h) vir persoonlike

Joey: Persoonlik

Interviewer: Omgee

Joey: Nee (.)

Interviewer: Is dit?

Joey: Nee (.) Ek het altyd gevoel dat ek moet, ek is al een wat moet provide vir alles die.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Ek moes (.hh) daai ekstra myl loop om vir hulle soos ek (.) ek het nie FISIES daai, ek het meer emosioneel geknak gevoel omdat dis moeilik man, en ek kan nie by alles uitkom nie.

5.3.4 Frustration, anger, and rage

(p. 92 – 95)

Josephine: So met Denwall het ek nie gesukkel nie, ek ken toe alles en so aan (.h) maar ja met Jayden destyds was dit nogal ‘n (...) kyk jy (.) vang ook nie heeltemal reg die eerste keer nie. My ma sal mos miskien verduidelik so en so. Nou gaan jy dit nie reg doen nie, nou gaan sy kom en dan sê sy ‘NEE MAN nie so nie, kom laat ek jou weer wys en’. Nie so nie, miskien, destyds die layer is nie reg gevou nie, kyk hier agter die kind se sterre is ‘n hobbeltjie dit moet nou eers so dan...Jy raak kwaad. Jy kry nou nie die ding reg soos jy dit wil hê nie maar ja

Interviewer: So dit was meer die praktiese goet...

Josephine: Praktiese goed ja ja

Interviewer: Wat eintlik meer van ‘n uitdaging was

Josephine: Yes...praktiese goete.

Josephine: Soos die pa was nie eintlik daar om vir my te ondersteun nie, um ek het net gevoel uhm hy was seker so jaar oud. Ek sien nou net nie meer kans vir jou nie want jy wil ook nie jou deel rerig doen nie, om te gaan werk en vir jou kind te sorg nie.

Josephine: Hy worry nie baie met sy seun nie, nou en dan sal hy daar kom en sy gesig kom wys en hello sê maar ook nie rerig nie, want hy’s ook maar op ‘n verkeerde pad. Hy loer in, nou en dan wanneer hy (...) so voel of whatever sy probleem is maar ek het hom altyd weggehou van Jayden af, want vir my in die begin ja, toe hy kleiner was uhm (.) vir my was dit net uhm jy doen nie jou deel nie so, hoekom moet ek dan ‘n kind met jou deel en uhm jy wil kom wanneer jy wil, jy wil gee wat jy wil um en jys op ‘n

verkeerde pad, en ek dink nie jys 'n goeie invloed. Ek bedoel hy is wel jou kind maar ek wil nie hê my kind moet so nie.

Nathalie: Dit is nie. Dit WAS nie het ek maar sê 'n maklike saak nie want jy's KWAAD, jy weet nie rerig hoekom en (.) en vir WAT het dit met my gebeur nie want jy jy vra en jy vra en jy vra vir die Here hoekom dan, hoekom dan (.h) dan gaan jy maar nooit ver kom nie. Jy antwoord net vir jouself.

Joey: Soos, soos laas, soos laas naweek

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Ek het net gevoel hier neuk die skuld jong!

Interviewer: {laughs}

Joey: Ek gaan nie die skuld betaal nie.

Joey: Maar as jy nou al so groot en verstandig is, hoekom kan jy nie DINK

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Om net te regverdig teenoor jou kinders nie.

Blondie: Ek (.) ek, daar is party dae wat 'n mens, jy weet, jy raak kwaad en dan gee jy hom 'n hou (..) of so maar jy PRAAT nog steeds. Jy sê nog steeds maar (.) ek verwag nie dit van jou nie. Moenie dit doen nie, dis nie mooi nie.

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: Of you know, jy verduidelik HOEKOM.

Blondie: Ek het eendag amper iemand gegryp in die pad en die persoon SIEN die kind gaan val (.) en ek skree ook: "Jou kind gaan val. Die kind is klein, wat weet die kind. Jy moet, jy moet 'n kind se hand vashou. Nie 'n kind JOU hand nie en as daai kind jou hand vashou, gaan daai kind jou hand los en dan wil jy nou agter die kind aanhol soos wat. En daar val die kind. En daar gryp die ma die kind en daar slaan die ma die kind (.) Jissie maar ek gryp daai kind uit haar hand en ek sê vir haar "Is jy MAL?"

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: "JY is verandwoordelik vir jou kind, nie jou KIND vir JOU nie" . Want JY moet mos sien wat gaan gebeur

Poppie: Dis MOEILIK, dis vir my baie moeilik. Baie kere is is, baie kere (.) dan um (.) wil ek nie skel en so nie maar (..) dan is, partykeers dan raak dinge te veel en dan, dan is dit weer die dae wat. Want dis moeilik

Poppie: En hulle twee *{refers to 2 older brothers}* stry weer baie (.) elke oggend

Interviewer: Is dit, die oudste's?

Poppie: Nou hulle twee is nou ouer en hulle's – O hulle twee stry baie (.) Soggens moet hulle hulle (.) hulle hulle dag begin met sk- (.) hulle twee gaan nou mekaar nou seermaak en hulle gaan nou (.) Ons gaan nou; djy ek maak vir jou nou in jou DIE en die ander een sê ek is mos nie bang nie, hoekom kom djy nie- ELKE oggend

5.3.5 Joy

(p. 96 – 99)

Poppie: Party kere as ons almal saans in die huis is en (.) ons kyk nou TV en (.) sal ons nou miskien Jason sal partykeers inkom dan sal hy nou (.) funny wil wees en dan lag ons almal saam en (.) maak jokes en (.) en sal hy nou baie kere praat van hoe sy pa wat gedoen het of- ja is, is goetes wat snaaks is en dan sal ons nou ALMAL as familie lekker saam sit en lag en (.h)

Interviewer: Uh (.) ja daai lekker lag

Poppie: Maar (.) uh hartseer is nie onvermydelik nie. Daar moet dae wees wat dit (.) afdraands gaan en daar moet, daar is, is- dit kan nie net maanskyn en rose wees nie.

Poppie: As ek so terugdink, die persoon wat ek was (.) is dit vir my nou beter dat ek n ma is, as wat ek (.) nog so (.) die, die lewe gehad, lei het wat ek gelei het toe ek jonk was, is dit vir my (.) Ek is bly ek is n ma.

Poppie: Soos hulle twee (.) Zara en Lily, hulle sal altyd vir my as hulle sien ek lyk, ek lyk nie lekker nie. Hulle's so klein maar hulle (.) sal ALTYD net vir my kom sê 'mammie, ons is lief vir mammie'

Interviewer: Sies tog

Poppie: Vir my n soentjie gee. Of hulle steel die mense se blommietjies hier teen die pad af dan bring hulle dit vir my so, en dan vergeet ek al weer waarom ek nou geskel het.

Millicent: So: um (.) ek wil meer betrokke; ek hou van betrok te wees in hulle (.) in hulle lewe.

Interviewer: Ag ja

Millicent: Dit is vir my baie lekker om betrokke te wees in, in wat hulle doen

Millicent: Elke tyd as ek vir hulle (.) as ek vir hulle iets koop (.) AL drie van hulle, hulle's baie lief vir drukkie gee en soentjies gee. Nou dit is vir my (.) DAAI'S vir my baie (.) dit STAAN vir my baie uit want hulle't daai liefde vir my en hulle het (.) Hulle koester vir my, hulle waarDEER my.

Millicent: Dit is wat dit is. Dis vir my BAIE wat vir my uitstaan van hulle; dat hulle daai liefdevolle kinders is. Hulle's BAIE lieflik; hulle hou van (.) hulle is daai drukkie-kinders. Dit maak vir my baie na aan die hart want hulle waardeer ENIGE dingetjie al is dit klein of groot. Hulle waardeer enigiets wat ek vir hulle gee al is dit ook 'n ou MUSSIE

Millicent: En ek kan SIEN baie keer dan voel jy trots oor die goedjies wat jy hom geleer het. Hy kan vir my sê 'my pa se kar is grys' en dan gaan hy DRUK op daai en dis goedjies wat EK nou geleer het vir hom

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: en dan (.) jy voel so trots.

Joey: Maar die spesiale tye wat ons wel saam het is wanneer ons saam 'n movie kan kyk. Ek skep vir ons popcorn. Of ons sit en gesels (.) net. Of ons speel 'n gamepie of wat ook al, net om die FUN te maak (.h) in, in die plekkie waar ons is.

Joey: Ons het die Saterdag beach toe gegaan en die Sondag het ons Waterfront toe gegaan (.h) Spur toe gegaan, gaan uiteet. Net (.) dat ons kan tyd spend saam met die seuns. En daai is die beste gevoel ooit as jy sien jou kinders lag en hulle's gelukkig.

Nathalie: Het ek ge- het ek, het ek gehuil en ek het vir die Here dankie gesê (.h) en ek sê vir hom (.) ek is BAIE baie trots op hom want dit wat hy achieve het um Dinsdag, sy uitslae in 2020 deur, waardeur hy deurgegaan het (.h) was vir my (.) geloofwekkend en dit was net vir my so fantasties en ek, en ek kan net die Here daarvoor dankie sê (.h) vir dit wat hy nou um bereik het.

Blondie: Ek wil cozy by hulle lê. Ek (.h) sal eerder my tyd met hulle spandeer as wat ek (..) um daai soos

Interviewer: Okay, ja, okay

Blondie: Want die tyd wat ek by die werk is, is klaar vir my te veel.

Interviewer: Hm (.) ja

Blondie: Okay 'n mens MOET, 'n mens MOET werk. Jy MOET. Jou kinders MOET skoolgaan. Maar dit voel vir my te lank.

Josephine: {Laughter} Ek weet nie wat om te sê nie. Moederskap beteken vir my baie.

Interviewer: Mm.

Josephine: Baie, baie, baie. Want dis iets wat kosbaar is. Omdat ek dink aan um (...) Vrouens wat (.) ek bedoel, wat nou nie kinders kan hê nie.

Interviewer: Mm.

Josephine: En dan is daar mos nou ons wat kan hê, wat klomp het, sommer vyf, ses. Dan word die kinders verwaarloos. En dis sad, want (.) hoekom doen jy dit nadat daar 'n vrou is wat 'n kindjie verlang?

Poppie: Dit beteken vir my baie (.) en dis baie dinge, kere wat ek (.) Besides die, die die ongehoorsaamheid van hulle

Interviewer: {laughs} Ja

Poppie: Is dit, is dit baie kere wat ek trots kan wees op my kinders

5.4 Coping

5.4.1 Support as a buffer

(p. 101 – 104)

Nathalie: As jy die regte supp- support system het en, en dan (.) dan is dit 'n baie goeie ding. Maar as jy nie die regte support system het nie dan (.) soek nie, dan sal dit maar baie agteruit gaan (.h) want dan gaan dit (.) as jy {sighs} vir my is dit (.) jy begin REG. As jy nie REG gaan besluit nie dan gaan daai kind ook nie reg opgroei nie.

Poppie: Ek het darem, ek kan darem (.) my ma kom maar altyd en dan (.) bring sy ietsie en (.h) dan is dit nou um (.) hulle't 'n, ek het 'n vriendin wat ek agtien jaar nou al mee vriende is en (.) s:y, ek en sy's baie close en ons is soos susters. Ek vat vir haar vir my oudste suster en haar ma wat ek vir my, soos my ma (.h)

Interviewer: Ah dis so sweet

Poppie: En hulle's teen (.) meeste van die tyd is hulle altyd daar...As hulle nou, sy sal haar, sy sal haar laaste vir my (.) vir my gee. Ons het 'n baie goeie verstandhouding. Sy (.) sy sal vir my- as ek verkeerd is dan sal sy vir my sê. Of ek nou kwaad raak (.) dan moet (.) sy't maar net weer reggeraak maar ons twee't 'n (.) lekker verstandhouding; sy's hulle twee se peetma.

Poppie: Is dit (.) hulle twee s'n is, is (.) ek het nie so (.) so moeilik; dit was nie vir my so moeilik met hulle.

Interviewer: Met die eerste?

Poppie: Met hulle twee soos met die twee (.) met, met Jason en James

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: Daar was tye wat hulle pa nie werk gehad het nie maar (..) ek het baie ondersteuning gehad met hulle twee, met (.) hulle twee het ek baie ondersteuning gehad.
 Poppie: Ja so, so my ma het baie kere vir my ondersteun, en dan's dit nou (.) ook nou (.) um my kinders, hulle peetma

Poppie: Hm (.) Daar is tye wat ek (.) wat ek, wat ek moedeloos raak maar (..)

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: As (.) as jy ondersteuning in die lewe het dan kan jy enigiets aanpak wat lewe, wat- soos hulle sê (.) baie kere sê die; die ou mense't so gesê um (.) jy kan enigiets aanpak wat die lewe na jou kant toe gooi (.) Baie kere dink ek nogal daaraan (.) As (.) hoe dit sal, dit gesal gewees het as, as ek nie vir hulle in my lewe gehad het nie. Dan voel ek (.h) voel ek baie hartseer nogal (.) want

Poppie: As ek my lewe nou kyk en (.) die ondersteuning wat ek nou het, nou nog het van daai tyd af (.) is dit vir my (.) hulle's vir my baie waardevol, en (.) ek dink nie ek sou so ver gekom het as hulle nie vir my onderge- geondersteun het nie

Joey: Met die, met die oudste een was dit mos nou sy pa, en dit was actually sy aunties, sy ouma en sy oupa so hy't n HELE klomp familie gehad.

Interviewer: Ah shame dis nice

Joey: Met hierdie enetjie is dit basies ek, MY ma, my suster, my broer met **HIERDIE** omgewing waar ons nou woon. So dis (.) hulle tweetjies het die ondersteuningkring van MY mense af.

Joey: So as ek ietsie nodig het, dit kom nou wanneer ek nou rerig in daai DRUK is

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: En dan moet jy maar nou jou trots in jou sak sit en dan sal ek maar altyd vir haar vra. Boodskappie stuur en sy sal vir my help of wat ook al met alles.

Blondie: Maar (.) my ma was darem baie daar om vir my te (.hh) My ma het my- my ma het my baie gehelp en (.h) veral haar broers

Interviewer: Okay

Blondie: Haar broers en (.) een of twee van hulle vrouens {lag} het my baie gehelp.

Josephine: Ja daar was ups en downs, en swaar tye, maar, ek vir my, was dit net uhm(..) jy moet ondersteuning het, soos my ma het my baie ondersteun met goed wat ek nie geweet het van babatjies af nie, hoe om die kind uit te smeer, om die babatjie te was, as die kind miskien nou, watter medisyne hy moet hê, wat moet in sy bottel kom, daai soort tipe goed

Josephine: Want daar was nie iemand anders nie my ouma was toe mos nou lankal al oorlede, paar jare voor daai. So (.) ja:: my ma het my eintlik baie bygestaan met daai kindjie van my en hy was net so klein hy het 1.7kg geweeg

Josephine: Uhm...wat kan ek nou sê {laughing} op en af, uhm, somtyds was dit maar swaar, maar ek dink...kyk as ñ mens jonk is, jy moet ondersteuning he [mmh], en dis wat ek noggal gehad het.

Josephine: Maar nou rerig wat ek kan sê het van destyds is, ek was dom en ek weet nie wat sou ek gemaak het sonder my ma nie,

Interviewer: Ja

Josephine: Okay my oupa het mos nou geldelik ondersteun, maar ek bedoel dit wat sy weet het ek mos nou nie geweet nie, hoe doen 'n mens dit, hoe doen 'n mens daai, hoe vryf jy die windjies uit, wat gooi jy in die bottel as hy miskien só is of wat doen dji as dit so is of as hy so is of sy mondjie, of hoe maak jy. Daai sort tipe

Millicent: Um um um (.) my eksman se - sê maar my kinders se ouma

Interviewer: Hmm okay

Millicent: Sy was baie meer um (.) sy't my altyd baie gehelp (.) veral toe ek um Mike gebore was. Toe't Mike gebore was toe's Chris oppad (.) um primêre toe, Primêre skool toe (.h) En um ons het net so pas uit die hospitaal uitgekome (.) en sy't my baie gehelp want Chris makeer nog daai aandag. En ek moet vir die babatjie aandag gee.

Millicent: ...En afsprake wat jy by die kliniek en na- jy's ALLEEN. Die pa van die babatjie is nie saam met jou om jou hand vas te hou nie, jy't nie daai ondersteuning (.) van- dit is alles, daai MOEILIKE stappe wat jy moet deurgaen.

5.4.2 Religious practices

(p. 106 – 108)

Nathalie: En (.) dit was ñ baie moeilike tyd gewees vir hom maar um (.) toe ek begine besef maar um (.) EK sal moet die pa vergewe sodat my kind beter kan word.

Interviewer: Ja

Nathalie: En ek het vir die Here gevra, Here help my net dat ons (.h) net uit hierdie omstandighede uitkom en die Here het my gebed gehoor en my kind was genees, hy was gesond. Hy't baie beter met met maatjies gekommunikeer (.h) deur die hulp van die sielkundige wat hy't mos gesien het.

Nathalie: En dan het ek maar net altyd gebid en sê: Here, help my net, HOU my net op die pad (.h) sodat ek net daar kan wees vir my kinders (.h) en (.) die Here't my deurgedra (.) en en

Interviewer: Ja

Nathalie: Totdat hy my, my oë en my denkwysse (.h) um oopgemaak het en verander het en (.) ek kon hulle pa kon vergewe het

Nathalie: Vandag kan ek sê n mens (.) jy kan nie jou lewe bou sonder God nie

Poppie: Toe het hulle gekyk en toe sien hulle maar is, die, is infeksie in die dermpie. Sy kom ook al deur baie dinge. Sy't al n operasie ook gehad toe sy (.) drie maande oud is. Toe (.) kry sy n operasie vir haar dermpie (.hh) Maar die Here het ons deur al dit gedra en dit was n moeilike tyd vir my maar (.) toe ek by die hospitaal gewees het (.) Ek het nie gesukkel met goed nie (..) Ek het wel nie gehad om – ek gaan nou, ook nie daai tyd gewerk nie – ek het wel nie gehad om te (.) om te koop vir myself nie maar die Here het teen alle tye iemand ingestuur wat nou ook n kind kom kry en dan het ons maats gemaak, en dan het

Poppie: Soos ek dit NOU, as ek nou terugdink daaraan, dan dink ek (.h) dan dink ek is niemand anders as die Here wat vir my gehelp het in daai tyd nie.

Poppie: Kyk byvoorbeeld ek's bid nou al lankal vir werk (.h) So soos (.) is MOEILIK vir my (.) om om om om (.) my oë op hom gefokus te hou (.) maar dan kom daar tye wat hy vir my weer DEURkom soos met (.) soos met (.) waar hy miskien nou vir my (..) ons nou nie sukkel die week met iets om te eet nie en dan (.) dan dan dan bewys dit weer vir my hy IS daar vir my en

Interviewer: Hm hy sien vir jou

Poppie: Ja

Poppie: En um (..) toe, toe, toe die suster nou die die, vir hom vat en (.) ingaan daar na die kamer toe waar hulle mos nou die, die noodoperasies en goed doen. Toe gaan ek uit en ek gaan bid en ek vra vir die Here om my kindjie deur te dra

Joey: Ons het hoop. Ons bid, ons (.) bid MOS vir 'n lewendige God so ons aanvaar dat dinge (.h) gaan vir ons eendag makliker word (.h) So hulle's saam my positief so is nie, ek kan nie nou (.) moed verloor nie.

Interviewer: Kan ek vra wat het, wat um (.) het jou, wat het jy, jou daai push gegee? Wat het jy, jou, die soos (.) streng gegee om (..) te, aan te gaan?

Joey: Ek weet nie (.) Om die waarheid te sê, Sinead, ek het maar net meer begine (.) bid.

Blondie: Dit was nie 'n lekker saak om so groot te word nie (.) maar ek BID elke dag, ek sê vir die Here dankie ek maak nie my kinders so groot nie

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: Ek is met 'n baie wonderlike man getroud. Ons, hy KAN nou NIE vir my die maan, son en sterre alles gee nie. Maar hy's lief vir my en vir my kinders. So dit is vir my (.) rêrig (.) 'n groot, groot wonderwerk dat die Here vir my geseën het na al my *struggles* {lag}

Millicent: Nou ek wil my kinders, ek vra vir die Here dat (.) die dag wanneer ek moet oë toemaak, moet hulle op 'n GROOT ouderdom dat hulle vir hulle self kan (.) vir hulle eie twee voete kan staan.

5.5 Meaning of motherhood

5.5.1 Motherhood as duty and responsibility

(p. 111 – 116)

Joey: So die pa het fisies na hom gekyk en dan's dit mos nou sy pa se ouers (.h) wat na hom gekyk het. So as ek nou teruggekom het van skool af dan het ek nou my basiese moederskap pligte oorgeneem.

Millicent: Maar toe ek nou swanger raak toe kon ek nou nie dit nie en ek moes gaan werk het vir die tyd (.) om my swangerskap moet ek gaan werk het in die fabriek. Net om babagoedjies bymekaar te kry en vir my gereed maak vir die babatjie mos nou. Dit is baie baie um verantwoordelikheid.

Millicent: Ek moes na my eie babatjie omsien, ek moes dit (.) wat ek WIL gedoen het; ek moet my dans as ek wil gaan dans het (.) Jy kan nie, jy't 'n babatjie. Wie gaan na jou babatjie kyk? Jy moet na jou eie babatjie kyk. Jy, jy moet gedink het aan dit VOOR jy um (.) hoe sê grootmense – ons, ons praat mos baie wild (.) ons grootmense

Interviewer: {laughs}

Millicent: Jy moes gedink het voor jy gaan oop lê het

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: By ń man. Jy moes dit aan gedink het. Moenie nou wil loop en (.) wil loop en dans. Wie moet na jou babatjie kyk? Hier lê jou dans, hier's jou babatjie, kan nie nou dans.

Poppie: Ek was baie (.) baie kere baie onverantwoordelik en nou is, is ek meer verantwoordelik want (.) hulle's, hulle't nie gevra om hier te wees nie en (.) ek moet verantwoordelik wees vir hulle, vir hulle twee.

Blondie: Ek het maar alles gekoop wat ek vir jou kon gekoop het want (.) jy's my enigste. So SY was letterlik (.) die, die KONINGING, die prinsessie

Interviewer: Hm {lag}

Blondie: Sal ek maar sê want sy het ALLES gekry

Blondie: Ja maar ek gaan nie, ek gaan nie vir, ek gaan nie sê ek is perfek nie (.) glad nie. Is net n ding van (.) ja, ek probeer om ń goeie ouer te wees.

Josephine: JA. So, moederskap is vir my iets, um, baie diep. Diep (.) en (.) ek dink dis een van die belangrikste dinge. Want kyk kinders wat sonder ma grootword. Dit is nie lekker nie. Of die ma sterwe nou

Interviewer: Mm, dis so hartseer.

Josephine: Dis hartseer. Want daai standvastigheid wat daar was, is dan nie meer daar nie.

Josephine: Vir 'n- vir 'n kind, as iemand jou slaan: "Ek gaan nou my my ma sê"

Interviewer: Ja {laughter}.

Josephine: Is nie: "Ek gaan my pa sê nie." As jy seerkry: "MAMMIE," of is, so. Daar in my huis is daar nooit geroep: "PA," of wat nie, dis net: "Ma! MAMMIE"

Joey: So ń mens moet hierdie goetes (.h) met jou seuns deel want (.h) ek meen maar dit gaan mos darem nie vir my lekker wees om te sien of om te DINK dat jy't AL daai effort en moeite ingesit.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Om jou seuns so mooi groot te kry en dan gebeur daar iewers skielik iets. Hoe gaan jy voel as ouer? (.h)

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Jy gaan voel jy't gefoutief in die lewe. Want waar het jy jou kind verkeerd (.) opgevoed of wat ook al. Verstaan? maar soos ek sê, ek moet maar net positief bly (.) en insit waar jy moet of kan.

Nathalie: Jy gaan moet verantwoordelikheid neem (.) EN dan gaan jy nie jou drome kan bereik wat jy NOU as 'n jong persoon wil bereik nie want (.hh) sodra jy 'n kind het, gaan jou denkwysse en, en alles gaan verander in jou lewe.

Nathalie: En (.) dji's hulle ma so (.) hulle's vir jou, hulle's in jou sorg (.) jy moet staande bly

Nathalie: Dan sy's mos nou (.) elf jaar oud en want EK help haar oppas (.h) en dit met my gebeur het so dink ek, ek moet vir haar voorberei

Blondie: (.hh) Om 'n goeie ma te wees beteken vir MY (.) net om daar te wees vir jou kinders (.)

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: Om (.) kyk 'n mens kan nie ALTYD nie, maar (.) as jy kan, om elke dag vir jou kinders 'n drukkies te gee. Om elke dag vir hulle te sê hoe lief jy vir hulle is. WAT jy van hulle dink en wat jy van hulle verwag. MAAR jy kan ook altyd 'n dingetjie insit van, jy HOEF NIE die beste te probeer, ALTYD die beste te wil wees.

Joey: Ek is nie altyd sterk nie maar ek, VOOR my kinders kyk ek maar dat ek elke dag, hulle glo dat dit, ek IS 'n sterk vrou so.

Millicent: Baie kere dan gaan dit oor ook respek en dissipline

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: Van hoe JY um jou kinders behandel, hoe jy jou man behandel, hoe jy ANDER mense behandel.

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: Want jou kinders kyk op na JOU.

Millicent: Want ek moet vir hulle kan wys ek is baie sterk. Want as EK (.) daar in 'n hoekie gaan sit dan gaan hulle ook (.) mos maar begin dink maar

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: Hoekom, is hoekom (.) Dan is hulle, dan voel HULLE ook maar (.) dit wat hulle in die lewe gaan, dit MOET nou net so wees.

Poppie: En (.) maar dis, dis nie maklik om 'n kind groot te maak ook nie want um (.) jy moet altyd kyk (.) wat jy ook doen voor die kind of so want, sodat dit nie vir jou op die (.) pad vorentoe kan uh um (.) hoe kan ek nou sê, kan op, kan (.) teen jou wees op die, op jou pad nie want (.) Soos soos (.) um (.) hulle eksperimenteer mos baie dinge in die lewe.

Josephine: Ek is nie uhm () daai tipe streng soos wat my oupa was van net streng, streng, jy gaan nêrens nie, deur word toegesluit, jy moet daar bly, of jys grounded of wat nie, maar (.) net ek praat hard met hulle as dit kom by maniere en so

Josephine: Jy kan weet waar jou plek is, veral in die lewe wat so deurmekaar is en sodat hulle, ek moet actually vir hulle die fondasie lê sodat hulle kan weet

Interviewer: Hmm

Josephine: Wat is die regte besluite en wat is verkeerd.

Josephine: Wat gebeur dan nou hier by die huis, ek bedoel mens moet verantwoordelik wees sodat jou kinders ook daardie selfde verantwoordelikheid kan aanleer.

Nathalie: Om te sien my kinders groei. JA hoe mens discipline en en (.) op die regte pad te hou.

Josephine: 'n Goeie ma is (.) iemand wat alles gee vir haar kinders, of doen (...) en (..) soos soos ons nou gepraat het ek dink die meeste van die antwoorde is daar in. Ek bedoel jy wil net die beste hê vir jou kinders, en ek dink 'n goeie ma is een wat 'n kind tug ook.

Poppie: (.) Ek sal nie sommer nou 'n, 'n ding wat onverantwoordelik is aanvang nie want (..) ek is mos nou 'n ma.

Blondie: JY is verantwoordelik vir jou kind, nie jou KIND vir JOU nie.

Josephine: So, ek kan sê die ma is so te sê (..) amper soos 'n skip. Sy's seker die kaptein
Interviewer: Mm, nee dit– ek love dit

Josephine: Of whatever, maar sy's die voorpunt, meer wat ek wou sê.

5.5.2 Power, control, and agency**(p. 118 – 121)**

Millicent: Jy voel daar's iemand wat na JOU luister en nie jy luister na iemand anders nou nie, want daar's iemand onderkant jou wat jou bevele moet um gehoorsaam. Jy voel jy't um - kom ons sê – in DAAI oomblik (.) jy's nog STEEDS n kind maar jy voel groot (.) en jy voel jy's n groot mens want hoe kan jy.

Interviewer: Ja {laughing}

Millicent: Want jy {laughing} O jy kan, dit, vir my voel dit amper soos um (.) um ja (..) Sy of hy of sy moet maar nou net- ek sê (.) jy mag nie dit doen nie en jy, dis klaar. So as jy nou nie vir, vir my nou (.) OOR daai reëls gaan, dan kry jy n pak. So vir MY voel dit ek is (.) ek is nog jonk maar ek is n MA. Ek voel groot, ek kan alles bemagtig (.) want MY, my my ree- um (.) dit wat ek sê is wet.

Millicent: So um (..) ja dit is- dit, baie keer is dit; moederskap is nie eintlik rêrig (.) dit dit kos RÊRIG iemand (.) n MA om (.) Eks- almal kan n ma wees. Almal, elke vrou, kan n ma wees maar dit hang van jouself af wat jy (.) daarmee wil maak.

Millicent: Ja. Jy voel um (.) jy voel jy kan alles regkry.

Millicent: Dit het vir my uh van my n baie beter MENS gemaak want die versoeking is groot en (.) dit, jy moet n n sterk wilskrag het as- veral as jy jonk is. Jy's nog onervare (.) van mansmense in jou lewe (.h) Dit dit dit (.) rêrigwaar dit vat BAIE van, van (.) veral van n vroumens af.

Nathalie: En (..) en ek het nooit daaraan gedink om dit te voltooi nie maar (.h) toe um my egskeiding kom en ek het geskei, seker so n jaar of wat daarna (.h) en toe besef ek maar (.) het dit nou eintlik vir my terug gehou want EK voel ek wil nou my um matriek (.) KLAARMAAK.

Interviewer: Ja

Nathalie: En (.) en toe het ek.

Interviewer: Ah

Nathalie: Ek het my matriek so drie jaar terug klaar gedoen.

Nathalie: Ek voel baie bly in dit wat ek bereik, in dit wat ek nog KAN wees, kan doen.

Interviewer: Ja

Nathalie: En ek voel baie, baie tevrede met dit.

Joey: En ek voel- JA, ek voel actually BAIE MEER trotser op myself

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: =dat ek verantwoordlikheid begine aanvaar het om te sê maar ek wil MY kinders by MY hê

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: En hulle moet onder MY dak groot word.

Joey: (.) Voel ek bemagtig?

Interviewer: Ja, voel jy um as, of (.) soos, ja, voel jy um (.) meer asof jy

Joey: In beheer is?

Interviewer: Ja (.) as jy dit so kan sê

Joey: Ja doen (.) Ja ek is in beheer, en dis soos ek sê, dis wat ek nog al die tyd wou gehad het.

Joey: Dis hoe ek voel as moeder.

Interviewer: Okay

Joey: Nie dat ek negetief is of so nie maar daar's dinge wat ek nog WIL doen.

Joey: En (.) ek beoog om volgende jaar verder te study. Ek wil net in die regte rigting gaan.

Interviewer: Ja ah yes

Joey: En as jy nie vir jouself doelwitte NOG STEEDS (.) gaan (.) gee of maak nie, gaan jy BLY waar jy is. So n mens moet maar net bietjie positief wees.

Blondie: Ja. Dit is (.h) Ek doen (.) want, joh, soms dan voel dit jy is so klein en dan

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: As jy weet jy is verantwoordelik vir iets en vir iemand (...) dan sal jy met (.) met al jou mag en krag iemand aanVAT wat miskien vir jou of jou kind wil seer maak.

Blondie: Maar {maak keël skoon} (.) ja ek, ek kan vir jou sê ek het baie verander. Ek het baie sterker geword

Interviewer: Hm

Bondie: Ek LAAT NIE OOR my loop nie {lag}

Poppie: Dis nie altyd moei- maklik, die besluite wat n mens in jou lewe doen nie, maak nie. Dis nie altyd maklik nie

Interviewer: Ja

Poppie: maar partykeers is dit vir, vir HULLE of vir geld se beswil wat jy besluit om.

Josephine: “Mammie, kan mammie nie vir my help met dit of daai” of so maar, as dit, as’t nie kan nie dan so, dis dis ‘n baie. Hoe kan ek nou sê, iemand wat, ek hou van standvastigheid, op my eie so.

Blondie: En um (.) ja (.) maar jy moet ook maar op jou eie bene probeer staan om (.) sterk te kan wees (.) want jy kan nie net afhanklik wees van ander mense nie want jy moet onthou daar is (.h) ’n kind wat afhanklik is van JOU as moeder so jy moet maar (.) probeer om op jou eie bene te staan.

5.5.3 Resilience

(p. 123 – 125)

Millicent: Dit maak van jou ’n sterker mens vir die dinge wat jy deurgemaak het.

Interviewer: Nee rêrig, ja, okay. Um (.) okay so so jy sal sê dat dit beïnvloed jou lewe nou?

Millicent: Ja (.) dit beïnvloed my lewe nou want um (.) ek is baie sterker deur dit.

Millicent: So ek moet vir hulle wys dat ek is (.) STERKER (.) Ek laat, nie laat niemand vir my onder kry nie, ek laat nie dat mens vir my goed sê of verneder of (.) watever nie.

Blondie: Maar (.) ek bedoel, ’n mens groei net. Ek sê altyd: ’n Mens moet nie van (.) goed na sleg (.) gaan nie. Jy moet van (.) jou slegte gewoontes moet jy beter dinge

Interviewer: Hm

Blondie: Maak. Jy kan nie, um, net in daai slegte (.) omstandighede wil bly nie.

Joey: Ek weet nie, jy sal seker nie verstaan nie maar dit, emosioneel was dit vir my moeilik.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Maar ek het nog elke dag maar vir my (.) net daai ekstra (.) PUSH gegee om bietjie meer in te sit as wat ek moes.

Joey: So dis hoekom EK gevoel het EK moet net sterk genoeg staan sodat ek vir my ’n bungalow kan aanskaf en my kind terug kry by my. Gelukkig het ek so daai verstandhouding in hulle gebring om VERANTWOORDELIKHEID (.) te wees op

hulle eie EN te aanvaar hoe die lewe hulle druk (.h) want (.) um (.) dit maak n mens actually sterker.

Nathalie: Dit het vir my net baie meer sterker gemaak omdat dit het vir my geleer maar (.h) um dit was vir my n SPIEEL. Ek kon

Interviewer: Ja

Nathalie: Ek kan nou TERUG kyk daarin en dan kan ek sê maar (.) dit is wat goed, gaan gebeur het. Dit is wat (.) MOET gebeur en en, en dit net reg stel...Jy moet net jousef optel en (.) aanbeweeg.

Nathalie: Want enige persoon KAN (.) Jy kan groei (.h) en jy kan net meer sterker word. Dit wat jy (.) voel (.) dat in jou pad is, jy KAN daar oorkom.

Interviewer: Yes

Nathalie: Jy KAN daai, daai brug wat daar, as daar n brug is, jy kan oor daai brug kom

5.5.4 Knowledge

(p. 126 – 129)

Poppie: Dit het ek kom leer (.h) As n mens miskien nog, as jy nog, n baba op n plan is dit nog diff- different van as jy n tipe plan het want (.) en as jy, veral as jy nie werk het nie, dan's dit moeilik om n kind in (.) die tyd groot te maak. Want nou vandag weet ek wat hy van hou, hoe hy (.) waarom hy sukkel mee in die lewe en so. Ek het self, mySELF (.) GELEER. Uh party goed het sy my geleer en party goed het ek self geleer

Poppie: Ek is eintlik n (.) voel dit vir my of ek um n moeder net is want um (.) my suster is mos nou hier by my en (.) baie kere sukkel sy met ding- hoe sy verander in die lewe en dan moet ek nou vir haar verduidelik jy is nou (.) n jong meisie en al die

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: En dan is dit nou my broers, hulle twee. Hulle gaan nie na my ma toe nie; hulle (.) kom kla oor hulle dinge by my en dan sal ek nou (.h) Sal ek nou vir hulle miskien nou raad gee

Joey: Okay in die begin (.) dit was nie (.) ek sal nie sê dit was moeilik nie. Ek was wel onkundig so ek moes baie dinge nog LEER. Verstaan?

Blondie: Jy- ek het nie geweet van (.) as die baba slaap moet jy slaap nie

Interviewer: {lag} Ja

Blondie: So ek het, agterna het my ma vir my gesê: ‘Nee man- LOS. moenie die huis skoonmaak nie as jy nie kan nie. LOS’

Interviewer: Uh

Blondie: Moenie kos maak as jy nie kan nie- los (.h) As die baba slaap gaan slaap jy ook.

Blondie: Dan sê ek nee um (.) en kyk daar’s baie kere wat ek vir my ma OOK nog iets kan leer van die, van die huwelik veral.

Blondie: Um ek kan darem ook nou vir mense raad gee.

Interviewer: H:m

Blondie: Ek kan ook vir, uit self-ondervinding praat.

Josephine: Môre is ek nie hier nie, of ek is nie by die huis nie, eks by die werk of wat weet nie wat gaan aan nie en, so het ek ook maar geleer en uhm toe het ek nou weer vir haar geleer en soos met Denwall, my ma het net gekom die dag toe ons by die huis “is alles oraait”, jy weet mos hoe werk die storie, toe sê ek nee dis oraait mammie kan maar gaan, toe gaan sy want ek ken mos nou alles, ek weet hoe en wat.

Millicent: Dis van ervaring wat jy opgetel het (.) deur die, deur die jare. Dis die ERVARING wat ek opgetel het en jy kan vir ander mense sê (.h)

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: Waar (.) um baie keer – ek maak ’n voorbeeld – baie kere dan is dit my broer se meisiekinders, wil altyd vir my kom raad vra

Interviewer: Ah sies tog

Millicent: En ek sal vir hulle baie mooi kan verduidelik.

Millicent: Ek kan vir hom miskien (.) WYSHEID gee

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: Maar ek kan nie vir hom teen alle tye BESKERM.

Millicent: Ek (.) ek pas maar aan hoe hy nou is en hoe- dit het, maak dit (.) dit maak dit lekker en interessant.

Interviewer: Ja

Millicent: Dit maak dit vir my- dit, dit maak my dag om

Interviewer: Hm

Millicent: Om vir hulle besig te hou. Dit voel vir my ek leer vir hulle um (.) baie MEER by die HUIS.

Poppie: Aan die een kant was dit n, was dit olraait en dan aan een die ander een (.) partykeer is dit olraait, soos ek mos leer dat hy moet drink aan my.

Poppie: Dit maak nie n verskil of jy jonk n moeder raak en of jy ouer n moeder raak nie (.h) As jy n moeder is (.) daar's baie dinge wat jy leer as jy n moeder is.

Interviewer: Hm

Poppie: Wat jy nie geweet het as jy nou miskien nou nog nie kinders gehad het nie.

5.5.5 Selflessness, sacrifice, and privilege

(p. 130 – 133)

Joey: So daar's baie dinge wat jy MOET (.) opsy skuif om jou kinders eerste te stel en my kinders is my eerste prioriteit (.h) Ek weet nie hoe hulle pa voel oor hulle nie (.)

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Dit- ek steur nie nie actually vir my daaraan nie (.h) maar solank ek weet my kinders is my alles.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Hulle't nie gevra om in die lewe te kom nie.

Joey: Ek kan nie

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Meer so n persoon wees nie so (.h) Ek het nou kinders om na aan te dink so ek kan nie meer so (.) DINK of selfsugtig wees of wat ook al nie.

Joey: Okay om n moeder te wees is basies, dis n groot voorreg.

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: ...Dis nie altyd maklik nie.

Joey: Okay uh MY uitdaging uit uh uit die lewe as n jong ma is dat ek moes baie dinge prys loop (.) Jy kan nie meer vir jou n jong girl party, geniet, drink of uitgaan nie (.) want jy weet jy't nou n kleintjie wat nou eerste aandag nodig het so

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Dat dit nou die eerste prioriteit is so

Poppie: Maar soos dit vir hulle; party dae lyk dit vir hulle dit is, ek (.) ek doen nie (.) is SO (.) is (.h) kyk hier dan voel dit vir my hulle, hulle waardeer nie wat ek doen nie.

Josephine: Daars klomp antwoorde wat ek kan gee maar basically is, 'n goeie ma is iemand wat omgee vir haar kinders, ek bedoel (..)

Interviewer: Okei

Josephine: Omgee met die sin in van (.hh) jy is altyd daar vir hulle, jy gee om vir hulle, jy sorg vir hulle, jy dink altyd EERSTE aan hulle, want as jy nie eerste aan jou kinders dink nie dan weet ek nie.

Josephine: Baie, baie, baie. Want dis iets wat kosbaar is. Omdat ek dink aan um (...) Vrouens wat (.) ek bedoel, wat nou nie kinders kan hê nie.

Interviewer: Mm.

Josephine: En dan is daar mos nou ons wat kan hê, wat klomp het, sommer vyf, ses. Dan word die kinders verwaarloos. En dis sad, want (.) hoekom doen jy dit nadat daar 'n vrou is wat 'n kindjie verlang? Wat al jare probeer, of ek bedoel.

Millicent: Ek het nou die eerste um Junie verjaar. Okay my man gee vir my geld; ek moet vir my gaan iets mooi koop (.) Okay, ek is in die winkel maar ek sien niks vir my nie, op die oomblik het ek niks vir my gesien nie, maar ek sien iets vir my kinders, al drie my kinders. Want my kinders het- ek sien MYSELF, my kinders, ek sien my kinders self daarin. Ek het vir my agteruit gestoot en ek het; ek gaan nie vir my maar koop nie- ek gaan eerder vir my kinders.

Millicent: En (.) toe ek begin, toe ek nog swanger is, toe het dit my weerHOU van jo:ng (.) van my jongsewe af, van dit wat ek wil doen en (.) ek moet maar wag tot um my kind nou miskien drie of vier en vir my sê 'mamma ek is honger'

Josephine: Jy gaan moet regop sit met daai baba, jy gaan moet dit doen, jou hele roetine verander. Kyk jys 'n vyftienjarige jy loop, jy gaan, jy kom soos jt wil, jy maak soos jy wil, jy kan nie nou meer loop nie, jy kan nie meer kom en gaan wanneer jy wil nie want jy moet heeldag sit met die babatjie of jy moet, ek bedoel jou hele alles verander.

Josephine: Ja uhm ja ek dink met my was dit ook so, veral aan die begin met Jayden, um dit was net alles is vir my kind, vir my kind, ons is by die werk dan maak my vrinne, daai van my, hulle koop chips en so dan sê ek nee ek gaan die vir my kind neem, enige ding is vir my kind nou sê hulle alles bly jou kind, jou kind weet nie eers wat jy hier doen nie of eet of wat nie, eet die chips of so, dan sê ek nee dis vir my kind want net daai as ek vanaand by die huis kom en ek haal vir hom iets uit my sak uit en daai uhm (.) expression op sy gesig van my ma het nou iets vir my gebring, hy's klaar bly om vir my te sien maar nou bring ek nog vir hom 'n 'something' en dis mos kostelik en hy is nog klein so daai was vir my uhm ja ek kan nie sê ek voel dieselfde soos hulle nie (.h) in die begin voel 'n mens so ja.

5.5.6 Performance

(p. 135 – 136)

Joey: Ek moet eintlik dit vir my kinders vra want ek weet nie {laughing} Ek probeer maar net elke dag my bes te doen. Ek wil vir hulle die lewe gee wat ek nooit gehad het nie.

Joey: Ek is opgevoed. Ek het maar nie die ondervinding of die education agter my naam nie maar ek weet as 'n moeder (.) gee ek net my beste so ek dink ek het baie meer volwasse geraak in my 34 jaar.

Joey: Sommige kere (.h) is dit ook dan so moeilik om uit te kom (.) Moederskap is 'n baie nice ervaring

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Maar dis ook wat jy insit.

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: Met my geld.

Interviewer: Sho ja

Joey: Maar ek sal altyd probeer om vir hulle (.) te cover en die beste te gee.

Nathalie: O um (.h) weet jy nê (.) ek wil nog altyd net die beste ma gewees het vir my kinders.

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: Ek wil nog altyd net vir hy, hom nog altyd net die beste (.) hê VIR hulle

Millicent: Jy is, jy wil graag gesond lewe, jy wil die BESTE gee vir jou babatjie. O dit is wat ek um (.) vir my kinders, ek (.) vir hulle wil ek graag net die beste gee wat ek ken nie van gehad het nie.

5.5.7 Development, growth, and maturation

(p. 137 – 139)

Poppie: Maar soos n ouer, ouer persoon (.) gaan mos nou meer wyse dan optree as n JONGER persoon.

Interviewer: Okei. So jy sal sê dis die, die (.) onvolwasse:nheid

Poppie: Hm

Interviewer: Om n jong ma te wees is baie meer om te leer.

Poppie: Hm as wat jy nou (.) n groot, groot vrou al klaar is.

Millicent: Dat iemand vir my enigiets kan gesê het en ek het begin te (.) in my eie dop kruip en (.) ek um geleer om op te staan vir myself. Nie vir MY nie, vir my kinders se onthalwe want hulle's die kinders wat; hulle's die verskonings wat na my opkyk.

Millicent: Ek voel (.) dit wat ek deurgemaak het tot op, om tot nou toe, ek is baie sterker as dit. Ek is BAIE meer sterker, ek is baie meer um (.) hoe kan mens sê (.) um (.) ek het meer BEGRIP oor wat die lewe behels. Ek kan (.) EK kan um (.) kom ons sê (.) ek kan (.) EK KAN raad gee

Interviewer: Ja?

Millicent: Ek hou van raad gee. Ek kan n OOR wees om te luister, ek kan (.) ek kan (.) ek is amper soos n sielkundige vir ander {laughs}

Blondie: Ek het dit aangevang daai tyd so {Albei lag saam} Maa:r (.) ek bedoel, n mens groei net. Ek sê altyd: n Mens moet nie van (.) goed na sleg (.) gaan nie. Jy moet van (.) jou slegte gewoontes moet jy beter dinge.

Blondie: Hulle wil LAAT {lag} wakker wees. Maar (.) wat ek geleer het is um (..) in my lewe – JA ek het my *fun* gehad – ek het sommer GENOEG strooi aangevang, you know?

Blondie: Maar ek bedoel, ja, ek het baie geleer. En ek is nogal dankbaar (.) vir al die goed wat ek deurgemaak het, want ek sou nie die persoon gewees het

Interviewer: En (.) dis, ek dink (.) ja. As jy terug na wat jy dink jou foute was of iets (.) kan kyk en sê, jy weet, jy't probeer om beter te doen, dan (.) kan jy maar (..) Dis al wat jy kan doen.

Blondie: Dit IS so

Blondie: Om nou terug te, te (.) Toe ek (.) eerste keer n moeder gewees het, ek letterlik (.) jy weet, nog n kind soos ek vir jou gesê het (.h) maar met die jare het ek baie sterker geword.

Joey: Maar ek sê altyd elke ding in n mens se lewe gebeur met n doel.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Oor as ek nou sê (.) ek kan nie actually dink aan lewe sonder my kinders nie.

Joey: Ek sal sê ek het baie verander. Ek het meer volwasse begin raak.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Ek is opgevoed. Ek het maar nie die ondervinding of die education agter my naam nie maar ek weet as n moeder (.) gee ek net my beste. So ek dink ek het baie meer volwasse geraak in my vier-en-dertig jaar

Joey: Maar ek is nie spyt nie.

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: Ek meen n mens maak verkeerde besluite in die lewe (.) of keusies wat jy maak. Ek is nie spyt nie (.) ja.

Joey: Ja en n mens (.) ja en n mens leer uit jou foute so (.) [Dis maar net iets wat jy SELF moet deel mee. Verstaan?

Interviewer: Hm

Joey: En dat jy probeer dit vermy om nie WEER dieselfde foute oor en oor in jou lewe te maak nie.

5.5.8 Motherhood as identity

(p. 140 – 142)

Joey: Teenoor my kind nie (.) So (.) dis actually, ek voel – dis hoekom ek sê – ek voel meer emosioneel uitgeput vir die kinders se onthalwe

Interviewer: Ja

Joey: As vir MYself.

Joey: Ek wil my eie huisie hê, ek wil my (.h) ek wil n beter werk hê. Ek wil my eie motor hê sodat EK finansieël sterk kan wees (.) om vir my kinders te kan provide.

Nathalie: Vir my persoonlik nê sodra um n vrou n moeder word

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: Is daar nie iets anders wat sy sal aan dink as aan, as aan haarself as n moeder nie.

Nathalie: Ek dink nie daar's, ek dink nie daar's n manier wat jy vir VYF minute of vir, vir n sekonde van die dag

Interviewer: {laughs}

Nathalie: Kan sê maar ek is, ek is (.) ek nie. Jy is n MA. Jy bly konstant n ma

Interviewer: Hm

Nathalie: Jy dink die heelyd aan jou kinders. Want is net, as jy nie aan jou kinders dink nie aan wat dink jy dan nou. Dan maak dit mos nou van jouself nie n moeder nie.

Poppie: Ek is eintlik n (.) voel dit vir my of ek um n moeder net is want um (.) my suster is mos nou hier by my en (.) baie kere sukkel sy met ding- hoe sy verander in die lewe en dan moet ek nou vir haar verduidelik jy is nou (.) n jong meisie en al die.

Blondie: Ek wil cozy by hulle lê. Ek (.h) sal eerder my tyd met hulle spandeer as wat ek um daai (..) So ek gaan sê ek is nie baie van n vrou nie {lag}

Interviewer: {lag} Ah-uh NEE

Blondie: Ek is, ek is baie van n ma {lag}

Blondie: Ek kan nie DINK- okay (.) n mens kan ook nie, n pa mag dit ook nie doen nie maar n MA is die *prime caretaker*. Hoe kan jy jou kind net so los? Is, is vir my nee (.) te. Ek raak *paranoid* as ek by die werk is en ek kan nie een van my kinders op hulle selfone kry of goed nie want ek wil weet wat in hulle lewe aangaan.

Interviewer: Ja

Blondie: Ek wil weet waarmee is jy besig? Wat doen julle? Um, het hulle al geëet? Jy weet? Dit voel vir my ek is nog steeds by die huis of ek – al is ek by my werk ek wil (.) ek wil (.) ek kan elke sekonde wil ek weet {lag} waar my kinders is, wat hulle doen, is hulle veilig? (.) You know?

Josephine: Is, is, is net nie (.) en dis nie waarom moederskap moet gaan nie. Jy moet (..) Moederskap gaan oor, um (...) Elke vrou wil 'n kind hê, of 'n ma wees. En wanneer die kind daar is, moet jy alles wat jy het, of kan, vir daai kind gee. Aandag, liefde, ALLES. Daai's is wat moederskap vir my is.