

Constructions of adoptive and foster mothering: a discourse analysis

by

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For my daughter Khaya who birthed this project within me
and for my sons Emilio and Judah who teach me daily what it means to be a mother.
You are my treasures and you sacrificed for every page of this research.

With deepest gratitude to

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and each participant who shared their story with such generosity.

Abstract

Due to the ever-growing crisis of orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa, research into strategies of care remains a crucial pursuit. Models of care in the country currently range from informal to formal, including informal fostering / non-statutory foster care; community-based support structures; home-based care and support; unregistered residential care; statutory adoption and foster care; and statutory residential care. This research study focuses on the area of adoption and fostering. Existing adoption and fostering research, locally and internationally, concentrates on the adopted and fostered child with little consideration given to parents. Mothering adopted and foster children in South Africa is a specifically under-researched area. This research contributes within this field, specifically, by exploring how women who have adopted and/or who foster children construct mothering and how these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering. This qualitative study utilises a postmodern and poststructuralist ontology, and both social constructionist and feminist epistemologies. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 adoptive and foster mothers and data were analysed through discourse analysis. Ten key discourses and eight main constructs emerged. Participants engaged with discourses of natural mothering, and good mothering in which the constructs of the good mother, the good adoptive mother and the good foster mother operate. These two broad discourses are informed by the construct of the family. Constructions of adoption and fostering are formed in relation to notions of the family; and this family construct also largely informs and is informed by the discourse of legitimate belonging, the construct of the child; and the discourse of collaborative parenting. These discourses and constructs have conversations with and are formed in relation to broader discourses of gender, race, culture and HIV/AIDS. Adoption and fostering occur in relation to discourses that operate within the institution and in relation to dealing with the institution as a construct. Finally, engagement with these discourses and constructs inform how the discourse of support is constructed in relation to adoptive and foster mothering. Through exploring these constructs and discourses in relation to one another, three key arguments emerged. The first relates to a mechanism of how the ideology of intensive mothering operates through the manner in which it constructs natural mothering and good mothering. The second conclusion reached is that ambivalence is a key component of the constructions of adoptive and foster mothers. Thirdly, the study indicates that the construct of the good mother, as it operates within the ideology of intensive mothering, is resistant to deconstruction. After proceeding through the analysis, and exploring how the findings intersect particularly with discourses within the ideologies of patriarchy, technology, capitalism and race, the study offers specific recommendations for the support of adoptive and foster mothers.

Key words: Mothering, adoptive mothering, foster mothering, family, the good mother, ideology of intensive mothering, race, support

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CHAPTER ONE

Opening

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In some ways, writing a dissertation is like writing a story. This text presents one storyline, constructed through a detailed process of discursive data analysis. No matter how satisfactory the trustworthiness of the research findings may be, I hope only to convince you that this story is a sound one, and not that it is the only one.

Unlike a story, which one typically writes from beginning to end, this dissertation is a little different. This opening chapter is written last of all. I write it perched upon a vantage point overlooking the entire research process. I can trace a stream that began from a very clear spring, but grew into a river as other streams flowed into it. I see how the river gushed into regions I had not anticipated and how the waters end in the sea, where there are many more questions than there were to begin with.

The original spring bubbled up from an awareness of the increasing numbers of orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa. This study stemmed from the desire to contribute, through psychological research, towards exploring viable options of care. As the trickle of water began to gain momentum a more focussed research topic formed concerning adoption and fostering and, particularly, the meanings that this may hold for women mothering in this context. This focussing also occurred in relation to my own experiences as an adoptive mother.

As the river flowed it meandered through five large territories: meanings of mothering, relationships with the construct of the good mother, gender, constructions of family, and race and culture. Within the postmodern, poststructuralist and social constructionist landscape of this particular research, what became crucial to explore was how participants' meanings of adoptive and foster mothering engaged with dominant discourses. As the analysis progressed, these dominant discourses seemed to function in different ways. They can be thought of as the stream's bank, confining the water's path or they might be intersecting rivers bringing strong currents of thinking that are difficult to swim against. Consistently, however, we see agency, almost as if participants create boats: constructions of meaning that they form for themselves and within which they can chart their own course through the currents. As Miller and Glassner (2004) remind us, "dominant discourses are totalising only for those who view them as such; they are replete with fissures and uncolonised spaces within which people engage in highly satisfying and even resistant practices of knowledge making" (p. 126). Despite this agency, though, we see in this study that the currents remain, persistent and strong.

This first chapter begins by presenting something of a map of the lay of the land. It is not a 'background' as much as it is an introduction to the texture of the ground inside of which the stream began, but also of the ground that it flowed through along the way. This contextual introduction will be followed by an outline of the theoretical location of the study as well as the methodological framework. The chapter will then present a description of the structure of the thesis.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Orphaned children will account for 10% of the South African population by 2015. This amounts to approximately three million children (Madhavan, 2004). Due to the growing consensus that the extended family system is severely economically constrained and, therefore, less capable of caring for orphaned children (Deininger, Garcia, & Subbarao, 2003; Heymann, Earle, Rajaraman, Miller, & Bogen, 2007; Townsend & Dawes, 2004; UNICEF 2006; Zuberi, Sibanda, & Udjo, 2005), there is an urgency to creatively develop and strengthen a variety of strategies of care and to understand the experiences of those who provide care in these situations.

Models of care for orphaned and vulnerable children in South Africa range from informal to formal, including informal fostering / non-statutory foster care; community-based support structures; home-based care and support; unregistered residential care; statutory adoption and foster care; and statutory residential care (Moses & Meintjes, 2010). The term 'adoption' typically refers to the full transfer of parental rights from birth parents to social parents whereas 'fostering' involves a partial transfer of rights. In practice, however, this legal framework often involves a continuum rather than a clear contrast (Bowie, 2004). Informal fostering is a much more common practice in Africa as opposed to formal adoption (Foster & Williamson, 2000; Zimmerman, 2003) and the research output reflects this (Akresh, 2009; Bowie, 2004; Cichello, 2003; Gillespie, Norman, & Finley, 2005; Madhavan, 2004; McDaniel & Zulu, 1996; Serra, 2009; Sudarkasa, 2004; Thomas & Mabusela, 1991). Although literature on fostering in Africa and South Africa is still sparse, research on adoption is even more so.

The focus of existing adoption and fostering research, locally and internationally, lies on the adopted and fostered child with very little consideration given to parents (McKay, Ross, & Goldberg, 2010; Palacios & Brodzinsky, 2010). Mothering adopted and foster children in South Africa is a specifically under-researched area.

In 1986, Rich wrote: "We know more about the air we breathe, the seas we travel, than about the nature and meaning of motherhood" (p. 11). Although a fair amount of research has indeed been conducted in this area in the 26 years since Rich's observation, much of motherhood remains uncharted territory awaiting in-depth study. In Baraitser's (2009) words,

The mother after all, is the impossible subject, par excellence. Caught in an ever widening gap between her idealisation and denigration in contemporary culture, and her indeterminate position as part object, part subject within the Western philosophical tradition, the mother has always been left hopelessly uncertain...In some senses she is everywhere, our culture saturated with her image in its various guises, and yet theoretically she remains a shadowy figure who seems to disappear from the many discourses that explicitly try to account for her (p. 4).

The veneer of mothering is the 'obvious' and the 'natural'. The current research participates in the task of chipping away at this veneer in order to contribute to the illumination of mothering as socially constructed in time and place by history, culture, society, politics, and notions of morality (Lawler, 2000; Sudarkasa, 2004). The idea of the good mother - currently formed influentially through the ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) - is pervasive and essentially unnoticeable and, without being questioned, it persistently influences what is viewed as being in the best interest of children, how children should be raised and who should be held accountable for their development (Thurer, 1994). The ideology of intensive mothering is

rooted within dominant ideologies of patriarchy, technology and capitalism (Rothman, 2004). In Western culture, mothering is defined in relation to binary opposites of male-female, nature-culture, mind-body, reason-emotion, labour-love and public-private. Mothering is represented by the subordinate side of each opposition (Glenn, 1994). Feminist deconstruction of gender has included analysis of the relationship between the culturally and historically pervasive social assignment of the work and role of mothering to women and women's oppression (DiQuinzio, 1993).

Cultures also organise distinct and relatively stable discourses of family that feed assumptions of what is 'right', 'real', and 'normal' within the family context. These dominant notions of the normal family provide foundational principles of social organisation (Collins, 1998), powerfully privileging and sanctioning particular family arrangements and marginalising and stigmatising others (Walsh, 2012). In many ways, adoptive and foster mothers are positioned outside of this dominant frame. It is crucial for research to reveal and to engage with overt biases "whose everyday practices stratify some children and mothers as more culturally 'real' and worthy than others" (Ragone & Twine, 2000, p. xiv).

In Rothman's (2005) words,

If you step just an inch off 'ordinary' family - the inch that adoption moves you, or the extra inch that an 'obvious', transracial adoption gives you - you get a fresh angle on family...Mothering across race, mothering through adoption, and doing both at once, opens up all the basic questions of motherhood, of family, of relationships, love, intimacy, and connection (p. 7).

Many of the participants in this study are mothering transracially. Transracial adoption and transracial fostering remain socially and politically complex issues worldwide. Both 'race' and 'transracial adoption' / 'transracial fostering' are social constructions. The study offers a window of insight into the manner in which participants engage in this activity of construction within the South African context. With the inception of Apartheid, South Africa became one of the most racialised societies in the world (Posel, 2001) and race and racism are still "notoriously persistent problems" (Foster, 2005, p. 495). Racism does not always manifest overtly, however, and newer, more subtle (but potentially equally damaging) forms of racism exist, such as aversive racism (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2010). The current study also explores how this may be engaged with by adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa.

In addition to these social, psychological and political contexts within which this research evolved my own personal context was greatly influential in the conceptualisation, design and execution of the study. I mother three children. I held my sons for the first time after they were delivered from my womb through Cesarean Section (a minute apart) and I held my daughter for the first time as a social worker placed her on my lap. I happen to have a light skin complexion and my daughter's skin happens to be a shade of brown. As a result we fall into the realm of the socially constructed category of 'transracial adoption' and we continue to encounter adventures in this fascinating territory. These adventures challenge how I think about how others understand us, how we understand others, and how we understand ourselves.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The two research questions that emerge from this contextual backdrop and guide the study are as follows:

- (i) How do adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa construct mothering?
- (ii) How do these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering?

1.4 AIM

The aim of this research is to contribute to expanding understandings of mothering through exploring how women who have adopted and/or who foster children construct mothering. This is intended for the purpose of deconstructing (or, at least, troubling) dominant discourses and constructs that hold existing understandings in place, for supporting women who mother children from outside of their biological families and for informing strategies of care for orphaned children.

1.5 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

What we understand is informed by how we understand. The task of this thesis, therefore, is as much to present the view of the findings as it is to make explicit the manner in which such a view is enabled in the first place. Ontologically, this study utilises postmodern as well as poststructuralist perspectives. Although these overlap, they originate in different fields (postmodernism mainly from within social theory and philosophy; poststructuralism from within literary criticism and theory) (Nicholson, 1992).

Postmodernism affords a view that is sceptical of taken-for-granted knowledge (Lax, 1994) and is distrusting of grand narratives (Malpas, 2001). It acknowledges multiple, concurrent, and at times contradictory, meanings (Grenz, 1996). Explanations of 'reality' are understood to be constructions rather than statements of 'Truth' (Atkinson, 2002). Poststructuralism provides further insight into the interrelated roles of knowledge and power in this process of construction (Foucault, 1972) and into the manner in which texts can be deconstructed in order to reveal arbitrary suppositions and power relations (Lotter, 1995). Deconstruction intends to open up meaning space and to offer possibilities for the reuse and redeployment of terms. In this sense it is, therefore, an intrinsically political pursuit (Seidman, 2004).

The utilisation of a postmodern and poststructuralist ontological springboard allows this study to leap into an investigation of the ways in which dominant understandings of mothering, formed through particular knowledge and power relationships, create an illusion of 'Truth'. Instead of accepting this 'Truth' and the (political, social, psychological, cultural) implications of it for women who mother differently - in this case through adoption and fostering - we are enabled to deconstruct these assumptions and welcome alternate constructions of meaning.

This endeavour is further empowered by a social constructionist epistemology. Here, particularly, concepts and categories which we use to understand the world are viewed as culturally and historically specific as are forms of knowledge themselves. This knowledge is understood to be constructed and sustained through interaction between people (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006). This interaction is largely language based. The specific role of language in social construction is understood through the concept of discourse. Discourses produce meanings and form objects (Burr, 2003). In this sense, then, the practice of mothering can be understood to be a collection of "linguistic possibilities" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 280).

Definitions of discourse abound as the term itself is a contested one (Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). According to Burr (2003), discourses are sets of meanings that represent a specific version of events, or persons. Macleod (2002) discusses discourses as possessing a coherence or regularity even though they do vary over time. Discourse both enables what can be said about a certain topic within a particular context and also restricts what can be known or experienced (Macleod, 2002). Parker (1992) defines discourse as "a system of statements which constructs an object" (p. 5). Gee (2005) distinguishes between discourse which

he defines as “language-in-use” (p. 7) and Discourse, which also includes the actions, gestures, interactions, values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and even ‘props’ involved in ‘pulling off’ being a particular person in a particular time and place. Discourses essentially, then, refer to the recognition of a “*who-doing-what*” (p. 23). The current study specifically rests upon the perspectives on discourse offered by Gee and Parker, theoretically and analytically.

Social constructionist epistemology provides a researcher with the tools to seek that which is presumed to be natural and inevitable and to question those premises. Such assumptions have direct implications for constructions and reconstructions of perceptions of self, interpretations of circumstances, experiences, and actions (Hacking, 1999). Social constructionism provides a framework within which the constructs ‘adoptive mother’ and ‘foster mother’ can be recognised as neither straightforward nor inevitable. Only through the dominance of the construct of the biological mother are these categorisations assigned meaning. Deconstruction of this categorisation allows for a raising of consciousness regarding subversive power relations and the promotion of alternate ideas leading to activism and as an activity of activism in and of itself (Hacking, 1999).

The current study also draws explicitly upon a feminist epistemology. Feminism is valuable in researching mothering and understanding mothering is valuable for feminists. According to Ross (1995), understanding the scope of the lives of contemporary women will remain incomplete without full recognition of the practice of mothering in its varied forms and contexts. Although there are many approaches to feminist research, common to all are the centring of the diverse situations and experiences of women as well as the institutions that influence and frame such situations and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The feminist epistemological stance is one characterised by reflexivity, valuing the centrality of practice, a central focus on process (Fox & Murry, 2000) and “situated knowing” (Grasswick, 2011, p. xvi). Feminist research aims “to seek social justice, to enhance women’s voice and influence in society, and to explore alternative ways of understanding the world through women’s experiences” (Gergen, 2008, p. 280).

1.6 METHODOLOGY

Building upon this ontological and epistemological foundation, this research is designed as a qualitative study. Qualitative research is understood as “involving the collection and analysis of non-numerical data through a psychological lens...in order to provide rich descriptions and possible explanations of people’s meaning-making – how they make sense of the world and how they experience particular events” (Coyle, 2007, p. 11). It consists of an exploration into the characteristics, qualities or properties of a phenomenon in order to elicit a deeper explanation and understanding (Henning, 2004). Qualitative research resonates with postmodern and social constructionist approaches in that meaning is of primary concern, multiple and ambiguous meanings are accepted and context and interpretation are valued. Social constructionist methods specifically aim to examine how experiences and understandings are derived from and contribute to larger discourses (Alvesson, 2002; Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Methodological characteristics of feminist research have been consistently debated (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007; DeVault, 1993; Harding, 1985; Leckenby, 2007; Letherby, 2003; Maynard, 2009; Reinhartz, 1993). Although disputed, there appear to be a few common features. Women’s experiences and meaning constructions are used as an empirical and theoretical resource. Traditional social sciences asked certain questions and did not ask other questions based on that which appeared problematic from the perspective of

(Western, White, bourgeois) men. Findings from these studies were then generalised to the population as a whole. In addition to asking questions from the perspective of the experiences of women, feminist research recognises the plurality of the experiences of different women in different contexts. Also, methodologically, the feminist researcher utilises her own subjectivity and explicitly reflects upon her gender, class, race and culture, exploring how this may influence the research process (Harding, 1985). The relationship between researcher and participant is considered to be key and requires careful scrutiny, particularly in terms of power relations (Hess, 1990).

This study collected qualitative data through in-depth interviews conducted from a social constructionist perspective, with adoptive and foster mothers. The goal of an in-depth, unstructured interview is understanding as opposed to explanation (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Reinharz, 1992). Within the postmodern, social constructionist paradigm, an interview is considered to be “a construction site of knowledge” (Kvale, 2007, p. 21). Interviewers are not viewed as providing a platform for the interviewee to express his/or ‘real’ thoughts and feelings but, rather, meanings created in the interview are regarded as actively and discursively co-constructed between the interviewee and the interviewer (Flick, 2007; Henning, 2004; Parker, 2005). Purposive sampling and snowball sampling were employed (Babbie, 2009; Kelly, 2006; Neuman, 2006; Robson, 2002; Strydom & Delport, 2002).

Interviews, transcribed verbatim, were analysed utilising discourse analysis through a synthesis of the approaches proposed by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005). These approaches offer the researcher a series of questions to ask of the data, or tools with which to recognise and dismantle the constructions that emerge. These include investigating situated meanings, objects, activities, subjects and identities, relationships, intertextuality, sign systems and knowledge, discursive coherence, reflexivity, the history of a discourse, institutions, as well as politics, power and ideology. Findings from this detailed process of analysis were then explored in relation to existing literature.

Any knowledge claim reveals as much about the language use and beliefs of the researcher as it does about that which is being studied (Alvesson, 2002). Impartiality is an impossible pursuit when knowledge is produced by human beings for human beings (Hurtado, 2010). It is vital, therefore, to actively and critically reflect, throughout the entire process of research, upon questions of subjectivity (Pillow, 2002). This is crucial in all research, but is particularly the case when the area in question is so directly entwined with one’s personal experience, as is the case in the current study. In qualitative research, however, subjectivity is not only viewed as a resource, but reflexive engagement in the research can transform the “‘merely subjective’ into a self-consciously and deliberately assumed position” (Parker, 2005, p. 26). Reflexivity has been argued to be the defining feature of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002a). Reflexivity is conceptualised in multiple ways within different forms of qualitative research. The definition utilised within the current study is that proffered by MacBeth (2001). She describes reflexivity as “a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself” (p. 35). This definition is characterised by the idea of intersection, and exploration of this self-other-text-context intersection involves critical self-reflection, critical examination of relational and contextual dynamics and positions and a deconstruction of the text produced.

1.7 DISSERTATION OUTLINE

After the introductory comments offered in this chapter, chapter two will present the study's literature review. All empirical research requires connection to literature that supports the need for the study, relates to the study's purpose and situates the study in relation to previous research. This builds a foundation for the study through demonstrating links, illustrating trends, providing conceptual overviews and offering reference points for the interpretation of findings (Rocco & Plakhotnik, 2009). Chapter two engages with this task, through reviewing literature related to the wide range of areas within which this study is located. The chapter offers a contextual review of literature concerning the concept of family, followed by an exploration of literature on adoption and fostering in South Africa and Africa. Research concerning mothering is then discussed, including texts arguing for mothering to be understood as a social construction, a review of Western followed by African literature on mothering, an exploration of dominant discourses of mothering and, finally, a discussion of the literature that is available on adoptive and foster mothering specifically.

Chapter three presents a detailed discussion of the study's theoretical foundations. Poststructuralism and postmodernism are probed. This is followed by a discussion of social constructionism. Finally, central issues in feminist research will be presented, including African developments in the field and perspectives regarding the relationships between feminism and postmodernism and between feminism and poststructuralism.

Ontological and epistemological assumptions inform methodological choices (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The postmodern ontology, as well as the social constructionist and feminist epistemologies underpinning the study inform the characteristics of the qualitative methodology utilised. Chapter four explains this methodology. The contested nature of postmodern and social constructionist perspectives on research methodology is mentioned, followed by an acknowledgment of debates concerning feminist views on research methodology. Central features of qualitative research are then discussed. The research design is explained, including a description of sample selection through purposive and snowball techniques, data collection in the form of in-depth interviews, as well as interview transcription. The nature of social constructionist interviews is explored. Discourse analysis is then discussed, including theoretical underpinnings and the potentials of synthesising various approaches, with particular reference to those offered by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005). Research quality and generalisability are examined, specifically within the context of qualitative research. This is followed by a discussion of ethical considerations. The chapter closes by exploring perspectives on reflexivity.

Chapter five presents both the findings and the discussion thereof. Harper, O'Connor, Self, and Stevens (2008) explain that the structure of a thesis utilising discourse analysis often departs "radically" (p. 203) from the more traditional structuring of a psychology thesis. Such decisions are driven by pragmatic concerns. For example, chapters may be written in an unconventional order. Also, instead of simply listing all the rhetorical devices in operation within the data, specifically interesting features may be highlighted. In this research, findings of the detailed data analysis crystallised into three main, over-arching arguments. The most pragmatic approach, therefore, was to present the findings concurrently with a discussion of the relationships between the discursive patterns that emerged. These relationships formed the scaffolding of the three arguments. Chapter five begins with a description of the participants. This is followed by a discussion of the ways in which participants engaged in the activity of discursive construction and how they reflected upon this construction. The ten key discourses and eight main constructs that were identified within the data are listed as an introductory orientation. The chapter then proceeds with the in-depth discussion of the three

arguments, demonstrating the manner in which these discourses and constructs could be understood to function in relation to one another.

To close, chapter six elicits, from the detailed deliberation in chapter five, a direct response to the research questions. This is followed by recommendations regarding the support of adoptive and foster mothers. A reflexive account of the research process is then provided and the chapter ends with a discussion of the limitations of the study and recommendations for further research.

1.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter offered a summary of the contexts within which this study was designed and conducted. The research questions were stated, the theoretical orientation was pronounced and the study's methodology was identified. An outline of the dissertation structure was also provided. The following chapter entails the review of relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will begin by firstly providing a brief contextual review of the concept of family, followed by an exploration of literature on adoption and fostering in South Africa and Africa. Against this backdrop I will be foregrounding pertinent areas of literary pursuit concerning mothering. These include texts arguing for mothering to be understood as a social construction, a review of Western and African literature on mothering, an exploration of dominant discourses of mothering and, finally, a discussion of the literature that is available on adoptive and foster mothering specifically.

2.2 THE FAMILY

In response to the question ‘what is family?’, Holstein and Gubrium (1999) suggest that family is “a matter of practice” (p. 4), brought into being as a social form through the process of family discourse. This contrasts the concept of family as a singular, monolithic, objectively meaningful structure. ‘Family’ is continuously under construction and operates as a formation of images, ideas and terminology that is used as a resource to ascribe meaning to facets of everyday life and to achieve social bonds.

Various cultures assemble distinct and relatively stable discourses of family. Within these cultural discourses, we find constructions of ‘the’ family, or the ‘normal’ family. These dominant notions of the normal family that exist within cultures provide foundational principles of social organisation (Collins, 1998), powerfully privileging and sanctioning particular family arrangements whilst marginalising and stigmatising others (Walsh, 2012). Western notions of the family rely on consanguinity, central to which is the concept of blood relations and shared biogenetic inheritance. Russell (2003), Seekings (2003) and Young and Ansell (2003) comment that even the terms ‘household’ and ‘family’ are contentious when used in discussions of domestic structures in Southern Africa as many societies are fluid, with constantly changing relationships, meanings and forms. Boniface (2007) explains that from a South African legal perspective, changes in society have resulted in many children being parented by so-called ‘social’ or ‘psychological’ parents. She clarifies the distinction between biological parenthood, legal parenthood and parental responsibility. All three elements may be vested in one person or may be split between persons. McDaniel and Zulu (1996) explain that the “so-called African family is complex and...its structures vary remarkably across various countries and societies” (p. 1).

In psychological literature, ‘normal’ families have been defined in various ways. According to Walsh (2012) ‘normal’ families have been described as asymptomatic in terms of the absence of pathology and distress. This deficit-based perspective lacks acknowledgement that healthy family functioning is not solely dependent on the absence of ‘problems’. This position has also been criticised as espousing the view that disorder within an individual correlates with a dysfunctional family and the corresponding notion that a healthy individual is the product of a healthy family. Research on resilience has shown that this is not necessarily the case (Borders, Black, & Paisley, 1998; Greeff & Ritman, 2005; Walsh, 1996). ‘Normal’ families have also been

defined as average or typical. This can, however, lead to pathologising of difference and the acceptance of common family patterns that may be destructive. 'Normal' families have been framed as ideal, healthy or well-functioning. In relation to recognising that families are socially constructed in cultural, socio-economic and political contexts, it is clear that such values will differ. Also, there are instances where unconventional family arrangements can be optimal for the functioning of a certain family in a specific context. Walsh (2012) asks, "when a family pattern is deemed functional, we need to consider what is meant: functional to what end and for whom?" (p. 9).

Waterman (2003) explains that, even in Western societies, the ideal of the nuclear family is not the reality for most children and most mothers. She proposes that a vision for the future of child development requires fresh ways of thinking about attachments between children and non-biological mothers and about co-mothering relationships (in cases of step, foster, adoptive and biological mothering). The increasing diversity of family structures needs to be broadly acknowledged.

The nuclear family, which is organised fundamentally according to gender, has been a particularly influential concept within Western feminism. Oyewumi (2002) explains that, despite attempts to undermine this male-dominant institution, the Western nuclear family still forms the foundation of much feminist theory. Although definitions of family are, to a degree, expanding, adoptive and foster families often still challenge traditional assumptions of what it means to be a family (O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003) and can therefore offer significant challenges to members as they engage in sense-making (Galvin, 2003). Galvin argues that research is needed in order to explore the construction of such families especially as they may present as a type of microcosm for complexities faced in other types of families who also navigate issues such as race, gender, culture and class in more subtle ways. It must also be noted that families, in this case adoptive and foster families, who may differ from the norms of dominant family structures and practices are not unified in their difference and broad diversity occurs in how these families are organised, how they function and how they construct meaning (Friedlander, 2003).

2.3 ADOPTION AND FOSTERING IN AFRICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXTS

In this section literature will be reviewed that locates adoptive and foster mothering contextually within research on the residential patterns of orphaned children in Africa and South Africa. Also, literature on transracial adoption and fostering will be explored as this became a key area of interest in the current study due to the characteristics of the sample.

2.3.1 RESIDENTIAL PATTERNS OF ORPHANED CHILDREN

Residential patterns of orphaned and vulnerable children in Southern Africa have been examined in literature, with studies focussing particularly on child-headed households (Donald & Clacherty, 2005; Nkomo, 2006; Roalkvam, 2005), community based interventions (Desmond & Gow, 2001; Russell & Schneider, 2000; Strebel, 2004), care provided through the extended family, institutional care, fostering and, to a lesser degree, adoption. Desmond, Gow, Loening-Voysey, Wilson, and Stirling (2002) explored the quality of care and variations in cost of the six models of care offered to children in South Africa in order to develop policy recommendations. The models of available care range from informal to formal: informal fostering / non-statutory foster care; community-based support structures; home-based care and support; unregistered residential care; statutory adoption and foster care; and statutory residential care (taking place in what are

now termed 'child and youth care centres' in South Africa, according to the amended Children's Act of 2005 (Moses & Meintjes, 2010)). Although women often assume the prominent role in caring for children in all of these models in South Africa (Denis & Ntsimane, 2006; Donald & Clacherty, 2005; Monasch & Boerma, 2004; UNICEF, 2006) and in other African countries (Hejoaka, 2009), mothering itself is very rarely studied in these contexts.

Placement of orphaned children with family members or within their communities is widely argued to be the best and foundational option for care (Foster, 2002, 2004; UNAIDS, UNICEF, & USAID, 2004). However, mounting research suggests that in a context of widespread poverty, extended families and communities are facing increasing strain in caring for orphaned children and that this capacity for care may often be exceeded (Heymann, Earle, Rajaraman, Miller, & Bogen, 2007; UNICEF 2006; Zuberi, Sibanda, & Udjo, 2005). Strain on families appears to increase significantly when more than one orphaned child is being cared for (Rivers, Silvestre, & Mason, 2004). Foster (2000) explains that "the extended family is not a social sponge with an infinite capacity to soak up orphans" (p. 55). According to Townsend and Dawes (2004), even if the figures of orphaned and vulnerable children prove to be exaggerated, there is ample evidence to indicate that "significant numbers of children in South Africa will not grow up with the beneficial experience of family life" (p. 69). Moses and Meintjes (2010) explain that increasing numbers of orphaned children are being placed in residential care facilities in countries that were previously making strides in providing non-institutional care largely as a result of financial donations dedicated restrictively to institutional care.

Statistical evidence indicates that a notable percentage of orphaned children in South Africa have lost parents due to AIDS. UNICEF (2006) placed the figure of orphan-hood due to AIDS as opposed to other causes in South Africa at 49% in 2005. UNICEF's report *The State of the World's Children 2009* states that South Africa has the highest number of children orphaned by AIDS in the world. The number of children impacted by the HIV/AIDS crisis in Southern Africa is well documented (Actuarial Society of South Africa, 2005; Barnett & Whiteside, 2001; Bicego, Rutstein, & Johnson, 2003; Madhavan, 2004; Marais, 2007; Skinner & Davids, 2006; Smart, 2003). UNICEF estimated in 2006 that, by 2010, 15.7 million children in sub-Saharan Africa will have lost at least one parent to AIDS. Sherr, Varrall, and Mueller (2008) conducted a systematic literature review of all controlled studies prior to 2006 in which the concept 'AIDS orphan' was addressed. They conclude that the inconsistencies in definitions and measures present challenges in this area. Definitions of 'orphan' may involve either single parental death or double parental death and studies use either the age limit of 18 years or 15 years. These discrepancies result in variance within statistical figures. The psychological well-being of children orphaned by AIDS is under-researched (Cluver & Gardner, 2007; Gillespie, Norman, & Finley, 2005) as is the well-being of those who care for them.

According to Townsend and Dawes (2004), formal as opposed to informal foster care and adoption are "heavily entrenched in First World models of alternative family care and have been under-promoted and consequently under-utilised by the majority of South African families" (p. 71). Bowie (2004) explains that the term 'adoption' is conventionally used in Western societies to refer to the full transfer of parental rights from birth parents to social parents. She contrasts this to foster parenting where only a partial transfer of rights occurs. She highlights, however, that, even in Western societies, this legal framework represents more of a continuum than an absolute contrast. The term 'adoption' does not exist in the Western sense in many African communities (Foster & Williamson, 2000). Children, rather, are fostered through prevalent, culturally sanctioned procedures. Bowie (2004) continues to say that, when attempting to apply the term 'adoption'

cross-culturally, a number of difficulties are encountered. Not only do understandings of parenthood differ legally and culturally, but even the terms 'child' and 'parent' assume different meanings in various contexts. Authors also use 'adoption' and 'fostering' differently in their attempts to translate indigenous practices without adequate terminology.

The Western system of adoption includes various levels of possible openness in relation to contact and communication between the child's adoptive family and birth family. 'Closed' or 'confidential' adoptions refer to those in which there is no contact or sharing of information, directly or indirectly. On the other extreme, 'open' or 'fully disclosed' adoptions involve direct contact - which may vary in frequency - between the adoptive family and at least some members of the child's birth family. In the middle of this continuum lies 'semi-open' or 'mediated' adoptions where communication occurs via a third party (Grotevant, 2000). Open adoptions can disrupt identities of 'mother', 'father' and 'child'. Yngvesson (1997) describes how this occurs due to the way in which "open adoption compels recognition of the place of an 'other' mother on whom one's own mothering depends" (p. 32). Frasc, Brooks, and Barth (2000) conducted a longitudinal study to explore openness in 231 foster care adoptions in California, in which parents adopted children who they had initially fostered. The participants in their studies who practiced open adoptions reported very little contact overall between themselves and the child's biological parents, as well as between the adopted children and the biological parents. Participants reported experiencing a sense of control regarding how this contact was organised. The likelihood of an open adoption was informed by the adoptive parents holding a positive view of the birthmother.

Informal fostering is a common practice throughout developing countries, particularly in Africa, where up to 25% of children are fostered (Zimmerman, 2003). It must be noted, however, that McDaniel and Zulu's demographic study in 1996 found large inter-country variation in the levels of child fosterage in sub-Saharan Africa. Orphaned children fostered by kin are typically cared for by grandmothers and aunts (Gillespie, Norman, & Finley, 2005). McDaniel and Zulu (1996) state that the rearing of children by individuals other than their biological parents is a well-established practice in sub-Saharan Africa, deeply entrenched in African history and culture. Modern urbanisation and migration have further contributed to these arrangements through placing strain on the African family system.

Bandawe and Louw (1997) conducted a study focussing on foster care in Malawi specifically, including related and non-related children. Areas of exploration included motivation for fostering (largely infertility), concerns after placement (such as the health of the child and the temporary nature of the placement), the impact of the placement of the foster child on the family (joy as well as financial pressures), disclosure (the majority of interviewees did not plan to disclose to the children that they were fostered), various issues around HIV and AIDS, and social welfare support.

Voluntary or purposive fostering in sub-Saharan Africa, which has a temporary and reversible character, has been discussed by Serra (2009). She explains that, even in Africa, the common presumption at policy and academic level reflects the dominant Western perspective that non-parent residence represents a situation of risk for children. Empirical evidence on measures of welfare for fostered children is mixed, however, depending on motives for fostering, social setting, whether biological mothers and fathers are still alive and the relationship between biological and foster parents. Serra reviews studies showing that, where fostering is sought by both sending and receiving families, children are at no comparative disadvantage regarding health status, nutritional status, cognitive development or schooling. On the other hand, when fostering results from

a crisis situation such as divorce, illness or death of a parent, children do appear to be placed at greater risk, particularly relating to lower school enrollment and greater work responsibilities.

Madhavan (2004) also distinguishes between voluntary (most often informal) fostering which is the case in most non-biological child rearing in South Africa, and crisis-led fostering. Madhavan explores motivating factors for informal fostering and his conclusions are similar to studies conducted by Akresh (2009) and Zimmerman (2003). Akresh studied household's decision to foster children in Burkina Faso. He reports on data drawn from a larger study that located and interviewed 316 pairs of sending and receiving households. He found four principle factors correlating with a household's decision to foster a child. Firstly, households experiencing exogenous negative income shocks are more likely to send their child to live with another family. Secondly, children are fostered for reasons of gender balancing as children perform gender based household tasks. Thirdly, children are fostered for educational purposes (to be closer to school) and fourthly, fostering occurs due to network quality, in other words, children are sent to a household that is perceived to offer better opportunities such as improved healthcare, nutrition and social mobility.

Zimmerman's (2003) study concerned fostering and children's school attendance in South Africa. His discussion focuses on fostering within family networks. He lists reasons for placing a child in foster care as potentially involving social, political or religious prestige, moving a child closer to their school, or placing the child with a relative who will be paying for the child's education and who will then benefit from the child's labour, literacy or ability to negotiate the economy, and to strengthen kinship and emotional ties across households. McDaniel and Zulu's (1996) research also confirmed that girls and boys are often fostered for different reasons related to tasks that they are required to perform within the household. Sudarkasa (2004) offers another reason for fostering, explaining how, in many indigenous African societies, woman who have not given birth or whose children no longer live with them may be assigned or given a child to care for for an unspecified period of time.

Cichello (2003) explored child fostering and human capital formation in KwaZulu-Natal from an economic perspective. He found that 22% of all Black children in KwaZulu-Natal under the age of 18 years old are fostered children. He explains that, in most cases, children reside in foster care for an extensive period of time. The term 'Cinderella effect' is used to refer to the idea of fostered children being treated unfairly in the family in relation to biological children due to their lower status within the household. This has been predicted to result in lower enrollment in schools. Cichello's findings, collected from statistical data from 1032 households in KwaZulu-Natal, challenge this expectation. He also found no long-term negative impact on the accumulation of human capital for fostered individuals.

A less recent South African study on fostering was conducted by Thomas and Mabusela in Soweto in 1991. Most of the families involved were fostering children due to abuse or abandonment. Although the political picture in South Africa was significantly different at that stage, the study concluded that foster families in Soweto were primarily concerned with basic survival needs, namely food, housing, transportation and safety. Thomas and Mabusela argued that this, coupled with the Apartheid system's restriction on essential resources and supportive services for Black communities, hampered effective foster care practice.

Due to the rarity of formal adoptions in many African communities (Foster & Williamson, 2000) literature on the subject is sparse in comparison to literature on fostering. An example of research on adoption in South Africa can be found in a study conducted by Harber (1999) on adoption in the 'new' South Africa in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. She explores the failure by social welfare organisations to promote adoption within

Black communities in particular. She suggests that two notions are influential in this regard. The first is the assumption that adoption is not necessary as extended family members will meet the needs of orphaned and vulnerable children. Although in many events this is the case, it is not always so, especially in cases where babies are abandoned. The second concerns the perceived lack of 'fit' between the construction of Western formal adoption and traditional cultural practices of Black South Africans. She explores secrecy in relation to infertility, the social stigma of childlessness and the impact of this upon reluctance to adopt. This can lie in tension with contemporary theories of adoption that emphasise the importance of disclosure and openness. Harber also discusses how adoption involves not only the incorporation of a child into a nuclear family but into an entire kinship network. She explains that in traditional African cultures the boundaries of kinship groups are typically firmly established. This may result in difficulties absorbing a child from outside of the family. Culture and tradition are, however, not static and these dynamics continuously evolve. Adoption practice itself shifts and transforms. Harber suggests that

it may be possible to adapt adoption practice in South Africa to develop a more culturally sensitive service which is both accessible to and appropriate for Black families...If adoption is to become a more mainstream service for children affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa, there is an urgent need to find ways in which African and Western notions of child care can be married (p. 12).

Although Harbor's call for further research into these areas was made in 1999, few have accepted her invitation and the areas of concern raised in her study remain today.

Many studies on adoption involving African children focus on the subject of international adoption (Roby & Shaw, 2006). These studies typically explore the issue from the context of the receiving country rather than the sending country. One such example, conducted in the United States by Hollingsworth (2003), examines the adoption of African children by American families. Research on adoption conducted specifically in South Africa has tended to focus on transracial adoption.

2.3.2 TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

This study includes examinations of the constructions of both transracial adoptive mothers and transracial foster mothers as many of the participants in this research are mothering within this context. However, literature explicitly exploring transracial fostering is glaringly absent. As a result, this section focuses on transracial adoption. Whilst both the terms 'transracial adoption' and 'cross cultural adoption' can be found in literature, 'transracial adoption' is by far the most ubiquitous. Transracial adoption is defined as "the adoption of a child from a race that is different from that of the adoptive parent" (Moos & Mwaba, 2007, p. 1115) although, in literature, the term most often refers to the adoption of Black children by White parents (Szabo & Ritchken, 2002). Transracial adoption remains a socially and politically complex issue worldwide. A review of literature on this subject must be prefaced by a discussion of race as a fluid, contested social construct (Das Gupta, 2007; Harrison, 1998; Holstein & Gubrium, 2008; Yancey & Lewis, 2009). Patton (2000) argues that transracial adoption "cuts to the heart of the social construction of race" (p. 60). 'Transracial adoption' is, thus, also a construct inviting deconstruction rather than treatment as a taken-for-granted, essentialist parent-child relationship category.

2.3.2.1 CONSTRUCTING RACE

'Race', as a term, appeared in the English language for the first time in the 17th century, stemming from the Spanish word 'raza' which was used to distinguish Christians of 'pure blood' from the descendants of

converted Muslims and Jews who were persecuted. The term, therefore, indicated beliefs of religious superiority rather than external differences such as skin colour (Hill, 2008). Winant (2000) explains that it is possible to argue both that Europe's attainment of imperial, world power gave rise to race and that the concept of race "gave rise to, or at least facilitated the creation of, an integrated sociopolitical world, a modern authoritarian state, the structures of international economy, and the emergence over time of a global culture" (p. 172). It is imperative to recognise each of these as profoundly racialised issues.

Although the folk theory (or "myth" (Posel, 2001, p. 89)) that developed after this, wherein race is used to refer to a fundamental category of genetic variation still functions discursively, the category of race is not a biological phenomenon, but a sociopolitical one (Hill, 2008). Winant (2000) states clearly that "there is no biological basis for distinguishing human groups along lines of race, and the sociohistorical categories employed to differentiate among these groups reveal themselves, upon serious examination, to be imprecise if not completely arbitrary" (p. 172). One clear indication of this is the manner in which racial classifications have changed over time (Green, Sonn, & Matsebula, 2007; Hill, 2008; Ratele, 2007). Shih, Bonam, Sanchez, and Peck (2007) also emphasise the malleability of race, explaining that race is defined according to cultural and structural parameters and is grounded in both micro and macro social processes.

Racial ideologies are generalised systems of belief that explain social practices and social relationships through racialised language (Doane, 2006). Racial ideologies have been used throughout history to explain and justify conquest, dispossession, exclusion, enslavement, discrimination and stratification according to race. Dominant ideologies are challenged by counter ideologies that work to redefine and even overturn the current racial order. As a result, racial ideologies shift and change. This struggle is engaged in through racial discourse as it occurs through everyday interactions (Essed, 1991). Discourse is the arena within which this struggle takes place (Doane, 2006).

Race, as a category within the discursive formation of identity, is clearly, therefore, not a pre-given trait, but is constituted by a variety of available cultural meanings within which one places oneself whilst internalising such meanings in order to locate and stabilise oneself and the world (Dolby, 2001). From a social constructionist perspective racism has been defined as "a set of ideas and discursive and material practices aimed at (re)producing and justifying systematic inequalities between 'races'" (Duncan, van Niekerk, de la Rey, & Seedat, 2001, p. 2). Bonilla-Silva (2006) describes how 'racism' can be understood very differently by people of different racial groups. Writing from a North American perspective, he explains that for most White people racism means prejudice whereas for most people of colour racism holds meaning that is more institutionalised and systemic. Although recognising race and racism as socially constructed negates any essential differences between people classified as belonging to particular racial groups (and allows for complex differences and diversity within groups to be acknowledged (Luke, 1994)), this does not frame such claimed 'differences' between 'racial' groups as, therefore, meaningless or inconsequential. In fact it allows for the powerful effects in everyday life of such social constructions to be explored.

With the inception of Apartheid, South Africa transformed into one of the most racialised societies in the world (Posel, 2001). Posel writes that

the architects of Apartheid racial classification policies recognised explicitly that racial categories were constructs, rather than descriptions of real essences - a version of the idea of race which enabled the bureaucratisation of 'common sense' notions of racial difference and which contributed directly to the enormous powers wielded by racial classifiers (p. 87).

Engineers of the construct of race in Apartheid South Africa defined this category in such a way that intimately associated race with processes of class and lifestyle. These racial constructs still function powerfully within the everyday lives of 'new' South Africans (Durrheim, 2005; Posel, 2001). Race in South Africa is, therefore, a story of inequality (Gibson & Gouws, 2003). Foster (2005) describes race and racism as "notoriously persistent problems" (p. 495). Finchilescu (2005) explores intergroup anxiety in South Africa in relation to race. Although the current generation of youth in South Africa did not directly experience Apartheid, their parents did and dynamics of race relations continue through processes of socialisation. (Sullivan and Stevens (2010) also explain the process through which children in South Africa were taught, through the transmission of everyday linguistic, behavioural and social practices and values, norms that reinforced Apartheid). Both Apartheid laws and current legislation regarding affirmative action (as necessary as these current laws may be) construct and maintain competition between racial groups. Cultural practices associated with different race groups in South Africa include wide varieties of language, music and food preferences, for example, which contribute to perceptions of dissimilarity. Finchilescu discusses meta-stereotypes as an additional factor of relevance in intergroup anxiety in South Africa. Meta-stereotypes refer to the stereotypes that members of a group believe members of an outgroup to hold of them. Ansell (2004) argues,

the fact of the continuing significance of race despite the formal end of Apartheid should come as no surprise except to the most ardent 'post-racist'. Apartheid was a society so structured in racial dominance that its transformation demands from government and necessitates on the part of all South Africans an ongoing engagement with the legacies and continued purchase of race (p. 4).

Stevens (2003) reflects upon how a resistance to acknowledging race and racism currently plays out in South Africa. He claims that, through a decreased questioning of the validity of the construct of 'race', social fatigue and the social desirability of discourses of deracialisation and reconciliation, South Africans (including academics) have become pre-occupied "with not being pre-occupied with race and racism" (p. 192). Stevens argues against this by saying that

the rapid and fluid social transformation in South African society over the last decade clearly represents a fundamental point for social inquiry into issues of 'race' and racism. Theorising about 'race' and racism has needed to adjust to this transformation, especially as articulations of Self and Other have become increasingly complex and difficult to predict and understand. Moreover, the imperative for those involved in theorising and other formal knowledge production to evaluate the manner in which knowledge reflects and shapes everyday discourses and social contexts, is critical as we attempt to responsibly build non-'racialism' and anti-racism (p. 193).

Durrheim, Tredoux, Foster, and Dixon (2011), on the other hand, describe South Africa as remaining a society "obsessed by race" (p. 276). Through their historical review of trends in South African race attitudes they note a marked reversal in intergroup prejudice patterns. Historically, studies (e.g. Foster and Nel (1991), Kinloch (1985), and Lever (1978)) demonstrated strong negative attitudes by English and Afrikaans speaking White people towards Black Africans whilst samples of Black respondents expressed negative attitudes towards Afrikaans speaking White people compared to relatively more positive attitudes towards English speaking White people. However, research by Durrheim et al. (2011), Gibson and Claassen (2010) and Tredoux and Finchilescu (2010), indicates a shift in that Black respondents now express higher levels of

prejudice against White people than that expressed by White people towards them. Trends also indicate that prejudice scores of White respondents have decreased steadily over time.

2.3.2.2 RACE AND CULTURE

As race is constructed, so too is 'culture'. Willis (1990), writing from the perspective of cultural studies, comments on the constructed nature of culture and how culture constructs its subjects. He states:

It is one of the fundamental paradoxes of our social life that when we are at our most natural, our most *everyday*, we are also at our most cultural; that when we are in roles that look the most obvious and given, we are actually in roles that are constructed, learned and far from inevitable (p. 2).

Complexities arise in terms of how constructs such as race, culture, and also ethnicity, gain meaning in relation to each other and how they may be distinguishable. MacDonald (2006), for example, argues that the denaturalisation of race has opened up a gap that has been filled with the idea of 'culture'. However, when race is conceptualised as a cultural formation this culturalisation of races merely raises additional questions. He asks what then differentiates culture from race if race is constructed essentially as cultural identity. Berbrier (2008) writes about the relationships between ideas of race and ethnicity. He comments on the lack of consensus that has emerged in literature in terms of distinguishing between these two notions. Even further, there is routine conflation (in academic and non-academic discourse) between 'race', 'ethnicity', 'tribe', 'nation' and 'culture'. Culture is understood to be the centrally necessary component in almost every definition of ethnicity. Instead of unsuccessful theoretical struggles to sustain distinctions between these constructs, he recommends a more empirical focus on how the terms are utilised in practice. All the terms have particular histories and their uses have changed over time.

The use of the constructs of race and culture and the use of the relationship between the two have a particular history in South Africa. MacDonald (2006) describes how separate development and segregation were two rival strategies utilised by the Apartheid government in order to attempt to preserve White supremacy. Segregation sought to "confine Africans in 'their' tribal cultures" (p. 15) by restricting Africans under chiefs who, themselves, were confined under the state. Separate development also attempted to do the same, but sought to extend this further through converting 'tribal cultures' into 'nations', thereby fragmenting the unity of the oppressed majority. Upholding race as the pivotal social organiser bore the fear of overwhelmingly unifying the African majority. 'Tribalising' Africans was the strategy used to counter this. MacDonald articulates this further:

Whereas Smuts associated races with cultures and left the matter there, separate development appreciated that cultures are permeable, are susceptible to mixing, amalgamation, and contamination. In response, separate development *particularised* the cultures of Africans, then *nationalised* them. Once differentiated into nations and encased in states (real states for Whites, fictional ones for Africans), cultures became less permeable. 'Blacks' could not become 'White' by changing cultures (the fear of all White supremacists) nor could they transcend ethnic divisions (the fear of separate development). Africans were mired in and inseparable from ethnicity, that is, they were tribal (p. 16).

We see, therefore, that conflation that may occur between the constructs of race and culture in contemporary South African discourses rests upon complex historical events and meanings.

2.3.2.3 FURTHER UNDERSTANDINGS OF RACISM

Critical race theory, which originated in the field of law, argues that racism is a pervasive, systemic condition influenced by power as it is socially and historically constructed (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Feagin, 2010; Young, 2011). Racialised social systems are structured according to a hierarchy of racial categories producing definitive social relations between people of different races. All racialised social systems are hierarchical, however, the character of the hierarchy is variable. In South Africa, a structural approach examines how racial ideology is transformed and reproduced within the post-Apartheid context and in relation to international racial politics, as well as facilitating the investigation of post-apartheid racial identities.

As opposed to understanding race and racism from a structural perspective, on the other end of the continuum, traditionally, racism was studied in psychology as a form of psychopathology affecting certain individuals. Developments in the field of social psychology resulted in a sharp shift towards an alternate formulation of prejudice that was based on the understanding of basic and normal cognitive processes. Stereotyping, and the favouring of ingroups over outgroups, was argued to be a fundamental part of all human information processing. This processing was (and is) recognised as being shaped by or held in tension with social factors that either encourage or challenge prejudicial beliefs (Hodson, Dovidio, & Gaertner, 2010). Hodson et al. argue that, as a result, in societies where egalitarian ideals are emphasised, conflict can arise within individuals between the normal cognitive processing which facilitates prejudicial perspectives and non-prejudiced, consciously-held values related to justice. They describe how this ambivalence can manifest in a subtle form of bias termed 'aversive racism' and explain how an individual demonstrating this form of racism "discriminates primarily when the features of the situation allow him or her to maintain a positive (that is, a non-prejudiced) self-view" (p. 2). This subtle and insidious form of racism is widely regarded as the new form of racism (Ikuenobe, 2011). Aversive racism undergirds the social practices that then constitute systemic racial structures.

According to Hodson et al. (2010), there are two main features of aversive racism. The first is that aversive racism is more likely to be expressed in ambiguous situations where behaviour and attitudes that disadvantage people of another racial group could be assigned to causes other than prejudice or could be justified on a non-racial basis. The second is that aversive racism is more likely to be expressed as a pro-ingroup bias as opposed to anti-outgroup bias and in this way the bias is less recognisable as prejudice against people of another race. Thus, as a society develops stronger egalitarian norms, people may report lower levels of personal prejudice, but they may continue to discriminate subtly. Hodson et al. argue that aversive racism typically remains unrecognised even by those holding the bias. People exhibiting aversive racism are reluctant to acknowledge personal prejudice and therefore do not recognise any need for intervention. This form of racism is no less detrimental, however, it is more difficult to identify and exerts its influence with relative ease.

As racial categories have changed over time, so too have those who have inhabited the categories 'racist' and 'not racist'. Trepagnier (2001), writing from the perspective of the United States, explains how 'not racist' has become a "default category" (p. 142), but even though most White Americans will classify themselves as 'not racist', racism endures. In Memmi's (2000) words, "there is a strange kind of enigma associated with the problem of racism. No one, or almost no one, wishes to see themselves as racist; still racism persists, real and tenacious" (p. 3).

Aversive racism has also been given alternative names such as 'new racism', 'modern racism', 'symbolic racism' (McKenzie, 2003), 'subtle racism' (Reid & Birchard, 2010) and 'silent racism' (Trepagnier, 2001). This area also bears some relationship to studies of explicit (slow, intentional and conscious) and implicit (fast, automatic and often unconscious) racial attitudes (Akrami & Ekehammar, 2005; Devine, Plant, Amodio, Harmon-Jones, & Vance, 2002; Hofmann, Gschwendner, & Schmitt, 2005; Nier, 2005; Pratto & Shih, 2000). From a discursive perspective, McKenzie (2003) argues that literature in the area of aversive racism has failed to yet adequately explore how this form of racism "is *itself* the accomplishment of complex, situated negotiations between speakers in mundane social settings" (p. 462). The concern of discursively oriented research is to examine the work of talk itself in definitions of racism. More focus is required upon an exploration of "how speakers take up the issue of what *constitutes* racist activity or racially discriminatory behaviour as well as what is at stake for speakers when and where such definition is at issue in their talk" (McKenzie, 2003, p. 465).

2.3.2.4 WHITENESS

Due to the fact that the majority of mothers interviewed in the current study are White, the theoretical concept of whiteness, which has emerged in literature in recent decades (although not very distinctly yet in South Africa) as another tool with which to deconstruct racism, also deserves attention. It is duly noted that not all authors agree that it is a productive tool for engaging with issues of racism, for example Ratele (2007). Whiteness has been broadly described as "the production and reproduction of dominance rather than subordination, normativity rather than marginality, and privilege rather than disadvantage" (Frankenberg, 1993, p. 236). The sources of its hegemonic power are multifaceted, contextually specific and vary across time, region, gender, class, and political orientation. Green et al. (2007) explain that whiteness places people in a privileged position whilst this privilege can remain invisible to White people. Bonnet (2000) argues that, through a blindness to white racial privilege White people may then view whiteness as unproblematic. White people "can deny noticing race, including their own racial position, and thereby avoid engaging with the realities of White supremacy and avoid considering how they may be implicated in these processes" (p. 405). Note that in these explanations of whiteness, the focus is on what whiteness 'does' rather than offering a proposal on what whiteness 'is'. What is whiteness and what does it mean to have an identity as a White person? Doane (2003) argues that this is a major challenge within whiteness studies and is a complex matter. Whiteness studies cannot neglect to analyse the core concept and yet, when Whiteness is regarded as a social construction how does one approach these questions without essentialising Whiteness?

Green et al. (2007) draw on a number of research studies arguing that White South Africans use a range of discourses and practices to distance themselves from racial privilege and racism whilst still securing and protecting the normativity and dominance of whiteness. They maintain that challenging racial hegemony requires raising the socio-political awareness of dominant groups. Steyn (2007) describes this recognition of "taken-for granted privilege" (p. 421) as characteristic of the first wave of whiteness studies, the aim being to make these strategies through which whiteness operates visible. She critiques this invisibility of whiteness in a South African context, however, and argues that invisibility requires the comfort that majority affords. Whiteness has been more visible in South Africa due to the fact that white people occupy a small minority. Fears of being overwhelmed by the majority characterised the racist Apartheid imagination. Although whiteness was, therefore, more visible in this context, the entitlement that accompanied White supremacy was still taken for granted. Steyn argues that, in the current, democratic South Africa, whiteness functions in

a manner that is even further differentiated from the ways in which whiteness is described in international literature. Steyn explains how the power relations that upheld previous social identities have shifted sharply. The state is conspicuously engaged in the dismantling of racial privilege and White South Africans can no longer hold onto privileges of the past. Whiteness in this country relates to blackness that encompasses political, demographic and cultural power (as well as gradually increasing economic power). Regime change and the resulting reorganisation of power relations have, therefore, disrupted the White subject position. In exploring whiteness in this context, then, the key question concerns what becomes of whiteness as it loses its power. Ansell (2004) concurs that meanings of whiteness and blackness have changed, creating new questions around selfhood “as identities become dislocated and reconstituted in a new context” (p. 7).

Feagin (2006, 2010) writes about the ‘White racial frame’. He defines this as “an organised set of racialised ideas, stereotypes, emotions, and inclinations to discriminate” (2006, p. 25) which are passed down from generation to generation. The White racial frame is comprised of five aspects: assumptions about White superiority; negative stereotypes regarding people of colour; emotions associated with racial assumptions and negative stereotypes; repeated individual or group expressions of racialised knowledge; and the broader institutional structures within which these are expressed. Not all features are present in every race-based interaction: there are variations of this frame and White people utilise this frame to different degrees (Picca & Feagin, 2007). The White racial frame does, however, form a kind of racialised ‘water’ in which White people metaphorically swim, often without even noticing.

Rothman (2005), as a sociologist and adoptive mother, explores meanings around what it is to be a White mother of a Black child (from within her own context in the United States). She lists the kinds of questions, in an anecdotal style, that her research and her own personal experience raised concerning:

When you are the mother. When that is your child. When you mother that child and that defines who you are, the mother of that child. When you’ve put your eggs in that basket, when your future lies there with Black kids, with the world Black kids live in and will grow in. When who you are is kind of besides the point, when you’ve reached the limits of how much White privilege you can extend to your kid, and you’re standing there watching the kid go forth into the world, as a Black woman or a Black man...Race isn’t just something we talk about; it’s something we live (p. 150).

2.3.2.5 CONSTRUCTING TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION

Both Courtney (1997) and Triseliotis, Shireman, and Hundleby (1997) describe the lack of middle ground between those who oppose transracial adoption and those who stand in favour of it. One of the most well-known statements of opposition to transracial adoption in the United States is that of William T. Merritt (as cited in Simon & Altstein, 1996), the then-president of America’s National Association of Black Social Workers (NABSW), who described the practice in 1972 as “a blatant form of racial and cultural genocide” (p. 6). This attitude continued as evidenced by the description of transracial adoption as “the ultimate insult to Black heritage” by Jeff, a former president of NABSW, in 1991 (as cited in Simon & Altstein, 1996, p. 6). Other concerns regarding transracial adoption involve adjustment, the identity formation of the child and the rights of children to be raised among their own racial group (DeBerry, Scarr, & Weinberg, 1996; Hollingsworth, 1998a; Johnson, Shireman, & Watson, 1987). Simon and Altstein (1996) argue that objections to transracial adoption have no empirical basis and are politically and ideologically driven whereas the case for transracial adoption is founded in empirical studies.

Transracial adoption has only recently become a subject of public interest in South Africa as until just over 10 years ago, laws such as The Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act No. 55 of 1949 and The Immorality Act No. 21 of 1950 attempted to prevent all mixing of races, including the adoption of a child of another race (Moos & Mwaba, 2007). Limited research is available regarding transracial adoption in South Africa (and there is a particular paucity of studies exploring the socially constructed nature of the notion itself). Research that has been conducted in this country has explored challenges experienced by parents who adopt transracially in Gauteng, particularly regarding perceived lack of support (Finlay, 2006) and attitudes and beliefs of a sample of psychology students regarding transracial adoption (Moos & Mwaba, 2007). Atwell (2004) conducted a qualitative, interpretivist study to explore motivations for and experiences of White parents adopting transracially in South Africa through interviewing three families. Atwell also aimed to explore how parents negotiate the identity development of their transracially adopted children as well as their own social and racial identities from the perspective of social identity theory. Although claiming to focus on identity, much of Atwell's analysis centres on the general experiences of parents including motivations for adopting, the role of support and concerns about the future.

A sizeable body of international research has been devoted to exploring whether transracial adoption is in the best interest of children. The term 'best interest of the child', also a discursive construct, has been an area of contest in literature and practice (Finley, 2003; Park & Green, 2000). According to Raymie (2008), the legal standard escapes definition. Mahlobogwane (2005) describes how the term 'best interest of the child' has led to intense debate in many South African legal judgements as it cannot be determined with absolute certainty. Ambert (1994) explains that the construction of parenting takes place in accordance with the paradigms and ideologies of those sciences and professions that dominate in terms of dictating what is good for children at any given point in time. What parents should and should not do—and, in this case, how families should and should not be formed—is implicitly and explicitly constructed in relation to how that which is 'in the best interest of the child' is established. A dominant South African perspective, as informed by a position statement issued by the Johannesburg Child Welfare Society, entails a preference for same-race placement of children, however, in instances where the alternative would be institutional residence, transracial placement is considered preferable (Szabo & Ritchken, 2002).

Further international literature on the subject of transracial adoption includes studies by Galvin (2003) and Lee (2003). Historically, Western adoption practices sought to match physical characteristic of parents and adopted child, therefore allowing for the privacy of the adoption. Transracial adoption precludes this possibility of privacy. Galvin (2003) explains how this necessitates family members negotiating a constructed identity as well as boundaries for outsiders and for themselves.

Literature, for example by DeBerry et al. (1996) and Hollingsworth (1998), emphasises the role of adoptive parents in facilitating the racial identity development of their transracially adopted children. Yoon (2001) found an increase in the positive racial/ethnic identity development of transracially adopted children (which, in turn, influenced positive adjustment) when parents actively promoted their children's race. According to Greene (1990),

a major task of parenting persons is that of interpreting the outside world's messages to a child about who she or he is with respect to Black and White persons, and what his or her respective place in the world is or can be. This must be done in addition to teaching the child the skills

required to survive and negotiate the cognitive, social, and for Black children, racial tasks of the world (p. 214).

How this process is approached, however, remains a complex and contentious issue. Lee (2003) conducted a systematic literature review focussing on the racial, ethnic and cultural challenges and opportunities faced by transracial adoptive families in the United States. One specific aspect that he concentrates on is that of cultural socialisation. He discusses four strategies identified in literature that are used by transracial adoptive families in this regard. These strategies are not mutually exclusive. The first is termed cultural assimilation. This strategy involves the downplaying or even rejection on the part of the parents of the unique racial experiences of the transracially adopted child and the minimising of racial differences between parent and child. Within such families, children are acculturated or assimilated into the culture of the parents. The second strategy is referred to as enculturation and this allows for the acknowledgment of difference. Parents attempt to expose and teach their children about the culture and heritage of their biological families. Research appears to indicate that children raised by parents utilising this strategy either show a higher degree of racial pride or they may be more likely to develop a more fluid and flexible cultural identity. The third strategy, racial inculcation, involves parents attempting to provide children with coping skills deemed necessary to engage with racism and discrimination. Research indicates a variety of approaches utilised by parents in this regard, from the downplaying of racist comments, being openly critical of those with racist views, being more likely to read books to their children that focus on the promotion of a positive racial identity, speaking to their children about discrimination at school and, less commonly, taking an active community role in the promotion of social justice. The fourth strategy is child choice and this refers to parents initially providing their transracially adopted child with cultural opportunities and exposure, but becoming more ambivalent in this regard according to their child's wishes and interests, especially as the child enters adolescence. This shifts the responsibility of cultural socialisation from the parents onto the child and it is proposed that children's sensitivity to their parents' ambivalence in this regard may contribute towards a suppression of their racial and cultural identity in order to ensure family harmony, although further research is required in this area.

Forms of the first strategy mentioned above, cultural assimilation, draw on the discourse of being 'colour-blind'. Perry (1994) wrote a paper on the discourse of transracial adoption, also in the United States which, although penned over 15 years ago, still retains relevance. She identifies two competing perspectives within the transracial adoption controversy, namely liberal colourblind individualism and colour and community consciousness. Liberal colourblind individualism is characterised by the belief that the eradication of racism is possible, by the ideal of colourblindness and the rejection of race as a vehicle for the evaluation of individuals, and by the emphasis on the rights of the individual (for example, the rights of the individual to create a multiracial family). The colour and community consciousness perspective regards race as exerting a profound influence on the lives of people and racism as being a persistent feature of society. This view includes a focus on the interests, rights and needs of the group with which the individual is associated (for example, the rights of a group to influence, or even enforce, intraracial, intracultural or intrareligious placement of children).

Doane (2003) explains the colour-blind racial discourse further as one in which race no longer 'matters'. The solution for racial concerns is simply not to 'see' race and to assert that all people are the same. Race is no longer a valid topic of conversation. Therefore, those who do demonstrate consciousness of race or who raise race as a subject for debate are viewed as asking for special treatment, complaining, or "playing the

race card” (p. 13) or even of exhibiting racism. Doane argues that this colour-blind discourse serves to further the hegemony of whiteness. She states the following:

As an organised set of claims about race, ‘colour-blindness’ rests on the seemingly unassailable moral foundation of ‘equality’, which is the basis for its political strength. What is overlooked - or deliberately masked - is the persistence of racial stratification and the ongoing role of social institutions in reproducing social inequality. In essence, the ‘colour-blind’ society is not a utopia where racial inequality has been eliminated; it is simply a discourse in which it is not permissible to raise issues of race - except to condemn *individual* acts of racism. Within the discourse of ‘colour-blindness’, inequality is explained away as the result of individual or communal failings, not the persistence of racism, and is therefore not considered a problem requiring structural change. Given the transparency of ‘whiteness’ and of racial inequality, the ‘denial’ or ‘strategic avoidance of race’ is an effective political strategy for legitimising the persistence of White hegemony (p. 13).

Smith, Juarez, and Jacobson (2011) ask whether White parents are equipped to teach Black adoptive children how to understand and cope with racism. These authors attempt to reach further than debates concerning colour consciousness versus colour-blindness. Their concern is with the ways in which institutionalised practices of domination intersect with the daily lives of transracially adopted children. They begin their inquiry by proposing that White adoptive parents are positioned to transmit knowledge, memories, interpretations and understandings about Whiteness and not about Blackness. White parents are positioned to impart lessons about race that privilege and reflect the experiences, interests and perspective of White people. Parents may fail to comprehend how they may be embodying White-supremacist values and beliefs, whilst denying any prejudicial attitudes (especially through not demonstrating any explicitly coercive control), and this can blind them to how their actions may still be affirming racial domination. These authors propose that “the race lessons of White adoptive parents provide a window for examining ways individual Whites of goodwill may unintentionally help to perpetuate rather than interrupt historical patterns of social inequalities within the context of transracial adoption despite the best of intentions” (p. 1198).

Smith et al. (2011) conducted 23 interviews in three North American states with White adoptive parents and their Black adoptive children who were now adults. Through a thematic analysis of the transcripts three ‘race lessons’ were identified. The first concerned celebrating diversity and involved parents’ attempts to convey to their children that they should be proud of who they are and where they come from. Adoptive parents expected their transracially adopted children to utilise cultural pride as a source of strength and as a tool to combat racism. The second ‘race lesson’ involved parents teaching their children to suppress their own needs in the service of catering to the needs of White people. Offending White people is constructed as racially ignorant whilst the needs of the Black child are positioned as secondary. The child is expected to evaluate the severity of the incident and the motivation behind the offense before selecting a response. Racial mistreatment is framed as “interpersonal misunderstanding” (p. 1216). The third ‘race lesson’ emphasised the value of maintaining peaceful relations with White people. Conflict and displays of anger towards White people are not regarded as acceptable. People are basically good. The aim should be to look past incidents of racism and to develop a ‘thick skin’. The responsibility for dealing with racism lies with the child. To respond with anger or criticism to an incident of racial mistreatment means that the child risks being positioned as the stereotypical ‘angry Black male’ or ‘angry Black female’. In each of these three ‘lessons’ race is understood to be an “individual possession” (p. 1221). The individual and culture are private property.

Smith et al. argue that these approaches aim to teach Black adopted children to think about race the way White people do, in other words, that Whiteness is the norm. Transracial adoptive children were taught that “White people are virtuous and good people who just did not know a lot about race” (p. 1222). These authors emphasised that the adoptive parents who participated in their study loved their children deeply and all had anti-racist intentions. However, their privileging of the individual and the manner in which they took White innocence for granted revealed the operation of the White racial frame. In this way “White racial domination may function even in a sphere where the participants intend otherwise” (p. 1223).

Although literature reviews often do not overtly involve the personal voice of the researcher, reflexivity requires that I remain critically aware of my own stake throughout the research process, including in the selection of literature for review. As a White adoptive mother of a Black child I acknowledge that research ‘demonstrating’ that transracially adopted children develop satisfactorily within their adoptive families (and there are many such studies) is appealing. From the vantage point of social constructionism, however, I recognise that this is a highly complex area involving multiple, contextual layers of meaning constructed by individuals who are positioned in numerous ways and who hold powerfully vested interests. Rothman (2005) makes some stark comments concerning the complexity of transracial adoption, from her own North American context, which characterise the critical position that I aim to hold. Due to the vivid nature of her statements, I shall include the following two as direct quotations. The first relates to her own relationship with her transracially adopted daughter Victoria:

I profit from American racism. More than almost anybody I know, I am a beneficiary: I have Victoria (p. 9).

African American children have been raised in White families since slave days, in a wide range of circumstances. White women have conceived children with their Black lovers and raised them.

White families have adopted, fostered and stolen Black children with the fullest range of motivations.

A White family raising a Black child may be engaging in an act of love, or an act of genocide - or it may well be both at once (p. 103).

2.4 MOTHERING

Although the literature that has been reviewed thus far provides a certain amount of insight into options of care for orphaned children, one of the areas in which research is lacking is that of mothering within these types of contexts. This section examines the socially constructed nature of mothering, followed by a review of Western and African research on the subject. Dominant discourses of mothering are discussed, including those emanating from within ideologies of patriarchy, capitalism and technology. The notion of the good mother is explored, particularly in relation to the ideology of intensive mothering. This is followed by a review of literature on adoptive and foster mothering specifically.

2.4.1 MOTHERING AS CONSTRUCTED

There are few concepts that seem as obvious as family, motherhood even more so, its naturalisation taken as a logical consequence of its rootedness to the human body (Rothman, 2005). Motherhood, however, is not primarily a biological or natural function. It is shaped historically, culturally, socially, politically and morally (Duarte & Goncalves, 2011; Miller, 2005) and its meanings change across times and places (O’Reilly, 2004). Mothering and research on mothering are therefore not static phenomena. According to Silva (1996),

recognition, transformation and continual redefinition of ‘the mother’ has been a key component in the history of women. In the introduction to her thorough history of Western motherhood, from the Old Stone Age to the time of her writing, Thurer (1994) agrees that

Motherhood—the way we perform mothering—is culturally derived. Each society has its own mythology, complete with rituals, beliefs, expectations, norms, and symbols...The good mother is reinvented as each age or society defines her anew, in its own terms, according to its own mythology (p. xv).

She explains that the wide variety of roles that women have played in raising their children throughout history are not underpinned by some or other fundamental truth, but rather by everyday demands of life such as population pressures, subsistence strategies, weather patterns, biology, technology, beliefs about women’s nature and beliefs about the nature of children. Thurer discusses how, like most myths, the current Western version of the good mother is so pervasive that it is essentially unnoticeable and therefore persists without question, despite influencing what is viewed as being in the best interest of the child, how children should be raised and who should be held accountable for their development. Miller (2005) explains that motherhood profoundly shapes our experiences as women (whether or not we are mothers). The institution of motherhood also limits the ease by which women can discuss the unanticipated and challenging facets of mothering, resulting in the concealing of such common experiences and the subsequent perpetuation of the myths.

As a note, Lawler (2000), a sociologist, acknowledges that the social construction of the category ‘mother’ is largely no longer contested. However, the construct ‘childhood’ is very rarely questioned and the nature and needs of children are taken for granted. (Nsamenang (1996, 2008, 2009) does offer interesting perspectives in this regard, exploring meanings of early childhood in Africa.) Since motherhood is constructed significantly in relation to the needs of a child, this lack of attention paid to childhood results in the “radical analysis of motherhood” (p. 35) remaining an impossibility. Unfortunately the current study is unable to address this issue with due consideration. However, it is recognised as pertinent and, as far as possible, a critical view is taken on the social construction of the ‘nature’ and ‘needs’ of children, particularly adopted and fostered children.

Lorber, Coser, Rossi, and Chodorow (1981) comment that biological, historical, social, economic, or psychological terms used to explain motherhood transform their subject. Psychological research on mothering has shifted, relatively recently, from focussing on how mothers produce healthy children to the mother as subject. Kruger (2006) explains that, although this shift has directed more focus to the subjective physical and emotional experience of mothers, potent ideologies of motherhood continue to inform all psychological researchers and clinicians in their work with mothers.

Smith, Surrey, and Watkins (1998) concur that psychological theory has been used to promote dominant cultural ideologies which then influence the daily experiences of mothers. Writing from a Western perspective, they explain that the experiences of adoptive mothers challenge the most fundamental assumptions concerning what is ‘normal’, ‘right’, ‘natural’, ‘real’ and ‘psychologically sound’ within family life, even though adoption has taken place for as long as history has been recorded. They emphasise that ideas about adoption are always embedded in historical and cultural contexts and intersect with ideologies of race, class and gender. Smith et al. propose that gaining clarity about the ideologies that frame their experiences empower adoptive mothers to challenge and transform these dominant ideas of motherhood and kinship according to their own actual experiences of mothering their children. Glenn (1994) contends that the way

mothering is conceived, organised and practiced is not only determined by cultural and material resources and constraints, but that agency is also central to an understanding of mothering as a social construct.

African researchers have also emphasised how mothering is embedded within social, cultural and historical contexts. Sudarkasa (2004) discusses comparative studies of kinship which, rather than bearing a one-to-one relationship with biology, is created and terminated by culturally prescribed rules, regulations and behaviour. In human societies, therefore, when referring to kinship, the opposition between 'culture' and 'nature' is no longer relevant as even nature is enculturated. She explains, "even 'motherhood', which many might assume to be an obvious 'fact of nature', is in reality, 'a facet of culture'" (p. 1).

The majority of literature on mothering has, however, been dominated by Western perspectives (which pose as universal). Ambert (1994) argues that, due to the Western monopoly on knowledge in the social and behavioural sciences, a discourse on parenting as a fixed entity that is perceived as "nature bound" (p. 530) within one particularly dominant sector of society is perpetuated. Ideological paradigms of the chief knowledge producers influence research on parenting. Results of parenting studies are still commonly presented as universally generalisable even though there is wide acknowledgment that parenting studies are culturally bound.

This applies most specifically to the Western focus on an individual mother at the core of a child's development, which is, in fact, far from universal. The necessity for a child to have one adult attachment figure, usually the mother, is placed under serious question in light of multicultural forms of parenting and even when considered in relation to the numbers of children in Western societies who are cared for by other persons or institutions whilst mothers are gainfully employed. Crouch and Manderson (1995) also call for a critical appraisal of early post-partum 'bonding' in scientific research.

Said's (1983) concept of "travelling theory" (p. 226) can be related specifically to this debate. As theories travel they are subject to change. Said explores how theories travel between people, situations and time periods. He sees travelling theory as a normal part of life and as enabling intellectual activity. He also asks, however, whether "by virtue of having moved from one place in time to another an idea or theory gains or loses in strength, and whether a theory in one historical period and national culture becomes altogether different for another period or situation" (p. 226). Said also points out that examining how a theory may be different within different circumstances reveals information regarding the theory itself, for example its possibilities, limitations and intrinsic problems. Said notes four stages common to travelling theory. The first of these is a point of origin; the second is the distance travelled (through time and space and through the pressure of different contexts); the third is the conditions of acceptance and resistance which confront the idea at its point of arrival; and the fourth is the transformation of the idea through its new position and new uses. It can be suggested that the idea of 'the good mother' deserves critique not as an essential, prescriptive ideal, but as a travelling theory.

Ambert (1994) critiques Western journals for exporting paradigms through publishing research that may not be relevant, may be harmful in other societies and frequently no longer apply to segments of contemporary Western societies either. She continues to say, through exploring examples such as the 'effects' of maternal depression and changing levels of parental affective investment, that these traditional, biased Western constructs of parenting (especially mothering) also limit intellectual perspectives and do not promote a focus on social change. Glenn (1994) states that "what may be needed to emphasise the social base of mothering

is attending to the variation rather than searching for the universal, and to shift what has been on the margins to the centre” (p. 5).

Ebron (2007) discusses the chasm in feminist theory that has developed between North and South and the question she reaches applies equally to the more specific area of mothering addressed in this study. She summarises the following:

on one side of the divide, proponents generate notions in which the very definition of theory is that which ‘speaks’ to the universals of humanity; on the other side of this gulf, proponents are forced to address specific and concrete issues of colonialism, culture, and conventions of representation. Yet what if this imagined geography of difference could be reconfigured so that these two sources of gender analysis were brought together in a productive conversation? (p. 171).

Rather than describing a “productive conversation”, both Glenn (1994, p. 2) and McMahon (1995, p. 1) describe mothering as a “contested terrain”. The remainder of this chapter explores literature that engages in and with this contest from a number of different perspectives, focussing particularly on key Western texts on mothering, mothering from African perspectives, dominant discourses of mothering, particularly the ideology of intensive mothering, before exploring literature examining perspectives on adoptive and foster mothering specifically.

2.4.2 WESTERN AND AFRICAN RESEARCH ON MOTHERING

A division between Western and African research on motherhood and mothering is utilised in this literature review firstly for purposes of convenience, secondly to show how a broad range of perspectives have been drawn from and acknowledged and thirdly to highlight some of the differences and similarities that do exist between these bodies of literature. However, it is recognised that this is a somewhat problematic distinction, particularly when positioning a study in a multicultural country such as South Africa which is influenced by and influences both African and Western ideologies (van der Merwe, 1996). Research on ‘Western’ perspectives on mothering may, for example, be conducted by a South African researcher as is the case with the text by Kruger (2006) mentioned in section 2.4.3.1. Walker (1995) also cautions, with regards to any temptation to view ‘White’ as Western and ‘Black’ as non-Western in the South African context, that

‘Eurocentric’ ideas have not been the property of South Africans of European descent only, but have been absorbed and refashioned in complex ways by Black South Africans as well. The opposition set up between a White = Western = oppressive discourse of motherhood and a Black = non-Western = emancipatory discourse, is overly simplistic and does not appear to be based on a serious engagement with the available literature or primary sources (p. 19).

Walker (1995) argues that the evidence points towards shared understandings, concerns and even experiences of motherhood among women from diverse backgrounds. She suggests that those who argue for distinct meanings of motherhood amongst Black and White women may be motivated more by political concerns than by evidence. Nonetheless, a strong tradition of research on mothering has emerged from Western authors and to imply that the findings are automatically universal would be equally as concerning.

2.4.3. WESTERN MOTHERING RESEARCH

The intent of this section is threefold. Firstly, prominent classifications of Western mothering research are described. Secondly, foundational Western texts on the subject of mothering are reviewed and, thirdly, studies are explored that have build upon this foundation.

2.4.3.1 OVERVIEWS OF WESTERN MOTHERING RESEARCH

A number of authors have attempted to review Western research on mothering in order to very broadly classify approaches within this field of study. Three such classifications will be mentioned, firstly by Boulton (1983), secondly by Arendell (2000) and thirdly by Kruger (2006). Although Kruger writes her overview from the perspective of dominant discourses (which will be discussed in further detail in section 2.4.5) it is appropriate to include here, in light of the current focus on presenting broad approaches to mothering research, after which more specific aspects of study will be explored.

Remarkably, although written over 20 years ago, Boulton's (1983) distinction between two opposing camps of mothering research and theory remains applicable today. She distinguishes between biologically based theories and social theories. Biological theories focus on a woman's desire and capacity to mother as being innate. Within this camp, Boulton identifies the psychoanalytic school of thought and the ethological school of thought. Within psychoanalysis, inner conflicts, fantasies, anxieties and resentments within the individual mother are the focal point. Boulton (1983) summarises a psychoanalytic position on mothering as implying that

motherliness is a normal characteristic of a mature woman's femininity; that 'motherliness-in-action' is naturally rewarding; and consequently that the experience of dissatisfaction in motherhood is evidence of developmental problems in a woman and poor adjustment to her feminine psychosocial identity (p. 3).

Ethology also argues that mothering is 'natural' and essentially fulfilling. However, ethology concentrates on the so-called 'bond' between mother and offspring (principles are drawn from animal species) and how this forms the intense mother-child affective tie. In this school of thought, the focus lies on the early months of motherhood and the circumstances surrounding the birth, which are viewed as having an impact upon bonding and attachment (Boulton, 1983).

In contrast to biologically based theories, Boulton's (1983) summary identifies sociological and social anthropological approaches to motherhood. Here, the focus lies on how society shapes mother and child relationships and influences a woman's experiences as a mother. The desire and capacity to mother is, from this perspective, largely socially created and motherhood is understood as a social role. Boulton (1983) draws on an array of studies to conclude that this school of thought purports that socialisation for motherhood occurs over the duration of a woman's lifetime through messages that are received and transmitted in many forms concerning what is considered to be appropriate behaviour.

Arendell notes two predominant strands of North American research on mothering through her extensive review in 2000 of the previous decade's research. The first concerns the theorising of motherhood and mothering, and includes approaches that can be described as qualitative, hermeneutic, interpretive, critical and feminist. This type of research focuses on the situational contexts out of which people act and how shared, multiple and shifting meanings are constructed. Language is analysed and dominant ideologies are

deconstructed. She highlights two main conceptual developments spearheaded by feminist scholarship and by the increasing acknowledgment of the diversity of ethnic practices: the ideology of intensive mothering and maternal practice. The second strand discussed by Arendell concerns empirical studies, undergirded by statistical methodologies, largely of the mothering experience. She concludes that four main areas of research required further attention: firstly, identities and meanings of mothering, secondly, characteristics of the relationships between particular mothers and their children, thirdly, experiences and activities of mothering and, fourthly, the social locations and structural contexts from within which women mother. In relation to these areas she lists pertinent questions that invite exploration: What meaning do various women ascribe to mothering? How do they feel about being mothers? How are the experiences, desires and sexual lives of women affected by mothering? How do mothers understand the mothering project? What are the characteristics of the relationships between particular mothers and their children? How do women negotiate mothering activities? How do women resist dominant ideologies of mothering? She highlights the necessity to explore these areas with respect for and attention to the vast multiplicity of mothering circumstances and also with class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, national origin and immigrant experience at the forefront of consideration.

Kruger (2006), a South African psychologist, discusses four dominant discourses of motherhood in Western psychology. The first two, medical discourse and child development discourse, fall under the umbrella of instrumental discourses (where mother is an object). The third and fourth, rational feminism and romantic feminism, fall under feminist discourses (where mother is a subject). The medical discourse of motherhood, in essence, is concerned with the mother's body as a 'machine' for reproduction, requiring monitoring and intervention by experts. Certain core meanings and norms are reflected (and reinforced) in this discourse such as mind-body dualism, decontextualisation of emotional experience and the need for control. The second discourse is concerned with how mothers facilitate the optimal development of their children, in other words, the value of mothering for society. Mothers are expected to find satisfaction in their role as the self-sacrificing, all-giving mother. This is also referred to also as the ideology of 'essential motherhood' or the 'ideology of intensive mothering'.

Rational feminism, the third discourse that Kruger (2006) summarises, demands gender equality and asserts that differences between women and men should be minimised. This is expressed in viewpoints that range from advocating shared family responsibilities in households to representing childrearing as an instrument of oppression. This position has been criticised as presenting women as passive victims of social forces, as devaluing women who make more 'traditional' choices and as neglecting to acknowledge that some women experience motherhood as a source of power. Instead of arguing that women are equal, romantic feminism, the fourth discourse, emphasises that women are different in that their lives are oriented towards caring for others. Romantic feminism has been criticised as viewing woman as naturally and inevitably bound to motherhood (even if only in the form of being daughters or in having the capacity to mother) (Lauritzen, 1989). Both rational and romantic feminism are rooted in social and historical contexts. Collins (1994) states that, although claiming to be objective and universal, these theories are partial and represent the positions of White, middle-class women and exclude the experiences of those who are neither White nor middle-class. She argues that "such theorists are themselves participants in a system of privilege that rewards them for not seeing race and class privilege as important" (p. 72).

2.4.3.2 FOUNDATIONAL WESTERN TEXTS ON MOTHERING

This section will explore the positions of four highly influential figures within research on motherhood and mothering. Chodorow, writing from a psychoanalytic object relations perspective, Ruddick, a philosopher, Rich, a poet and feminist and Collins, a sociologist have participated significantly in creating a foundation upon which current Western psychological research on motherhood and mothering is built.

Chodorow (1999), also classified as a romantic feminist within Kruger's (2006) classification and a proponent of "feminist mothering theory" (p. 817) according to Balbus (1992), explores why women mother. She concludes that a woman's psychological capacity for parenting develops out of her intense and continuing relationship with her own mother. Chodorow discusses how the internal unconscious world and the conscious and unconscious sense of self are formed, developmentally, largely within the relationship between mother and child, with particular emphasis on daughters. In 2003 she explored a particular example of this in her analysis of how unconscious aggressive mother-daughter fantasies delay the desire for motherhood.

Chodorow (1999) explores how the mother-daughter relationship can be understood (in terms of characteristics and in terms of how this relationship takes form within the female psyche) in relation to two comparative claims. The first involves the comparison between women and men (including femininity and masculinity, the female self and the male self, and mothers and father). The second involves the comparison between the mother-daughter relationship and father-daughter, as well as mother-son, relationships. She argues that, in contrast to men's sense of self that seeks to deny connection and relation, women experience a sense of "self-in-relation" (p. viii). One of the conscious outcomes of this is a mother's sense of a maternal self. She maintains that the biological drive or urge to become a mother that is experienced by many women is shaped by unconscious fantasy and this fantasy affects the meanings that pregnancy or being a mother holds for women. Chodorow then theorises maternal subjectivity which she describes as the mother's conscious and unconscious experiences of being a mother.

The first edition (1978) of Chodorow's seminal work on maternal subjectivity was criticised as aiming to build a universal theory of mothering whilst remaining "centred on a single, normative pattern, with variation relegated to the margins" (Glenn, 1994, p. 5). Chodorow retains an essentialist argument in the second edition (1999), holding that culture does not determine personal meanings of gender and that every human being has a psyche that operates as psychoanalysis describes. She maintains that the unconscious realm of psychical meaning shapes the experience of the mother, regardless of culture.

Philosopher Sara Ruddick (1989), also a romantic feminist according to Kruger's (2006) classification, wrote a book entitled *Maternal thinking: Towards a politics of peace* which, although published just over 20 years ago, is still a widely referenced and influential text (see for example, Radosh (2008)). Ruddick extends a reflection of personal mothering in private spaces into ethical theory and political practice arguing that maternal thinking can ground feminist peace politics. She views the term 'maternal' as a "social category" (p. 346) and explores maternal thinking as it arises out of actual child-caring practices, in other words, focussing on what mothers *do* as opposed to what mothers *are*. She therefore prefers the term 'mothering' (referring to a conscious social practice) to 'motherhood' and includes non-biological mothers, and even men, in her discussion. She understands maternal thought—the unity of reflection, judgement and emotion—as arising out of social practices and as enabling empathic relationships. Ruddick explains that mothers engage in a discipline. In other words, mothers select certain questions to ask as opposed to others and set criteria for the truth, relevance and adequacy of possible answers. Ruddick, who recognises that her work is limited by her

knowledge of motherhood as situated in middle-class, White, Protestant, capitalist, patriarchal North America elaborates her argument by discussing maternal practice as governed by demands for preservation (the responsibility for maintaining the life of a child), growth (physical, intellectual and emotional) and acceptability (fostering the growth of a child into an adult who is viewed by others as acceptable). She discusses inauthenticity in maternal thought as referring to taking on the values of the dominant culture. Ruddick presents the idea that mothers are policed by the “gaze of others” (1989, p. 111), resulting in a loss of confidence in their own values and an abdication of their authority. This fear of the gaze of others is then lived out in (and arises through) maternal practice as an achievement to fulfil the values of others. Ruddick explains that, as individual mothers live out maternal thought, they assume the values of the men, families and subcultures with whom they are associated. She states that, through this relinquishing of maternal authority, “a ‘good’ mother may well be praised for colluding in her own subordination with destructive consequences to herself and her child” (p. 355). Ruddick describes this as inauthentic mothering.

Ruddick (1980) does, however, acknowledge that there are women who ‘fail’ by insisting on their own values and who do not remain oblivious to the implications of dominant value systems (for example, competitiveness, war, gender stereotyping) although this may initially lead to a sense of moral ambiguity. Ruddick continues by saying that

out of confusion, new voices will arise, voices recognised not so much by the content of the truths they enunciate as by the honesty and courage of enunciation. They will be at once familiar and original, these voices arising out of maternal practice, affirming its own criteria of acceptability, insisting that the dominant values are unacceptable and need not be accepted (p. 357).

Although calling forth new voices of maternal practice, Ruddick (1980) has also been criticised for presenting an essentialist perspective. Rumsey (1990) asks how Ruddick can possibly know how all or even most mothers think. Also, seeing as Ruddick’s argument follows that maternal thinking arises from maternal practice, Rumsey questions how Ruddick is able to draw universal conclusions regarding how women practice mothering in different times and cultures. Bailey (1994) offers a similar criticism noting that although Ruddick mentions diversity among mothers she does not account for the implications of such diversity.

One of the overarching perspectives that distinguish Ruddick’s (1980) contribution to the literature on mothering remains her focus on the activity of mothering as opposed to maternal identity. This has opened up an alternate avenue for exploring mothering as practice (although investigating maternal identity has nonetheless been fruitful too, for example, in research such as Nuttbrock and Freudiger’s (1991) study on identity salience and motherhood, Bailey’s (1999) study on self-identity changes in the transition to motherhood, McQuillan, Greil, Shreffler, and Tichenor’s (2008) exploration of the relationships between mother and worker identities and Woodward’s (1997) analysis of discursive constructs of maternal identity in women’s magazines). Before proceeding with a discussion on work by the third key figure in Western mothering literature, a contextual comment is required on the construction of mothering as activity. In 1971, Winnicott drew the parental distinction between mothers as *being* and fathers as *doing* (bearing in mind that Freud (1933) also differentiated between men as active and women as passive). From Winnicott’s psychoanalytic, object relations perspective, the mother is the infant’s first object. The mother and infant initially experience themselves as one and their identities are merged. In contrast, the male parent is understood as a separate being from the start. Fathers teach, perform tasks with their child, play games and problem-solve with their child. Mothers hold, contain and empathise. Thus, Waterman (2003) summarises, “in

a female-reared culture, mothers did not have the same boundaries between themselves and their children or between their identities as mothers and their identities as women as did men who were better able to compartmentalise between public and private life” (p. 25). The shift towards viewing mothering as activity offers a feminist critique of this particular binary.

In Adrienne Rich’s (1986) influential book, *Of woman born*, still one of the major feminist studies on the social construction of mothering, she discusses two superimposed meanings of motherhood: the institution of motherhood and the potential relationship (free of oppressive social constraints) of a woman to her children and to her powers of reproduction. The institution of motherhood has played an important role in many diverse political and social systems. She describes this institution as limiting the possibilities for women to make decisions that affect their own lives, creating the divide between ‘private’ and ‘public’ life and alienating women from their own bodies by “incarcerating us in them” (p. 13). Institutionalised motherhood requires maternal instinct rather than maternal intelligence and selfless relation to others rather than self-realisation. Rich uses the term ‘motherhood’ in referring to this patriarchal institution, which is controlled and defined by men and is oppressive to women. She uses ‘mothering’ to refer to experiences of mothering that are defined by women and are potentially empowering to women. She highlights, as being particularly harmful to women, two features of modern patriarchal motherhood. The first is the set of assumptions that mothering is natural to women and that the biological mother bears the sole responsibility for child rearing. This has been characterised by Hays (1996) as the ideology of intensive mothering (which is discussed further under section 2.4.5.3). According to Rich, this ultimately requires a denial or repression of a woman’s selfhood. The second harmful feature of modern patriarchal motherhood is the manner in which women are assigned the sole responsibility for child rearing, but are given no power in determining the conditions within which they mother, thereby denying them authority. Rich (1986) concludes that destroying the institution does not equate to abolishing motherhood. Rather, “it is to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination and conscious intelligence as any difficult, but freely chosen work” (p. 280). Although Rich distinguishes between the patriarchal institution of motherhood and mothering she focusses on the first and does not elaborate much further on the second. Her achievement, however, was to pave the way for subsequent feminist research on mothering, particularly as a site of resistance and power for women. The counter-narrative to the institution of motherhood is the development of a view and practice of mothering that empowers women.

Jeremiah (2004) critiques Rich’s position on mothering as corrupted by patriarchy in that it falls into an essentialist trap of suggesting that an authentic form of mothering or maternal self exists outside of patriarchy. She argues that proposing an authentic space outside of patriarchy where an unscathed maternal subjectivity may exist disregards the complex psychological interaction between ideology and subject. She demonstrates that feminist poststructuralism offers useful theoretical models that afford possibilities for change in both social institutions and individual agents.

Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1994) emphasises the imperative of acknowledging the role of race and class in research and theories of motherhood. She argues that, despite the fact that “racial domination and economic exploitation profoundly shape the mothering context” (p. 45), feminist theorising about motherhood has routinely ignored this. Collins uses the term “motherwork” (p. 47) to refer to the activities of mothering that cross the borders of private/public, family/work and individual/collective. Themes of survival, identity and power reveal how women encounter motherwork. Hart (2002) explains motherwork as including all types of

work where the main focus is on sustaining life as opposed to extracting profit. Collins (1994) describes motherwork as including a range of activities involving, for example, struggling for maternal empowerment (including the choice over whether to become a mother at all), nurturing psychic and emotional well-being (in contexts where physical survival is assumed), ensuring physical survival (particularly in contexts of poverty), countering isolation from the dominant group and preserving cultural practices and identity. Motherwork therefore operates both at an individual and at a communal level.

Collins (1999) also explains how the idea of the 'real' mother functions in North American society. She draws on numerous meanings and implications of the term 'real' including genuine, authentic, true and indisputable as well as concrete and tangible, honest and trustworthy. Collins argues that

within these intersecting meanings of 'real', dichotomies emerge that construct certain groups of women of the right social class, race and citizenship status as 'real' mothers, worthy and fit for the job...Real mothers are those whose authenticity lies in their biological and natural reproduction versus their social mothering; whose physicality operates via their willingness to participate in every facet of their children's lives; whose sincerity lies in beliefs about mother love; and whose surety lies in their indisputable ties to their biological offspring (p. 266).

2.4.3.3 BUILDING UPON SEMINAL RESEARCH

The four key authors discussed above have catalysed subsequent research on mothering. Following Ruddick's (1980) emphasis on maternal activity, and writing from the perspective of gender studies, Maher (2005) draws insights from two research projects in which she was involved, one concerning fertility decision making and the other investigating domestic labour. The women involved in these studies constructed mothering as a practice rather than as an essential identity. Although acknowledging that motherhood will, in all likelihood, continue to function as a meta-discourse, Maher (2005) emphasises that an "activity-based exploration of motherhood" (p. 18) offers possibilities for considering the everyday practices of women and how dominant discourses of conflict surrounding motherhood are managed.

In a London based study, Byrne (2006) researched how mothering can be understood as performative of gender, race and class. Mothering involves repeating and re-inscribing gendered, raced and classed discourses. Byrne argues that mothering lies at the intersection of gender, race and class, "with White middle-classness often functioning as a norm of womanhood" (p. 1002). Duncan (2005) also explores the relationships between mothering and class. Although written from a British sociological rather than psychological perspective, due to the fact that many psychological theories of mothering have been criticised as not acknowledging issues such as race and class, it is deemed important to include the study in this review. Also, Marcus (2006) offers a reminder that class remains a plausible concept through which to explore South African society. Duncan highlights three main responses to the paradox that class no longer appears as a self-conscious component of social identity, however, marked social and economic inequalities remain in most developed and developing countries. Firstly, individualisation theorists argue that the form of class still exists, however, individuals now reflexively author their own biographies. Secondly proponents of rational action theory (falling within the Nuffield paradigm of social mobility) claim that

people from different classes, acting rationally, will act in different ways—even if they have the same individualised attitudes—because the opportunities and constraints they face are quite different.

And, of course, people in the same class will rationally tend to act in similar ways. Hence, individuals act according to their class position despite their lack of class awareness (p. 51).

The third approach explores how class, as understood in terms of individualisation or rational action theory, is culturally constructed. Duncan (2005) endeavours to unravel which of these three responses best addresses the relationship between mothering and class. His study builds on previous research that demonstrated how social interactions between mothers and children are structured by, as well as produce and reproduce, class differences and also how class forms a basis for constructions of good mothering. Duncan conducted 50 semi-structured interviews with White mothers with children under the age of 11 years asking questions mainly relating to motherhood, child care and paid work. He found similarities and differences between and within class groups of mothers. Most mothers in the sample experienced motherhood as a significant social event, however, this did not automatically indicate a transition into an identity mainly consumed with mothering. Duncan suggests that ideas around how best to combine motherhood and paid work require an understanding of social and cultural interpretations. In his study two main factors emerged in this regard: relations with partners and understandings of 'career'. He concluded that simple structural divisions between middle class and working class are insufficient explanatory tools and a more nuanced view of social identities is required, presenting different mixtures of choices and constraints. These choices and constraints are, however, culturally and socially created.

In a North American sociological study by Ridgeway and Correll (2004), motherhood (as analytically distinct from gender) was explored as a status characteristic, creating barriers to advancement in the workplace in much the same way as race, age, education, occupation and gender. Through the development of widely shared cultural beliefs, status characteristics assign greater worthiness and competence to one categorical distinction over another. Ridgeway and Correll discuss the lower status assigned to women in contemporary United States as correlated with mothers not traditionally being waged, the status devaluation of nurturance and the stereotype of the housewife. They also explore the conflict between cultural beliefs around intensive mothering and the ideal of the competent worker who demonstrates intensive, sacrificial devotion to her job.

2.4.4 AFRICAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN MOTHERING RESEARCH

African research on mothering has emanated from fields as diverse as education, politics and literature. These have included studies on mothers' (and fathers') roles in school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa (Lloyd & Blanc, 1996) and the politics of mothering as explored through African literature (Nnaemeka, 1997). Sudarkasa (2004) examined behaviours and ideologies associated with motherhood in (African) extended family structures as opposed to (Western) nuclear families. Using data drawn from Yoruba women in West Africa (Nigeria, Ghana and the Republic of Benin), Sudarkasa argues that the values, images and behaviours associated with motherhood are constrained and enabled by family structures. The nuclear family, for example, imposes different constraints on women than the extended family structure. She explores the complexities of 'wife' and 'mother' roles in conjugal families (including polygamous relationships) and extended families. A woman may be a wife to her husband, a co-wife to the other wives of her husband (with an assigned rank according to the order of her marriage into the house), a symbolic wife to her 'in-laws' (her affinal role), a mother to the children to whom she has given birth, a mother to the children for whom she has assumed responsibility, a mother to the children who have been 'assigned' or 'given' to her and a 'co-mother' to her husband's other wives' children. She also has co-responsibility for children in all other families to which she or her husband is related. Sudarkasa (2004) argues that,

by collapsing relational distance within these large kin groups, the terminology serves to reflect and reinforce the values of social cohesion, shared responsibility, and intergenerational reciprocity, thereby enabling these groups to survive even in the most adverse of circumstances. The two most important kinship categories in these generational systems are those of 'mother' and 'father' because they not only bring into existence each succeeding generation, but they acknowledge and accept the responsibility for rearing, educating, and launching the careers of as many as possible in the generation they term their 'children' (p. 5).

Sudarkasa (2004) explains how motherhood enhances the power, prestige and influence of women in African conjugal families and in the overall extended family. This is due, in part, to the shift from her position as her husband's wife to the mother of his child/ren. She also discusses how motherhood in traditional African conjugal families (using the Yoruba people group as an example) encouraged women to become more economically independent.

Kruger (2006) reveals that relatively little has been published on motherhood in South Africa. The few studies that have been published concern mothers and children at risk. These include a study of intra-group accounts of teenage motherhood (Parekh & de la Rey, 1997), incarcerated mothers (Eloff & Moen, 2003) mothers suffering from depression (Cooper et al., 2002) and poor mothers' (lack of) access to justice in the South African legal system (Mills, 2003). Kruger (2006) argues that most South African studies of motherhood are conducted within instrumental discourses that uphold powerful assumptions about the good mother. She states that "an analysis of how contemporary mothering and mothers are psychologically impacted upon by race, class and culture is almost entirely missing from the South African literature" (p. 194).

In 1995 Walker conducted a review of literature engaging with motherhood in South Africa. Walker notes that, although qualities and aspects of motherhood, actual and imagined, are described, the concept itself is not thoroughly interrogated. Walker echoes international concerns that this reflects the forceful assumption that motherhood as experience and institution is so familiar that it does not require definition. The term mother holds "enormously powerful normative authority" (p. 423).

Walker (1995) argues that motherhood is explored in South African literature in a multi-layered fashion although analysts appear to move between the layers without showing much clear intentionality. She separates these layers into, firstly, mothering work (the practice of motherhood), secondly, the discourse of motherhood (ideas, norms and values about 'the good mother', womanhood and female gender) and, thirdly, motherhood as a social identity (in relation to Tajfel's social identity theory). In the South African context these layers are rooted in a specific system of gender relations, one in which women are subordinated. Regarding the second, namely discourse, Walker emphasises that at any given time a number of separate or overlapping, oppositional or marginal discourses operate alongside the dominant discourse. These may be more or less successful in resisting the dominant construct. Walker proposes that social identity may be the most difficult aspect of motherhood to analyse and this, therefore, remains a challenging area of research and theoretical development.

Certain studies have been conducted in South Africa examining a particularly Western concept or practice relating to mothering or motherhood in order to explore its application or (re)formulation within a South African context. One such example is a study on infant observation conducted by Maiello (2000) with a Xhosa mother and her child in a township outside of Cape Town. Maiello aimed to investigate what she termed the "cultural dimension in early mother-infant interaction" (p. 80). She concluded that, in the first three months of

life, communication between the mother-infant dyad occurred significantly more through vocal/auditory, kinaesthetic/rhythmic and tactile interaction than visually and verbally as compared with Western mother-infant couples. She discusses the complexities involved in transcultural infant observation as the method is rooted in Western psychoanalysis. Maiello notes how the Xhosa concept of 'mdlezana' (the union between mother and child) relates to Winnicott's primary maternal preoccupation and Stern's motherhood constellation although 'mdlezana' appears to last throughout the first year.

Magwaza (2003) conducted a study in Durban utilising interviews in order to explore Black and White mothers' perceptions and experiences of motherhood, particularly from the perspectives of work/family balance, family support and cultural and societal expectations. She uses the concept of 'ubuntu' (I am what I am because of who we all are) to explain the Zulu practice of mothering (and co-mothering) not only biological children but other children within the community as well. Mothering is considered to be a communal practice in this context. White mothers in Magwaza's study experienced less community support, had more household support (in the form of domestic workers), viewed parenting as more of a private affair and spent more time with their children.

Jeannes and Shefer (2004) studied discourses of motherhood employed by middle-class White mothers in Cape Town in order to explore participants' perceptions of themselves as mothers and the sense they make of their experience of motherhood. Through the authors' analysis of interview data, they concluded that gender inequality was inherent in these mothers' constructions of motherhood. Facets of discourse used by the women interviewed included mothers as primary caregivers, characteristics of working mothers and motherhood as empowerment. Within these discourses, Jeannes and Shefer discuss a number of themes that emerged from their interviews including mothering as an inherent part of being a women, being a nurturing father is a choice, mothers as selfless and responsible, the good enough mother, mothers should be at home and career women are not mothers, mothers are superwomen (the need to be more and do more than one does), mother as nurturer within the parental dyad, mothers as possessing agency and authority. In terms of the last discourse, although this agency and authority is discussed as positive, on the one hand, in relation to mothers expressing a sense of power in their identity as a mother, this could also be understood as women experiencing a sense of power *because* they are mothers, implying that women who are not mothers do not possess this power.

2.4.5 DOMINANT DISCOURSES OF MOTHERING

Dominant discourses of mothering present to women constructions of what a 'mother' is and particularly what a 'good mother' is (Weingarten, Surrey, Coll, & Watkins, 1998). Discourses express and disseminate ideologies (Therborn, 1980). Miller (2005) explains how "the particular social, cultural and moral contexts which underpin contemporary motherhood simultaneously shape what can and cannot be voiced in relation to experiences of being a mother" (p. 6). Rothman (1994, 2000, 2004) describes three foundational ideologies that shape practices and experiences of mothering, namely, an ideology of patriarchy, an ideology of technology and an ideology of capitalism. Ideology is understood as the conceptual system that a group of people use to think about and make sense of the world. According to Rothman (1994), these ideologies give us "our vision of motherhood while they block our view, give us language for some things while they silence us for others" (p. 140). She demonstrates how these three ideologies influence the experiences of mothers in a wide range of areas such as genetic testing, fertility treatments, breast milk substitutions, minimum wage for child care, the 'mommy track' and so on. The following sections discuss each ideology in turn.

2.4.5.1 IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY

A society with a social heritage of patriarchy is built upon the premise that men control their children, however, they also control women as the mothers of their children. It is therefore women's motherhood that must be controlled in order to sustain patriarchy (Rothman, 2000). A patriarchal ideology of mothering denies women an identity outside of motherhood and perpetuates the economic dependency of women. Johnston and Swanson (2003) explain that the myth of maternal bliss (motherhood is the fulfilment of every woman's aspirations) reinforces patriarchy in that any maternal dissatisfaction is attributed to maternal failure.

Rich (1999) writes:

Motherhood - unmentioned in the histories of conquest and serfdom, wars and treaties, exploration and imperialism - has a history, it is an ideology, it is more fundamental than tribalism or nationalism. My individual, seemingly private pains as a mother, the individual, seemingly private pains of the mothers around me and before me, whatever our class or colour, the regulation of women's reproductive power by men in every totalitarian system and every socialist revolution, the legal and technical control by men of contraception, fertility, abortion, obstetrics, gynecology, and extrauterine reproductive experiments - all are essential to the patriarchal system, as is the negative or suspect status of women who are not mothers (p. 34).

Gender and mothering are closely intertwined as constitutive elements of one another in that gender is fundamentally divided along reproductive lines (Glenn, 1994). Families are constructed by and construct gender discourses. Everyday practices such as feeding, bathing and clothing communicate sets of meanings regarding appropriate gender behaviour (Blume & Blume, 2003; Thompson & Walker, 1995). Family interactions "reveal implicit gender ideologies, scripts, or rituals that enable family members to co-construct shared understandings of the dominant gender discourse in society" (Blume & Blume, 2003, p. 786). Blume and Blume argue that each family develops a set of assumptions around which their own family-level discourse develops and which organises their experience of the broader cultural discourse of gender.

Within patriarchal societies children were (and are) understood as being born to men, out of woman. The essential concept is the man's 'seed' which grows within the woman's body. Western patriarchal systems have had to acknowledge the equality of the genetic contribution of women thereby granting status to a woman's 'seed' as well. Therefore, based on their contribution of 'seed', women are granted equal rights to their children. Rothman (1994) explains, however, that this does not assign women rights to their children in society as mothers, "but as father equivalents, equivalent sources of seed...not on unique nurturance, the long months of pregnancy, the intimate connections with the baby as it grows and moves inside her body" (p. 143). This also creates the powerful assumption that the 'real' parent is the genetic parent. Rich (1999) also discusses how the term 'fathering' a child implies providing sperm to fertilise an ovum whilst to 'mother' a child denotes "a continuing presence, lasting at least nine months, more often for years" (p. 12). In this sense motherhood is seen as 'earned'.

In Rich's (1999) discussion of patriarchy, she explains how, through patriarchal mythology, theology and language, two ideas co-exist: on the one hand the female body as impure, the site of bleeding and of discharges and a source of physical and moral corruption and on the other hand, the woman as mother who is pure, sacred, beneficent, asexual, nourishing and her physical potential for motherhood is her primary destiny and justification. She explains how these two ideas "have become deeply internalised in women,

even in the most independent of us, those who seem to lead the freest lives” (p. 34). Rich draws the conclusion that “the woman’s body is the terrain on which patriarchy is erected” (p. 55). Within this dominant discourse the tools for understanding and accepting the phenomenon of assuming the role of mother when one’s children are not birthed from one’s own body do not exist.

Feminism will be examined in more detail in the following chapter, however, a few notes will be included here in the context of the present discussion. Feminist examination of the social construction of gender identity has included specific analysis of the relationship between women’s oppression and the culturally and historically pervasive social assignment of the work and role of mothering to women (DiQuinzio, 1993). Glenn (1994) explains how, in Western culture, mothering is defined in relation to binary opposites of male-female, nature-culture, mind-body, reason-emotion, labour-love and public-private. Mothering is represented by the subordinate side of each opposition. Viewing gender identity as socially constructed allows for the distinction to be made between being a woman and being a mother and allows for consideration of how women’s reproductive role comes to be considered “the basis of feminine gender identity” (p. 3). Although the socially constructed nature of mothering has already been reviewed, DiQuinzio (1993) presents a particularly feminist slant:

From this perspective, close connections between dominant understandings of femininity and of mothering are seen as developments in history and culture rather than as rooted in nature or human biology. Further, social constructionism allows the distinction between reproduction or childbearing, the activities of childrearing, and the sociocultural contexts, such as the family or the private sphere, in which women engage in these activities. In this way it provides a basis for redefining and re-evaluating mothering in terms of specific conceptual frameworks, such as analyses of mothering as a form of production or practice, and for reconstructing the social contexts of mothering (p. 3).

Altman (2003) explains how complex the notion of motherhood has been for feminists. She states that the gender-specific role of motherhood, which entails the aim of nurturing a child, has been referred to as the problem that modern feminists cannot confront. The complexity relates, in part, to the aforementioned fault line in feminist thinking between seeking to minimise or affirm difference, which is particularly prevalent in discussions of mothering. Craig (2007) also explores the challenges posed by mothering to feminism. One line of reasoning views mothering as a stumbling block to gender equality. Feminist writers have proposed that the notion of ‘maternal instinct’ developed specifically to motivate mothers to accept the loss of independence associated with the full-time care of children; that female oppression is most clearly felt in motherhood; and it is through having children that women become economically vulnerable. Through these processes, it is argued, women are coerced into a subordinate position. Rejection of motherhood, however, has not proved to be a feasible alternative. Women, in many circumstances, continue to choose to be mothers and, according to Glenn (1994),

we are reluctant to give up the idea that motherhood is special. Pregnancy, birth, and breastfeeding are such powerful bodily experiences, and the emotional attachment to the infant so intense, that it is difficult for women who have gone through these experiences and emotions to think that they do not constitute unique female experiences that create an unbridgeable gap between men and women (p. 23).

One is left questioning where this leaves women who mother through adoption and fostering, who have not experienced pregnancy, birth or breastfeeding and who may have experienced the development of

attachment (or struggled to attach) to an older child. Is their experience also uniquely female and what are the implications of answering this question? Glenn elaborates by suggesting that women's relationship to mothering may be both similar to and different from men's in the same way that an individual woman's relationship to mothering may be similar to and different from any other woman's relationship. She concludes that "the social constructionist view implies that searching for universals that characterise mothers and mothering is probably fruitless" (p. 25). The suppression of difference is not a prerequisite for mothers to nurture growth, develop a sense of community or to engage in collective action (Glenn, 1994).

2.4.5.2 IDEOLOGIES OF TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITALISM

Within the ideology of technology, motherhood is conceived of as work and children are, then, the product of that labour (Rothman, 2004). The ideology of technology has implications for how we view the value of rational thought and a disdain for physical work in preference for mental work which is particularly problematic for women 'doing' the work of mothering. Rothman (1994) questions the approach to motherhood as situated within these ideologies of technology and capitalism by asking

what if we genuinely valued the work that is motherhood? What if we valued intimacy and nurturance, and human relationships, not just as a means towards some end, but in themselves? Such a valuing would open up, not constrain, the gender boundaries of intimacy we now face. It would expand, and not restrict, the very definition of mothering (p. 154).

Taylor (2004) argues that exploring the interrelated dynamics of motherhood and consumption offers insights into important questions concerning how political and economic regimes infiltrate intimate relationships and are produced and reproduced through the bearing and raising of children. The ideology of capitalism values the accumulation of wealth by people in positions of control. It is important to bear in mind in the present context that it is not the workers who are in control of the products of their labour. Rothman (1994) argues that ideas such as property rights have infused our views of mothering in particular regarding ownership of one's own body and rights to one's child, which play out in arenas such as abortion legislation. From a capitalist perspective, mothers produce babies. Mothers also consume babies, though, in that babies produce one as mother (Rothman, 2004).

Rothman (1994) explains the following:

When people talk about becoming parents, about wanting a child, they use the word *own*. They want a child of their own. They want, it sometimes sounds, to 'own' a child. The word *have* gets used in its blurred meanings: they want to 'have' a child. They want to have it to *own* it, and they want to have it to, well, to *have* it...When a woman gets pregnant easily, readily, she doesn't have to think about what it means to 'have' a baby. But when a woman, or a couple, cannot readily have a baby of their own, on their own, they take the complex whole of 'having' a child and start sorting it out into the parts they can and the parts they cannot have for themselves (p. 25).

The idea of 'control over bodies' cannot adequately be dealt with without reference to the influential work of Foucault. Foucault (1979) argued that the shift to modern regulatory power comprised normalising tactics, regimes of discipline and systems of surveillance. He used the metaphor of the Panopticon, the 18th century 'model prison' housing an 'inspector' in a central tower. The tower was visible and the possibility always existed that the prisoners were being surveyed. Prisoners could not see the inspector, however, and were therefore never absolutely sure whether they were being observed or not. Thus, even though the surveillance

was discontinuous in its action it was permanent in its effect. In this way power relations were sustained. Foucault used this idea to show how modern regimes of power are minimal in their approach (the inspector did not need to survey the prisoners continually), but far reaching in their effects (the prisoner then applies the sense of surveillance upon himself/herself). Foucault (1979) argued that with the evolution of the modern paradigm of power there was a shift in the state's rights over the life and death of its subjects. This was manifest in two ways, the first relating to "docile bodies" (p. 138) (useful, submitted, disciplined bodies) and the second relating to the "biopolitics of the population" (1978, p. 139) in which the attention of the state is directed towards the reproductive capacities of bodies. Deveaux (1994) explains how, within the idea of the docile body, "the body becomes a political field, inscribed and constituted by power relations" (p. 224). Feminist scholars have critiqued Foucault's construction of the 'docile body', however, in that he does not distinguish between men and women's experiences. Foucault's work lacks an account of practices that can engender women's bodies more 'docile' than men's.

Feminist researchers have used such concepts of disciplinary forms of power to demonstrate how insidious types of control, such as colluding with patriarchal notions of femininity, have replaced more overt types of oppression of women. Deveaux (1994) describes how feminist scholars who utilise this idea of power draw on the Panopticon model as an explanatory framework for women's submission to patriarchal norms of femininity.

Bartky (1988) argues that women internalise the feminine ideal to such a degree that a denial of its supporting practices becomes denial of one's identity. Deveaux (1994) argues that this insidious form of control has not replaced overt forms of oppression as examples of overt control over women's bodies and choices still abound. Rather, both require consideration within a broad discussion of women's subordination. Deveaux also critiques Bartky's position for neglecting agency as well as an acknowledgement of the complexity and variation in responses to ideals of femininity engaged in by women of different ages, races, classes, cultures and sexual orientations. This also neglects Foucault's later work concerning how resistance is inherent within the model of disciplined bodies.

Regarding biopolitics, Foucault argued that the state shifted from focussing on juridical authority to the control and management of the longevity of its population including procreation, birth rate, health and education. Feminist authors have explored this "natal Panopticonism" (Deveaux, 1994, p. 229) or control of reproduction from the perspectives of fetal rights discourse, prenatal technologies, surrogacy, HIV testing of pregnant women. Deveaux again asserts that such explorations are incomplete without an account of individual and collective resistance by women against coercive social and medical practices.

2.4.5.3 THE GOOD MOTHER

It can be argued that, in many ways, these conceptions of the power of the internalised feminine ideal and its resistance as well as biopolitics of control over the reproductive capacities of women and its resistance lay the groundwork for understanding evolving notions of what constitutes the 'good mother'. An additional perspective is provided by Knowles (1996), a sociologist. She writes on how the shining of a spotlight on child abuse and child rights in the 19th century created the concept of the 'bad mother' and "the need to speak about bad mothering gave us the 'good mother'" (p. 116). Through the construct of the good mother, the bad mother is identified and reformed. Without the bad mother the good mother would not exist. The bad mother acts as a type of yardstick. Knowles makes the stark point that the linking of the good mother "with the cause

of child rights has put her beyond the reach of even feminist critique, since no-one supports harming children...The bad mother simultaneously invents motherhood and rescues it from feminist critique” (p. 116).

Guendouzi (2005) describes how the Western notion of the ‘good mother’ has shifted, influenced largely by Bowlby’s attachment theory and Winnicott’s conceptualisation of the ‘good enough mother’. Although Winnicott (1990) spoke of women who are capable of providing good-enough care and those who do not, he claimed that mothers who are not “distorted by ill-health or by present-day environmental stress do tend on the whole to know accurately enough what their infants need, and further, they like to provide what is needed” (p. 54). This provision is initially characterised by almost entire adaptation to the needs of the infant with a gradual decrease in this adaptation as separation between the mother and infant grows. He maintained that this attunement to the infant’s needs is the core component of maternal care. It is through good-enough maternal care that the development of the infant is facilitated.

Winnicott (1971) does acknowledge that the good-enough mother does not necessarily have to be the infant’s biological mother, but he also wrote, in relation to primary maternal preoccupation that

Naturally, the infant’s own mother is more likely to be good enough than some other person, since this active adaptation demands an easy and unresented preoccupation with the one infant; in fact, success in infant care depends on the fact of devotion, not on cleverness or intellectual enlightenment (p. 10).

This devotion develops during pregnancy when the mother increasingly identifies with the infant and shifts her interests from her self to her child. Winnicott (1965) believed that it is this primary maternal preoccupation that gives the mother “her special ability to do the right thing” (p. 15). The threats to this preoccupation with the infant are either compulsive preoccupation with self-interest or, on the other extreme, a pathological preoccupation with the infant.

He also stated that

If we like, we may continue to leave the task of infant care to the mother, whose capacity does not rest on knowledge but comes from a feeling attitude which she acquires as the pregnancy advances, and which she gradually loses as the infant grows up out of her (1965, p. 3).

He acknowledged that there may be instances where intervention on behalf of medical practitioners may be necessary, however, it is primarily the infant’s dependable mother who is able to adapt sensitively enough to her child in order to enable development. Winnicott (1965) also believed that the mother is capable of being good-enough if she feels secure, if she feels loved by the infant’s father and accepted by her family and her broader social circles.

Although there are clear discursive overlaps, the ‘good enough mother’ appears to have been superseded by the ideology of intensive mothering, as coined by Hays (1996). In this paradigm, motherhood is viewed as the ultimate fulfilment of womanhood. Hays explains intensive mothering as defined by three themes: the mother is the central caregiver, mothering involves giving a child significant amounts of energy, time and material resources, and mothering is more important than paid work. According to Hays, within the ideology of intensive mothering, appropriate methods of child rearing “are constructed as child-centred, expert-guided, emotionally absorbing, labour-intensive and financially expensive” (p. 8). Mothering is constructed as continually rewarding and satisfying. If a mother does not experience it as such she runs the risk of producing a child with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Bell (2006) explores how this has been the dominant North

American view on mothering for most of the 20th century, continuing into the 21st. While the ideal (heterosexual, married, fully satisfied) mother (who loves her children unconditionally and selflessly and possesses an innate ability to parent) does not necessarily resonate with the reality of many women's lives, she remains a powerful discursive force and, in many ways, is still the normative Western standard against which mothers are judged (by others and themselves). Although pressures to comply with this dominant model of motherhood and the implications for noncompliance are highly influential in the daily lives of women, there remain possibilities for women "to practice agency, resistance, invention and renewal within this institution" (Green, 2004, p. 129).

Rothman (2005) offers an alternate perspective on the good adoptive mother from the perspective of genetic ideology. The view of genetic material as determinate of fate has implications for parenting an adopted child, who is constructed as genetically 'unknown'. The responsibility of passing on 'good' or 'bad' genes (viewed as highly influential in determining characteristics and behaviour) has been removed and parents, therefore, do not hold blame and cannot claim credit. Rothman reflects on this in light of research results indicating that adoptive parents are more likely to utilise mental health services for their children. She suggests that one of the factors at play in this phenomenon is that adoptive parents feel less stigmatised seeking such help as opposed to biological parents who may feel that acknowledging that their 'own' child needs assistance reflects negatively on themselves. She explains that

if an adopted child has such needs, then it can be read as an undesirable characteristic inherited by the child from its family of origin, something with which adoptive parents must cope. In this ideology, the adoptive parents switch from causative agents of their child's misery or problem to innocent victims of bad genes passed on, and perhaps martyrs for dealing with it at all (p. 67).

In Guendouzi's (2005) exploration of how British middle and working class women achieve mothering through talk (how they 'do being a mother'), she concludes that intensive mothering is deeply embedded as a discursive position in women's lives as the social ideal. Arendell's (2000) survey describes a number of deviancy discourses which are derived from this construct of intensive mothering and which position single mothers, welfare mothers, minority mothers, immigrant mothers and lesbian mothers as subjects of deviancy. Notably, although raising biological children is clearly part of the ideology of intensive mothering, even Arendell does not present literature that critiques the view of mothering non-biological children as deviant.

Miller (2007) examined ways in which (17 White, middle-class, British) women engage with and position themselves in relation to powerful discourses surrounding mothering experiences and expectations through a longitudinal study. She argues that dominant discourses of mothering and motherhood which promote a woman's biological tie to her child and her instinctive ability to know and care for him/her create unrealistic expectations for women transitioning into motherhood. Through analysing interview data collected at three separate points in time, Miller examined which strands of dominant discourses of mothering (e.g. 'medical expert discourse', 'intensive mothering discourse') were discernible in the women's narratives and how these were used. In the prenatal interviews, words such as "nature" and "instincts" were used alongside "confidence" and "trust" in medical experts (p. 343). Most women positioned themselves discursively as 'good mothers' preparing responsibly for the arrival of their child. In the early postnatal interviews shock was expressed regarding the actual birth experience in contrast to the expectation that the female body is 'naturally' predisposed towards childbearing. The expectations themselves are not challenged, however, rather the women perceive their own bodies as having "let them down" (p. 349). Most mothers attempted to

present themselves as “coping” (p. 349) although they did not experience new mothering as instinctive or natural. A particular interviewee asked, “I should know you [the baby]; I should understand exactly what you want; why don’t I?” (p. 350). Like most participants in the study, this woman’s experiences did not fit with the ideology of intensive mothering. Despite this, at the early postnatal stage, optimistic stories of the ‘good mother’ were still not questioned. Miller conducted the final set of interviews nine months after the birth. In these interviews different patterns of engagement with particular strands of dominant discourses emerged and Miller notes a greater emphasis on “prioritising their own ways of knowing” (p. 352) and the tendency for mothers to position themselves discursively as the relative authority on their children. Some of the mothers in the study had returned to work at this point and discussed enjoying working and valuing the input of multiple care-givers in the life of their child, which challenges discourses within the ideology of intensive mothering. However, one of the interviewees stated that she felt guilty because she did *not* feel guilty about working and not being solely responsible for her child. Miller comments that there is then “no escaping the discourses that circumscribe mothering” (p. 353). She continues to say that there may be a degree to which “however we feel and act...we are still continually brought back to locating our experiences in the context of good mother discourses even when we want to challenge and reject them” (p. 353).

In an Australian study, Maher and Saugeres (2007) explored how dominant discourses of mothering influence women’s life decisions regarding children through conducting semi-structured interviews with 100 women, both mothers and non-mothers. Although acknowledging that the ideal of intensive mothering still holds considerable power in Australian society, they found that images of the good mother were more prevalent in women without children whilst mothers were more concerned with pragmatic concerns of managing mothering.

Johnston and Swanson (2006) examined constructions of the good mother in relation to work status, through interviewing 95 married mothers in the United States. Three central discursive themes emerged. The first was accessibility which was constructed by at-home mothers as “being there” (p. 513), by part-time employed mothers as “quality interaction” (p. 513), and by full-time employed mothers as “psychological and emotional accessibility” (p. 514). The second theme was mother-child happiness. For at-home mothers this was constructed from the perspective that a happy child makes a happy mother. The authors note the difficulties involved for participants within this category in talking about difficult emotions relating to their decision to be and experience of being at-home mothers. Part-time employed mothers espoused the happy mother-happy child discourse enthusiastically through associating their happiness with having achieved a sense of balance and ascribing their child’s happiness to also having a break from their mother. Full-time employed mothers resonated with the happy mother-happy child position in their assertion that mothers should have a separate identity outside of motherhood, however, they were less happy due to feeling unable to spend as much time as they would like to with their children. The third discursive position was separation of spheres. At-home mothers selected one sphere, the home, thereby resolving home-work tension. Part-time employed mothers resolved home-work tension by making sacrifices in the work environment, or they did not report tension between the home and work spheres, priding themselves in their capacity to engage in both. Full-time employed mothers spoke of work impinging on the family and family impinging on work, with a difficulty to sustain separation. These mothers expressed an ambivalence between wanting to excel in the workplace as well as in mothering whilst realising that ‘doing it all’ is impossible. Johnstone and Swanson discuss how the ways in which women position themselves in relation to accessibility, happiness and separate spheres succeeds in excluding mothers of different employment statuses from the construction of the good mother.

For example, the construction of the good mother as 'always there' by at-home mothers excludes full-time working mothers. The construction of the position of happy mother-happy child by part-time employed mothers excludes at-home mothers. The position of the self-sacrificing mother-happy child by at-home mothers excludes full-time employed mothers from the status of good mother.

Through her study of academic mothers, Raddon (2002) highlights that women are not only positioned and formed by dominant discourses, but are also able to accept, resist and transform these discourses. It was in the 'space' between the constructions of 'successful academic' and 'good mother' that the participants in her study negotiated how best to fulfil these competing roles. This may, however, result in both conscious and unconscious empowerment and disempowerment. Being positioned by and positioning within a range of discourses in this case appears to create contradictory and ambivalent feelings.

The equating of good mothering and breastfeeding has been well established within the Western ideology of intensive mothering (Carter, 1995; Murphy, 1999). Marshall, Godfrey, and Rendrew (2007), however, found, in their British study, that this is becoming more contested in response to diverse practical, emotional and social concerns. Breastfeeding appears to be conflated with good mothering when the baby seems to be thriving, however, it is more difficult to sustain this idea when the infant is unsettled or is not gaining weight. Maintaining the status of good mother in relation to breastfeeding is also more complex in the context of merging identities as mother and worker. In Flacking, Ewald, and Starrin's (2007) study of 25 Swedish mothers of preterm infants, however, they found strong alignment with the construct that the good mother breastfeeds.

A number of South African studies have also explored dominant discourses of mothering. Jeannes and Shefer (2004) discuss how South African television and print media reinforce dominant Western discourses of motherhood through presenting women's role primarily within the home, presenting women as finding this central task of caring for their families fulfilling, meaningful and foundational to their identity, presenting motherhood as instinctual and offering certain styles of mothering as natural.

Youngleson (2006) investigated whether there was a prevailing, dominant discourse of motherhood within the semi-rural, low income, Coloured community of Kylemore in the Western Cape. Through analysis of interview data, themes relating to good and bad mothering emerged. Interviewees described the good mother as operating within a nuclear family setting, having a supportive partner, not working and spending quality time with her child, prioritising her child's needs, self-sacrificing, and as not 'abandoning' her child (even for short periods of time). On the other hand, a bad mother was described as unconcerned about taking responsibility for her child, as selfish and self-centred, as neglectful and as smoking and drinking. Youngleson discusses the challenges faced by the participants in her study, many of whom are not financially independent and lack emotional support from their partners, as they attempt to live up to this idealised motherhood. Youngleson (2006) concludes that it would seem as if

women in this community are trapped in a double bind – the prevailing discourse is heavily influenced by the expectations that mothers will assume traditional intensive mothering practices. However, the reality is that due to poverty and a lack of resources, many of these women need to assume roles which conflict with intensive mothering practices (p. 54).

Van Doorene (2009) conducted a phenomenological study in order to explore whether a group of urban, employed South African women with tertiary education, from culturally varied backgrounds, subscribe to

intensive mothering ideology, how they alter and reject this ideology and what the emotional implications of this are. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed through thematic content analysis. Although mothers in this study did reconstruct meanings of motherhood according to their individual contexts and cultures, participants generally viewed mothering as an inherent ability and as gender specific. Mothering was constructed as primarily child-centred and as requiring systematic planning and strong commitment in order to ensure the optimal development of the child. Attempts to adhere to this idealised model of mothering prompted feelings of inadequacy, guilt and ambivalence. Van Doorene argues that the data indicates the “internalised stronghold” (p. 94) of the Western ideology of intensive mothering even in South African women from culturally diverse backgrounds.

Current academic literature still leans heavily on the ideology of intensive mothering and argues for its present relevance, however, O’Reilly (2008) draws her readers’ attention to a list of recent popular books on mothering with titles such as *The balanced mom: Raising your kids without losing your self* (Simpson, 2006); *Mojo mom: Nurturing your self while raising a family* (Tiemann, 2009), *Mommy guilt: Learn to worry less, focus on what matters most, and raise happier kids* (Bort, Pflock, & Renner, 2005) and *The three-martini playdate: A practical guide to happy parenting* (Mellor, 2004). These authors clearly challenge patriarchal discourses of mothering as well as many aspects, in particular, of the ideology of intensive mothering. Although academic literature appears to lag behind popular literature in examining this trend to a degree, a number of authors have begun to explore this shift and to this subject I now turn.

2.4.5.4 NON-PATRIARCHAL MOTHERING

O’Reilly (2008) argues that the counter-discourse of non-patriarchal mothering can be split into feminist mothering and empowered mothering. Empowered mothering (championed by women who do not characterise themselves as feminists) centres on themes such as the active questioning of societal expectations of mothers, emphasising the importance of mothers meeting their own needs, arguing that mothering does not fulfil the entire range of women’s needs, challenging traditional parenting practices, assuming shared responsibility for children’s development, and challenging the notion that love is the only emotion that mothers experience towards their children. Full-time intensive mothering is, therefore, not practiced by women mothering from this position as would be dictated by patriarchal motherhood. The discourse of empowered mothering views mothering as a site of power, emphasising mothering with autonomy, authority, authenticity and agency, and also argues that mothering can be defined as “a political site wherein mothers can affect social change through the socialisation of children and the world at large through political-social activism” (O’Reilly, 2008, p. 7).

Feminist mothering also contends that mothers can hold beliefs that do not conform to the dominant discourses of mothering. Glickman (1995) argues for a feminist mothering that can be understood as “lived resistance to the normative—stereotypical—expectations of both motherhood and womanhood” (p. 22) that are oppressive and limiting to women. Although there is overlap between these two discourses, feminist mothering is differentiated from empowered mothering in its explicit identification with feminist consciousness. As an example, Tucker (2008), an advocate of feminist mothering, states, “I find it difficult to explain the precipitous decline of agency, autonomy, and opportunity that women experience when they become mothers without resorting to a feminist analysis of gender and power” (p. 206). In Cowdery and Knudson-Martin’s (2005) study of (Western) constructions of mothering in relation to gender inequality, four processes appear to maintain the view of mothering as a gender-based talent: partners viewed mothers as having a

natural connection to their children and intuitive knowledge regarding child raising; fathers retreated (due to feelings of incompetence and fear); mothers structured their time in relation to their children; and mothers assumed continuous responsibility. Green (2008) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study of 10 ethnically diverse, self-identified feminist mothers in the United States (two of whom were adoptive mothers). In her interviews over time with these mothers she records themes such as the lack of support and social acknowledgment for mothers, and particularly for feminist mothers, valuing honest and open communication with children, the development of critical thinking in children, and introducing them to a feminist analysis of the world. Green argues for the work of feminist mothering to remain a political and communal endeavour.

In opposition to the premises of the ideology of intensive mothering, feminist theories have argued that motherhood is not without feelings of hostility, resentment and destructive impulses. Motherhood is experienced by many women as being incongruent with ideas of what good mothering is supposed to be. Murray and Finn (2011) challenge the binary of the contained 'good' mother and the depressive, dangerous mother as constructed within the ideology of intensive mothering through their study of new mothers' thoughts of intentionally harming their newborns. In this way they attempt to critically engage with ambivalent mothering. For participants in their study, emotions interpreted as negative, such as guilt, anger and frustration, were viewed as contradictory to the norms of good mothering, preferred maternal identity and self-knowing. Perceiving oneself as a less than good enough mother was associated with self-identification as potentially contaminating and threatening for the child. As a result, participants' strategies for ideal mothering involved "a full and constant emotional suppression" (p. 51) through continuous self-monitoring. Participants in this study distanced themselves from thoughts of harm through externalisation, splitting, and bracketing thoughts as being a result of postnatal depression in order to retain their position within the 'good mother' domain. These authors contend that thoughts of infant-related harm are, in fact, normative and are not, as previously assumed, exclusive to pathological populations. However, instead of merely incorporating this into the normative construct of the mother, they suggest that it may be more productive to contend that these "emotional extremities and perceptions of danger can move through the mother as thoughts of harm that do not begin with her, represent illness or wickedness, or remain hers to own and contain" (p. 55). This allows for creative maternal subjectivity and a heightened sensitivity toward one's own strengths and weaknesses.

Within her personal account of mothering, Rich (1986) offered the statement:

Nothing could have prepared me for the realisation that I was a mother, one of those givens, when I knew I was still in a state of uncreation myself. That calm, sure, unambivalent woman who moved through the pages of the manuals I read seemed as unlike me as an astronaut (p. 35).

Despite feminist voices proclaiming their resistance, and emerging discourses such as shared parenting (Vuori, 2009), Murray and Finn (2011) conclude that "the predominant discourse of the idealised 'good' mother has come to thoroughly saturate women's perceptions and doings of motherhood" (p. 48). Regardless of evidence that, for example, mothers experience frustration and resentment as mothers, the belief system that women have maternal instinct which cements their destiny as mothers and the subordination of their own interests in the service of their children remains. Women remained "defined in terms of their relationship to maternity" (Wager, 2000, p. 390). Wager (2000) emphasises how this sustains male dominance in the public sphere and conveniently ensures men's personal benefit from the care of women in their private life.

2.4.6 ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER MOTHERING

One of the consequences of the dominant family ideologies reviewed above (even non-patriarchal mothering to a large degree) is that non-genetic family forms tend to be understood as abnormal and even pathogenic (Wegar, 2000). These ideological positions are, granted, largely Western and alternative discourses do exist and co-exist within some 'African perspectives', as reviewed. In 2002, Jacob Zuma, who subsequently became president of South Africa, stated in a speech for the launch of the Orphans of AIDS Trust that "the bedrock on which our communities have been built over decades is the principle of 'every child is my child'" (para. 1). It appears however that, in reality, 'every' child may still refer largely to 'a child from my own family' as reflected in Zimmerman's (2003) report that 90% of fostered children in South Africa are fostered by close relatives (mostly grandmothers according to Madhavan, 2004). In Freeman and Nkomo's (2006) study of 1400 adults in three provinces in South Africa, 87.7% thought that another member of their family would care for their child if they were deceased or unable to. Case, Paxson, and Ableidinger (2004) found, in their research in 10 African countries, that an orphaned child was more likely to be discriminated against when living with an unrelated or distantly related caregiver. These findings appear to indicate that non-genetic family forms are equally as 'abnormal' or at least unusual in African communities.

Language (and this shall be discussed in more detail in the following chapter) plays a key role in the construction of adoption and fostering as something that is out of the ordinary. Rothman (2005) highlights the fact that, in English, being adopted is always in the present tense: she *is* adopted; I *am* an adoptive parent (which would also apply to fostering). In this way "the foreignness of the child and the parent are continually reinforced in our language and in our thinking" (p. 54).

Friedlander (2003) explains how the implications of these dominant meanings may impact on a therapeutic process with clients who have been adopted. Naïve therapists can harm clients, and specifically adoptees, through communicating stereotypical perceptions of adoption such as the universally tragic nature of the loss of a birth family or the requirement of a reunion for psychological well-being.

In their study of women who mother children with ADHD, Carpenter and Austin (2007) use the metaphor of "motherhood in the margins" (p. 660). The motherhood myth that describes good mothering is viewed as the text, with the margin being "the space beyond that text" (p. 660). The mothers who inhabit the margin (who, in the context of their particular study, mother children who are regarded as 'different') fail to be recognised by the text. The boundaries of the text are guarded by gatekeepers (for example, family members, doctors, teachers, even strangers) who judge a mother's worth. Carpenter and Austin discuss how women who mother children with ADHD are not only subjected to the discourses of this motherhood myth, but also act as agents. They explain how the participants in their study experienced being silenced, not having a voice, and not being heard when they do speak of their experiences, but also how these women challenged the pressure to conform to dominant discourses of motherhood. The women in the study spoke of themselves as good mothers, yet, in many ways, not as the mothers of the myth. Carpenter and Austin explore this as troubling the coherence of the text. However, although the women often did not experience themselves as being identified with the dominant construct of 'the good mother' (because of the behaviour of their children upon which a woman is then judged) they used the very language of this myth to justify why they were indeed good mothers, particularly in relation to the selflessness they displayed in their mothering. Although the focus of their study—mothering children with a diagnosis of ADHD—is distinct from the current study's endeavour, the metaphors used are highly applicable.

As becomes clear throughout the previous section, dominant discourses of mothering may act to relegate adoptive and foster mothers to the margins. Weingarten et al. (1998) explain marginalisation as “the social phenomenon of being diminished and devalued in comparison to others, or of having one’s ideas, feelings, practices, or actions rendered less valid or useful in relation to a dominant ideal” (p. 6). They continue to say that, “when marginalisation occurs, the experience of some is subjugated to the experience of others and rendered less visible and less heard” (p. 6). Mothers at the ‘centre’ tend to be those women with resources and support who are viewed and who view themselves as fitting within dominant ideology. Weingarten et al. (1998) explain that adoptive mothers as well as bicultural mothers and mothers of children with disabilities are marginalised through their lack of representation in images and discussions of mothers and mothering. This marginalisation may enforce invisibility, but it may also inspire resistance.

Smith, Surrey, and Watkins (1998), writing from a Western perspective, highlight seven dominant discourses that particularly overshadow adoptive mothering. These are listed as follows:

- (i) The valuing of blood relations as well as cultural and racial sameness
- (ii) The opposing belief that environmental nurture is more important than genetic endowment
- (iii) The importance of ‘bonding’ immediately after birth within the mother-child relationship
- (iv) The psychological health of the child depends on his/her relationship with his/her mother
- (v) A simple identity is superior to a complex identity
- (vi) Adoptive mothers are defective and are more likely to cause psychiatric symptoms in their adopted children
- (vii) Adoption is a lifelong grieving process for all involved

Not only do dominant discourses inform judgement of whether a woman is a ‘good’ or ‘bad’ mother, but foundationally, in many pronatalist societies, the nature of her being a woman implies that she ‘should’ be a mother (Bueno-Alonso, 2006; Morell, 2000; Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000; Wager, 2000). Glenn (1994) urges for the decomposition of the master definition of mother into constituent elements beginning with the conflation of woman with mother which together appear as “an undifferentiated and unchanging monolith” (p. 13). Not having a child is typically viewed as unnatural and even pathological. The medical language of infertility, for example, includes terms such as ‘incompetent cervix’, ‘hostile mucus’, ‘blocked Fallopian tubes’ and ‘failure to conceive’. Ulrich and Weatherall (2000) interviewed 19 women seeking medical infertility assistance. Participants constructed motherhood as a ‘natural instinct’, as a stage in the development of the relationship with their partners, and as a social expectation. They also drew on discourses of motherhood as the outcome of decision-making (which offers an alternative to the discourse of motherhood as natural instinct) and the realities of motherhood, including challenges and ‘hard work’ (which can subvert the ‘natural’ drive to have children). Letherby (1999) explored experiences of motherhood and non-motherhood in relation to involuntary childlessness (as opposed to voluntary childlessness which is also termed being ‘child-free’ by, for example, Durham (2008) and Moen (2003)) and achieving motherhood in ‘unusual’ ways such as medically assisted conception and mothering non-biological children. Letherby interviewed 24 mothers in Britain who spanned a range of socio-economic privilege. She suggests that women with no children represent the ‘other’ in relation to the feminine ideal in societies valuing motherhood, thus creating a stereotype of non-mothers as unfulfilled. Throughout history, childless women have been regarded as not being ‘real’ women. Women who mother

following involuntary childlessness may still feel that they do not meet the ideal. Letherby explains that “biological motherhood is more highly valued than social motherhood in that biological motherhood enables a woman to fulfil herself in terms of expected biological and social roles” (p. 367). A number of her interviewees reported feeling that it was “harder to be a ‘proper’ mother to ‘miracle babies’ (medically assisted), much longed for babies and babies with genetic histories that you do not share” (p. 366). In theorising the experiences of women in her study, Letherby draws on Simmel’s (1971) sociological concept of the ‘stranger’ which is premised on the position that all relationships are characterised by attributes of nearness and distance, including acceptance and exclusion, belonging and not belonging, and commonality and difference. The stranger—who often functions as a scapegoat—shares certain features in common with the mainstream group (often shared by other members of the broader society as well, for example, nationality or occupational identity) yet possesses other features that render him/her a stranger. This influences status, perception of self and relationships with others. The existence of the stranger (in the case of this study, ‘unconventional’ mothers) reaffirms the group’s identity for members (‘conventional’ mothers).

Wegar (1997) explains how, in adoption literature, both birthmothers who make the decision to place their children for adoption and adoptive mothers are portrayed as deviant in their failure “to conform to dominant definitions of true womanhood and good mothering” (p. 77). Adoptive mothers in the United States are, however, typically more economically privileged and this deviant status is therefore alleviated by their class position, although literature still tends to portray them as inadequate. Through a survey of adoption literature Wegar aims to show how motherhood is framed in narrow biological and individualistic terms. She argues that clinical literature on adoption has also perpetuated stereotypes of women as mothers through assuming that the mental health of women is governed by their womb and that mature femininity is a result of childbearing. Further, Wegar describes how literature has presented the adoptive mother as solely responsible for any problems that may occur in the adoptive family, largely due to the lack of a biological bond between herself and her child.

An example of the uncritical manner in which adoptive parents and particularly adoptive mothers have been presented in literature can be found in a study by Noy-Sharav (2002). Noy-Sharav studied “good-enough adoptive parenting”, focussing on the “needs” and “problems” of adoptive parents (p. 57). (The use of a number of direct quotes in this paragraph is intentional as the language she uses is informative.) Noy-Sharav examines several “conditions” (p. 57) that may impair relations between adoptive parents and their child including “insufficient mourning of the wound of infertility; early narcissistic vulnerability; oversensitivity to abandonment; proneness to use primitive character defences; and marital pathology” (p. 57). Her study was not based on a clinical population, but on her experiences with couples going through the process of assessment and preparation for adoption. She defines successful adoption as dependent upon “a mutual process of healing of early damages” (p. 57). Noy-Sharav’s article lacks a critical reflection upon the reality that not all adoptive parents bear a ‘wound of infertility’ and is underpinned by a dominant discourse of ‘biological child is best’. When the attempt to bear a biological child ‘fails’ then a couple considers adoption, in other words, adoptive parenting is equivalent to parenting after infertility. Noy-Sharav (2002) claims,

it becomes clear that adoptive parents have to cope with complex and special tasks that are different from those facing birth parents...It is important that an adoptive parent work through the problems connected to narcissistic injuries in her past. Otherwise the adoptee’s inner split may

deepen, and he may be forced to construct a false self in order to accommodate the parent's needs (p. 60 & p. 74).

Note that even though Noy-Sharav is discussing adoptive parents, most notably it is the mother who must work through problems from her past. Although adoptive parents may face unique challenges, they may also face unique joys and may also share much in common with the experiences of biological parents.

Dozier, Stovall, Albus, and Bates (2001) examined relationships between infants and foster mothers. Although this study also explores how foster mothers' processing of past experiences influences their mothering and may impact on the child, this study is significantly more balanced in acknowledging a range of perspectives as well as including discussion of both 'positive' and 'negative' aspects of the mother-child relationship within the context of foster-care. Dozier et al. researched the correlation between foster mothers' attachment state of mind and foster infants' (aged between birth and 20 months) attachment quality after examining the complexities and contradictions within available literature. A mother's 'state of mind' here refers to the ways in which she may process feelings and thoughts concerning her own attachment experiences. The authors reported a correspondence between maternal state of mind and infant's attachment quality, which is similar to the level observed between biological mother-infant dyads. This was also not related to the age of the child at placement. The authors conclude that babies are able to adapt their attachment behaviour according to the availability of a new caregiver. Most of the infants in the study formed secure attachments with nurturing, coherent foster mothers, even those infants who had been exposed to abuse, neglect and up to five changes in caregivers prior to the current placement. Dozier et al. (2001) summarise their study by suggesting that their results "speak to the strength of the human propensity for relatedness" (p. 1475). The authors refer to their results as "striking" (p. 1474) in relation to previous research and also, I suggest, in relation to how these findings challenge and resist dominant discourses of mothering. The findings do not discount that foster families may face particular challenges and even 'problems', merely that this is not the only viable construction.

Although the transition to parenting a biological child has received attention in research, adjusting to parenting an adopted child has not. The limited amount of research that has been conducted indicates that adoptive parents face challenges shared by biological parents as well as experiencing unique challenges during their adaption to parenthood (and the co-existence of these two dynamics may itself pose challenges). These challenges are often informed by experiences with infertility prior to adopting, parenting at an older age, parenting children with emotional and/or behavioural difficulties, parenting transracially and parenting in relation to stigma associated with adoption (Gair, 1999; McKay, Ross, & Goldberg, 2010). McKay et al. (2010) conducted a systematic literature review exploring adaptation to parenting (including mothering) during the three years post-adoption. The authors highlight that, despite recognition of the factors mentioned above, literature remains problematically sparse relating to issues such as post-adoption depression, the relationships between the demands of parenting (for example, sleep deprivation and managing behavioural problems in children), facilitating factors (for example, support and resilience) and the mental health of parents. There is also a lack of research in the areas of intimate partner relationship satisfaction and physical health of adoptive parents.

Postpartum depression is defined in a manner that links the phenomenon inextricably to the biological birth of children. Post-adoption depression has only been addressed in a handful of studies. Gair (1999) utilised several scales of postnatal depression as well as in-depth interviews in order to explore distress and

depression in 19 adoptive mothers. Some of the participants in the study reported adjusting well during the transition to motherhood whilst others cited experiences of severe distress and depression. In these instances, there appeared to be a relationship with ongoing lack of sleep, persistent screaming of the baby and colic. The author also discusses potential relationships between distress and depression and adjustment to the role of full-time motherhood, loss of occupational identity, and the perceived need to perform as a perfect mother. Payne, Fields, Meuchel, Jaffe, and Jha (2010) evaluated the prevalence rate of post-adoptive depression as well as associated factors through a study of 112 adoptive mothers of infants under 12 months of age in the United States and internationally. Post-adoptive depressive symptoms were found to be relatively common within the first four weeks after adoption within this particular sample (28% of participants) with 9.3% reporting significant depressive symptoms. These symptoms were not found to be associated with family or personal psychiatric history, but were found to be associated with adjustment difficulties and stress. Senecky et al. (2009), in their study of 39 adoptive mothers, found depressive symptoms in 15.4% of participants, a prevalence rate similar to that of postpartum depression in the general population. The women who reported these symptoms in their study had, however, also shown depressive symptoms prior to adopting.

Philosopher Park (2006) presents a critique of dominant views on mothering through examining the adoptive maternal body, thereby revealing the social regulation and discursive mediation of all maternal bodies as well as the normalising assumptions that frame the (Western) traditional biological family. Motherhood, according to Sevón (2005), is “firmly grounded within the female embodiment” (p. 464). Probyn (1991) reminds us that the female reproductive body is seen as providing the model for a “well-run society (as family)” (p. 115). Park states that

from the dual perspective of adoptive mothers—borne of inhabiting that borderland between being and not being ‘real’ mothers—feminist theorists can examine motherhood from new angles... The term adoptive mother is oxymoronic. Insofar as mother is defined as a procreative being, adoptive mothers (as nonprocreative beings) are impossible. Our impossible status may give us a unique position from which to examine and resist normative conceptions and practices of mothering (p. 203).

Park (2006) uses the Foucauldian framework of power producing subjects and the production of ‘abnormal’ subjects serving to define what is normal to explore how normalising discourses produce a conceptualisation of natural, biological and paradigmatic motherhood. She suggests that one way to shift from viewing adoptive bodies as infertile, damaged and inferior is to move away from a pronatalist perspective and focus on the present rather than the absent embodiments of mother-child relations. She argues that the biological maternal body is also always embodied in social, cultural, political and economic contexts that are marked by racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, ableism and ageism. Therefore, “those for whom motherhood is experienced as natural are precisely those who have successfully embodied the dominant social script about mothering” (p. 211).

A final study will be reviewed concerning children affected by HIV/AIDS in South Africa and the construction of both biological mothers and those who respond to the plight of abandoned children. This is particularly relevant in relation to informing possible constructions of adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa. Meintjes and Bray (2005) conducted an analysis of South African media reporting on this group of children. Their analysis revealed layers of messaging communicating moral judgements concerning who is and who is

not performing appropriate roles in relation to children. They suggest that these messages influence social perceptions and responses to HIV/AIDS. Meintjes and Bray explain that

distinctions made through language and imaging set apart 'innocent' and 'guilty' victims of HIV, with blamelessness generally situated within White, middle-class, heterosexual populations... Through the practices of 'othering', accompanied by blame, discourses of AIDS reporting thus produce, and importantly reproduce, hegemonic stereotypes, power relations and notions of deviance (p. 150).

Meintjes and Bray (2005) found that implicit and explicit moral judgement was directed at biological mothers and broader kinship and community networks. HIV-positive mothers are depicted as morally aberrant for irresponsibly risking the transmission of HIV to their children. Newspaper articles also repeatedly referred to mothers 'abandoning' their babies with little reference to the contexts in which these decisions are made. Meintjes and Bray note that "the contrast between press representations of the African family and representations of those who are documented as responding to children affected by AIDS is striking" (p. 154). These individuals (largely White and middle class) are portrayed as moral heroes who have sacrificed and taken risks to care for those not considered to be their immediate responsibility. Briggs (2003) writes of the discursive significance of visual iconography of 'Third World' poverty and hunger mobilising "ideologies of rescue" (p. 180), particularly regarding non-White people being rescued by White people. Within this ideology, the construction of the poor, hungry, non-White child in turn constructs its counterpart, "the would-be rescuer" (p. 184). "Moral adoption" (p. 189) within this view then serves politically to reinforce oppressive power relations. Meintjes and Bray (2005) argue that a racialised morality is bolstered through this portrayal of hero and victim and this is employed at a cost, both to the public's attitudes and knowledge concerning the impact of AIDS and to the lives of children affected by the epidemic. Although the study explored dominant discursive constructions of mothering in the media, very little literature exists investigating how the women involved personally experienced mothering in these particular contexts.

Within this context of considering the construction of mother as rescuer or hero and the concomitant reinforcement of power relations, Rothman (2005) offers her own perspective:

When a child, a healthy child is born to you, you don't distinguish, you're not *asked* to distinguish, the narcissistic part of your love from the altruistic. When you take care of that child, no one asks you *why*. But direct that nurturance towards a child the world has made clear it will not value, and not only motivation but the very legitimacy of your actions are up for question. It's true of your love for the disabled child, and it's true of love for the 'rescued' child, the child taken out of a third-world orphanage, out of slavery, or just out of a contemporary ghetto and into a middle-class White family (p. 132).

These are the complex meaning spaces within which adoptive and foster mothers find themselves and how they construct meaning within these complex spaces is the subject of this research.

2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has reviewed literature providing a contextual background to adoption and fostering both from international perspectives and within the South Africa context. Western and African research in the field of mothering has been presented, mothering has been examined as a social construct and dominant discourses of mothering were explored. A more specific review of literature pertaining to adoptive and foster mothering was also provided. Although this is the focus of the current research, it is valuable to bear in mind that not

only is this study important for understanding the experiences of adoptive and foster mothers (particularly in a South African context) but, as Smith et al. (1998) argue, exploring the forms of mothering that seem ‘other’ reveals both the nature of these ‘other’ forms as well as the nature of the dominant ideologies in our culture. Investigating adoptive and foster mothering can serve as “a window through which we can see more clearly the largely unconscious but dominant ideologies of the family, the child and motherhood” (p. 201).

The following chapter will lay the theoretical foundations for this study through a discussion of postmodern ontology and social constructionist epistemology. Key tenets of feminist research will also be explored, as these relate to the study at hand and the relationships between feminism and postmodernism as well as feminism and poststructuralism will be acknowledged.

CHAPTER THREE

Theoretical Foundations

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to lay the theoretical foundation upon which the research questions guiding this study, which utilise terms such as ‘construct’, ‘discourses’ and ‘dominant discourses’, can be asked. This foundation can be understood to involve, broadly, a postmodern ontology and a social constructionist epistemology. While ontology is concerned with the nature of reality, epistemology enquires about the relationship between the knower (researcher) and the known (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006) or “what the rules for knowing are” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 29). The typical ‘formula’ in dissertations utilising these ontological and epistemological positions, involves the author laying postmodernism as the first brick, with poststructuralism alongside it in order to argue for—among other things—multiple forms of truth, abandonment of grand narratives and the constructive powers of language. Next, laid neatly upon postmodernism and poststructuralism, is the brick termed social constructionism. This brick allows for a discussion of the socially constructed nature of reality and the primacy of discourse. Along with the acknowledgement that none of these terms can really be defined with any kind of accuracy or agreement, one lays the final brick of research design on the top, invariably involving the discourse analysis of data gained through an attempt to explore questions worded somewhat similarly to the ones guiding the present study.

Although I shall essentially be following this established procedure, I hope to also present an account that reveals how each ‘brick’ is not a neatly compacted body of theoretical ideas and how the cement that holds the bricks together is somewhat messy and malleable. I also aim to make explicit my own particular stance as a postmodern, feminist, realist social constructionist researcher, open to conversations with phenomenology.

I oppose the idea that writing about the constructions and experiences of women and about gender equality should automatically place one within a box that must be labelled ‘feminist’. That perpetuates the idea that feminism is a counter-discourse standing in opposition to ‘mainstream’ academic knowledge which is then, by implication, framed as being patriarchal. This serves to reinforce the othering of women, marginalising their meaning-making and preserving inequality. Haraway (2003) speaks of her aversion to feminists being designated as a “‘special interest group’ in the rarified realm of epistemology” (p. 21) and Salo (2001) also encapsulates something of this perspective when she says “whenever I do anything that differentiates me from a doormat, people call me a feminist” (p. 59) (although she then elaborates on feminism as a positive term). In my opinion, feminism will only have achieved its mission when, to research, document and explore the lives of women and issues of gender merely locates one as a researcher, writer or academic not as a ‘feminist’, and when such research is not viewed as only benefitting women. Tamale (2006) states that areas of concern for women are in reality areas of concern for all human beings. Clearly there remains work to be done in this pursuit, and seeing as it would be rather preposterous to claim that feminism has achieved its goals and is therefore obsolete, for the moment, the binary between androcentric and feminist approaches to

research seems, for many, to serve a purpose. I therefore situate the current study (a little reluctantly) within feminist perspectives as part of the theoretical foundation for this study.

This chapter is structured in the following manner: after a note on ontology and epistemology, poststructuralism will be explored, followed by a discussion on postmodernism. Poststructuralism is discussed first as concepts such as deconstruction need to have been explained in order to lay the groundwork for the review of postmodernism. This will be followed by a discussion of social constructionism, including concepts that are considered key as well as an exploration of the differences between relativist social constructionism and realist social constructionism. Lingering questions regarding the relationship between meaning, construction, discourse and experience will then be mentioned. Finally, some central issues in feminist research will be presented, including African developments in the field and perspectives regarding the relationships between feminism and postmodernism and between feminism and poststructuralism.

3.2 A NOTE ON ONTOLOGY AND EPISTEMOLOGY

Within a positivist paradigm, ontology precedes epistemology. What is knowable is not influenced by how one accomplishes knowing. Positivist epistemology claims to ensure that research findings accurately represent reality. From the postmodern perspectives undergirding this study, epistemology precedes ontology. In other words, how we know precedes what we are able to know. In Scheurich's (1997) words, "how I see shapes, frames, determines, and even creates what I see" (p. 29). For explanatory clarity, however, the ontological basis of this study will be explained first within this particular chapter.

3.3 POSTSTRUCTURALISM

The terms poststructuralism and postmodernism are often used interchangeably. Although containing significant theoretical overlap, and although both provide critiques of positivism (Agger, 1991), the terms are not identical (Fahy, 1997). Fahy argues that postmodernism is a more inclusive, broader concept than poststructuralism. Poststructuralism refers to a group of theoretical positions influenced by post-Saussurean linguistics, psychoanalysis (Lacan), Marxism (Althusser), feminism (Kristeva) and the work of Derrida, Foucault, Barthes and Lyotard (Gavey, 1997). Foucault, Barthes and Lyotard are also (to complicate matters further) commonly referred to as postmodernists (Agger, 1991). Agger differentiates between postmodernism and poststructuralism by explaining that, whereas postmodernism is a theory of history, culture and society, poststructuralism is a theory of language and knowledge. Nicholson (1992) makes a similar distinction, classifying postmodernism as a term used in philosophy and social theory and poststructuralism as a term used more frequently in literary criticism and theory. Weedon (1997) explains poststructuralism as a theory that attempts to explain the relationship between language, subjectivity, social organisation and power.

Poststructuralism followed structuralism, which is associated with what has been termed "the linguistic turn" (Lather, 1999, p. 95; Lemert, 1997, p. 59; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004, p. 450) or, less commonly, "the literary turn" (Denzin, 1992, p. 64). The linguistic turn was also influenced by disciplines such as anthropology, linguistics, semiology, philosophy of language and ethnomethodology (Edley, 2001). This represented a shift in focus from social to linguistic structures. Structuralism developed in part as a reaction to the focus of humanism (and particularly existentialism) on individual freedom and responsibility (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Seidman, 2004). Structuralists, influenced by the thinking of de Saussure, explained the individual as the effect of impersonal forces, most importantly language. Meanings within the social world and even the mind

itself are formed through the structure of language (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Therefore, instead of the individual being at the centre of the generation of meaning, structure itself occupies this central position. The structure or system of language thus produces the individual (Seidman, 2004). Two previously held views on language were challenged by structuralists. Firstly it was argued that the meanings of words do not directly correspond to the objects to which they refer, in other words the 'mirror' model of language was critiqued. It was argued instead that the link between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary (de Saussure, 1974; Edley, 2001). Secondly, humans do not assign and group these meanings in order to communicate. It is instead the system of language that provides the conceptual categories that are available (Traynor, 2004). Edley (2001) explains that language is therefore claimed to be "productive rather than (merely) reflective" (p. 435). Foucault (1972) was highly influential in this critique, claiming that discourses construct the objects of which they speak.

Foucault (1972) also argued that knowledge and power are inseparable. Proceeding from the Enlightenment, power was (and often still is) viewed as an external force, operating in a prohibitive manner upon an individual. Knowledge is then considered to be that which will free us from the effects of power. This perspective maintains that if we can attain 'true' knowledge, we will be released from the hold of power as we will be able to 'see through it'. This 'true' knowledge also involves gaining, through reason, self-reflection and actualisation, knowledge of our 'true self'. In this formulation, autonomy is the antithesis of power. The key critique of this worldview is articulated by Lawler (2000):

When we are incited to make our selves autonomous, to 'be who we really are', to realise and express our 'true selves', what kinds of knowledges about the nature of the self are brought into play? Are these knowledges neutral, foundational and transcendent, or are they bound up with regimes of governing persons and populations? When we are most incited to be 'free', and to seek out the truth of our freedom, are we then most subjected to the workings of power? In other words, is power at its most powerful when it is least apparent, when it is working through our desires, when it is governing through the freedom and aspirations of liberal subjects rather than in spite of them? (p. 21)

Foucault claimed that power does not distort or conceal 'truth', power produces truth. His interest, therefore, lay in how power is exercised (Davies, 2000a). Power is not conceptualised essentially, but is "a complex set of relations amongst people and in the relations between people and knowledge systems or patterns of discourse" (Davies, 2000a, p. 18). Knowledge does not exist distinctly from power and its revelation does not free us from power. Knowledge and power are intrinsically interwoven. 'Truths' are considered as such because of local and specific preoccupations, not because of some supreme quality of knowledge (Lawler, 2000). Foucault argued that those who are in the position to regulate what is regarded as truth hold power and retain access to material privilege (Gavey, 1997). Knowledge that is present in a society influences who is able to control or be controlled and who is able to claim certain resources. Also, by drawing on this knowledge we are able to act in socially acceptable ways. Foucault (1979) contended that

We should abandon a whole tradition that allows us to imagine that knowledge can exist only where the power relations are suspended and that knowledge can develop only outside its injunction, its demands and its interests...We should admit rather that power produces knowledge...that power and knowledge directly imply one another,...there is no power relationship without the correlative

constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (p. 27).

Power does not only relate to oppressive relations between people, however. Power/knowledge also involves the possibility of knowledge enabling powerful action. Power includes the ability to resist, to deconstruct, to create and to imagine. Although this may lead to the domination of some over others, this is not always the case (Davies, 2000a).

Derrida proclaimed the dawn of poststructuralism in a lecture in 1966 (published in 1978). He reduced language to writing which he believed – in contrast to how language was understood by structuralists – does not constrain its subjects. What was a *work* in modernist terms is a *text* in poststructural and postmodern terms (Foster, 1987). Lotter (1995) explains texts as including “everything” (p. 48): persons, institutions and events. Denzin (1992) provides a more refined definition, explaining texts as “any printed, visual, oral, or auditory production that is available for reading, viewing, or hearing” (p. 32). This would include newspaper articles, songs, paintings, buildings and so on. He continues to say that “readers create texts as they interpret and interact with them” (p. 32). According to Barthes (1977), instead of interpreting the text in order to uncover what lies behind it, the text itself is the object of study. Deconstructionists claim that even if a text appears to refer to something else, that reference is still to another text (Sim, 2002). Derrida’s deconstruction focuses on the critical analysis of texts, exploring texts by pulling them apart to uncover arbitrary presuppositions and hierarchies. Deconstruction explores what is not included in a text, what is repressed, unnamed or concealed (Lotter, 1995). Butler (1992) argued that to deconstruct “is not to negate or to dismiss, but to call into question and, perhaps most importantly, to open up a term...to a reusage or redeployment that previously has not been authorised” (p. 15). Parker (1992) similarly explains that deconstruction is used to disrupt theories and open up conflict. Derrida claimed that meanings of signs are never fixed. The search for truth, then, is no longer relevant as signifiers are contested and in flux and all readings of texts are emergent, temporal and carry conflicting, ambiguous meanings (Denzin, 1992; Lather, 1999; Seidman, 2004). For poststructuralists there is no final knowledge. Grenz (1996) submits that

if language really does construct meaning (as opposed to revealing an objective meaning already present in the world), then the work of the scholar is to take apart (‘deconstruct’) this meaning-constructing process. By deconstructing influential concepts, perhaps we can break their control over our thoughts and actions (p. 43).

Lax (1994) states that all postmodern discourses are basically deconstructive in that they attempt to create scepticism about taken-for-granted beliefs regarding knowledge, truth, power, language, and the self, which serve as legitimation for Western culture. Derrida stated that meanings have political and social significance and are therefore a focus of conflict (Seidman, 2004). Deconstruction, then, is intrinsically political, as statements of authority are broken down to reveal their nature as particular, arbitrary and ambiguous claims. In this way, power phenomena are exposed (Lotter, 1995).

Deconstruction is not easy. In her discussion of women’s subjectivity and feminist stories, Davies (1992) acknowledges that “the task of generating feminist story lines that have the power to disrupt and displace the old is extraordinarily complex” (p. 66). She suggests that this is the case for a number of reasons: firstly, new stories tend to be interpreted from the perspective of the old stories, secondly, our desires are not easily challenged as they are defined in relation to a sense of essential self, and, thirdly, our understanding of how stories maintain the existing order is limited. Instead of the term deconstruction, Davies (2000b) prefers to

speak of “troubling” (p. 14) discourses where the word is used to mean “to agitate” or “make rough” (p. 14). Binaries are not dismantled easily and, most often, work claiming to be deconstructive draws attention to binaries and the forces that constitute them as well as facilitating different kinds of meanings rather than obliterating binaries and the boundaries between them altogether. MacBeth (2001) also speaks of troubling the production of knowledge through reflexivity (which is discussed further in section 4.10 of the following chapter) in order to “disrupt the comforts of familiar knowledge representations and to warrant and incite new ones” (p. 46).

3.4 POSTMODERNISM

An apt entrance into a discussion of the postmodern is provided by Atkinson’s (2002) comment:

“postmodernism is not ‘safe’—it does not offer to achieve a specific aim—but it is perhaps more honest about its own uncertainty than more secure ideological positions might be” (p. 75). Most authors are reluctant to provide a specific definition of postmodernism (Foster, 1987; Kirsten, 1988; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004), a term which seemed to crystallise around the mid-1970s (Connor, 1994). Blake (1997) begrudgingly speaks of “the great game of specifying what postmodernism or indeed postmodernity are” (p. 296), arguing that the clash of varying ideas is much more interesting than any attempt to reach some kind of consensus. The reluctance to agree upon a definition of postmodernism stems from there being no singular, coherent postmodern philosophy (Kvale, 1999). Rather, there are many thinkers focussing on various facets of the postmodern condition. Even the idea of a postmodern ‘worldview’ has been challenged as postmodernists have no single, mutually agreed upon view of the world (Grenz, 1996). Rather, there are “many views and, by extension, many worlds” (Grenz, 1996, p. 40). Alcoff (1997) brings some perspective by reminding her readers that

‘postmodernism’ is indeed a fictional construct, but, of course, so is every other analogously large term such as ‘liberalism’, ‘socialism’ or the ‘Enlightenment’. Postmodernism is no more or less an accurate representation of reality than, as Nietzsche might say, are words such as ‘thing’, ‘self’, ‘truth’, indeed, even ‘world’. Like these other terms, however, there are productive uses to which the term ‘postmodernism’ can be put (p. 6).

Postmodernism manifests itself in a broad range of fields, including psychology, sociology, education, literature, architecture, philosophy and cultural studies (Lather, 1991). Postmodern thinkers are also often highly idiosyncratic (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Postmodernism is described obliquely as a “space for debate” (Malpas, 2001, p. 1), a “culture” (Lemert, 1997, p. 4), a “new mood in Western culture and society” (Grenz, 1996, p. 39), a “challenge to cultural assumptions” (Sim, 2002, p. 6), a “conflict of new and old modes” (Foster, 1987, p. xi) and as having to do with the question, “What is to be made of the world—concern that preoccupies people outside the cloisters of privilege who believe the world is not what it used to be?” (Lemert, 1997, p. xiii). Scheurich (1997) offers a particularly pithy conceptualisation of postmodernism: “postmodernism is Western civilisation’s best attempt to critique its own most fundamental assumptions, particularly those assumptions that constitute reality, subjectivity, research, and knowledge” (p. 2).

A range of proposals have, however, been proffered regarding attempts to at least explain some central characteristics of the postmodern. Kvale (1999) distinguishes between postmodernity, postmodernism and postmodern thought. Ritzer and Goodman (2004) use the same principle, however, instead of ‘postmodern thought’ they speak of “postmodern social theory” (p. 469). Whilst postmodernity has been described as an epoch following modernity, postmodernism often refers to cultural products and postmodern thought or social

theory that delineates a way of thinking that differs from modern social thought. According to Ritzer and Goodman, “the postmodern” (p. 469) includes all three.

At the centre of modernity lies a belief in a world that is knowable through rationality and reason. This world constitutes its subject matter, about which it is possible to discover universal laws. Modern psychologists confidently assert that the subject exists and is available for interrogation (Gergen, 1992). As a rejection of the age of modernity, postmodernity has been described as a time characterised by a move away from this fundamental quest to uncover the true nature of reality. In broad strokes, this new era represents an opposition both to the idea of ultimate truth and to the structuralist premise that the world as we know it is formed through hidden structures (Burr, 2003).

The terms modernity and postmodernity are used to highlight specific cultural and social features that are viewed as identifying a historical period. These periods are, firstly, characterised through reference to these features and, secondly, they are explained in some way through the use of these features. The idea of periodising postmodernity as a merely descriptive label is, however, contentious (Blake, 1997; Elliott, 2000). Blake argues that it is crucial to recognise that the term postmodernity is itself theory-laden (as is the term modernity). Even within the two broad categories of modernity and postmodernity, distinct theorists differ on what features should be emphasised and others prefer, when discussing the very same historical time period and the same phenomena occurring during those years, not to use terms such as modernity or postmodernity at all. For Blake, explaining postmodernity as a historical epoch is much less helpful than describing it as a discourse. Connor (1994) also argues for postmodernism to be as a “discursive function” (p. 10). Instead of asking what postmodernism is, we could ask what postmodernism *does*, who it addresses, how, why and where it thrives, and what is at stake in its presence (Connor, 1994).

Smart (1998) argues that the postmodern does not necessarily indicate a move away from the modern, but may, in fact, refer to a “critical relationship with the modern” (p. 36). Kvale (1999) proposes that the modern/postmodern dichotomy is actually inherently contrary to postmodernism’s move beyond binary opposites to explorations of nuances and differences. Nevertheless, postmodern commentators frequently do discuss a shift from modern to postmodern (Scambler & Higgs, 1998; Seidman, 2004), although this shift is at times characterised pessimistically as a proclamation of crisis and, at other times, as heralding liberation (Sim 2002). Although penned in 1997, the following comment on postmodern society by Lemert could well be argued to have remained salient:

In simple terms, ‘things are not what we thought they were’. [This] is hardly the first time people may have entertained such fears. But it *may* be a time when, relative to other periods of rapid social change, there [is] no obvious, nor even possible, grand scheme to account for ‘the way things are supposed to be’ (p. 59-60).

Broadly, the postmodern concept of knowledge is built upon two key assumptions. Firstly, all explanations of reality are constructions that may be useful, but are not fundamentally true. Secondly, we are not able to step outside of our constructions of reality. In summary, “the theories we devise create the different worlds we inhabit” (Grenz, 1996, p. 43). Atkinson (2002) breaks these two assumptions down into more detailed features (and acknowledges the limitations of attempting to summarise the broad range of ideas encompassed under the umbrella of postmodernism). He explained postmodernism as characterised by:

- (i) renunciation of fixed concepts of reality, knowledge and method

- (ii) opposition towards finality and conclusive meaning
- (iii) intentional pursuits to destabilise assumptions
- (iv) embracing multiplicity, complexity, ambiguity and contradiction
- (v) recognition of subjectivity
- (vi) questioning traditions of philosophy and morality
- (vii) challenging hierarchies and boundaries, and
- (viii) disruption of binaries.

Burr (1998) explains that these ideas exist along a continuum and people differ in the distance along that continuum that they are prepared to travel.

A notion that involves a number of Atkinson's (2002) characterisations of postmodernism is the distrust and suspicion (not complete disintegration, though) of grand-narratives. The terms 'grand-narratives' and 'meta-narratives' are occasionally used interchangeably, however Malpas (2001) provides a distinction between the two. Meta-narratives can be understood as the rules that govern the construction of narratives. He uses the example of 'my love is like a red, red rose' which is perfectly acceptable within poetry, but not in a botany textbook. He explains that "a meta-narrative thus sets out the axioms (the principles or laws) that allow communication to take place, and determines the legitimacy of a narrative for a particular genre, as well as giving the rules to determine its truth or falsity" (p. 5). Meta-narratives are established through political interests and are constantly being transformed. Grand-narratives can be conceptualised as stories of the development of narratives, which legitimate their content in relation to overarching themes and justify peoples' choice of action. Grand-narratives collate narratives and meta-narratives in order to create a political, moral and historical worldview. For example, one of the chief features of modernity was the grand-narrative of progress, specifically related to science. Other grand-narratives include reason, justice, truth and emancipation (Elliott, 2000). Grand-narratives have, in history, silenced, subordinated and marginalised. Lotter (1995) describes meta-narratives and grand-narratives as attempts at interpreting the world that indicate where a person, group, societal institution or nation comes from, what its nature is at present and what it will be in the future.

In Habermas' book *Legitimation Crisis* (1975), he depicts a loss of faith in legitimating forces of authority and tradition. Sim (2002) also describes how the decline in respect for the authority of meta-narratives and grand-narratives is a notable feature of postmodern Western societies. As grand-narratives break down, smaller narratives (that are local, cultural, ethnic, religious and ideological) assume greater prominence (Lotter, 1995). This paves the way for the legitimacy of multiple meanings. Lotter suggests that the biggest shift brought about by postmodernism is a "new attitude of openness" (p. 51).

Narrowing the discussion to the field of psychology in particular, postmodernism has cast positivist experimental research methods as "misleading justificatory devices [in that they] operate as truth warrants for a priori commitments to particular forms of value-saturated description" (Gergen, 1992, p. 24). In contrast, postmodern psychological research intends to create awareness concerning implicit assumptions about human beings and types of human experiences (mothering, for example) that are available to members of a particular social group at a particular time and place. Knowledge is then understood as interrelational, and as "interwoven in webs of networks" (Kvale, 2007, p. 21).

Postmodernism has been strongly contested. It has been accused of being intellectually weak, of fostering irrationalism, of being misleading and politically conservative (Sim, 2002). Also, postmodern social theory has been criticised as emphasising not whether ideas are true, but whether we believe in them, as offering broad generalisations without qualification, ideas that are vague and abstract, as well as leading to profound pessimism (Ritzer & Goodman, 2004). Cole, Hill, and Rikowski (1997) go as far as calling postmodernism “a theoretical virus which paralyses progressive thought, politics and practice” (p. 187). One of the key criticisms of postmodernism is that, in its refusal to take an ideological position, it lacks a vision for what society should be, and therefore does not possess an agenda for social change (Cole et al., 1997). This falls within what Alcoff (1997) speaks of as the first wave of political criticism of postmodernism. She summarises this critique as maintaining that

without a normative category of the good human life or concepts of progress and freedom, we cannot critique the present; without an epistemological foundation of some sort, we cannot privilege our own claims against others; and without any substantive vision of a better future we cannot formulate present political strategies (p. 6-7).

Alcoff believes that this stage of the debate is over and that postmodernists have been largely victorious. Deconstruction has been shown to enable social criticism through demonstrating how any structure of signification relies on “systems of violent exclusion” (Alcoff, 1997, p. 7). Postmodernists have shown also that the quest for universal truths is really a flybottle problem (we, as metaphorical flies held in a bottle, are trapped inter-subjectively in our thinking by schematic linguistic interpretations). Also, it has been demonstrated that ideas of progress guaranteeing a splendid future and predetermining the roles we shall play in it (roles constructed according to systems of oppression) do not actually lead to freedom. Moving forward, Alcoff (1997) champions an approach to postmodernism that does not claim to be theoretically correct or discursively hegemonic. Rather, postmodernist work is used “as a disposable toolkit” (p. 9) which can be used to work on certain cultural and/or philosophical issues as needed.

Atkinson (2002), in her article *The responsible anarchist*, also argues against the notion that postmodernism lacks an agenda for social change. Postmodernism refuses the idea that a form of “innocent knowledge” (Atkinson, 2002, p. 75) can be discovered that will inform how we should behave in a manner that will lead to the ultimate good of all, as the very concept of ‘justice’ requires deconstruction. Atkinson argues that, although such a viewpoint has immense implications for possibilities of social change, this prospect is not completely disregarded. What postmodern thinking allows for is a critical view of the very notion of justice. Although postmodernism does not propose a single route to justice, the possibility of multiple routes are acknowledged, on the premise that the beliefs upon which these possibilities are founded should not be taken for granted. In this way, not only are we challenged to question what it is we believe to be in need of change but also the certainties of how and why we hold this view. This allows for not only society to change but for the activist to change as well.

Atkinson (2002) breaks her argument down by countering four claims: postmodernism disempowers those it claims to give a voice; it has no practical value and is useful only to intellectuals; it prevents the creation of a new social order; and it colludes with the status quo by refusing to act. In terms of the first claim, Atkinson contends that those who view postmodernism’s relationship to truth as problematic for the disempowered need also to acknowledge that concepts of ‘truth’ have brought about positive reform but have also undergirded many social injustices. She explains how postmodernism’s focus on the instability of language

as well as the uncertainty of group identity has been attacked as serving to disempower. She refers to Kelly's (1999) comment on postmodernism's refusal of identity (alluded to in chapter two), which, Kelly argues, results in paralysis in relation to gender analysis and the confrontation of oppression, for example. Kelly claims that, as difference between men and women is extended to difference between women, it then becomes impossible to speak of women as a group. In other words, celebration of uncertainty and confusion leads to the disappearance of the oppressed group. Postmodernists counter this by arguing that it is through this very instability of identity and language that both social critique and social change are enabled. Exploring what is understood to be 'true' and 'right' reveals the discourses that mould society. Allowing consideration of alternate grounds for such concepts can result in a reworking of social principles.

As an aside, Alcoff (1997) believes that there is still an underlying epistemological denial at play, however. Postmodern discourse is still deeply concerned with truth and the truthfulness of theory and it is this very concern that motivates scepticism towards authority and authenticity. She argues that postmodernism has its own implicit appeal to a particular understanding of truth according to which it judges other more realist versions. However, it lacks interrogation of its own concern.

In terms of the second and third claims, Atkinson proposes that intellectual exchanges do not necessarily serve to remove postmodernism from the field of action if one considers action to be determined by ideas. Postmodernism creates a climate of inquiry and challenge in which meanings cannot be taken for granted. Postmodernism offers perspective through suggesting new possibilities. In response to the challenge that postmodernism leads to a relativism that cannot hope to provoke social change, Atkinson explains that thoughtful postmodernism does not dissolve into relativism but illuminates the politics of knowledge and reserves scepticism for claims which propose to supersede those politics. Openness to multiple meanings does not necessarily result in subjective nihilism but rather contextual relativism where linguistic practice legitimates action (Kvale, 1999). Atkinson continues by saying that

the reductionist view of postmodernism, which sees it as limiting the scope of inquiry merely to the personal, the contingent and the local, fails to recognise the postmodern view of the personal as the product of the social, the contingent as the product of the determined, the local as the product of the global, and *vice versa* in each case...Moreover, the understanding of social contexts and situations as the intersection of disparate discourses may have the effect of enabling greater mutual understanding and tolerance, rather than the entrenchment of existing hegemonies. In this way, postmodernism may offer new possibilities for communication and cooperation (p. 81).

In response to the fourth claim, that postmodernism colludes with the status quo, Atkinson (2002) argues that deconstructing texts that claim to emancipate, liberate and educate powerfully opposes the status quo. This deconstruction examines the subtle ways in which power is exercised through such texts and therefore critiques and destabilises the status quo. Postmodernism does, then, lend itself to an ethical programme through deflating totality and universalism, valuing cynicism as a means of retaining a distance from elitism and intellectualism, and remaining committed to "self-reflexive subversions" (Elliott, 2000, p. 338) in order to avoid authoritarian conceptual closure. Elliott (2000) argues that the ethical strength of postmodernism is its attentiveness towards the Other, and towards social and cultural differences and exclusions. Postmodernism is, at its best, politically aware, disruptive and challenging, rightly suspicious of authority and highly creative (Yates, 1992).

3.5 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Van Vucht Tijssen (1990) claimed that postmodernism was nothing more or less than a disguise for well-known theories such as symbolic interactionism, critical cultural theory and social constructionism. For Burr (1996) and Edley (2001), however, postmodernism and poststructuralism are “the cultural and intellectual ‘backcloth’ against which social constructionism has taken shape, and which to some extent gives it its particular flavour” (Burr, 1996, p. 12). Durrheim (1997) explains that, in part, the drive behind the turn to social constructionism in psychology in particular is the growing awareness that a “predicative model of science has failed” (p. 175) because of its lack of relevance to psychology’s subject matter. Instead of treating the human being as a natural scientific object, it has been argued that psychology should rather be concerned with the study of how human meanings emerge in socially shared constructions.

This section will discuss the origins and characteristics of social constructionism. This will be followed by a presentation of arguments concerning the ‘point’ of social constructionism and the relationships between social constructionism and understandings of ‘reality’.

3.5.1 ORIGINS OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

The first book to have ‘social construction’ in its title was Berger and Luckmann’s *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*, written in 1966. These two authors contended that our beliefs, sense, and experience of reality are constructed in our social worlds through interaction. It was not their claim that reality itself is constructed, which is a common misinterpretation. Although objects in reality (such as water or pumpkins) do exist independently of human beings, meanings assigned to such terms are constructed socially and these meanings differ across cultures and time.

Since the publishing of Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) seminal text, social constructionism—referred to in multiple ways as a theory, a position, an approach, or an orientation—has developed and been influenced by a number of intellectual movements such as poststructuralism, ethnomethodology, feminism, post-positivist philosophy of science, and psychology, to name a few (Stam, 2001). Gergen (1985) is regarded as having introduced social constructionism to wider audiences within the field of psychology through his article *The social constructionist movement in modern psychology*. In this particularly relativist paper, he questions the possibility of objective knowledge and argues that psychology should study the ways in which we construct the world and ourselves through discursive practices.

3.5.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Burr (2003) explains that there is no one feature that is characteristic of all social constructionist work, rather there are certain recurrent elements that are shared within a social constructionist position. Stam (2001) reminds the reader that any list of what ‘counts’ as social constructionism is often dependent on the author’s aims. Nevertheless, Burr’s classification is included here as it is a widely referenced framework. Firstly, she argues that social constructionists assume a critical posture in relation to knowledge that is taken-for-granted. This includes knowledge of our social worlds and knowledge of ourselves. Secondly, the concepts and categories which we use to understand the world are viewed as culturally and historically specific as, thirdly, are forms of knowledge themselves. Fourthly, this knowledge is constructed and sustained through interaction between people who are embedded in culture and society. The meaning of being a ‘mother’, or

'woman' or 'married' or 'disabled', for example, is therefore governed by the dynamics of social interaction. Knowledge is thus something that people *do* together.

The interaction between people that constructs forms of knowledge is largely language based. Even the categories and concepts that create a framework for thinking are provided by language. Language is also considered to be a form of social action as social constructions of the world invite different types of action. Rather than using language as a window into reality then, our sense of reality is constructed by language. Mothering can, therefore, be understood as a "set of linguistic possibilities" (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 280). A sign (for example 'mother') does not point to a particular concept, but rather stands in relation to a system of meanings including other signs such as 'marriage', 'lady', 'family', 'warm', 'fertility' and so on. Terre Blanche et al. (2006) explain that "every time we invoke the sign 'mother' we therefore not only implicitly draw on these related meanings, but in a very real sense find ourselves 'up against' them" (p. 280).

The role of language in social construction is understood through the concept of discourse. For Foucault, discourses produce meanings and form objects, they are not mere linguistic representations (Burr, 2003). To know anything "is to know in terms of one or more discourses" (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 46). Burr (2003) explains a discourse as a set of meanings that represent a specific version of events, or persons. Each discourse brings into focus different aspects and raises different considerations and implications for action. Burr's definition of discourse is one of many. The variety of understandings of discourse stem from diverse theoretical positions and this will be discussed in detail in the following chapter. For the purposes of the present discussion, Macleod's (2002) distillation of three common features emerging from the variety of definitions of discourse (she draws from 10 such definitions) will be mentioned.

Firstly, although discourses do vary dynamically over time, they possess a kind of regularity or coherence. Macleod (2002) explains that statements within a discourse "cluster around culturally available understandings as to what constitutes a topic" (p. 18). Secondly, (and in relation to the discussion in the previous section), discourses do not merely describe the social world but are constructive of this reality. Also, discourse not only enables what can be said about a certain topic in a certain time and place but also restricts what can be known or experienced about it. Even though a discourse excludes other discourses, in this exclusion it directly refers to them, which "creates the conditions for modification, for the undermining of its presence" (Macleod, 2002, p. 18). In this way, discourses produce, reproduce and challenge power relations. Thirdly, discourse (and discourse analysis) can be viewed along a continuum, where the one pole can be characterised in accordance with Lacanian influence and stresses discourse as a "network of meaning" (p. 18). From this perspective, both the conditions that produce certain accounts and how these accounts create meaning hold relevance. The other pole can be considered along Foucauldian lines where, whilst conditions that produce discourse and meaning aspects are not discounted, the focus lies on "the social and power/knowledge effects of discourse" (p. 18). In this sense, discourse is viewed as a social practice. There are also conceptualisations of discourse such as that described by Fairclough (1992)– which will be mentioned in the following chapter–that occupy territory in between these two poles.

A particular area in which discourse is implicated in social construction is that of identity. Social constructionism maintains that human beings do not possess a stable, unified, core 'essence'. Rather, identity arises out of interactions with other people and is also language based. In other words, identity is understood as 'doing' identity (Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). Ivanic (1998) describes identity from a social constructionist perspective as "the result of affiliation to particular beliefs and possibilities which are available

to them in their social context” (p. 7). Identity is, therefore, constructed out of culturally available discourses (Burr, 2003).

Liebrucks (2001) explores the social construction of identity further. He asserts that there are two distinguishable theses behind this argument, one relating to discursive constructions and the other to material constructions. Firstly, there are properties of people that exist only within the context of particular discourses. In other words, people only have these properties in relation to systems of meaning within their communities and these properties cannot be identified outside of this context. For example, a good mother is recognised as such by the community within which she belongs as a meaning system exists that provides for this role. Emotions and attitudes can also be understood in the same way as discursive constructions. Material constructions on the other hand refer to rules for appropriate conduct, or the ability to “utilise the expressive means that are assigned a certain meaning by social conventions” (p. 378). The good mother buys the latest equipment for her baby (including a nasal aspirator which she will undoubtedly never use), displays her intense preoccupation with her child, attends all the PTA meetings and knows how to express frustration with her children in her facebook status softened with just the right amount of persistent, unquestioned affection. Liebrucks (2001) thus explains how

social constructionists argue that psychological concepts characterise the behaviours and experiences of persons with respect not to purportedly hidden processes in the mind or brain but to the meaning these behaviours and experiences have in the context of a certain cultural discourse (p. 382).

Holstein and Gubrium (1999) propose a social constructionist approach to family studies. Although this subject was very briefly mentioned at the outset of the previous chapter, it is considered further here in light of the theoretical premise of this research study. Topics within social constructionist research differ from those within conventional family studies where ‘the’ family is viewed as an objective structure located within a household. Within the social constructionist epistemology, family is understood as an idea, meaning formation and interpretive practice and its experiential reality is problematised. The quest is to explore *how* these meanings are assembled and used. Holstein and Gubrium discuss the role of culture in the social construction of family meanings. They understand culture not as a set of rules for action or interpretation but as a “constellation of more or less regularised, localised ways of assigning meaning and responding to things, [providing] interpretive resources and standards of accountability to which community members must orient as they formulate their actions” (p. 8). Local cultures of domestic life communicate relatively distinct and stable forms of family conceptualisation, but these offer resources and conditions of interpretation (particular orientations and vocabulary) rather than monolithic and absolute prescriptions. Individuals within culture are not merely robotic representations of these cultural conditions but “exercise interpretive discretion” (p. 10). These authors also highlight that interpretive practice always engages with multiple layers of resources and constraints. The ways in which meanings of the family are interpreted and used intersect with the interpretive domains of, among others, gender, race, class, age, professional affiliation, geographical location, and so on.

Methodologically, understanding the family as a discursive construct directs the researcher to examine the construction and articulation of relational meanings through talk and interaction. On the one hand, this leads the researcher down the trail of exploring however familial meanings are created and used. This does not, however, result in a complete relativistic ‘free-for-all’. The manner in which the term ‘mother’ is constructed by an individual or group, for example, will have practical consequences in relation to the “working conditions of

interpretation” (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999, p. 11) or relational and cultural contexts. These working conditions that Holstein and Gubrium refer to do appear to relate to the concept of dominant discourses (and how one’s interpretation is aligned with or resists dominant constructions), but their emphasis is on the implications of this. They use the example of referring to the chair of a university department as ‘mothering’ her faculty. How is this meaning of ‘mothering’ culturally mediated? Does it evoke a moral order? How are interpersonal obligations articulated through the use of this term? Does the meaning of a disagreement with this chair then resonate with familial betrayal? An interpretive vocabulary brings with it “cultural configurations, sentimental expectations and interactive burdens” (p. 12). Although we explore how individuals create meaning within and about families (as opposed to investigating an essential family structure) the terms of reference that individuals use are still “membership categorisation devices” (p. 12) with concomitant cognitive and affective implications and these categorisations work to organise relationships.

3.5.3 THE ‘POINT’ OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONISM

Hacking (1999) argues for a re-evaluation of what social constructionism is and how it can or cannot be used analytically. He proposes that, instead of beginning with a definition, we need to begin by asking what the point of social constructionism is. He posits that the primary aim of social constructionism has been to raise consciousness, in order to improve thinking and living within the worlds we inhabit. This raising of consciousness takes place firstly through the overarching argument that much of our experience of the world is socially constructed and secondly, concerning local claims about the social construction of something in particular. This ‘something’ might be Zulu nationalism, or homelessness, the good mother, or the adoptive mother. The social constructionist’s point is that the character and even existence of this ‘something’ is neither natural nor inevitable, but has been shaped by history and social events, and could have been shaped differently (Burr, 1998). Weinberg (2008) explains this further by arguing that the desire to discover universal truth, firstly, is less helpful than explorations into how our understandings have developed, how these ideas of truth are used and might be transcended and, secondly, can also be detrimental in naturalising instead of challenging the status quo.

Hacking summarises the social constructionist argument as follows, where X denotes what has been referred to thus far as ‘something’:

- (step 1) X is not inevitable or determined by nature
- (step 2) X is a bad thing
- (step 3) without X, the world would be a better place.

Hacking (1999) uses the example of the ‘woman refugee’. When referring to the social construction of the woman refugee, the individual woman is not the subject of analysis, but rather the idea or classification or type of woman, an idea that exists within a matrix of social meanings. Hacking explains that, in the country to which she flees, the woman refugee learns how to live her life. In living this life she develops into a certain type of woman, a woman refugee. This construction of the individual and her experiences occurs within the matrix of meanings surrounding ‘woman refugee’ as a classification.

Hacking (1999) argues that it is redundant to argue for the social construction of the woman refugee in the context of the country from which she is fleeing, as, from this perspective she is a product of the social conditions in her country. Circumstances have directly evoked fear and the necessity to flee. Her fleeing is

inevitable. In the country to which she flees, however, 'woman refugee' may *seem* to be a straightforward and inevitable idea whilst it is far from inevitable. There is, then, the need to raise consciousness about how the contingent classification and the matrix within which it resides influences how some woman refugees perceive themselves, their circumstances, their experience and their actions, and how they are constructed and reconstructed.

In relation to this study, 'adoptive mother' and 'foster mother' are not considered straightforward and inevitable (step 1). Only through the dominance of the construct of the biological mother are these categorisations assigned meaning. Available literature indicates that this classification may be linked with degrees of inferiority or lack of 'realness' as a mother (step 2). It is suggested that this 'contingent classification' may, to varying degrees, influence how these women perceive themselves and their circumstances, their actions and experiences, and the nature of their potential resistance. Within this framework, dissolving the categories of 'adoptive mother' and 'foster mother' as opposed to 'biological mother' would therefore be proposed as a 'good thing' (step 3).

Hacking (1999) describes what he terms six "grades of commitment" (p. 19) in social constructionism to the three-point argument summarised above. The first argues for construction through historical social processes and is hence not particularly focussed on step (2), whether X is a good or bad thing. The second assumes an ironic attitude and acknowledges that although X is in fact not inevitable after all, it is part of our thinking and cannot be changed, at least at the present time. The third, reformist constructionism, acknowledges that X is not inevitable, that it is bad, and that some aspects of X can be changed. This is related to the fourth grade of commitment, which Hacking terms unmasking, in which the argument is that by exposing the function, appeal and authority of X, it will lose its effectiveness. The third and fourth are largely intellectual pursuits. The fifth and sixth, rebellious constructionism and revolutionary constructionism, involve a radical stance towards (1), (2) and (3), with the sixth directly involving activism.

Due to social constructionist opposition to the reification of elements of social life that are in fact neither natural nor inevitable, Weinberg (2008) explains that social constructionists have emerged as critical of the disciplines within which they work, as they unmask and deconstruct their colleagues' "sacred cows as the socially contingent and eminently provisional achievements that they are" (p. 15), whilst mainstream social scientists work towards building on, and strengthening, the credentials of their respective disciplines. Although this critical interrogation is necessary, Weinberg argues that it also tends to reflect a philosophical immaturity. Rather than only deconstructing the knowledge claims of others, social constructionist researchers would benefit from a higher degree of engagement with the value and intellectual legitimacy of our own research. Weinberg (2008) proposes that

this will entail moving beyond the well-established fact that claims to truth or objectivity are always, in some sense, claims to power towards the development of approaches that help us to more reasonably, justly, compassionately, and systematically arbitrate between such claims... Too many of us have clung too fast to the [radical relativist principle] that our beliefs, practices, and experiences are somehow confined by our different belief systems, conceptual schemes, cultures, discourses, epistemes, languages, paradigms, or worldviews. This has then dissuaded us from seriously considering the possibilities (and the immense value) of critical value across these lines of difference (p. 15 & p. 33).

The point, then, of social constructionist research is to raise consciousness about the social construction of categories that are not inevitable or natural and, where possible, to unmask and deconstruct these classifications as activism in itself or in order to provide alternate ideas that lead to activism. Deconstructing the meaning of terms such as ‘adoptive mother’ and ‘foster mother’ may do more to reveal how these conceptually closed terms are located in the social and in networks of power than to lead to disintegration of the terms. This deconstruction does not automatically plunge one into a meaningless, identity-less position where one is unable to oppose unequal power relations. Rather, it may lead to a revealing and destabilising of power relations and the opening of a space for communication and tolerance. In Okeke’s (1998) words, “the rich texture of women’s lives across the globe is not likely to emerge if our politics and conversations remain one-sided” (p. 238). Instead of becoming paralysed within a whirlpool of relativity, there does exist the possibility of arbitrating between claims to knowledge. This will be discussed further in the following section.

3.5.4 SO DOES REALITY ‘REALLY’ EXIST?

It was mentioned near the outset of this discussion on social constructionism that Berger and Luckmann’s (1966) seminal text did not claim that reality itself is constructed, but rather that the meaning we assign to this reality is constructed. This comment is, in fact, the tip of a rather large iceberg. A hefty debate has emerged between relativistic and realistic positions within social constructionism. Burr (1998) uses the contrasting views of Potter and Wetherell and Collier to illustrate the distinction between these two schools of thought.

According to Potter and Wetherell (1987), the world is discursive and textual. Even if a reality did exist, any description of it becomes a discursive construct. Any quest to discover what lies behind discourse would therefore be fruitless. This corresponds with Derrida’s (1976) assertion that nothing outside of the text exists. Gergen (1992) believes that

to presume the independent existence of a subject matter, reflected by the discourse, would be to engage in an unwarranted objectification of the discourse. Further, such reification is likely to be fraught with various ideological and valuational biases. Thus, to presume the subject matter is to mystify the valuational basis of one’s ontology (p. 24).

Extreme relativistic views in social constructionism have been critiqued for espousing a multiplicity of equally valid perspectives and thereby removing the possibility of arbitrating between such choices. Although social constructionism’s power lies in the deconstruction of classifications and categories in favour of recognising diversity, Burr (1998) suggests that “if we limit our action to the deconstruction of existing discourses, for fear of reifying alternative constructions that may turn out to be as bad or worse...we may as well leave our dominant constructions unchallenged” (p. 16). Also, the self as a discursive construct becomes devoid of agency. Burr (1998) asserts that, although largely removing a basis for choice and action, “the radical scepticism of the relativist” (p. 22) remains indispensable.

In Collier’s (1998) critical realist view, which the present study ascribes to, a ‘real world’ does exist, pre-dating our experience and description of it. Language, whilst being constructive and performative, is derived from reality itself. The world, therefore, is more than just textual, it is also material. In Parker’s (1992) words, “things could both be inside and outside texts” (p. 34). Edley (2001) uses the example that a city, let us say Johannesburg, does not exist because the map book says it does or because it suddenly appeared when mentioned. It exists in reality, but it has meaning as a city by virtue of its textual classification in South African town planning documentation. Where its boundaries lie is also a matter of negotiation. The argument, then, is

not whether Johannesburg ‘really’ exists, but how it exists “as a socially constructed reality” (Edley, 2001, p. 439). For this study, the existence of the material adoptive or foster mother is not in dispute. What is under investigation, however, is how these women exist also as socially constructed mothers, as mothers who are involved in social construction, and as mothers who construct meanings potentially both similarly and differently.

Individuals act on the basis of their beliefs and judgements about the world and are capable of choosing which constructions to draw from and which to challenge. Liebrucks (2001) defends the view that social constructionism can maintain a realist position whilst still allowing for a multiplicity of perspectives. He uses the example of a biologist and a layperson looking at a prepared slide through a microscope. Even though the biologist sees a Golgi body whilst the layperson sees a splotch, they are both looking at the same object, within a common world that exists independently of their conceptual backgrounds and which affords different perceptions of the object in question. Liebruck’s example demonstrates that, although different (equally valid) meanings can be assigned to the same object, not just *any* meaning is relevant or appropriate. Possibilities exist, through using techniques such as those that will be discussed in the following chapter concerning the quality of research, to arbitrate between the claims of researchers.

3.6 LINGERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEANING CONSTRUCTION, DISCOURSES AND EXPERIENCE (AND WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN SOUTH AFRICA?)

The debate between realistic and relativistic social constructionists, concerning whether a reality exists apart from discourse, can be complexified even further. Painter and Theron (2001) wrote an article entitled *Heading South! Importing discourse analysis*. This article asks whether, if social reality is constructed, that construction takes place through discourse alone and whether the embodied nature of humans and the activity of culture can indeed be ignored in understanding conduct and experience. They also explore the implications of such a position in non-Western contexts. Painter and Theron’s thesis is integrated here with Alcoff’s (1997) views on the postmodern exclusion of experience.

Painter and Theron (2001) explain that discursive social psychology, drawing on the ontological and epistemological positions elucidated in this chapter, understands the relationship between the individual and the social, and, more generally, between cultural forms of conduct and experience, as being discursively organised. Experience is therefore not considered to be an authoritative source for knowledge (Alcoff, 1997). In short, social reality is the product of discourse. This reduction of reality to discourse has provided a critical voice in minimising the reproduction of Western values in non-Western contexts, thereby challenging intellectual imperialism. However, Painter and Theron argue that privileging language over conduct and experience may still perpetuate subtle Western preoccupations. Alcoff believes that “the manner in which experience is conceptualised is critical for discourses of political liberation and has a determining effect on the choice of theoretical as well as practical strategies” (p. 9). She shows how, seeing as every discourse can be analysed with reference to the systems of exclusion on which it relies, postmodernism as a discourse relies on a system of exclusion operating around the concept of experience. She argues that this exclusion of experience is “allied with an elitism and new authoritarian meta-theory” (p. 25).

A number of questions come to the fore. Cultural forms of conduct and experience (for example, habits, tastes, ways of making meaning, and social identities) appear to be somewhat resistant to change despite human being’s ability to create new discourses. Why do certain discourses become prevalent and appear as

'natural' at certain places and points in time? Also, why does the use of contradictory discourses not necessarily bring about a change in social forms? Practices, behaviours and feelings appear to remain even after discourses have changed and people have reached a realisation of how they are located discursively. The patterns of cultural experience thus appear to extend beyond discursive constructions (Painter & Theron, 2001). Alcoff (1997) argues that, on the one hand, changes in discourse have effected changes in experience. On the other hand, and using an example from Alcoff's work, if experience is linked to discourse too securely, then, prior to the discourse of date rape, the experience itself would not have occurred (which is clearly debatable). She also uses the example of the sexual abuse of very young children. If children are raped before they can discursively articulate the event, the event would be considered below what can be considered meaningful. Without discourse, meaningful experience on behalf of the child would thus be impossible. Alcoff argues that there are surely "important ways in which experience exceeds language, in which experience is at times inarticulate; one cannot repudiate this phenomenological fact by theoretical fiat" (p. 16). For Painter and Theron, these questions highlight the conceptual challenge of understanding the relationships between meaning construction, discourses and experience. There are important political stakes in this debate regarding how we understand the content of experience as well as how epistemic authority is distributed. If we believe that experience is pre-empted by theory, then those who hold the ability to theorise experience wield authority over those with experience. This is not, however, intended to imply that experience alone is sufficient in grounding a systemic political analysis (Alcoff, 1997).

Epistemologically, what remains unresolved, in the reduction of social reality to discourse, is the lack of distinction between the descriptive world of the observer and the experiential world of the actor (Painter & Theron, 2001). This lack of distinction between the acting, experiencing and embodied individual and the realm of the observer who is involved in interpreting this behaviour according to social patterns, may result in reified social structures becoming identified that are regarded as independent of human actors. In this way, a "scholarly mode of knowledge" (p. 7) regarding how individuals and groups engage with and make sense of the world may be produced and imposed upon people. Painter and Theron suggest that, as we attempt to understand the materiality of practice as derived solely from language rather than from social conduct and experience, this Western postmodern rhetoric subtly reproduces "polarised sites of knowledge production in social psychology" (p. 7). Scheurich (1997) contends that even when we as researchers believe that we are producing knowledge that is useful and that assists people in opposing injustice and challenging the status quo, we remain constrained by profound cultural biases that damage other cultures and silence those who do not speak in our cultural language.

The field of psychology was originally exported to sub-Saharan Africa (Nsamenang, 1995, 2005) and has been dominated by Northern American trends (Painter & Terre Blanche, 2004). Research situated in South Africa is particularly obliged to approach knowledge production reflexively, especially in light of our country's history. Although postmodernism, social constructionism and discourse analysis are recognised as potentially enabling the deconstruction of oppressive systems that silence marginal voices, this stance cannot be assumed uncritically. As mentioned, for example, focussing on the primacy of language carries Western values (Painter & Theron, 2001). The tendency to utilise these theories at the expense of generating uniquely South African approaches has been criticised (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004). Macleod (2004) argues that the field of psychology will always be a sociopolitical endeavour, rather than an objective and neutral one. It will always be intertwined with social, historical, economic and political power relations. As a result, psychology is

obliged to produce knowledge and practice that not only reflects this, but contributes towards challenging and overcoming the inequality of our society and the psychological issues associated with this.

Painter and Theron (2001) propose some alternative approaches to positioning South African discursive research. Firstly, human beings are embodied. Within a discursive ontology, the body is understood as merely carrying meaning. It is not involved in the production of meaning. Painter and Theron argue that the human body, as a material resource, enables and constrains discourse production. Turner's (1998) argument for the acceptance of a general theory of human rights within a postmodern framework (even though the idea of universal rights is hard to sustain) which uses the concept of pain as a fundamental human experience resonates with this argument. Secondly, culture does not only have to be viewed as carrying meaning either. Culture can also be considered as activity. Using the example of gender, Painter and Theron contend that while behaviours (for example, how a woman might rock a child or how a man may sit on a couch) are shaped and framed by discursive accounts, it is the embodied patterning of that behaviour, not the account of the behaviour that makes the interaction seem habitual and ingrained.

Alcoff (1997) suggests that phenomenology may contribute to this challenge in providing a more accurate account of experience as embodied. Clearly postmodernism / poststructuralism and phenomenology are distinct at best and contrary at worst, with respect to this argument. Alcoff explains that,

whereas poststructuralism bases its claims about the inevitability of incomplete understanding on the nature of language, phenomenology basis its account primarily on a reflective description of lived human experience. Lived experience is open-ended, plural, fragmented, and shifting, not because of the limitations of language, but because of the nature of embodied, temporal existence...In this view, meaning is not outside culture and history, but rather meaning is produced through the embodied actions of consciousness in the world (p. 21-22).

From this perspective, history and culture do not function as reified abstractions that can be reduced to discourse. In phenomenology, discourse "does not exhaust experience" (Alcoff, 1997, p. 22). Meaning is found in signs and symbols as well as in action and experience. Although these approaches are foundationally distinct, Alcoff (1997) argues, in relation to her particular research interest, that, in theorising rape, both discursive constructions of experience as well as embodied experience need to be taken into account. I propose that the same may be true for an exploration of mothering. Both discursive constructions and embodied experiences constitute knowledge. Alcoff (1997) prefers to understand experience and discourse as "imperfectly aligned, with locations of disjuncture" (p. 17). To maintain that only experiences that can be expressed through language can justify, challenge or inform knowledge claims upholds only declarative knowledge and completely dismisses all experiences that cannot be articulated.

Recognition of these arguments by Alcoff (1997) and Painter and Theron (2001) does not mean that I will be attempting to develop a new methodology based on a combination of phenomenology and postmodernism. What it does mean is that my particular postmodern, feminist (see section 3.8), realist social constructionist study, which utilises discourse analysis in order to explore how mothers of non-related children construct mothering discursively and how their constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering, does not claim to provide a full picture. It is one of many pictures. Although I focus on discursive analysis, I acknowledge that mothering involves both discursive construction (which is the site of the present enquiry) and lived experience. Also, the embodied nature of the dominant (biological) maternal experience cannot be ignored. Discursive accounts of mothering may not be the only medium through which biological mothering

becomes 'natural'. The maternal body itself enables and constrains discourse production through the physical experiences of pregnancy and breastfeeding in particular. Although discursive accounts of mothering may invite deconstruction, the embodied experience of biological mothering which enables certain discursive accounts may offer resistance to social change regarding the dominance of the discourse of the good mother as, in part, a biological mother. This does not imply that such discourse analytic work is futile. It merely suggests that potential limitations do need to be realistically acknowledged and indeed these issues may also provoke further research questions.

3.7 POSITIONING

Although a poststructural concept, a more fruitful exploration of the idea of positioning (Davies & Harre, 1990; Harre & Gillet, 1994; Raddon, 2002; Torronen, 2001) can take place at this point in the current chapter now that social constructionism generally and the social construction of self, more specifically, have been explored in a little more detail. Within the theoretical paradigm at hand, the individual is now considered to have dissolved into a variety of possible subject positions defined through face-to-face or textual communication. Torronen (2001) summarises this point by saying

the environment for an individual's actions has been conceptualised as a multiplicity of representational systems, heteronymous practices and conflicting social relations; in other words it is seen as being a process, in which a variety of different and conflicting subject positions evolve for the individual to identify with and use (p. 313).

Hollway (1984) first used the concepts of position and positioning in her exploration of how women and men are placed in relation to one another in heterosexual relationships through the meanings that are made available through discourse. Once a person has taken up a specific position, he or she will view the world from the perspective of that position and in relation to the concepts, images, metaphors and storylines that are relevant within the discursive practice in which he or she is positioned (Davies & Harre, 1990; Tirado & Galvez, 2007). From the perspective of positioning theory, developing and maintaining an identity involves applying to oneself particular discursive categories and adopting a moral system structured in accordance with those categories (Slocum-Bradley, 2009).

Positions are relevant largely because they reveal how certain consequences are triggered. Let us assume that person X has been positioned as powerless. What is analytically useful is to be able to explore how that position is "taken up" (Davies & Harre, 1990, p. 54) by X. How is X's concept of powerlessness derived? What did X feel on past occasions when she took herself to be powerless? What psychological assumptions gather around the attribute of powerlessness that has been attached to X through the act of positioning? How does X use her past experience to interpret the position she has been assigned?

Who one is emerges through the discursive practices in which one participates and the individual is therefore flexibly constituted and reconstituted depending on the positions that are available within these discursive practices (within the stories that we use to make sense of our own and others' lives). Davies and Harre (1990) discuss five processes involved in the development of a sense of self. Firstly, we learn categories of inclusion and exclusion (mother/father, old/young). Secondly, we participate in the discursive practices which allocate meanings to these categories (for example, the storylines through which subject positions are constructed within these categories). Thirdly, there is the positioning of self in relation to these categories and storylines (for example, positioning oneself in one's imagination as a girl, not a boy or as a good girl, not a

bad girl). Fourthly, there is the self-recognition of belonging with a certain category and therefore the development of an emotional commitment to membership and the organisation of a moral system associated with that sense of belonging. Fifthly, this way of 'doing' being a person constructs the experiencing of contradictory positions as problematic and as something to be resolved. Davies and Harre argue that the notion of positioning allows for an understanding of the discursive production of a variety of selves.

As a further note on the idea of positioning in relation to storylines, it is worth noting that these authors' definition of positioning is "the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced storylines" (p. 49). Through language, speakers present conceptions of themselves and others through positions they assume in particular stories (Bartlett, 2008; Harre & Moghaddam, 2003). Stories involve norms, obligations and values. Torronen (2001) explains that "often the attachment of subject positions to hoped-for value-orientations is strengthened by the story of the anti-subject which exemplifies, as a warning story, what could happen if we do not adhere to the proper values in our action" (p. 322). This holds particular relevance in the current research in relation to the manner in which the 'bad mother' functions as an anti-subject.

Positioning involves both reflexive positioning through which one positions oneself as well as interactive positioning through which a person is positioned by another. Davies and Harre (1990) provide the example of person B regarding person A's comment as condolence and therefore positioning themselves as the bereaved. Person A may not have intended his or her comment to be perceived as such and may not wish to be positioned as one who would offer condolence in the context within which the speakers find themselves. Winslade (2005) explains this process in the following way:

At the same time as we establish a discursive position for ourselves in making an utterance, we also offer the other person(s) we are addressing a position (or a choice or positions) from which to respond. They are called into particular positions, not just in obvious terms like agreement or disagreement, but also in much more subtle ways as affiliating with, and implicitly giving support to, whole frameworks of meaning. If each utterance establishes a position in a social relation, then the other points in that relation are necessarily implied in the utterance. Any position in a relation creates an implicit (even if not explicitly stated) platform for another to respond from and gestures towards the other an invitation to stand upon that platform in making a response (p. 353).

There are a number of dimensions that should be taken into account when exploring how a speaker positions him/herself and another through language (Davies & Harre, 1990). Firstly, speakers use metaphors and images that invoke and presume the ways of being that they regard themselves as being involved in. Secondly, speakers are typically not aware of the assumptions they are making or the power of these metaphors and images, merely regarding their utterances as the 'normal' way of speaking in this situation. It is important to remember (and this is discussed further in the following chapter, section 4.8.3.2) that 'this situation' is constructed as such because of the interaction that is defined as natural in this setting which informs what is regarded as the 'normal' way of speaking. Thirdly, a number of factors influence how the language of the initial speaker will be heard: the "sort of person one takes oneself to be" (p. 52), one's moral and political affiliations and the availability of alternative discourses other than the one called into use by the initial speaker. Typically, however, the assumption is made that subsequent speakers will draw on the same discourse. Fourthly, positions may be viewed by participants either in terms of known roles or characters

within shared storylines or in a more transient way, involving power shifts or the granting or denial of access to facets of desired or claimed identity (for example, as being positioned outside the story, looking in).

In contrast to the construct of 'roles' (which draws upon the metaphor of an actor who is presented with pre-determined lines within a pre-crafted play and who learns how to play the part), positioning enables the conceptualisation of a subject with choice. We are constituted in certain (sometimes contradictory) positions within particular stories and we are also able to negotiate new positions by refusing the ones that are assigned to us or that are made available to us. When faced with contradictory positions, a complex negotiation between the cultural/social/political/emotional meanings attached to the positions, the stories that are used to make sense of those positions and the moral systems that legitimate choices is required. This is often experienced as a struggle to resist contradiction and to construct a consistent, unitary story of self. However, what is central to bear in mind is that although discursive practices constitute their subjects, they simultaneously function as a resource for the negotiation of new positions (Davies & Harre, 1990). In the current research study, one of the ways in which the construction of adoptive and mothering is explored is through an analysis of the ways in which participants are positioned and position themselves and others in their speech.

3.8 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES

Hacking (1999) explains that one of the areas in which social constructionism has been most influential is that of gender. A culture's institutions and discourses are not only socially constructed, but are socially constructed by those in positions of power, which, in feminist analysis of cultures, usually implies White, wealthy, heterosexual, able-bodied men (Bem, 1994). Gender, therefore, operates not only at the level of sex differences or within social interactions in which gender beliefs are expressed and confirmed, but also in social structures that define power relations (Fox & Murray, 2000). The historically influential and persistent definition of gender as "the culturally-shaped group of attributes given to the female or to the male" (Humm, 1989, p. 84) is now viewed as limited in its monolithic view of female and male categories and as lacking adequate response to questions such as who gives these attributes? How are they given? How do 'recipients' respond? Wodak (1997) defines femininity and masculinity not as essences but as "ways of living certain relationships" (p. 4) and Stewart and McDermott (2004) explain gender as "a system of power relations embedded in other power relations" (p. 519). Gender is, therefore, viewed as a foundational organising principle which significantly influences the material conditions of everyday life (Lather, 1991) and the idea of gender identity therefore holds normative power (Butler, 1990). Sunderland and Litosseliti (2002) support a discursive approach to gender that includes notions of gender as fluctuating, multiple and shaped largely by language, as well as incorporating individual agency. Gender is considered variable (across contexts and times), socially and individually. Davies (1992) explains the discursive category female/woman as entailing the experience of being constituted discursively as one who belongs within that category, of being interactively and structurally positioned as such and as "taking up as one's own those discourses through which one is constituted as female" (p. 54).

According to Callaghan (2006), feminism offers the tools for an exploration of the "deeply politicised nature of the personal" (p. 306). Weedon (1997) states directly that "feminism is a politics" (p. 1). She continues by saying that this politics is concerned with altering the power relations between women and men that structure every aspect of social life and prescribe who we are and who we might be. Fox and Murray (2000)

contextualise feminism as an orientation to social life that, among other assumptions, argues that women and men hold equal importance in social action. Feminism is complex, dynamic and diverse (Ardnt, 2002).

First-wave feminists of the latter part of the 19th century introduced the explicitly political agenda of gender contestation. These, almost exclusively White, middle-class women sought to challenge the inequalities of male power and privilege in a gendered life. Second-wave feminism centres on the social construction of gender (Essed, Goldberg, & Kobayashi, 2009). Baxter (2003) explains that second-wave feminism has been preoccupied with universal ideas of female nature and with critiquing “the structuring influence of the ‘big variable’ of gender on social relations in order to promote female emancipation” (p. 4). Second-wave feminism focusses on women’s rights and women’s liberation (Kinser, 2004). Third-wave feminism appeared in the mid 1980s (Baxter, 2003) and is more concerned with the deconstruction of ‘mundane’ gender identities and relations within particular communities of practice. Within this third-wave the diversity of women’s identities are celebrated, the performative nature of gender is highlighted and, rather than striving against the oppression of women, the concept of female resistance to subordinate positions is emphasised. It has been argued that dividing feminist work into three waves is not necessarily helpful, however, and that it may be more appropriate to think of the waves rather as “theoretical strands” (Baxter, 2003, p. 5).

In addition to distinguishing between the positions of first-, second- and third-wave feminism, feminist approaches have been categorised into feminist empiricism, feminist standpoint theory and the postmodern/social constructionist position. Feminist empiricists believe that science can be used to reveal and dismantle gender stereotypes (Campbell, 1994). The feminist standpoint position operates from the view that “all descriptions of experience and reality are made from a particular standpoint position” (Gergen, 2008, p. 283). In other words, exploring the concrete experiences of women provides the grounds for discovering women’s truth (Brooks, 2007). Gender differences are believed to exist and these differences should be identified and celebrated. This approach has received criticism, particularly from women of colour who accuse it of representing only the standpoint of White, middle-class, able-bodied women. These two approaches take the category ‘women’ to be transparent and self-evident. The postmodern/social constructionist approach calls into question both the objective world of empiricist research as well as the subjective world of the standpoint position. The argument against the first two positions is that both utilise gender as an essential identity category (Leavy, 2007). As discussed in this chapter, from a postmodern view, what is taken ‘real’ is understood rather as relying on particular groups’ relational processes of defining and acting it (Gergen, 2008).

A final (bifurcated) strand that requires mention is that of ‘post-feminism’ (Kavka, 2002; McRobbie, 2004). Although this movement shares a time period with third-wave feminism, the two are not necessarily synonymous. Kinser (2004) explains that third-wave feminism began to speak from within “the midst of the bellowing voice” (p. 132) of post-feminism. The perspective of post-feminism, largely in its manifestation as a discourse in mainstream media (Holmlund, 2005; Moseley & Read, 2002), claims that the need for feminism no longer exists. Feminism has achieved its goals. It is now out of date, redundant and undesirable and further feminist activity will actually counter advances achieved by women (Faludi, 1991). Kinser (2004) summarises post-feminist rhetoric with the statement: “Yes, gender equity is very important. That’s why we should all be so thankful that we have finally achieved it. I don’t know what those other women are still so upset about, but I’m sure glad things are fixed now” (p. 135). In many ways, third-wave feminism engages

with a countering of this discourse. (Pozner (2003), for example, challenges what she calls “False Feminist Death Syndrome” (p. 31).)

Post-feminism, in the sense that it is described above, offers a paradox in that, on the one hand it pronounces the end of feminism whilst, on the other, in itself it is a site of feminist politics and a focal point for the articulation of new meanings (Kavka, 2002). Although ‘post’ is usually applied to signal a historical break and the end of an era, those challenging whether feminism has indeed achieved ‘success’ argue that the term ‘post-feminism’ is currently as unthinkable as terms such as ‘post-racism’ or ‘post-classism’. Kavka (2002) describes even how second-wave feminists were already confronted with emerging post-feminism and she quotes a sticker reading “I’ll be a postfeminist in a postpatriarchy” (p. 29). She does acknowledge that feminism is a movement through a temporal space, that feminist projects have come and gone and that the season in which feminists could gather around a common ‘we’ is no more. There is, however,

clearly no one date, no revolutionary moment, in which feminism passed the baton to its ‘post’, not least because there is no one discourse that can claim to exhaust the range of thinking and projects undertaken in the name of feminism (Kavka, 2002, p. 31).

As mentioned, the above description is more closely associated to post-feminism manifested as a discourse in mainstream media. Post-feminism in the academy is something of a different animal. A likening of third-wave feminists and post-feminists has occurred in some quarters. This is due to the assumption that third-wave feminism’s rejection of second-wave feminism can be equated to post-feminism’s dismissal of feminism. Academic feminism has shown an openness to a post-feminism (or, rather, post-feminisms (Brooks, 1997)) that can be characterised as “feminism within poststructuralist theory” (Gillis & Munford, 2004, p. 168). Instead of claiming feminism’s redundancy, here feminism comes of age. Post-feminism has been more warmly received in the academy than has third-wave feminism. A suspicion towards a new ‘kind’ of feminism coupled with third-wave feminists frequent intentional positioning of themselves as non-academic has contributed towards this. Theoretically, the fence between third-wave feminism and post-feminism in an academic context is constructed by the dispute between a focus on equality versus a focus on difference. Although this provides a helpful reference point, Gillis and Munford argue that third-wave feminism does in fact allow for both foci to co-exist. To complexify matters further, other authors, such as Genz (2006) argue for an alignment of third-wave and post-feminist thinking. Further, she critiques the distinction between “media/backlash feminism” (p. 336) and academic post-feminism as she believes that this merely resists plurality and clings to categorisation.

3.8.1 FEMINISMS

As is already clear in the previous section, feminist scholarship is by no means homogeneous (Cameron, 1997; Letherby, 2003). Elia (1999) echoes this in her reminder that there is no such thing as “‘universal feminism’, an abstraction that would unite women across national, racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and other boundaries” (p.137), just as the social construct ‘woman’ is not universal (Oyewumi, 2002). Feminism is a contested term in Africa particularly (Essof, 2001). Three overarching arguments have emerged in this regard: firstly, feminism is a Western invention and therefore has no relevance to African reality and no meaning for African women; secondly, feminism highlights gender inequality which needs to be overcome in Africa, but should be tackled under a different name; and, thirdly, the concept of feminism should be retained and made ‘our own’ (Kolawole, 2002; Lewis, 2001). Miescher, Manuh, and Cole (2007) describe the

relationship between scholars of gender studies in Africa and those in Europe and North America as strained and, at times, even “explosive” (p. 1). They ascribe this to variations in experiences of racism, political environments and views on feminist ideologies.

Many African feminist writers argue that the (dynamic) social identities of women in Africa assume markedly different forms from the gender identities acquired in Western societies (Lewis, 2001; Oyewumi, 2002; Walsh & Scully, 2006). For example, Lewis explains that “the cultural resonance of motherhood as practice and icon, as well as the valorising of ‘superwoman’ mean that African women’s official identities frequently challenge the myths and stereotypes linked to western notions of femininity” (p. 6).

There seems to be no understanding of a mother as independent from her sexual tie to a father in “White feminist thought” (Oyewumi, 2002, p. 2), hence the use of the oxymoron ‘single mother’. Oyewumi explains that African perspectives define motherhood in relation to progeny and so a mother cannot, by definition, be ‘single’. She proceeds to discuss the non-gendered south-western Nigerian Yoruba family structure in which kinship categories signify seniority rather than gender (bearing in mind that gender hierarchies do exist in other African societies (Salo & Mama, 2001)). Oyewumi’s example demonstrates how African feminisms “compel us to re-imagine what is meant by ‘feminism’ in a global context” (Guy-Sheftall, 2003, p. 31). Oyewumi’s point is significant in relation to the present study’s pre-occupation with adoptive and foster mothering which, in some respects, deviates from the dominant structure of the nuclear family. Her argument offers a cautionary note with regards to using the Western framework of feminism as a methodological and analytic tool without sufficient critical thought employed regarding the axiomatic centring of the nuclear family.

As such, the ideology of Western feminism has been (and continues to be) interrogated by African women (amongst others) especially on account of its claim to be universal (Mangena, 2003). This has prompted movements bearing a range of names including ‘Third World Feminism’, ‘Womanism’, ‘African Feminism’, ‘Stiwanism’, ‘Afrikana Womanism’, ‘Nego-feminism’ (Mekgwe, 2010) and ‘Anti-Racist Feminism’ (de la Rey, 1997). As this list of terms indicates, ‘African feminists’ (and Western feminists for that matter) are not unified, “natural affinity groups” (Elia, 1999, p. 137). Due to this lack of homogeneity within feminism in Africa specifically, the use of the term ‘feminisms’ is often preferred (Arndt, 2002). This heterogeneity has been influenced by the diversity of social realities present within the African continent. Globalised networks and the movement of many feminists between continents further complicate any categorisation of knowledge production according to region. Mekgwe (2010) explains that African society is an evolving, plural and fluid society. Through incorporating a variety of concepts and cultures expressions of gender have changed.

There are, therefore, forms of local feminisms that emerge in a variety of contexts, at different times, and in different ways. Within these local feminisms there are also degrees (or levels of consciousness) of questioning gender inequalities, theorising and activism. This allows for the needs of different groups of women to be taken into consideration as well as the needs of women within these groups (Arndt, 2002). It is for this reason that feminism can always be considered as a ‘movement’ (Elia, 1999; Tegomoh, 2002).

It is clearly important to critique the ways in which Western feminism has proclaimed universality. Setting up African feminisms as completely distinct is equally naive as if, in Salo and Mama’s (2001) words, “in being African, we forgo all the things that other feminists struggle for - respect, dignity, equality, lives free from violence and the threat of violence, and all those other feminist aspirations” (p. 60).

Feminist theory that is indigenous to South Africa is still relatively sparse (Gouws, 2005). One such area of work is presented in Gouws' (2005) edited book on feminist debates concerning the gendered nature of citizenship in South Africa particularly. She asks, for example, whether the inclusion of women in citizenship should be based on their equality with men where equality is understood as sameness or whether women should be included as *women* which contrasts the liberal idea of the universal political subject. One of the key concepts that is emphasised here is that the valid pairs of opposites are equality and inequality, and sameness and difference. Constructing equality and difference as opposites hides hierarchical and subordinate relationships. By disregarding difference (how women may be different to men, for example) reinforces inequality (Gouws, 2005). Gouws explains that, post-1994, the prevailing discourse in South Africa relating to citizenship has been the discourse of rights and liberal democratic individualism. This discourse is built around a dichotomy between society and the individual. This has been beneficial for women in the dimensions of law reform in relation to, for example, customary unions, violence against women and inclusion of women in the workplace. The focus on the rights of the individual has, however, obscured issues of collective needs. Such needs are given due consideration only when they arrive at courts of law. Otherwise collective needs, such as those relating to the manner in which culture constrains the lives of women, remain unchallenged. Gouws notes the irony of how the strength of awareness of racial inequality and discrimination in South Africa has not led to an understanding of gender inequality and discrimination (even though these identities are entwined).

Macleod (2006) proposes that a radical plural feminism provides a resource within South African psychology. This resource enables processes of deconstructing the normalised 'centre' and foregrounding the marginal 'periphery' whilst avoiding essentialising the experience of the 'Other'; theorising multiplicity without resorting to relativism; challenging First World assumptions without discarding the entire epistemological basis of Western knowledge; interweaving micro and macro levels of analysis; promoting multiple sources of resistance from the basis of commonality; and promoting a plural, dynamic and relational conception of subjectivity as opposed to a unitary notion of gender identity that does not take power relations into account. Macleod discusses the growing debate on feminism in Africa and concludes that

a recognition that the differential impact on women of sexism, classism, racism, colonialism and heterosexism means that feminist practice has to be a politics of alliance along a chain of equivalences and differences rather than one of unity around a shared unitary gender identity and shared social relations (p. 384).

Western feminism has been critiqued for proposing such a universally shared gender identity framework (Tripp, 2000; Wicke & Ferguson, 1992). The focus on differences between (largely White, Western, middle-class) women and men largely ignored differences between women themselves. In terms of actual, situated social practices, however, gender is conceptually related to racial, religious and ethnic identities as well as to social, economic and political conditions in vastly different ways. Reflections on these relations are always political constructions. This extension of difference between women and men to difference between women has also been critiqued, however, as creating a situation in which it becomes impossible to talk of women as an oppressed group in society (Kelly, 1999). Tripp (2000) argues that whilst Western feminist discourses have focussed largely on difference, women's movements in countries such as South Africa, Rwanda, Uganda and Sudan have faced the challenge of finding commonalities and minimising difference in contexts where difference has mattered "too much" (p. 659), resulting in violent conflict or civil war.

The newer and dynamic area of gender studies (Cole, Manuh, & Miescher, 2007; Essed, Goldberg, & Kobayashi, 2009) is informed by feminism, but allows for the analysis of both men and women and considers relationships between the two. Essed et al. explain gender studies as focussing critically upon “gendered conditions and articulations of social power along with their supporting bodies of knowledge in interaction with additional constitutive markers and expressions of unequal social arrangements” (p. 8). Although feminism is unarguably the mother of gender studies, for some this newer field represents a less politically threatening concept than feminism. Many African scholars show a preference for gender studies as a result of the perception of feminism’s origins in values, conditions and family structures that are foreign to Africa. Although gender has still been criticised as merely the next foreign concept, gender studies has, nevertheless, been widely accepted in Africa although there remains (increasing, in some regards) difficulty concerning the forming of coalitions around gender issues. Miescher, et al. (2007) submit that, “more so than any other analytic social category - be it class, race, seniority, or ethnicity - gender has energised the scholarship about African contexts across the disciplines within the humanities and social sciences over the last twenty years” (p. 4).

3.8.2 FEMINISM, POSTMODERNISM, AND POSTSTRUCTURALISM

Claiming the identity of either a postmodern feminist or a poststructuralist feminist requires engagement with a number of layers of complexity. Regarding the first pair, Wicke and Ferguson (1992) view both postmodernism and feminism as theoretical discourses that are “porous, capacious; equally, they are discourses on the move, ready to leap over border and confound boundaries” (p. 2). Some feminist scholars reject postmodernism, however, fundamentally citing a disjuncture in aims. Whilst feminism aims politically to end the oppression of women, postmodernism aims to deconstruct ‘women’ as a “falsely totalising category” (Cosgrove, 2003, p. 86) and, in this way, silences feminism. Fahy (1997) explains that feminists value self-conscious reflexivity, as well as human autonomy and freedom, all of which rely on an authentic subject. Postmodernism’s disbelief in such a subject is viewed, then, as implying a denial of women’s awareness of and ability to demonstrate agency regarding what is in their own best interests.

This is but one of the camps in the debate between feminism and postmodernism. Wicke and Ferguson (1992) contend that feminist theory requires an understanding of postmodernism and postmodernism entails feminism as a crucial critical component. Waugh (1998) believes that feminists have always been involved in the postmodern project of challenging ‘universal’, ‘objective’ categories of knowledge which are constructed according to the vested interests of the powerful. She argues that feminism has always offered its own critique of the Enlightenment, contending that the idea of “a universal rational Subject is implicitly masculine, as is its understanding of history as a grand narrative of progress” (p. 177).

A strategic engagement between feminism and postmodernism is indeed possible, according to Cosgrove (2003), and the tension may result in the transformation rather than the end of feminist psychological research. Wicke and Ferguson (1992) speak of the conflictual yet productive “uncertainties of feminism and postmodernism” (p. 9). Cosgrove explains that this engagement is desirable as it “allows feminist psychologists to negotiate a slippery slope: researching gendered experience while simultaneously challenging the ontological status of both gender and experience” (p. 86). For example, it may be politically advantageous to use either an empiricist feminist approach or to work from a standpoint position depending

on the context. However, postmodernism can help to avoid polarising the two through encouraging a critique of the assumptions grounding their epistemologies. Such contextual judging of epistemologies, in terms of their political and social effects, may lead to more complex accounts of difference and the resignifying rather than reifying of gender (Cosgrove, 2003).

Poststructuralism has also been both opposed by some feminists and integrated into feminist work by others. Opposition has included a critique of deconstruction as aiming to uncover a binary opposition between terms such as man/woman or culture/nature organised according to a system coined by Derrida (1981) as logocentrism in which each opposition possesses a superior term. Dominant meanings are thus created through comparison with an 'other'. Meanings are as embedded in the opposite of the object in question as they are in the nature of the object (Papart, 1993). Women are defined, then, as "a subjugated difference within a binary opposition" (Nicholson, 1992, p. 61). With reference to this study, the binary opposition between biological mother/adoptive mother or biological mother/foster mother could be understood to operate in the same way, where biological mother may function as the superior term. The feminist pursuit is to defeat this logocentrism and its power of oppression. However, to speak of 'women as different' implies 'women as different to men' therefore re-invoking this oppositional structure and retaining the potential for women to be subjugated within it. To assert total difference, thereby subverting the structure itself, removes the possibility of defeating the oppressive power of the system (Nicholson, 1992).

Nicholson (1992) argues that logocentrism "construes language as a monolithic symbolic system [in which] the operation of male domination becomes an all or nothing affair: one either participates in it or one rebels against it" (p. 64). As discourses are always political, even within feminist language terms such as mothering, sexuality and reproduction hold pervasive assumptions of being natural categories. These terms project meaning (largely determined by the experience of Western, White, middle class women) onto women of diverse historical periods, classes and cultural backgrounds. Nicholson concludes that all categories will be marked by the needs of their creators and, therefore, the only way to alleviate the potential dangers of this is to become more cognisant of the ways in which this is more likely to take the form of oppression.

Gavey (1997) explains that feminist analyses in psychology have privileged women's experiences, understood as transparently reflected in women's language. Therefore, much feminist discourse views speaking 'from experience' as speaking with authority. The constructive powers of language go largely unnoticed. This focus on women's experience has been critiqued as moving "parallel to hegemonic discourse" (p. 51) by maintaining the belief in essential, fixed qualities of men and women and therefore as lacking the ability to radically challenge the status quo. Gavey maintains that "subversion requires a challenge to, rather than uncritical preservation of, the practices and forms of subjectivity (that is, ways of being, identities, desires, ways of behaving, and so on) required by existing social institutions" (p. 52). Feminist poststructuralists, championing the productive co-existence of both theoretical orientations, privilege women's experience, and regard that experience as being intrinsically linked to language (Gavey, 1997). Investigations into the realities of women have tended to produce "different truths" (Gavey, 1997, p. 52), indicating the existence of multiple realities and multiple truths.

Feminist poststructuralists are concerned with the mechanisms by which women and men adopt certain discursive positions that resonate with their interests (Weedon, 1997). Davies et al. (2006) explain that the process of transformation, then,

is not so much the result of a rational choice to be someone or something else in particular, but a movement, a 'decomposition', an engagement in a messy process in which one 'scrapes and catches and drags' in a complex process of reinscription, of rubbing out the unthinkable; a decomposition, and a fractured, messy recomposition, of thought and of body...[The subject] is above all, in process, vulnerable to inscriptions that may be opaque to her and yet developing the powers to make the discourses and their descriptive powers both visible and revisible (p. 90 & p. 101).

For Davies (1992), poststructuralism offers a critique of the reverence for masculinity and particularly its association with reason, emphasising for women an embodied sense of self in which desires and emotions are legitimated as part of reason. She explains that, for women, poststructuralism offers a means to claim the right to subject status; it does not result in the death of the subject. The poststructural subject is able to recognise and speak of her condition, as well as to explore how the patterns that hold that condition in place can be overturned.

A study by Aston (2002) provides an example of a feminist poststructuralist approach to research on a particular aspect of mothering. She explored how aspirations and concerns of first-time mothers were constructed and mediated in postpartum classes. Aston explored how the new mothers in her study "thought about, felt about, questioned, challenged, chose or did not choose their new positions as mothers" (p. 286) and how this relates to a mother's need to feel 'normal', as situated in the way she is positioned in society in relation to dominant notions of what 'normality' means. Aston uses a definition of discourse as "a historically, socially, and institutionally specific structure of statements, terms, categories and beliefs" (p. 286). She views the subject as actively participating in her own social construction, consciously working with social discourses. One therefore actively negotiates one's subject position. Deconstruction, then, includes using one's agency. As a form of deconstruction, questioning one's subject position "can uncover how the power relations inherent in any discourse, and between discourses and individuals, affect access to certain knowledge, beliefs and practices" (p. 288). Aston (2002) discusses how processes of normalisation have the potential to create the idea of deviance if one does not adhere to normative social forms. Women who do not conform to the standardised and systematised norms of mothering practices prescribed by social and medical institutions are therefore regarded as bad mothers. This belief in a 'normal' way of mothering then undermines women's confidence in some of their own mothering practices. As being a certain way and doing particular things constitutes one's identity as mother, being or doing differently serves to challenge one's identity.

For the current research, what is largely considered to be 'real' mothering (mothering biological children) is problematised through deconstructing how mothering is socially defined and how mothering is potentially constructed as action by women who mother within circumstances outside of the norm. This research also seeks to remain reflexive in making explicit the power relations involved in the research process and in my own reflections, as researcher, on my capacities of construction.

3.9 CONCLUSION

A postmodern ontology allows this research to voice multiple meanings and expressions of mothering that are inseparable from context, that are created through social interaction, and that are valuable and legitimate in both their similarity and difference. This ontology is theoretically linked to poststructuralism, which provides

the ingredients for exploring how this construction occurs through language and within power relations. As feminist research, this study aims, in accordance with Gergen's (2008) characterisation of feminist research, "to seek social justice, to enhance women's voice and influence in society, and to explore alternative ways of understanding the world through women's experiences" (p. 280). A realist social constructionist epistemology locates the research questions within a position that accepts that the world is textual (as well as material). In other words, the everyday practices of mothering are understood as having a socially constructed, discursive dimension as well as a material dimension. Also, the study maintains that although discursive constructions of mothering are the focus of investigation, they may not adequately take into consideration the embodied nature of the dominant (biological) maternal experience and may serve to promote Western interests. I propose that acknowledging these complexities enables the study to make more relevant and reflexive claims to knowledge as well as stimulating further research questions for future studies. The following chapter will detail the methodology utilised within this qualitative research project, explaining the research design, data collection and discourse analysis. Research quality and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Building on the foundation laid in the previous theoretical chapter, this chapter presents the methodology utilised in this study. After stating the research questions, the chapter begins by mentioning the contested nature of postmodern and social constructionist perspectives on research methodology followed by an acknowledgment of certain debates concerning feminist views on research methodology. Key characteristics of qualitative research are then presented. The research design will then be explained, including a description of the sample selection through purposive and snowball techniques, data collection in the form of in-depth interviews as well as interview transcription. The nature of social constructionist interviews will be explored, particularly in relation to the co-construction of discursive meanings, and power relations in interviews will be considered, largely from a feminist perspective. Discourse analysis will then be discussed, including theoretical underpinnings and the potentials of synthesising various approaches, with particular reference to those offered by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005). Research quality and generalisability are examined, specifically within the context of qualitative research. This is followed by a discussion of ethical considerations. The chapter will close by exploring perspectives on reflexivity.

4.2 CONSTRUCTION OF THE STUDY'S METHODOLOGY

This study is driven by research questions that are developed and explored within a particular theoretical paradigm. Research paradigms, according to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (2006, p. 6), are “all-encompassing systems of interrelated practice and thinking that define for researchers the nature of their enquiry”. Paradigms incorporate three elements: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Methodology focuses on how knowledge is gained about the world or how the researcher practically goes about his/her study. Ontological and epistemological assumptions inform methodological choices (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

In line with the arguments laid out in chapter three, this study draws upon Terre Blanche's and Durrheim's (2006) conceptualisation of the constructionist paradigm, which involves a postmodern ontology, a social constructionist epistemology (which, in this study, is also influenced by a feminist social constructionist position) and a qualitative methodology. As a note, debate has occurred regarding whether social constructionism functions epistemologically or ontologically as an explanatory framework for examining the actual nature of the world rather than just our knowledge of the world through the co-constitutive function of language as an incomplete reference (Nightingale & Cromby, 2002). (The notion of epistemology itself is a dynamic and contested one (Cosgrove, 2003)). This study does, however, frame social constructionism epistemologically as discussed in sections 3.5 and 3.6 of the previous chapter.

4.2.1 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is guided by the following two research questions:

- (i) How do adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa construct mothering?

- (ii) How do these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering?

These questions focus the research directly in relation to the stated aim of the study, namely to contribute to expanding understandings of mothering through exploring how women who have adopted and/or who foster children construct mothering. This is for the purpose of deconstructing (or, at least, troubling) dominant discourses and constructs that hold existing understandings in place, for supporting women who mother children from outside of their own families and for informing strategies of care for orphaned children.

4.2.2 POSTMODERN AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Literature on postmodernism tends not to provide particularly clear methodological guidelines as, at the root of postmodernism, lies the premise that no method, discourse or theory holds a universal claim to authoritative knowledge (Alvesson, 2002). What constitutes social constructionist research is also a contested matter (Weinberg, 2008). Travers (2006) explains that the terms postmodern qualitative research and constructionist qualitative research are often used interchangeably. Social constructionist studies have been broadly categorised as those that “seek, at least in part, to replace fixed, universalistic, and sociohistorically invariant conceptions of things with more fluid, particularistic, and sociohistorically embedded conceptions of them” (Weinberg, 2008, p. 14). Willig’s (2008) perspective on the matter is that social constructionist research is concerned with “identifying the various ways of constructing social reality that are available in a culture, to explore the conditions of their use and to trace their implications for human experience and social practice” (p. 7). In this study it is the constructions of the social reality of adoptive and foster mothering that is up for exploration.

Qualitative research resonates with postmodern approaches. Alvesson (2002) explains that this is largely due to postmodernism’s aversion to approaches such as quantitative research that “minimise ‘undecidabilities’” (p. 14). Postmodernism favours qualitative research in that it values context and interpretation. Social constructionist research methods, specifically, are qualitatively concerned with meaning (Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006). Whereas interpretive approaches focus on meaning from the vantage point of subjective experiences and understandings, social constructionist methods aim to examine how these experiences and understandings are derived from and contribute to larger discourses. As postmodernism values multiple meaning possibilities, discourse analysis, the method of analysis which this social constructionist study utilises, does not necessarily aim to arrive at closure in the sense of producing the only possible reading of the data, but aims to present one such possibility (Cheek, 2004).

4.2.3 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES ON RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Feminist research developed within the context of second-wave feminism (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007). Gorelick, in a paper written in 1991, draws a conclusion that, I propose, still holds relevance today:

To understand the different milieus in which women experience their oppression and to trace their connections with each other, we need a social science produced by women of various social conditions (race, class, sexual preference, nationality, or ethnicity), a social science that reveals the commonalities and structured conflicts of the hidden structures of oppression, both as they are felt and as they are obscured. The quest for such a science confronts and comprises a dynamic tension

among the researcher and the researched, struggle and science, action, experience, method, and theory (p. 474).

This 'quest' has raised the question of whether there is (or should be) a feminist method of inquiry (as an alternative to the stance of 'just adding women' to existing social science research). What has complicated these issues is the blurring of epistemology, methodology and method and uncertainty as to which may be implicated in this feminist approach (Harding, 1985). In terms of methods, the established techniques of listening to, observing, or examining artifacts are used by both feminist and 'non-feminist' researchers alike. *How* these methods are used, however, can differ dramatically in terms of how we listen to participants, how we observe behaviours and what behaviour is observed, what data are selected and what patterns are recognised in that data. This does not automatically imply a 'new' method of research, though, in the sense that these different approaches to gathering data do not fall into a cohesive conceptual category. Also, the intention of feminist researchers is not necessarily to discover distinctive methods, but to instil transformation at epistemological and methodological levels that then influences the shaping, selection and application of method (Harding, 1985). Feminist research is, then, a holistic pursuit involving all stages of the research process, from selecting a topic and formulating questions, to writing up findings. Feminist researchers also emphasise the relationships between epistemology, methodology and methods (Brooks & Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Debates about the nature of feminist research are ongoing and dynamic. The many (sometimes conflicting) views concerning feminist research have in common the centring of the diverse situations and experiences of women as well as the institutions that influence and frame such situations and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). An overarching goal of feminist research has been to address both the distortion and invisibility of female experience in order to correct the unequal social position of women (Lather, 1991). Fox and Murry (2000) discuss several common elements of feminist approaches to scholarship. They describe the first as reflexivity, a self-conscious reflection regarding one's own involvement in knowledge generation, including orientations, interpretations, actions, interests and biases, which fosters a critical epistemological approach. The second element is the centrality of practice. Feminist research aims not only to contribute to theory, but is also applied in the pursuit of social change for greater gender equality. The third element of a feminist approach to scholarship is a central focus on process. Fox and Murry explain that feminist research is not only concerned with investigating the experiences and related inequalities of women and men, but focusses on the social processes that generate and sustain these as well as how these processes are reproduced over time.

Grasswick (2011) explains that the concept of "situated knowing" (p. xvi) is the most influential idea to emerge from feminist epistemology. It is one's social location, one aspect of which is gender, that enables and constrains what one is able to know. This acknowledgement that knowledge is always limited allows for the explanation of how practices of knowledge production have been so profoundly shaped by masculine bias.

Cameron (1997) discusses the idea of 'women's language'. She asks whether 'women's language' is something more than the sum total of linguistic features used by those constructed as 'women' as distinguished from those constructed as 'men'. She explores 'women's language' as a discursive construct in itself or as "an order of meaning, which serves as a resource for the ongoing construction of gender identity by members of a particular culture" (p. 28). This construct shapes both women's and men's ideas and ideals.

The category of 'women's language', then, is not simply derived from the social identity of the women who use it, but is also constitutive of that identity. In other words, "being a woman' (or a man) is a matter, among other things, of talking like one" (p. 28). In terms of research then, she submits that the study of linguistic behaviour must be paired with a description of the ideological contexts within which language is embedded.

A common feature of feminist research is the recognition that the choice of research topic, sample and research methodology are political decisions (Letherby, 2003). Epistemological and methodological characteristics of feminist inquiry include, firstly, the use of women's experiences and meaning constructions as an empirical and theoretical resource. Traditional social sciences asked questions (and omitted to ask other questions) based on that which appeared problematic from the perspective of (Western, white, bourgeois) men. Findings from these studies were then generalised to the population as a whole. Feminist inquiry recognises that there is "no such thing as a problem without a person (or group of them) who have this problem: a problem is always a problem *for* someone or other" (Harding, 1985, p. 6). Feminist research therefore includes questions from the perspective of the experiences of women. Just as there is no universal man, there is no universal woman and feminist research seeks to recognise the plurality of the experiences of different women in different contexts. Secondly, feminist research is not only *about* women, but is *for* women. Where, traditionally, research was in the interests of men, and questions asked regarding women were questions that men wanted the answers to, feminist research seeks to offer insights needed and wanted by women. Thirdly, the researcher places herself upon the research canvas and explicitly reflects upon her own gender, class, race and culture and how this may influence the research process (Harding, 1985). The relationship between researcher and participant is a "socially organised practice" (Hess, 1990, p. 78) and this practice is informed by relationships of power that require scrutiny.

Leckenby (2007), Maynard (2009) and Reinharz (1993) oppose the view that women's studies and feminist research respectively are automatically qualitative. Reinharz argues that this pairing is a result of the link between the distrust in feminist research of earlier 'non-feminist' research that was often quantitative, the association between the challenge to the status quo offered by qualitative research and by feminism, and the belief that qualitative forms of research resonate with a typically female way of knowing. Through a study of feminist research Reinharz demonstrates that this view is a myth: feminist research encompasses both qualitative and quantitative methods. DeVault (1993) argues that "feminists have produced a complex, compelling, and quite distinctive feminist discourse about research methods and the production of knowledge" (p. 77). Although using the entire range of available research methods, feminist researchers modify these in a spirit of improvisation and innovation so as to respond to the challenges and insights of feminism. The current study is, however, qualitative due to the nature of the topic and the research questions as well as the ontological and epistemological position from which the subject is viewed. This approach to research will now be discussed.

4.2.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Qualitative research is an overarching term that refers to a number of approaches to research in the social sciences and draws on a range of theoretical backgrounds (Atkinson, Coffey, & Delamont, 2001; Malterud, 2001). A wide variety of qualitative methods and techniques are available and these can also be combined in mixed approaches (Frost et al., 2010). Lincoln and Guba (2003) discuss the evolution of qualitative research (especially since the 1970s and 1980s) through what they term revolutions, rifts and ruptures. They speak of a "revolution of representation" (p. 17) which articulated the acknowledgement that knowing of the other

occurs through our own practices of representation (and is therefore a mediated form of knowing). All writing presents the views of the author, views shaped by social, cultural, class, race and gender dynamics. This feeds into a “revolution in authority” (p. 119), which refers to the challenge presented to the authority of the text and its ability to objectively establish the other.

Qualitative research can be understood as a moral discourse which is explicitly political and is intent on transforming the world or, more pragmatically, as a tool for understanding the world and producing knowledge (Flick, 2007). Malterud (2001) defines qualitative research as involving “the systematic collection, organisation and interpretation of textual material derived from talk or observation” (p. 483). Coyle (2007) explains qualitative research as “involving the collection and analysis of non-numerical data through a psychological lens...in order to provide rich descriptions and possible explanations of people’s meaning-making – how they make sense of the world and how they experience particular events” (p. 11). It entails an investigation into the qualities, characteristics or properties of a phenomenon in order to elicit a deeper explanation and understanding (Henning, 2004). This is in contrast with a quantitative pursuit of cause-and-effect relationships (Willig, 2008).

Qualitative research is also characterised as being holistic (the whole phenomenon is studied as a complex system), inductive (findings emerge from open-ended exploration) and naturalistic (real-world situations are studied without control or manipulation). This form of research is used to explore how individuals experience and construct the meanings of social phenomena within their natural contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Durrheim, 2006; Willig, 2008). Qualitative method is also characterised as focussing on “open, equivocal empirical material” (Alverson & Skoldberg, 2009, p.7), non-standardisation, and as beginning from the actions and perspectives of participants as opposed to that which the researcher deems to be central. However, qualitative methods do place emphasise on the role of the researcher’s presence in the study (Alverson & Skoldberg, 2009). Parker (1994) explains qualitative research loosely as “the interpretative study of a specified issue or problem in which the researcher is central to the sense that is made” (p. 2).

The centrality of context is commonly described as a core feature of qualitative research as a situated activity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Lyons, 2007; Neuman, 2006). The meaning of a social statement or action cannot be divorced from the context within which it occurs. This implies that the same behaviour or event may have different meanings in different settings. Coyle (2007) understands context in terms of the social systems in which an individual is embedded. Through these systems, individuals are constructed, and construct as well as make sense of their worlds. Context is not, therefore, merely the ‘background’ to the research question, but becomes “a constituent part of whatever it is we are researching” (Coyle, 2007, p. 17). In this sense, context contains various levels, from family relationships and occupational networks to broader social systems such as ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality. Instead of contaminating the research, context is made explicit and reflected upon.

A qualitative approach is most suitable for this particular research study as the phenomenon in question – namely mothering fostered or adopted children – lends itself to an exploration of meaning and sense-making in a naturalistic setting. Constructions of mothering are most appropriately explored holistically as to divorce mothering from the social systems in which the activity is embedded is impossible if one is aiming to reach richly descriptive, useful and credible findings within the ontological and epistemological framework within which the study is located.

4.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Research design is a more complex concept in qualitative than in quantitative research and there are a number of understandings of the term. In qualitative research, research design is considered in a looser, flexible and more interconnected sense and refers to a reflexive process operating throughout the study rather than to a fixed plan that is set in stone at the outset. The research design provides an orientation for planning and conducting the study without overly limiting and restricting the process (Flick, 2007; Maxwell, 2005).

Once an area of research interest has been established (constructions of adoptive and foster mothering in this case), the theoretical knowledge and research perspective underpinning the study (as explored in chapter three) as well as the selection of methods (in this case qualitative) and the availability of resources influence the research design. Flick (2007) explains that the research design involves the totality of these influences as well as having direct implications on the practical steps involved in the research study. These influences, therefore, create the implicit design of the study, which is made explicit through decisions that are made regarding particular components. Such components inform how the study will proceed in concrete terms.

These components of research design include limiting the focus of study in terms of time and resources and with the intention of producing relevant results, building clear research questions, sampling, intended comparison, intended generalisation, issues of quality and intended audiences (Flick, 2007). For the purposes of this study, the components of the present research design will be addressed in the following manner. A description of the sampling process (purposive sampling and snowball sampling) will be followed by a discussion of data collection (in-depth interviews) and data preparation (transcription). This will be followed by a description of the process of analysis (discourse analysis). Although these steps within the research process are explained sequentially, Gibbs (2007) highlights that there is, in fact, no separation between data collection and data analysis within qualitative research. Analysis begins through the data collection process. This is particularly true within social constructionist research utilising discourse analysis where meaning is understood as being constructed and analysed within the interview itself.

4.4 SAMPLING

In qualitative research, sampling is typically not intended to entail the formal, random selection of a representative part of an existing population in order to ultimately draw general conclusions about that population as a whole. Rather, it is understood as a method of deliberately choosing cases, events or materials in order to study a particular phenomenon in the most informative manner. To this end, most sampling in qualitative research is conducted according to the intention of purpose (Flick, 2007; MacDougall & Fudge, 2001). Also, in qualitative research, the sample size is usually relatively small in order to collect detailed, in-depth data (Tuckett, 2004). This particular study utilised purposive sampling and snowball sampling (Babbie, 2009; Kelly, 2006; Neuman, 2006; Robson, 2002; Strydom & Delport, 2002). Both forms are types of non-probability sampling, in that individuals are not selected randomly.

The selection of participants for the current study began with purposive sampling. In purposive sampling, participants are selected on the basis of the researcher's judgement in order to collect data concerning individuals who share particular characteristics (Coyne, 1997; Kelly, 2006). Cases are chosen to "represent the relevance of the phenomenon" (Flick, 2007, p. 29). There exists the need in purposive sampling to

balance the homogeneous and heterogeneous nature of a sample. If there is too much variety within the cases comprising the sample it is then difficult to identify common features. However, if the cases are too similar, it is difficult to draw meaningful comparisons (Flick, 2007).

Sample selection in qualitative research influences the quality of the research. In order to interpret the findings of the study, sampling criteria need to be described in sufficient detail (Coyne, 1997). Purposive sampling, therefore, typically entails criteria for selecting the sample. For this particular study, the sampling criteria were stipulated as follows:

- (i) The participants must be adoptive and/or foster mothers living in Gauteng. In this study, women are considered to be 'foster mothers' or 'adoptive mothers' from the point at which the child is legally placed under their care, in their home. Women who have mothered children for any duration of time from this point onwards were invited to participate.
- (ii) Participants must be over 18 years old
- (iii) Participants must feel comfortable participating in in-depth interviews that are facilitated in English
- (iv) Participants may be single mothers, in co-habiting relationships or married.

The purposive sample was drawn from one source. I emailed the facilitator of the Rainbow Adoption Group, a Johannesburg based network that I have recently joined which, despite the name, also has members who are foster mothers. She forwarded my email to the 83 mothers in the group (preferring the communication to be directed through her). The email included a short description of the nature of the research and explained what participation in the study would entail. My contact details were included and group members were invited to contact me if they were interested in participating. 12 women responded, all of whom met the sampling criteria, and, after receiving the participant information form (see Appendix A), nine volunteered to participate. Of these participants identified through purposive sampling, five mother adopted and biological children, one mothers a biological child, step-children and an adopted child, one mothers an adopted child only and one mothers an adopted child, a biological child and has also fostered children.

Both adoptive and foster mothers were included in this study as the focus of research is on *mothering* as an activity as opposed to *motherhood* as a state of being or one's identity as a 'foster mother' or 'adoptive mother'. Constructions of mothering in this sense represent how women 'do' mothering. Therefore, 'doing' foster mothering and 'doing' adoptive mothering are regarded as bearing sufficient similarities in terms of 'everyday mothering' to be researched within the same study. At the same time, differences in constructions of mothering between foster and adoptive mothers (due to the temporary or permanent nature of the placement for example) were also allowed to emerge and the research design allowed for an exploration of these differences. Foster mothering is also included due to the fact that research exploring adoptive mothering outweighs research on foster mothering. In this regard, Waterman (2003) describes foster parents as "often the most shadowy and forgotten of non-biological parents" (p. 32).

Unfortunately, and as a limitation of the present study, the sample was still skewed towards adoptive mothers due to difficulties in identifying willing foster mothers to participate. The sample was comprised of 18 adoptive mothers, four foster mothers and three women who are both adoptive and foster mothers. The overall sample size was determined on the basis of theoretical saturation. Theoretical saturation refers to the point at which new cases no longer contribute additional information that adds to the unfolding analysis (Terre Blanche, Durrheim, & Kelly, 2006) and data categories are well established (Bowen, 2008). Bowen notes that no

definitive rules exist for determining saturation and it is therefore derived from rigorous and coherent analysis, allowing for as many accounts as possible. Parker (2005) cautions, however, that even with such a rigorous process being carried out, regarding the data as saturated may hold the potential for closing off other theoretical ideas.

Morse (2000) discusses further features that need to be taken into consideration when determining sample size. One of these relates to the nature of the topic. Sample sizes need to be larger if the topic is more obtuse and if the participants experience discussing the topic in interviews as sensitive and awkward (which did not appear to be the case in this particular study as the women involved seemed to engage in interviews freely, willingly and with an investment in sharing their journeys). Another aspect involves the quality of information that is obtained in interviews. If participants experience difficulty expressing themselves, are distracted or only have limited time to offer the researcher, or are unwilling to share then a larger sample will be necessary in order to obtain rich data. Again, this was also not found to be the case in the study at hand. The design of the study also influences sample size. If the unit of analysis is a family or group, then more data will be produced per unit. Also, longitudinal studies will also produce more data. Finally, Morse indicates that sample size is also determined by considering whether “shadowed data” (p. 4) will be used. She uses this term to refer to asking participants to discuss the experiences of others, instead of only their own experiences. Participants volunteered this type of data in a few of the interviews conducted. In summarising these factors, Morse concludes that “the greater the amount of useable data obtained from each person, the fewer the number of participants” (p. 4).

Many of the participants who were identified through this initial purposive sampling and volunteered to participate also had contact with other adoptive and foster mothers who met the criteria and further participants were then identified through these social connections. This is known as snowball sampling as it relies on social networks to identify potential participants (Kelly, 2006).

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

In this section the data collection procedure will be presented. This will be followed by a description of the features of social constructionist interviews and the characteristics of in-depth interviews. The development of the interview guide will then be explained. Finally, power relations in interviews will be explored.

4.5.1 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

Once participants agreed to participate in the study I contacted them with potential dates and times for attending a focus group in Johannesburg. Due to persistent difficulties in negotiating a time that would be suitable for all participants to attend a focus group, and after repeated cancellations, it was decided, in consultation with my supervisor, to utilise only in-depth interviews.

I re-contacted participants and asked them if they would be prepared to participate in an in-depth interview only instead of a focus group. The interviews for this study were conducted at locations selected by the participants (Sin, 2003) at times that were convenient for them. One interview was conducted via Skype. At the start of each interview I gave the participant a hard-copy of the participant information sheet and confirmed all the ethical issues involved (see section 4.8). I then provided participants with the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and once the participant had signed this form I proceeded with the interview. Interviews ranged in length from 50 to 70 minutes and were recorded using a dictaphone. For the interview

conducted via Skype I emailed the participant the participant information form and consent form prior to the interview and she signed, scanned and emailed the consent form back to me. This interview was also recorded using a dictaphone. The development of the interview guide will be discussed momentarily once the nature of social constructionist interviews and the characteristics of in-depth interviews have been described.

4.5.2 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST INTERVIEWS

The ontology and epistemology guiding this particular study have direct implications for how the interviews were conceptualised and conducted. The data of interviews is language and, for a postmodern, social constructionist study, this is particularly appropriate (Goodman, 2001). Various types of interviews are hence a commonly used source of data for constructionist research (Kelly, 2006). The language of an interview is understood as contextual, ambiguous, unstable and open to multiple interpretations (Parker, 2005).

One cannot speak of a 'postmodern interview' per se. Rather, postmodern epistemologies have fundamentally influenced understandings of the process of interviewing and there are, therefore, approaches to interviewing that have taken on a postmodern form (Fontana, 2001). A postmodern approach to interviewing is based on the premise that everyday life is comprised of "a multiplicity of competing stories rather than one big story about progress and self-understanding that will fit for all" (Parker, 2005, p. 55). In this context, an interview becomes "a construction site of knowledge" (Kvale, 2007, p. 21).

Within constructionist research, interviewers are not viewed as providing a platform for the interviewee to express his/her 'real' thoughts and feelings but, rather, meanings created in the interview are regarded as actively and discursively co-constructed between the interviewee and the interviewer (Flick, 2007; Henning, 2004; Parker, 2005). Kvale (2007) phrases the matter in the following way: "The research interview is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between the interviewer and the interviewee" (p. 1). In interviews, both the participant and interviewer are "necessarily and unavoidably active" (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 141). These co-constructed meanings are also products of broader social systems (Kelly, 2006; Silverman, 2001). MacLeod (2009) explains that the process of representation involves invoking both the discourses of the researcher and those of the participant as they "meet, challenge, dovetail, diverge and generally construct new, hybrid understandings" (p. 383). It must also be noted, though, that there are instances in interviews when either the interviewer or participant may resist the joint construction of meaning (Scheurich, 1997).

Kvale (2007) compares two types of interviews using the metaphors of a miner and a traveller. If one views the interviewer as a miner, an interview could be understood as the extraction of nuggets of pure, uncontaminated, authentic meaning from the 'interior' of the participant. On the other hand, as is the case with this study, an interviewer could be viewed as a traveller, entering into conversations with people that he/she encounters whilst roaming freely with inhabitants. Meanings unfold through the traveller's interpretations and not only may new knowledge emerge, but the traveller is invariably changed through the journey as well. Nunkoosing (2005) also comments on the interview changing the traveller as well through explaining how the selfhood of both the interviewer and interviewee is continuously created and recreated. He describes how "the constant re-creation of the interview is itself an artifact of this changing creation of the interviewer, and in the various retellings of the interviewee's story, each interview refashions the experience being narrated" (p. 704).

Discourse-analytic interviewing requires detailed preparation (Parker, 2005). The interviewer needs to reflect on why the topic was selected, what stake he/she has in it, why he/she may want to question it and what theoretical resources might be useful. In addition, the interviewer needs to ascertain whether the interviewee is interested in questioning the topic and questioning the discourses that are used in the construction of the topic. Nunkoosing (2005) comments in this regard:

A person might have a well-rehearsed story to tell, and this is the only one that he or she can tell. It is the only one that he or she has access to at the moment. This can equally be a form of resistance to protect his or her ego, just as it can be a deliberate act against the intrusion of the researcher. In these instances, there are always new stories to be told. The interviewer has to wait, to negotiate, to build an enabling relationship with the interviewee so that he or she can find new things to reveal through acquiring new insight about the situation (p. 701).

A discourse-analytic interview is a “text-in-process” (Parker, 2005, p. 95). The interviewee can also be understood as a discourse analyst, the discourse itself is made to speak and work, contradictions against the discourse are highlighted and the analysis may be made visible to the interviewee.

One aspect of interviewing that has received significantly less attention in literature is that of the interview site. Different spaces afford different possibilities both for the participants’ construction of identity as well as for the construction of the interviewer-participant relationship. These are not static phenomena that occur within different locations, but are actively negotiated (Sin, 2003). The interviews that were conducted with participants in this particular study took place either at the women’s homes or at coffee shops selected by them. As mentioned, these locations were determined in every case by the participant concerned. Power in interviews will be discussed shortly suffice to say that this was one aspect that I purposefully did not attempt to control. I view the selection of interview location as part of the process of meaning construction engaged in by the participants, either through the manner in which their selected location afforded them particular opportunities for constructing themselves and their stories or through the manner in which the location itself formed part of their construction of (or even performance of) self, self-as-mother and self-involved-in-mothering.

4.5.3 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

One of the prominent forms of qualitative interview is the in-depth interview (Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003). Johnson (2001) describes in-depth interviews as typically used to elicit information that is ‘deeper’ than the kind that would be drawn from questionnaires, informal interviews or focus groups. Although this prompts a ‘miner’ versus ‘traveller’ connotation, Johnson is referring to the purpose of in-depth interviews being to explore deeply personal matters, such as experiences and meanings related to values and beliefs, decisions, ideology, cultural knowledge, and the self. The goal of this traditional type of unstructured interview is understanding as opposed to explanation (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Reinharz, 1992). The questions used in the in-depth interviews conducted for the study were short and clear, not too abstract or theorised, I tried to avoid using leading questions, and attempted to mirror the language used by participants as far as possible. In this type of interviewing, responses to the answers of participants should avoid assuming what the participant intended to say, commenting (which could introduce judgement or disrupt the flow of the conversation), summarising, finishing off the participant’s answer, or extraneous remarks (such as ‘okay’ or ‘I see’ which could communicate to the participant that what they have said is sufficient) (Legard et al., 2003).

In in-depth interviews, structure is balanced with flexibility. Even in highly unstructured interviews, the interviewer has a sense of the themes that will be explored and an interview guide is established beforehand. Flexibility is retained, however, in that the order of questions can be altered, responses can be further probed at a deeper level and other relevant issues may be raised spontaneously. The interview has an interactive nature and questions are posed in such a way as to encourage the participant to speak freely (Fontana & Frey, 2000; Gubrium & Holstein, 2001; Legar et al., 2003). In more standardised interviewing, interviewers do not usually alter the questions specified in the research protocol and aim to probe for clarification in a manner that will not influence the response. Only what is said is recorded. In in-depth interviews, participant's responses as well as the spontaneous alterations to the interview guide are recorded in order to explore how actions within the interview influenced and constituted the text (Warren, 2001). In-depth interviews, therefore, allow for complex constructions to be explored without imposing a pre-formulated system of categorisation (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

Nunkoosing (2005) proposes that the generation of rich data of high quality in interviews is dependent on "the use of the self, of relationship building, of acute awareness of the flow of conversations, of a sensitive awareness of the interviewer's theoretical and professional position, and of his or her research question" (p. 698). In-depth interviews facilitate the development of a relationship between participant and researcher based on a desire to understand as opposed to explain (Fontana & Frey, 2000).

4.5.4 DEVELOPMENT OF THE INTERVIEW GUIDE

Three interview guides were developed: one for adoptive mothers, one for foster mothers and one for participants who were both adoptive and foster mothers (see Appendix C, parts 1, 2 and 3). The first two included 13 questions and the third included 15 questions. The interview guides were structured as follows:

- Introductory question
- Questions exploring participants' constructions of mothering
- Questions exploring participants' constructions of adoptive and/or foster mothering
- Questions exploring mothering transracially, where relevant
- Closing question providing an opportunity to raise any additional matters

The three guides were developed directly in relation to the research questions (and the ontological and epistemological foundations upon which these questions are built), namely how participants construct adoptive/foster mothering and how these constructions intersect with dominant discourses. The design of the questions in all three guides utilised the term 'mothering' as opposed to 'motherhood' which reflects the study's alignment with the work of Collins (1999, 1994) and Ruddick (1980) and subsequent work by authors such as Byrne (2006) and Maher (2005) as expounded upon in chapter two.

The interview guides were developed in order to afford a discursive playing field in which the following could be engaged with (i.e. evoked, resisted etc.):

- (a) Dominant discourses that relate to mothering (broadly), as highlighted in literature, and
- (b) Dominant discourses that relate to adoptive and foster mothering (specifically), as highlighted in literature, for example:

- The 'good mother' (Bell, 2006; Guendouzi, 2005; Hayes, 1996; Knowles, 1996; Weingarten, Surrey, Coll, & Watkins, 1998; Winnicott, 1965, 1971)
- Woman-as-mother / mother-as-woman (Bueno-Alonso, 2006; Glenn, 1994; Morell, 2000; Rich, 1999; Wager, 2000)
- The 'normal family' (Friedlander, 2003; Galvin, 2003; O'Brien & Zamostny, 2003; Oyewumi, 2002; Walsh, 1996, 2003; Waterman, 2003)
- The institution of adoption/fostering (Desmond, Gow, Loening-Voysey, Wilson, & Stirling, 2002; Foster & Williamson, 2000)
- HIV/AIDS (Meintjes & Bray, 2005; Sherr, Varrall, & Mueller, 2008).

Participants were invited to engage with these discourses through questions concerning their journey towards adoption and/or fostering, meanings of the word 'mothering', the activity of mothering, relationships between the constructs 'mother' and 'woman', meanings of being an adoptive and/or foster mother, characteristics of a 'good mother' and a 'good adoptive/foster mother', and the need for specific support for adoptive/foster mothers (in order to explore whether / how this was constructed as opposed to or in addition to the 'normal' support that a mother of biological children may need).

(c) Dominant discourses that relate to transracial adoption and fostering, as highlighted in literature, for example:

- Race (Foster, 2005; Patton, 2000; Posel, 2001)
- Whiteness (Green et al., 2007; Rothman, 2005; Steyn, 2007)
- Culture (Lee, 2003)

Participants were invited to engage with these discourses through questions that prompted explorations of the construct of race (within which constructions of culture emerged), relationships between their own race and the race of their child, and the construct of mixed-race family.

(d) Discourses that may not have emerged in previous literature on this subject.

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews as well as through the inclusion of open questions (e.g. "Is there anything else that stands out to you about adoptive/foster mothering that we have not discussed?") participants were free to introduce new and alternative discourses and discursive perspectives.

4.5.5 POWER RELATIONS IN INTERVIEWS

Power is unavoidably at stake in all relationships, and researcher-researched is no exception (Lawler, 2000; Nunkoosing, 2005; Riley, Schouten, & Cahill, 2003). Imbalances of power that may influence the construction of knowledge within an interview are vital to acknowledge and manage as far as possible (Kelly, 2006). Various forms of power shift back and forth continuously between interviewer and interviewee. Nunkoosing (2005) speaks of a "dance" (p. 699) of power between the interviewer who holds authority as a seeker of knowledge and the interviewee as a privileged knower.

An interview has been described as "a conversation with a purpose" (Banister et al., 1994, p. 51), although a fundamental question that needs to be asked is "*whose purpose* the conversation is pursuing" (p. 51). Kvale (2007) cautions against regarding a research interview as an "open dialogue between egalitarian partners" (p.

14). It is doubtful that an interview can ever be nonhierarchical. The power asymmetry that exists is influenced by the fact that the interviewer initiates and defines the interview situation by presenting the topic, posing questions, selectively following up on responses, and ultimately terminating the exchange. Although the initial purposes of an interview are determined by the interviewer, what is important to notice and reflect upon is how these purposes are challenged and subverted by the purposes of those being interviewed (Parker, 2005). The researcher also usually assumes the role of interpreter in maintaining the right to interpret, report on and reconstruct the 'real meaning' of what was said in the interview (Kvale, 2007). In a social constructionist interview, as mentioned, it is clearly acknowledged that the findings of the study present one possible formulation of meaning.

In addition to this type of power, understood broadly as the power of the researcher as expert over the participant as 'subject', power is also at play in relation to the researcher's "interactive position" (McLeod, 2002, p. 19). The researcher may hold power by virtue of socially ascribed characteristics, such as gender, race and class.

4.5.5.1 FEMINIST INTERVIEWING

Feminist research "analyses situations and behaviour on the basis of an interpretation of the power relations that function within that environment" (Powers, 2001). Parker (2005) highlights that "feminist approaches attend to how power is reproduced moment-by-moment as part of the interview process" (p. 55). Interviewing is appealing to feminist researchers (Hesse-Biber, 2007). The technique offers access to people's own accounts of their ideas, thoughts and memories and this is particularly valuable for the study of women as it counters centuries of ignoring women's perspectives and the practice of men speaking for women. Women interviewing women in social research projects contributes to managing issues of power and also to facilitating understanding through enabling participants to develop ideas and construct meaning (Reinharz, 1992). The move towards women interviewing other women began in the 1970s and from the 1980s the term 'feminist interviewing' became established (Warren, 2001). Devault (1990) (writing from a feminist standpoint position) argues that language reflects male experience, is incongruent with women's lives and is therefore inadequate for women. This challenge can, however, be attended to through research that examines language itself. She explains that,

if language is 'man-made', it is not likely to provide, ready-made, the words that feminist researchers need to tell what they learn from other women. Instead of imposing a choice among several labels, none of which are quite right, feminist texts should describe women's lives in ways that move beyond standard vocabularies, commenting on the vocabularies themselves along the way (p. 111).

Although language presents constraints to women's expression, it still remains a resource that can be used and a site of possibilities. Women skilfully and creatively resist and subvert male dominance within language through how we talk and how we listen (Devault, 1990).

4.5.5.2 SELF-DISCLOSURE

In-depth interviews typically involve greater self-expression on the part of the interviewer than is the case in other forms of interviewing (Johnson, 2001). Gubrium and Holstein (2003) contrast a postmodern approach to interviewing with one in which the interviewer attempts to avoid shaping the information that is retrieved. They explain that, from this perspective of neutrality, the only self-conscious involvement on the part of the researcher is to remain alert to the potential for contaminating the research process. From a postmodern

position, the interviewer is, rather, viewed as an active subject or a counterpart who plays a role in the co-creation of knowledge. 'Neutrality' is no longer relevant. It is not possible to "taint knowledge if that knowledge is not conceived as existing in some pure form apart from the circumstances of its production" (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 33).

Abell, Locke, Condor, Gibson, and Stevenson (2006) discuss interviewer self-disclosure as a method that has been proposed in order to manage power relations in interviews; however, it requires careful consideration in terms of how it positions the researcher within the interaction. Reinharz and Chase (2003) define interview self-disclosure as the process in which "the interviewer shares ideas, attitudes, and/or experiences concerning matters that might relate to the interview topic in order to encourage respondents to be more forthcoming" (p. 79). Self-disclosure is therefore typically used in order to gain participants' trust and commitment (Millward, 2000) in light of the proposed relationship between the comfort of participants and the openness of resultant communication (Stewart et al., 2007). This is more complex than may initially appear. Abell et al. (2006) found, through studying self-disclosure in interviews with young people, that a crucial component in how self-disclosure functioned in interviews was the manner in which "doing-similarity" (p. 241) was received by participants. Their study showed that through sharing personal experiences, the interviewer may in fact reveal how he/she is different to participants and may enhance perceptions of entitlement to knowledge. Participants may also become increasingly unsure of what is expected of them once the interviewer has utilised self-disclosure and may then suppress further communication. This relates to Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit's (2004) caution against the possibility of participants feeling "used" (p. 67). Furthermore, participants may also not particularly want to know about the researcher's life (Lawler, 2000).

In most of the interviews conducted within this study, I informed participants that I was an adoptive mother. This frequently occurred near the outset of the conversation, however, there were instances where this disclosure only took place in the middle of the interview or at the end, sometimes even after I had ceased recording. This was due to the natural flow of the conversation. In one interview the participant was severely time-constrained and clearly wanted to proceed through the interview as fast as possible and self-disclosure of my own status as an adoptive mother was not appropriate. I therefore included self-disclosure when and where I found it to be appropriate. I did not, however, utilise it as a specific strategy within the questions posed during the interview. I did note an increase in rapport in almost all cases after I had disclosed that I was (a) also a mother and (b) also an adoptive mother. This will be reflected upon further in the section on reflexivity in chapter six.

4.6 TRANSCRIPTION: DATA PREPARATION AND THE BEGINNINGS OF ANALYSIS

Data from the in-depth interviews were transcribed verbatim by the researcher. There are advantages to the researcher transcribing the interview as opposed to utilising the assistance of another party. Repeated, careful listening to the recording allows the researcher to become familiar with the data (Gibbs, 2007). Transcription offers the opportunity to begin the process of analysis. Both transcribing in detail and continuous, careful transcription checking (Gibbs, 2007; Silverman, 2001) took place in order to increase the quality of the findings. Although the intention of transcription is to faithfully capture the participant's view of the world, this capturing does involve the transformation of data into another medium, from spoken language

to written language and the transcription can never be viewed as a “mirror image of the interview” (Willig, 2008, p. 27). Although considered part of the stage of data preparation, transcription is, therefore, in itself an interpretive process. Hammersley (2010) speaks of the “constructional character of transcription” (p. 556) as the procedure is not as simple as merely writing down what was said in the interview and there cannot be one ‘correct’ transcription. A variety of choices are involved in the process. Such choices shape the text in particular ways thereby introducing interpretations (Parker, 2005). Decisions need to be made concerning the amount of detail to include, whether to transcribe an interview in its entirety, whether to include features such as pitch, intonation, dynamic level and pace, whether to include laughs, sighs, coughs and other expressive sounds (especially as it is not always clear which sounds are intended as communicative), whether to include pauses and the length of pauses, and whether to include gestures. Decisions are also required concerning how to label speakers as well as the layout of the transcript. When writing up the final research report choices need to be made relating to how to select excerpts from the transcripts, whether to use the same conventions used in the original transcript document, where to begin and end the excerpt, how many excerpts are required and how much background information is necessary. These decisions involve both selectivity as well as cultural knowledge on behalf of the researcher. Hammersley (2010) cautions, however, that this recognition that interpretive decision-making is involved in transcription does not equate to the view that data is created by the researcher. There is data *and* there is interpretation. (This resonates with the realist social constructionist position which the current research study assumes.)

With reference to discourse analysis specifically, Gee (2005) explains that transcription is part of the process of analysis. This is due to the point made above: transcription involves making decisions of relevance as not every aspect of the initial situation will be meaningful in the context of a particular study. He argues that

such judgements of relevance (what goes into a transcript and what does not) are ultimately theoretical judgements, that is, based on the analyst’s theories of how language, situations, and interactions work in general and in the specific situation being analysed. In this sense, a transcript is a theoretical entity. It does not stand outside an analysis, but, rather, is part of it (p. 106).

4.7 DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Durrheim (1997, p. 179) explains that “the social constructionist account of meaning demands an alternative approach to psychological research”. Discourse analysis has emerged from this demand and is one of the most popular approaches to the analysis of data in constructionist research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Discourse analysis is not a unitary methodology and much diversity in practice and theoretical orientation abounds (Baxter, 2003; Cheek, 2004; Macleod, 2002; Traynor, 2006). ‘Discourse’ itself is a contested term (Sunderland & Litosseliti, 2002). Wetherell, Taylor, and Yates (2001) refer to discourse analysis as a *set* of theories and methods. Macleod (2002, p. 17) highlights that “there is no definitive method of discourse analysis and that, therefore, any methodological discussion or practice contributes to the constant construction and re-production of the intellectual and research activity called ‘discourse analysis’”.

4.7.1 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

It may seem logical and methodical to firstly explore the variety of definitions and uses of the term ‘discourse’ (providing more detail than the previous chapter) and to then follow this with a discussion of discourse analysis. This is not particularly useful, however, as understandings of what discourse ‘is’ are inseparable from how one would then go about analysing discourse and vice versa. Secondly, understandings of

discourse and discourse analysis emerge from particular theoretical positions. It is therefore more helpful, for the purposes of this chapter, to begin with a clarification of such positions in order to locate a subsequent discussion of discourse and discourse analysis as the terms are utilised within this particular study.

Traynor (2004) explains that discourse analysis has developed in two main streams, one flowing through the social sciences in fields such as social psychology, sociology and education (where discourse is understood through the lens of social interaction and social structures) and the other through linguistics and related fields such as sociolinguistics and literary studies (where discourse is analysed through examining verbal and cognitive processes and structures). He describes this in more detail using the following diagram:

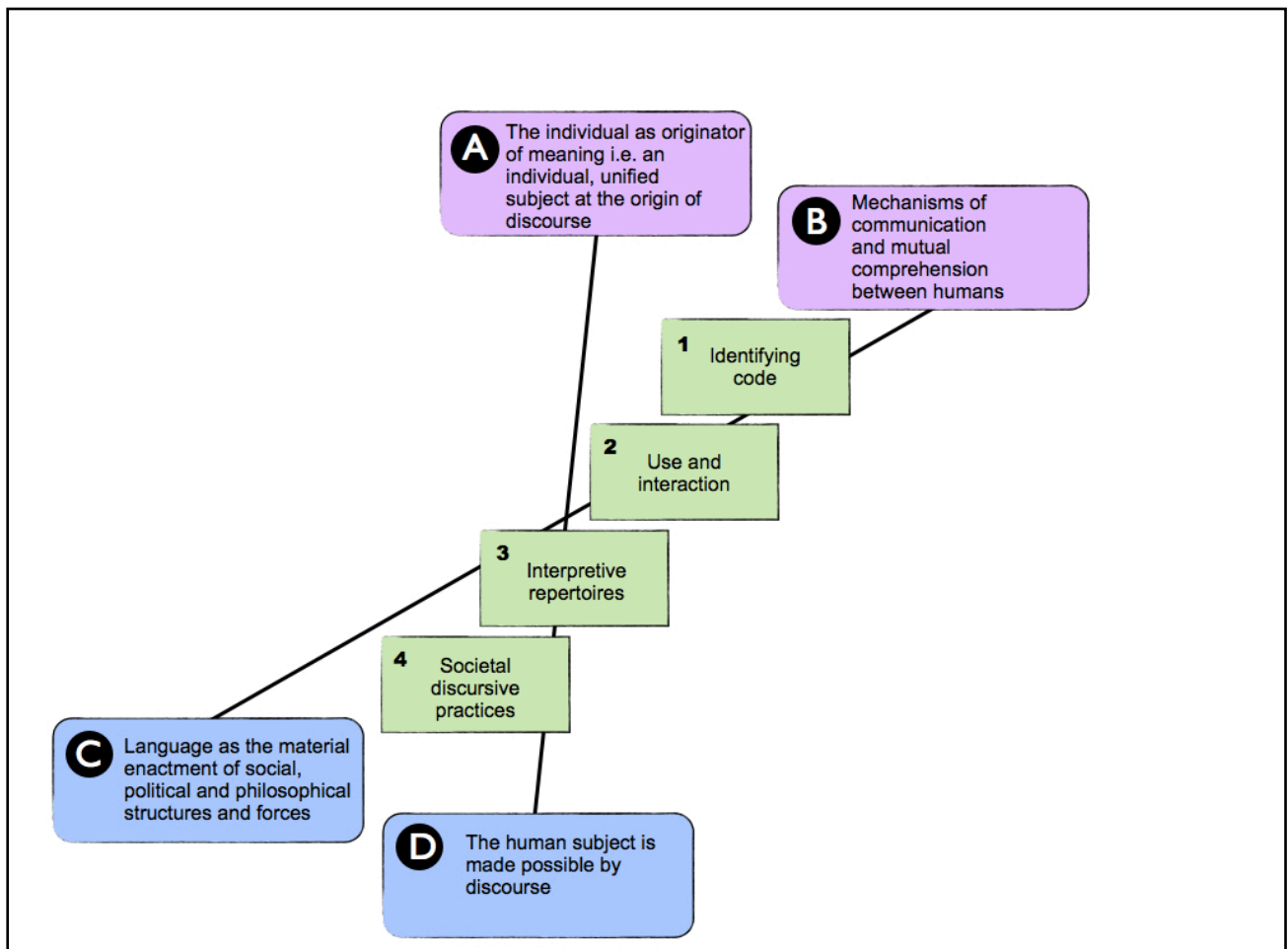


Fig 4.1 Dimensions of discourse analysis and categories of practice (Traynor, 2006, p. 63)

The A-D axis represents a continuum of theoretical positions concerning the relationship between humans and language. (A) represents the Enlightenment idea that humans have autonomous control over language and use language to express their thoughts. (D) characterises the poststructuralist perspective that discourse itself provides for available ways of thinking and talking through which human individuality is made possible. The C-B axis represents approaches within studies that utilise discourse analysis. (B) represents the concern with the competencies and techniques that are involved in communication that is successful and unsuccessful. (C) represents the concern with language as a vehicle of ideology. (A) and (B) relate to one another as analysts who focus on successful communication features tend to adhere to a view of language as produced by autonomous individuals. (C) and (D) relate as analysts who investigate how linguistic structures enable and constrain aspects of identity also tend to foreground social and political structures.

Four broad models of discourse analysis can be superimposed over these two axes. In the first, identifying code, analysts examine the structures and properties of language largely through conducting experiments rather than investigating naturally occurring situations. The second, use and interaction, can be understood through the work of conversation analysis and ethnomethodology. Here the focus is on language use in interaction and how conventional conversational strategies constrain speakers. There is an increased acknowledgment of social context as compared to the first model. The third model, interpretive repertoires, represents studies that explore how individuals enact and maintain their membership of groups through “talk-in-interaction” (Traynor, 2006, p. 64) as this occurs in particular social and cultural contexts. In the fourth model, societal discursive practices, analysis identifies “patterns of language and related practices and demonstrates how they constitute aspects of society and people within it” (Traynor, 2006, p. 64).

4.7.2 SYNTHESISING APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

Traynor (2004) argues that (C) and (B) are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and “the best analytic discourse work shows features of both” (p. 4). The current study attempts to do just that through combining two forms of discourse analysis, one stemming from social psychology and the other from social linguistics and literacy. Before describing each in detail, an example of such a combination of approaches will be summarised briefly, indicating both the value of such an endeavour and the practical feasibility thereof. The example is found in Fairclough’s (1992) method of discourse analysis which synthesises both linguistics and social theory.

Fairclough’s (1992) intention is the study of social and cultural change. He states that “it is necessary to draw together methods for analysing language developed within linguistics and language studies, and social and political thought relevant to developing an adequate social theory of language...such a synthesis is long overdue” (p. 1). Impairing such a synthesis has been the isolation of language studies from the rest of the social sciences as well as the belief in the social sciences that the content of, for example, interview data can be interpreted without paying attention to the actual language. Fairclough explains how previous attempts at synthesising social theory and language studies have not had significant success as there remains the tendency to overemphasise one at the expense of the other. Definitions of discourse are not least in creating such difficulties in synthesis. In linguistics, ‘discourse’ is often used to refer to “extended samples of either spoken or written language” (Fairclough, 1992, p. 3). ‘Discourse’ also refers to types of language that are used in various social situations, such as ‘classroom discourse’, ‘medical consultation discourse’ etc. In social theory, understandings of discourse have been influenced largely by Foucault’s views on the role of discourse in structuring social practice and areas of knowledge. Discourses in this sense have social effects as they actively construct social relations and institutions and position people as social subjects. Another focus in social theory is on how various discourses change and combine to form new discourses.

Fairclough’s (1992) multidisciplinary attempt to synthesise the linguistic and social forms of discourse analysis is three dimensional. He views any discursive event firstly as a piece of text that can be explored through language analysis (vocabulary, grammar, cohesion and text structure; forces of utterances, coherence of texts and intertextuality). Secondly, it is also viewed as an instance of discursive practice through which processes of text production and interpretation are then attended to, including which types of discourses are drawn upon and combined. Thirdly, the discursive event is also viewed as a social practice, concerning organisational and institutional circumstances, ideology and power as well as the constructive effects of the discourses at play. According to Fairclough, discourses have three constructive effects. They

construct social identities, social relationships and systems of knowledge and belief. These three dimensions of analysis are interrelated (especially the first and the second, as it is practically impossible to talk about the features of a text without referring to aspects of production and interpretation). He explains that “a rigid opposition between ‘content’ or ‘meaning’ and ‘form’, is misleading because the meanings of texts are closely intertwined with the form of texts, and formal features of texts at various levels may be ideologically invested” (p. 89).

Although Fairclough’s (1992) critical discourse analysis contains both linguistic and social dimensions, his broad focus on social and cultural change is not as applicable to the present psychological study as the approaches to discourse analysis that will be utilised here. His argument does, however, lay the groundwork for understanding the appropriateness of combining approaches to discourse that stem from linguistic and social roots. The two approaches to discourse analysis that will be used in this proposed study are those articulated by Gee (2005), writing from a linguistic perspective, and Parker (1992, 2005), writing from the perspective of social psychology. Although originating from these distinct schools of thought, and although each author retains a different emphasis, both approaches do contain linguistic and social elements. These approaches will be synthesised in a fluid and dynamic manner in order to draw richer meaning from the data. These approaches are not, in Gee’s (2005) words a ‘recipe’ or ‘how to’ manual, but are rather used as “thinking devices” (p. 7).

4.7.3 GEE’S AND PARKER’S APPROACHES TO DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In this section the theoretical bases of Gee’s (2005) and Parker’s (1992, 2005) approaches to discourse analysis will firstly be presented separately. This will be followed by a discussion of the practical steps and questions involved in each approach, but these will be presented in an integrated format to show how both approaches will be utilised in this study in a synthesised manner.

4.7.3.1 PARKER’S APPROACH

Parker (1992) unashamedly states that discourse analysis is political, arguing that “apolitical psychology is worse than useless” (p. 23). Although Parker’s definition of discourse as “a system of statements which constructs an object” (p. 5) is most frequently used in studies employing his approach to discourse analysis, he does in fact distinguish between Discourse and discourse. Discourse, with a capital ‘D’ is used to refer to language as it is organised into sets of texts. Alternatively, discourse with a lower case ‘d’ refers to “systems of statements within and through those sets” (p. 28). (Gee (2005) also uses both Discourse and discourse, although with different emphasis, and this will be discussed shortly).

Parker (1992) explains that discourses “both facilitate and limit, enable and constrain what can be said (by whom, where, when)” (p. xiii). Discourses categorise the social world and make particular phenomena visible. Once an object exists in discourse, it is referred to as if it were ‘real’. He states that discourses offer frameworks that enable debates concerning the value of different ways of talking about reality. Parker (1992) acknowledges that reifying discourses as coherent and systematised ‘things’ with causal functions is a risk. He argues, though, that

the risk is worth taking, for it is crucial that we hold to some conception of the *difference* between discourses, and show how contests between different structures of meaning operate as part of the architecture of society. This happens as we move beyond ‘common sense’. Just as there are different discourses, there are dominant and dominated cultures, different ‘common senses’. To

identify a discourse is to take a position, and the ability to step outside a discourse and to label it in a particular way is a function of both the accessing of dominant cultural meaning and the marginal (critical) position which the researcher takes (within or alongside another discourse or sub-culture or 'common sense') (p. 33).

Parker (2005) proposes four ideas that are central in discourse analysis. Firstly, rather than seeking underlying themes or psychological processes, discourse analysis explores the "multivoicedness" (p. 89) of language. Experiences of speaking and being spoken to contain contradictions and this variability requires serious consideration. A discourse relates to other discourses through the contradictions contained within it. A discourse simultaneously excludes and refers to other subordinate or opposing discourses. It therefore creates the conditions necessary for its own modification and undermining. Focus is therefore placed not on how words are similar to one another, but on how they are different. Secondly, discourse analysis examines the semiotics of how we use and are used by language. The language we use involves meanings that are not always within our control. Thirdly, language does 'things'. One of these 'things' involves producing, supporting or challenging power relations. Fourthly, Parker explains discourse as "the organisation of language into certain kinds of *social bond*" (p. 90) where each bond includes and excludes certain types of people. This relates to power relations and to the ideological function of discourse in defining what is 'normal' or 'deviant', thereby presenting an oppressive version of the world.

There is no "discourse analysis machine into which you can feed a piece of text" (Parker, 2005, p. 92). Parker (1992) does, however, propose certain criteria that can be used in order to question a text and that break down the four points just mentioned into further detail. Parker (1992) argues for seven key criteria (1-7) and three auxiliary criteria (8-10) which enable an engagement in discourse analysis. These will now be listed and described.

1. A discourse is realised in texts

Discourses, or rather pieces of discourses, are found in texts. Texts are understood by Parker (1992) to include all "tissues of meaning" (p. 6). Anything that is understood as having meaning can therefore be considered to be a text, such as a melody, a newspaper, a skirt, a gesture, a movie ticket, or a bridge. A text does not necessarily presume an author and, even if there is an author, our interpretation of discourses realised in the text may involve meanings that extend or even differ from the intentions of the author. This occurs because texts afford connotations and implications. Discourses within texts may also not be available to every audience. A psychology textbook may contain certain discourses that are accessible to psychologists and psychology students only. Parker argues that, although discourses are realised in texts, "the study of the dynamics which structure texts has to be located in an account of the ways discourses reproduce and transform the world" (p. i).

2. A discourse is about objects

Firstly, discourses constitute objects. For example, the phenomenon of the 'good mother' is brought into being (as a reality with certain effects) through language. A discourse, then, is the set of meanings which constitute that object. Parker (1992) explains that "the representation of the object occurs as previous uses of the discourse and other related discourses are alluded to, and the object *as defined in the discourses* is referred to" (p. 8). Discourse analysis is therefore concerned at one level with how a discourse constructs that which we perceive as being real. In other words, there is a discourse about the 'good mother', and the 'good

mother' is understood as the object of the discourse. Secondly, discourse analysis also explores the discourse itself as a set of statements. In this way, the discourse of the 'good mother' functions as an object.

3. A discourse contains subjects

Parker (1992) explains that a discourse "makes available a space for particular types of self to step in" (p. 9). Firstly, a discourse addresses the reader or listener in a certain way, making him/her read or listen in a particular manner. In other words, discourses afford particular perceptions of ourselves and others. Secondly, discourses position us in relations of power and assign and restrict the right to speak. A mother holding her child while the paediatrician examines him will speak differently as a result of her position within the medical discourse at play in the situation than she would when talking about her child's symptoms to her own mother, when a familialist discourse is in operation.

4. A discourse is a coherent system of meanings

Discourses can be conceived of as regulated systems of statements referring to the same topic, understood as such through cultural knowledge. Parker (1992) explains this role of cultural knowledge in determining which statements 'belong' together as referring to the same topic by using the example of the family. Recognising a coherent discourse of the family within a text would depend on what we bring to the text of our own cultural understanding of what a family is and is not. We do, however, also need to bring an awareness that there are alternative, competing understandings of familial relationships in order to understand a particular discourse as coherent.

5. A discourse refers to other discourses

Parker (1992) makes a number of related points under this topic. Descriptions involve contradictions that indicate how different discourses are interrelated. Also, contradictions within a discourse give clues as to what other discourses may be presupposed or embedded within them. The presentation of our reflections on a discourse is also bound by references to other discourses. In addition, the nature of a discourse is determined by how it is articulated in other discourses. This makes available metaphors, concepts or models from other discourses which give a speaker "a voice from another discourse" (Parker, 1992, p. 13).

6. A discourse reflects on its own way of speaking

To varying degrees, discourses reflexively comment on themselves and, in this way, a discourse "folds around and reflects on its own way of speaking" (Parker, 1992, p. 14). Discourses can also contain implicit negations. Discourse analysis requires the analyst to view the discourse from the 'inside' and to have a good sense of how the discourse operates as a coherent whole.

7. A discourse is historically located

Discourses change and develop over time. Discourses locate their objects in history. In analysing discourses an examination is required of how the discourse came about and how it is legitimated historically.

8. Discourses support institutions

Certain discourses are involved in the structuring of institutions. These discourses may also be discursive practices. Parker (1992) uses the example of the medical discourse which supports the institution of medicine, in journals, lectures, council decisions as well as in medical consultations. These are invested with meaning both through language as well as through practices such as physical examinations and medical

procedures. Institutions are not only supported by discourse, but are also subverted or attacked through discourse.

9. Discourses reproduce power relations

Parker (1992) is informed by Foucault's concept of power/knowledge and stresses that discourses produce and reproduce power relations through how objects and subjects are constituted. This also informs the manner in which certain people and not others are allowed to speak and certain things are allowed to be said while other statements are disallowed. Power, however, is not only reproduced in discourse. Discourse can resist power and refuse dominant meanings.

10. Discourses have ideological effects

Parker refers to Foucault's opposition to the term ideology as being too entwined with the idea of truth. Parker elects to retain the term, however, with certain provisos. Firstly, not all discourses are ideological as ideology would then equate to a belief system and all discourses would become merely relative. Secondly, whilst not all discourses are ideological, the distinction between those that are and those that represent 'truth' is also dangerous. Parker proposes that ideology should rather be understood as "a description on *relationships* and *effects*" (p. 20) in particular times and places. Discourses, then, may function in ideological ways by, for example, defending dominant world-views.

4.7.3.2 GEE'S APPROACH

Gee (2005) believes that there are two primary, interconnected functions of language: supporting the performance of social identities and social activities and supporting affiliations between people within cultures, institutions and social groups. He argues that "language has meaning only in and through social processes, practices which often leave us morally complicit with harm and injustice unless we attempt to transform them" (p. 8).

Gee (2005) distinguishes between discourse which he defines as "language-in-use" (p. 7) and Discourse, which also includes the actions, gestures, interactions, values, attitudes, beliefs, emotions, and even 'props' involved in 'pulling off' being, for example, an adoptive or foster mother in a particular time and place. In other words, Discourses refer to the recognition of a "*who-doing-what*" (p. 23). Discourses are not discrete units with defined boundaries, as they are continuously changing. Gee states that, although multiple strands of Discourses may be enacted and recognised simultaneously and even woven together into a new Discourse, "the point is not how we 'count' Discourses; the point is the performance, negotiation and recognition work that goes into creating, sustaining and transforming them, and the role of language (always with other things) in this process" (p. 30).

Gee (2005) explains that language-in-use is "everywhere and always political" (p. 1). It is political in the sense that, through language, we take a particular perspective on what the world is like: what is 'right', 'normal', 'real', 'acceptable', and 'possible' and what is not; as well as the 'way things are' and what 'people like us' and 'people like them' do and do not do. It is within the details of politics that social goods are created, sustained, distributed and redistributed. Gee's approach to discourse analysis, then, aims to offer "tools of inquiry with which to study discourse in Discourses" (p. 8). The aim of this endeavour is to explore why and how language operates in the ways it does when in action within the domain in question and also to contribute to knowledge and intervention within the applied area of interest.

Gee's (2005) discourse analysis rests on particular understandings of language and meaning. These understandings are discussed from three perspectives: the building tasks of language, tools of inquiry used to analyse these building tasks, and two types of meaning that attach to language in use.

A. BUILDING TASKS OF LANGUAGE

We speak or write in a manner that fits the situation within which we are communicating. However, how we speak or write constructs that situation. This begs the question: do we speak in a certain way because we are in a particular situation or is this situation what it is because of the way we are speaking? Both depend on the other and facilitate each others' existence reciprocally over time. Language-in-use is thus an "active building process" (Gee, 2005, p. 10). Gee argues for seven building tasks of language:

1. Significance

Language makes certain things significant by giving them value or meaning. Gee (2005) uses the example of a plain, square room with no clear 'front' or 'back'. If a person enters the room and begins to speak in a particular way as if about to run a meeting, where he or she stands becomes the 'front' of the room.

2. Activities

Language is used by people in order to be recognised as being engaged in a particular activity. When speaking in one way, others are led to recognise the activity as casual chatting before the meeting begins. When speaking in another way, others recognise that the meeting has officially commenced.

3. Identities

We also use language to build identity, to get recognised as assuming a specific role in a specific time and place. The language I use towards my transracially adopted child in the Woolworths queue while she screams for a sweet enables my being recognised as either a 'good' mother or a 'bad' mother...or a mother at all.

4. Relationships

Language builds social relationships through signaling how we are or are trying to relate to other people, groups or institutions. By saying "Madam chair, due to time constraints, would it be possible to move on to the next agenda item?" we are indicating a different relationship to the committee chair than we would if we were to say "Rose, let's move on".

5. Politics

Language communicates a perspective on the distribution of social goods. Saying "she gave her child up for adoption" or saying "she made an adoption plan for her child" has implications for social goods such as blame, guilt, responsibility or lack of it and communicates perspectives around what is perceived to be 'right', 'good', 'proper' and so on.

6. Connections

Language builds or breaks connections or relevance between things that are not necessarily inherently connected or disconnected from one another. For example, asking an adoptive mother "how long did you try for your own baby?" connects adoption and infertility, which are not inherently connected and disconnects the

'ownership' of a biological child that is accorded to a mother ("your *own* baby") by implying lack of 'ownership' of an adopted child.

7. Sign systems and knowledge

Language privileges certain sign systems (English, or the language of psychologists, or images) over others. By privileging these sign systems we assign prestige to particular forms of knowledge claims within certain situations. For example, in a focus group, if I use an 'academic psychology language' to phrase and interpret questions as the moderator, I privilege this communicative system and way of knowing over the everyday language and claims to knowledge that the mothers in the group may engage in.

B. TOOLS OF INQUIRY

Gee (2005) uses four tools of inquiry to analyse the workings of these building tasks within language-in-use. Although these tools are described as if they were "things that exist in the mind and in the world" (p. 51), these terms are ultimately ways of talking about and thus constructing the world.

1. Social languages

Gee defines social languages as "different varieties of language that allow us to express different socially significant identities and enact different socially meaningful activities" (p. 35). I would, for example, use a different social language to explain the nature of my study to my supervisor than I would use to explain the nature of my study to my husband. Social languages are used and mixed in order to engage in the building tasks mentioned above.

Social languages have their own distinctive grammar that can be divided into two types: the first involves units such as verbs, nouns, phrases, clauses and the like; the second involves the rules that determine how these units are patterned in ways that signal "characteristic *whos-doing-whats-within-Discourse*" (Gee, 2005, p. 41). In other words, our speech or writing is designed to contain patterns that can be recognised by others as being associated with particular situated identities and activities.

2. Discourses

Activities and identities are built not only through language, but through gestures, beliefs, emotions and so on, as explained in the above description of Discourses. Any piece of language needs to be understood in relation to the different Discourses of which it is a part.

3. Intertextuality

This refers to the way in which any text refers to other texts or to other types of texts. This may be done by borrowing words through direct or indirect quotation or by alluding to that which readers or listeners will recognise as coming from another source.

4. Conversations

Texts not only refer to other texts, but to broader themes or debates of which social groups are familiar. Gee (2005) uses Conversations with a capital 'C' to indicate all the talking and writing that has taken place within a social group or within society as a whole concerning a major issue, for example abortion, global warming, affirmative action, or HIV/AIDS. He explains that

to know about these Conversations is to know about the various sides one can take in debates about these issues and what sorts of people are usually on each side. As members of various social

groups and of our society as a whole, we are privy to a great many such Conversations. People interpret our language – and we interpret theirs – partly through such knowledge (p. 22).

C. SITUATED MEANINGS AND DISCOURSE MODELS

Finally, Gee (2005) distinguishes between two types of meaning that “attach to words and phrases in actual use” (p. 94). These he refers to as situated meanings and Discourse models. The meaning of words change flexibly in different contexts and these meanings are linked to various cultural and social groups.

According to linguists, structural aspects of language (form) can accomplish particular purposes (function). For example, whether a person is placed as the object or the subject of a sentence and how such structures form patterns across sentences has the potential to serve a particular purpose or to offer a certain range of meaning. This type of analysis is referred to as form-function analysis, also known as utterance-type meaning.

Written or spoken sentences also have situated meaning which relates to language-context analysis. Meanings are ‘situated’ in that they are “grounded in actual practices and experiences” (p. 53). Gee uses the example of the word ‘coffee’ and shows how the word takes on different meanings according to the variety of contexts that are implied in the following sentences:

- The coffee spilled, go and get a mop
- The coffee spilled, go and get a broom
- The coffee spilled, stack it again (p. 53)

The first implies a liquid, the second beans or grains and the third implies packages. The ‘context’ within which the meanings of words arise refers to

the material setting, the people present (and what they know and believe), the language that comes before and after a given utterance, the social relationships of the people involved, and their ethnic, gendered, and sexual identities, as well as cultural, historical, and institutional factors (Gee, 2005, p. 57).

As mentioned earlier, it must be remembered that language does not just adapt to context. The relationship is dynamic and bi-directional.

Situated meanings are therefore assembled in context, in the moment, out of a variety of available features as we listen, speak and act. Gee (2005) explains that this assembly can either be relatively routine, in that it is a repetition of past assemblies, or it may be novel as required by a new context.

Human beings hold unconscious explanatory theories about the meaning patterns of words that are socio-culturally grounded and therefore associated with a certain cultural model or “storyline” (Gee, 2005, p. 61). Different possibilities of situated meanings are therefore available to different social and cultural groups of people. Gee (2005) prefers to use the term ‘Discourse model’ instead of cultural model as “not everyone who shares a given model is a member of all the same cultures and not everyone in some larger culture shares all the same models” (p. 61). These theories about how the world works infer what is viewed as ‘normal’, ‘typical’ and ‘appropriate’ and are therefore embedded deeply in politics. Discourse models mediate between micro and macro levels of interaction. Gee uses the Discourse model of the word ‘bachelor’ as a simplified example. Although a dictionary definition of the term may be “an unmarried man”, questions such as “is the Pope a bachelor?” or “an elderly senile gentleman who has never been married?” (p. 71-72) reveal how the

term is actually used in relation to a commonly held ‘theory’ relating to beliefs and perspectives about the age men should marry, and who should and should not marry. The reluctance to acknowledge that rape can occur inside a marriage offers another example that can be understood along the same lines. ‘Mother’ also operates within Discourse models or cultural theories that inform who qualifies as a real ‘mother’ and who does not.

Gee (2005) distinguishes between three kinds of Discourse models: espoused models (which we consciously ascribe to); evaluative models (which we use consciously or unconsciously to judge ourselves and others); and models-in-(inter)action (which guide our actual actions and interactions in the world, consciously or unconsciously). Discourse models are complex and flexibly organised and can also be partial or inconsistent. Gee explains that “there are smaller models inside bigger ones. Each model triggers or is associated with others, in different ways in different settings and differently for different socioculturally defined groups of people” (p. 83). We can also refer to “master models” (p. 83) which are either single Discourse models or sets of associated Discourse models that organise and shape important elements of experience and Conversations that occur within groups of people.

The questions that are posed within Gee’s (2005) approach to discourse analysis are drawn from the concepts outlined above. Analysis, therefore, proceeds through exploring the building tasks of language, the tools of inquiry used to analyse these tasks as well as understanding meaning through recognising situated meanings and Discourse models.

4.7.4 A SYNTHESIS OF PARKER AND GEE

The following presents points of consideration within discourse analysis which integrate: (a) Parker’s (1992) 20 steps, written as a number according to Parker’s numbering, prefaced by a ‘P’, (b) Parker’s (2005) 12 steps, written as a number according to Parker’s numbering, prefaced by ‘p’, and (c) Gee’s (2005) 26 questions, written as a number according to Gee’s numbering, prefaced by a ‘G’.

Most of Parker’s points have been re-written as questions for purposes of overall consistency. In terms of the practical process of analysis, these were the questions that I directly asked of the data, holding them in the forefront of my mind as I analysed each line of the transcribed interviews. I have also retained the general headings under which these two authors present their steps/questions to orientate the reader. These points of consideration do not necessarily have to be followed sequentially.

A. PREPARATION FOR ANALYSIS

P1. [A DISCOURSE IS REALISED IN TEXTS]: The object of the study – in this case the focus group interviews and in-depth interviews (which are transcribed) – are treated as texts.

P2/P2. [A DISCOURSE IS REALISED IN TEXTS]: Free association takes place in order to “elaborate socially shared material connected to the text” (Parker, 2005, p. 93).

At the outset of analysis Gee begins an initial free association through

- Choosing key words or phrases in the data and asking what situated meanings they seem to have within the data (in light of what one knows about the context in which the data occurred)
- Thinking about what cultural models these situated meanings may implicate and about the Discourses and social languages that may be relevant

- Asking how socially-situated identities and social activities are being recognised and enacted in the data by the participants and by oneself as researcher.

B. SITUATED MEANINGS

- G1. [BUILDING MEANING & SIGNIFICANCE]: What are the situated meanings of the important words and phrases within this situation?
- G2. [BUILDING MEANING & SIGNIFICANCE]: What are the situated meanings that appear to be attached to relevant times, places, people, bodies, objects and institutions relevant in this situation?
- G4. [BUILDING MEANING & SIGNIFICANCE]: What Discourse models appear to be involved in the connection and integration of situated meanings?

C. OBJECTS

- P3. [A DISCOURSE IS ABOUT OBJECTS]: What objects are being referred to in the text and how can these be described?
- P3. In what ways are these objects significant and how are they constructed in the text?
- P4. [A DISCOURSE IS ABOUT OBJECTS]: How can the text itself also be understood as an object?

D. ACTIVITIES

- G6. [BUILDING ACTIVITIES]: What are the main activities or sets of activities that are occurring in this situation?
- G7. [BUILDING ACTIVITIES]: Of which sub-activities are the main activities comprised?
- G8. [BUILDING ACTIVITIES]: What actions create the activities and sub-activities?

E. SUBJECTS / IDENTITIES

- P5. [A DISCOURSE CONTAINS SUBJECTS]: What types of person are talked about in this discourse, some of which may already have been identified as objects?
- P6. [A DISCOURSE CONTAINS SUBJECTS]: What can these subjects say in the discourse? What could one say if one identified with them? What rights of speech would one possess?
- G9. [BUILDING IDENTITIES]: What identities, complete with feelings, values, and personal, cultural and social beliefs and knowledge seem relevant, in the process of construction, or appear to be assumed within the situation?
- G10. [BUILDING IDENTITIES]: How are these identities transformed or supported in the situation?
- G11. [BUILDING IDENTITIES]: What Discourses are relevant or irrelevant (and how are they made so) in terms of identities?

F. RELATIONSHIPS

- G12. [BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS]: What kinds of social relationships appear to be relevant, in the process of construction, or seem to be assumed within the situation?
- P7. What networks of relationships allow this scene to make sense?
- P8. How would characters positioned within these relationships manage opposition from 'outsiders'?
- G13. [BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS]: How are these social relationships transformed or supported within the situation?

G. INTERTEXTUALITY

- G3. [BUILDING MEANING & SIGNIFICANCE]: What values and situated meanings are associated with other texts that are alluded to, referred to or quoted in the situation?
- G14. [BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS]: How are relationships to other Discourses, texts or people constituted through allusion, reference or quotation to other texts?
- G18. [BUILDING CONNECTIONS]: What kinds of connections are created within and across durations of the interaction?
- G19. [BUILDING CONNECTIONS]: What kinds of connections to previous or future interactions, ideas, texts, people, things, and Discourses outside of the present situation are created?
- G20. [BUILDING CONNECTIONS]: How is intertextuality used to form connections between situations and Discourses?
- P9/p10. [A DISCOURSE REFERS TO OTHER DISCOURSES]: How are contrasting discourses set up against each another and how do they constitute objects in contradictory ways?
- P10. [A DISCOURSE REFERS TO OTHER DISCOURSES]: How do these different discourses overlap at points where they construct in differing ways what appears to be the same object?

H. SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE

- G22. [BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE FOR SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE]: What sign systems are relevant or irrelevant in the situation? How are they relevant or irrelevant?
- G23. [BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE FOR SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE]: What ways of knowing and systems of knowledge relevant or irrelevant in the situation? How are they relevant or irrelevant?
- G24. [BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE FOR SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE]: What national languages are relevant or irrelevant in the situation?
- G25. [BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE FOR SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE]: What social languages are relevant or irrelevant, and in what ways?
- P11. How do the ways of speaking appeal to different audiences?
- G26. [BUILDING SIGNIFICANCE FOR SIGN SYSTEMS AND KNOWLEDGE]: How are references to other texts used to invoke relevance of sign systems and knowledge systems?

I. COHERENCE

- G21. [BUILDING CONNECTIONS]: How do the connections addressed in G18, G19 and G20 facilitate the constitution of coherence (together with situated meanings and Discourse models)? What characterises coherence in this situation?
- P7. [A DISCOURSE IS A COHERENT SYSTEM OF MEANINGS]: How does this discourse 'map' a picture of the world?
- P9. What patterns occur across the text?
- P8. [A DISCOURSE IS A COHERENT SYSTEM OF MEANINGS]: How would a text using this discourse deal with objections to its terminology?

J. NAMING DISCOURSES

These reflections lead to "the bold step" (Parker, 2005, p. 94) of naming discourses that are at work in the text.

K. REFLEXIVITY

P11. [A DISCOURSE REFLECTS ON ITS OWN WAY OF SPEAKING]: How can other texts be used to elaborate the discourse?

P12. [A DISCOURSE REFLECTS ON ITS OWN WAY OF SPEAKING]: What moral and political choices are involved in naming the discourse?

L. HISTORY

P13. [A DISCOURSE IS HISTORICALLY LOCATED]: Where and how did the discourse emerge?

P14. [A DISCOURSE IS HISTORICALLY LOCATED]: How has the discourse changed? How does the discourse tell a story about its discovery of knowledge?

M. INSTITUTIONS

P15. [DISCOURSES SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS]: What institutions are reinforced when the discourse is used?

G5. [BUILDING MEANING & SIGNIFICANCE]: What institutions and/or Discourses are being produced or reproduced in this situation? How are they being supported or transformed?

P16. [DISCOURSES SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS]: What institutions that are challenged, subverted or attacked when the discourse is used?

N. POLITICS, POWER AND IDEOLOGY

G16. [BUILDING POLITICS]: What social goods are relevant or irrelevant in this situation, and in what ways?

G17. [BUILDING POLITICS]: How do these social goods relate to the Discourses and Discourse models that are in operation within the situation?

P17. [DISCOURSES REPRODUCE POWER RELATIONS]: Which types of people gain and lose from the employment of this discourse?

P18. [DISCOURSES REPRODUCE POWER RELATIONS]: Who would want to perpetuate this discourse and who would want to undermine it?

P19. [DISCOURSES HAVE IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS]: How is the discourse connected to other discourses sanctioning oppression?

P20. [DISCOURSES HAVE IDEOLOGICAL EFFECTS]: How does the discourse allow dominant groups to voice their stories “about the past in order to justify the present, and prevent those who use subjugated discourses from making history”? (Parker, 1992, p. 21)

As I engaged with each line of data in relation to exploring situated meanings, objects, activities, subjects and identities, relationships, intertextuality, sign systems and knowledge, I wrote analytic notes in a separate column on the right-hand side of the transcriptions as responses to the questions listed above. I also began to group quotations from the texts together in a separate document as statements began to discursively cohere together (see Appendix D for an excerpt of this document). Through this process discourses could be identified. Reflexivity, history, institutions, politics, power and ideology could then also be explored in relation to how these discourses operated within the texts.

4.8 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The study received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Pretoria on the 4th of November 2009. The central purpose of research ethics is to ensure the welfare and protection of research participants (Wassenaar, 2006). Essentially, ethics in social research refers to accountability, choice and deliberation on the part of the researcher(s) (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002). Feminist researchers Birch, Miller, Mauthner, and Jessop (2002) explain that ethical issues permeate all aspects of the research process, stating that “the complexities of researching private lives and placing accounts in the public arena raise multiple ethical issues for the researcher” (p. 1). These ethical issues include, firstly, respecting the autonomy and dignity of participants, secondly, ensuring nonmaleficence and, thirdly, consideration of the social value of the study.

As explained in section 4.5.1, subjects fulfilling the sampling criteria were invited to participate. Informed consent (Edwards & Mauthner, 2002; Wassenaar, 2006) was obtained after participant information forms and consent forms were distributed. Participation did not involve personal risk. Participation was voluntary and it was communicated to participants that withdrawal at any stage would not involve any negative consequences. No incentives were offered for participation. No deception occurred as participants were given full and accurate information regarding the aims of the study and the nature of their participation (Rosenthal, 1994).

Confidentiality refers both to protecting the identities of participants and to the management of private information (Giordano, O’Reilly, Taylor, & Dogra, 2007; Israel & Hay, 2006). Confidentiality “allows participants the freedom to express their experiences and opinions without the fear of identification, stigma, and/or retribution” (Giordano et al. 2007, p. 269). Anonymity was utilized to serve this purpose. Although initials have been used in relation to the participants in the body of the dissertation, in the interview transcriptions and in the analysis documents these do not coincide with their actual initials.

However, some information emerged within the interviews that could be argued to offer particular insights that could be used by a reader familiar in some way with a participant to identify the woman or children in question. This is especially of concern in cases where participants had not, and also were not planning on, revealing certain information to the children in their care, for example, relating to the circumstances surrounding the child’s conception or birth. For this reason, two versions of this dissertation have been written. One that includes the full interview transcripts will be submitted for examination purposes. Another will be submitted for the public domain (through the University of Pretoria’s database) omitting the interview transcripts. Transcripts in which identifying information has been removed will be stored securely for archiving purposes at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. As the audio recordings of the interviews contain mention of the names of participants and their children, these will be securely stored by the researcher and no other person will gain access to these recordings.

Consideration of the social value of the study is informed by the belief that research should address issues and produce knowledge that holds value for specific communities or society in general (Wassenaar, 2006). The participants in this study did not benefit directly from participating in this research although most were very eager to participate and appeared invested in telling their stories. Many spoke of the lack of relevant information available to adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa (this is discussed further in chapter six) and their participatory enthusiasm seemed to be related to their desire to contribute in this regard. Many participants asked if they could read the dissertation upon its completion and I shall ensure that it is made

available to them. In addition, the study holds social value in relation to the research objectives. Through expanding understandings of mothering by exploring how women who have adopted and/or who foster children construct mothering, the study hopes to participate in the deconstruction of dominant discourses and constructs that hold existing understandings in place. Also, the intention behind the research is to offer a contribution to knowledge in this area that can be used for developing approaches for supporting women who mother children from outside of their own families and for informing strategies of care for orphaned children. The findings will be made available through a dissertation, accessible via the library of the University of Pretoria (as mentioned above), and also through academic journal articles.

4.9 RESEARCH QUALITY

Lincoln and Guba (2003) explain three basic positions regarding the evaluation of qualitative research, namely, foundational, quasi-foundational and non-foundational. Foundationalists argue that the positivist criteria that are applied to quantitative research should also be applied within qualitative research. Quasi-foundationalists believe that a different set of criteria should be established to assess qualitative research, which is the position to which the current study adheres. Non-foundationalists oppose evaluative criteria on the basis of their political and moral character as reflective of particular interpretive communities.

Postmodernism doubts traditional forms of determining what counts as valid knowledge and is thus non-foundationalist (Alvesson, 2002). However, this does not mean that there is not and should not be a means by which a piece of research can be judged as being “good” or “not so good” (Alvesson, 2002, p. 162). Silverman (2001) contends, in alignment with the quasi-foundationalist approach, that, just as critical questions should be asked of a piece of quantitative research regarding whether it produces valid knowledge, so too should highly critical and probing questions be asked of qualitative research. The questions themselves, however, need to be based on criteria that are appropriate to the research paradigm (Smith, 2005).

In positivist research these criteria are typically validity and reliability (Kvale, 1995). Although in conversational language, ‘validity’ refers to the correctness or truth of a statement and the ability of an argument to show that it is sound, strong, justified, logical and convincing, within positivist research, validity refers to whether a method measures that which it claims to measure (Kvale, 1995). Reliability is used to assess whether findings are consistent over time (Golafshani, 2003). These classical criteria used for judging the reliability and validity of a quantitative study rest on objectivity which assumes the independence of the knower and that which can be known (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). Positivist and post-positivist traditions uphold the view that the social sciences can yield objective and universally valid truths through following clear, controlled procedures, logical and impartial arguments and analysis that is immune to the interpretation of the researcher (Bergman & Coxon, 2005). Kvale (1995) describes objectivism as “the basic conviction that there exists some permanent, ahistorical matrix or framework to which we can ultimately appeal in determining the nature of knowledge, truth, reality, and goodness” (p. 23). This objective reality is claimed to have an independent existence from the observer and only one correct view of this reality is possible.

Within the paradigm in which the current study is situated, the distinction between positivist research that produces objective facts and postmodern research that produces subjective interpretations is, itself, challenged. Bergman and Coxon (2005) argue that

most fundamentally, any observed 'fact' has already been interpreted at least in the sense that meaning has been assigned to an empirical observation. Description, explanation, prediction, and the assessment of causes and consequences of social phenomena cannot be achieved in the absence of evaluation and interpretation. To understand is to interpret. Most disciplines in the social sciences have long recognised the interplay between context, culture and tradition, our senses, and our understanding...The contextualised research phenomenon and the contextualised researcher contribute in different ways to the impossibility of sensing and describing anything without interpretation (p. 3).

The question, then, is the degree to which the research is willing to acknowledge its own contextualised nature. Research that has made explicit its own situated, relative and partial character has been criticised on two main fronts though. The first has been referred to as "the crisis of representation" and the second "the crisis of legitimation" (Taylor, 2001a, p. 13). An extreme version of the first argues that this situated research results only in knowledge about the world-view of the researcher and not about the world. The postmodern response to this critique is an acknowledgement that indeed research reveals information about the world-view of the researcher (although good quality research should also reveal information about the particular area of the world under scrutiny, as per the following point), but this is not unique to qualitative, contextual, situated research. This is the case in *all* research. This limitation (if one chooses to view it as a limitation) applies to all knowledge and challenges the very idea of reliability, validity and replicability (Taylor, 2001b). The second critique claims that, without an objective reality, there can be no way of evaluating the knowledge obtained. This has been addressed in section 3.5.4 in terms of evaluation of knowledge in relation to social constructionism's ability to allow for multiple perspectives whilst maintaining a realist position. Although an object can afford a variety of meanings, not just any meaning is appropriate or relevant. Although postmodernism rejects the idea of universal truth, there is room for regional, specific, personal and community forms of truth built on local narratives and daily life and language. The concept of validity shifts, then, from being determined by correspondence with objective reality to "defensible knowledge claims" (Kvale, 1995, p. 26). The tension lies between acknowledging that objective and universal knowledge is inaccessible, but that good quality, rigorous and credible research necessarily demands the evaluation of interpretive and subjective findings (Bergman & Coxon, 2005).

Alvesson (2002) offers a view on criteria that are appropriate for judging the quality of a postmodern piece of research. He argues that these criteria include exploring how knowledge claims are supported, firstly, through awareness, care and insightful management of the "production/construction process" (p. 166) and, secondly, through care in interpretation. He posits that what is of importance is the back and forth movement between considering how cultural assumptions, theoretical frameworks, personal subjectivities and language use construct, in qualified ways, a version of reality. What postmodern research cannot escape is "credible empirical material and careful analysis, strong arguments for conclusions, good anchoring in literature and an ability to establish a critical dialogue with other research texts" (Alvesson, 2002, p. 167).

Quality in qualitative research typically refers to the "soundness of the research as a whole" (Flick, 2007, p. 62). Kvale (1995) speaks of the emphasis in the validation of research as having moved "from inspection at the end of the production line to quality control throughout the stages of knowledge production" (p. 27). In terms of examining each stage of the research process, Bergman and Coxon (2005) explore quality in terms of developing the research question, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. Flick (2007) organises

his explanation according to research design, conducting the research and disseminating the findings and this division will be utilised here.

4.9.1 ADDRESSING QUALITY IN THE DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH

Although research topics and questions emerge from meta-theory, judging the validity and reliability of the choice of meta-theory would be fruitless. Quality in the planning of research rests upon explicit and clear reflection on the reasons behind the selection of meta-theory, designs and specific methods (Flick, 2007). Bergman and Coxon (2005) argue for the value of being aware of the specific “ideological baggage” (p. 7) that accompanies meta-theoretical choices as this fosters the potential for self-critical questioning of the limitations rooted in conceptualisations of the research questions (and analysis and interpretation of data). The previous chapter in this dissertation has attempted to do just that.

As discussed earlier, a key characteristic of qualitative research is sensitivity to context. In order to improve the quality of research, this needs to be demonstrated in a number of ways (Smith, 2005). Firstly, the study needs to show how it is located within previously published research (which has been addressed in chapter two). This needs to be done critically, however, as skilled authors are perceived to make authoritative arguments that reinforce specific forms of knowledge (Bergman & Coxon, 2005). Secondly, as mentioned, sensitivity to context needs to be demonstrated in terms of how the study’s methodology is theoretically located (which has been addressed in chapter three). Sensitivity to context relates, thirdly, to how the unfolding argument displays sensitivity to the data itself (which will occur in the following chapters), and fourthly, to how the social and cultural environment of the study, as well as the context of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, has influenced the process and results of the study (which will be explored in more detail in the section on reflexivity in chapter 6).

4.9.2 ADDRESSING QUALITY IN CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH

Considerations here relate both to the collection of data and the analysis thereof. In terms of data collection, Bergman and Coxon (2005) discuss the relevance of both the quality of the instrument used to collect data and the quality of the data obtained. In terms of interviews, they argue that what is of paramount importance is that the questions posed to participants sufficiently address the research question and accurately reflect the topic under investigation. Section 4.5.3 described how this was addressed within this study. In addition to focussing on the pragmatic aspects of the interview as an instrument, the interview is also a complex social event, or, as Alvesson (2002) terms it, a “situated accomplishment” (p. 114). In this sense, then, the quality of research must involve demonstrating an appreciation for the local, contextualised nature of the interview talk and situated identities. The two approaches to discourse analysis utilised in the current study, those proposed by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005) are centrally concerned with a contextual, situated analysis of data.

Also typically under consideration for quality in interview based research is internal consistency. In social constructionist, discursive research, in-depth interviews provide opportunities for examining inconsistencies. The aim is to detect such apparent inconsistencies in the interviews (rather than only noticing and examining them after the interview has been concluded during further analysis) and to explore this through additional probes (Bergman & Coxon, 2005). The concept of race, in particular, entailed inconsistencies in construction within this study and, when relevant, this was further explored during the interviews. This facilitates the process of discourse analysis used in this study that asks questions relating to, for example, how a discourse

reflects on its own way of speaking, connection as a building task of language, and language tools of inquiry such as intertextuality and ‘conversations’.

Flick (2007) describes three dimensions of tension relating to quality within the process of conducting qualitative research. Firstly, quality is produced in the tension between rigour and creativity. Studies should not only generate results that confirm what was initially expected, but should produce new insights, and this may require methodological creativity. In Parker’s (2005) words, “the best research enables surprising things to happen” (p. 58). Secondly, qualitative research also requires both consistency and flexibility. For example, although comparison between interview data may require that questions are posed in a consistent manner, good interviews require flexibility on the part of the researcher to adapt according to the individual participant. Depending on the features of various constructs that participants spoke of as salient, different probes were used in response to this within the interviews. For example, in relation to mothering, if a participant drew on the construct of ‘instinct’ I pursued this further whilst if another discussed breastfeeding I utilised different probes to allow for her to voice her position on that feature of mothering as it was relevant and important to her.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose criteria for establishing the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. Firstly, they consider truth value, relating to how adequately the researcher has represented multiple constructions of truth. The intention of the current research is to present multiple constructions of adoptive and foster mothering that emerged in talk with participants. Although it is acknowledged that the interpretive role of the researcher is key and applies throughout the process of research, accurate and consistent verbatim transcription of data and rigorous, reflexive analysis was carried out in order to ensure quality in the representation of these multiple constructions. Secondly, Lincoln and Guba describe applicability. In order to allow for transferability of findings to other contexts the original investigator needs to provide sufficient descriptive data and the applier needs to accumulate evidence regarding contextual similarity. Clearly the researcher’s role refers to the first task and, in this case, sufficiency of descriptive data has been addressed through the inclusion of all interview transcripts (see Appendix D and the attached CD), an excerpt of the analytic notes demonstrating the process of analysis (see Appendix E) and a full, clear and reflexive description of the entire analytic process (contained in chapter five). The third criterion is consistency. Whereas quantitative studies seek reliability through establishing whether a repetition of the inquiry would yield similar results (which assumes an essential, unchanging reality) the criterion of consistency entails an argument for the dependability of research by taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change. Finally, Lincoln and Guba discuss neutrality, focussing on the confirmability of the data, rather than the ‘objectivity’ of the investigator. This is also addressed in the current study through the rigorous and thorough description of the data and data analysis process as well as through the reflexive stance assumed throughout.

Flick (2007) draws attention to the fact that criteria such as those proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) do not come with “benchmark definitions” (Flick, 2007, p. 65), however. How much credibility should the researcher demonstrate? How much descriptive data is sufficient? The third point of tension therefore lies between applying these criteria where reasonable and possible and using alternative strategies such as triangulation where necessary. Although utilising triangulation in this particular study, for example, adding focus groups as an additional form of data collection, may have further increased the quality of the research,

as mentioned, logistical limitations (such as the highly limited time availability of busy mothers) restricted this possibility.

4.9.3 ADDRESSING QUALITY IN THE DISSEMINATION OF FINDINGS

Good qualitative research should produce useful or important findings and make a contribution in terms of social change (Smith, 2005). In writing a research report, quality is addressed through ensuring transparency and writing in a style that is appropriate for the intended audience. In terms of transparency, the report should be written in a manner that explains clearly how decisions were taken and how the analysis led to the conclusions. According to Flick (2007), a transparent research report will allow the reader to develop a feeling for how the process advanced, how ideas were developed, which ideas were pursued and which were left aside. Readers should be given enough information to decide whether they would have done the same and arrived at the same conclusions as the researcher or not. This dissertation has attempted to provide a clear, transparent account of the entire process of research as well as the findings thereof (as one possible construction of findings) and these will be detailed in the following chapter.

4.9.4 GENERALISABILITY

In quantitative research it is argued that validity and reliability act, together with the representativeness of the sample, in the service of being able to generalise results. Generalisability refers to the drawing of inferences from single observations to more general formulations that can be applied in future situations (Mayring, 2007). Qualitative, idiographic research is often regarded as producing findings that are not generalisable beyond the context or cases studied (Willig, 2008). A number of authors challenge this notion and explore ways in which the idea of generalisation can be conceptualised in qualitative research. Willig explains that, even in a case study (of an individual, group, organisation or community), where understanding the internal dynamics of the case is the goal, we are still likely to want to be able to generalise the findings to a certain extent. Even though this particular study is investigating how a relatively small number of women construct mothering, it is hoped that the findings may have some implications for other women's journeys in adoptive and foster mothering, and may inform aspects of biological mothering as well. Willig (2008) addresses this by explaining that

even though, strictly speaking, we cannot generalise from small-scale qualitative research of this type, it could be argued that, if a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalism.

Thus, even though we do not know who or how many people share a particular experience, once we have identified it through qualitative research, we do know that it is available within a culture or society (p. 17).

Accumulative techniques are also viewed as contributing to the generalisability of qualitative studies. Observations made in one context are compared to observations from other contexts and different findings are reviewed in relation to each other and integrated (Willig, 2008).

Mayring (2007) contends that the goal of generalisation needs to be approached through specification of aims and methods. The aims of generalisation may be one of the following: universal laws; statistical laws; rules (more general, theoretical statements, which can have exceptions); context specific statements (relationships or rules which are relevant under particular, similar circumstances); recording differences and similarities between a number of observations by systematic comparisons; descriptive studies (that collect observations in order to pave the way for the formulation of rules or similarities); explorative studies (that

develop statements that can be tested for generality in further studies); and generalisation of procedures rather than results.

The eight methods of generalisation, according to Mayring (2007), range from analysis of the total population, falsification of general laws and the use of randomised, stratified and larger samples to argumentative generalisation, theoretical sampling, seeking typical material, examining variation of the phenomena, triangulation and comparative literature analysis. Thus, Mayring's discussion highlights that the criteria of generalisation should not be applied as a blanket concept, inapplicable to qualitative research. Rather, qualitative research should make explicit the specific aims and procedures used in order to clarify intentions and possible applications of findings.

The current study draws on aspects of Mayring's (2007) last three aims: providing a descriptive account (although the research aims to offer a reflexive description of social constructionist research); offering explorative findings (that contribute to additional perspectives on adoptive and foster mothering); and generalisation in terms of procedures (the potential generalisability of discourse analysis will be discussed in further detail in the following paragraph). The methods of generalisation that were employed in the present study included seeking typical material (through purposive sampling) and examining variation of the phenomena (in terms of variation in the social construction of meaning).

Goodman (2008) explores generalisability in discursive research specifically. He discusses, firstly, how interpretive repertoires have been viewed as "generalisable linguistic resources" (p. 267) as they form a shared basis for social understanding. The very nature of discourse involves a shared pool of socially constructed meaning (just as there are generalised rules of conversation). Although participants also construct individual meaning and may engage with discourses in individual ways, discourses uncovered are *social* discourses and are, therefore, generalisable. Secondly, discourse is social action. Generalisability can therefore be explored in relation to analysis of the social action that is being performed by a certain text, for example, blaming or remembering. Goodman (2008) argues that discursive findings, therefore, can reveal "generalisable actions performed by a rhetorical strategy" (p. 268). Goodman uses the example of how people justify prejudice through demonstrating how the same discursive strategies are drawn upon in a range of settings and in relation to a variety of issues. In this sense, discursive research is generalisable. He clarifies that

this type of generalisability is different to quantitative generalisability. This type of generalisability reflects the rich and ideological nature of language. The flexible and indexical nature of language use means that we require a flexible form of generalisability to understand it. To claim that discursive findings are generalisable, it is not necessary to resort to quantitative measures of significance values or to make predictions as to when a particular strategy will be used (p. 272).

In order to make a claim of generalisability in discourse analytic research, five features need to be present (Goodman, 2008). Firstly, a "rhetorical accomplishment" (p. 272) should be shown to be achieved through a discursive strategy. Secondly, this strategy should be identified as bringing about the same accomplishment in a variety of conversational settings. Thirdly, if this is the case, the strategy can be considered to be a "successful strategy" (p. 272). Fourthly, as successful strategies will be employed in a range of settings by a range of speakers, it is a "generalisable example of an action performed by a rhetorical strategy" (p. 272). Fifthly, we bear in mind that oppositions to successful strategies invariably evolve. In relation to the current study, through utilising the approaches to discourse analysis proposed by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992,

2005) that emphasise discourse as language in use, rhetorical accomplishments were sought. Multiple conversational settings were investigated, involving adoptive mothers and foster mothers caring for children in a range of contexts (including same-race and transracial relationships, short-term care and long-term care, in conjunction with biological mothering and in the absence of concurrent biological mothering). In this way “successful strategies” (Goodman, 2008, p. 272) were sought, allowing for generalisable actions to be identified, taking into account that these may change over time.

4.10 REFLEXIVITY

Discursive strategies utilised in encounters such as interviews are the products of both the participant and the researcher (as the participant and researcher are also the products of these strategies). Generalising the success of rhetorical accomplishments on the basis of occurrence in a range of settings still requires detailed analysis of the settings in which they emerged (bearing in mind the complexity of this emergence (Sawyer, 2005)). A foundational feature of the above discussion on research quality is the acknowledgment of the study’s situated nature. Key to this is reflexivity.

Davies (1992) explains that concepts such as “‘masculinity’ and ‘science’ gain much of their status through their claims to positionless ‘truth’; that is, a truth that, no matter who one is or where one stands, would still be the same” (p. 54). However, any knowledge claim reveals as much about the language use and beliefs of the researcher as it does about that which is being studied (Alvesson, 2002). Impartiality is an impossible pursuit when knowledge is produced by humans for humans (Hurtado, 2010). These statements form a foundation to what is understood by the term reflexivity. It has been argued that this is the defining feature of qualitative research (Finlay, 2002a). How reflexivity is conceptualised, however, (in simple terms: what it is, what it means, what it does and how to do it) varies, sometimes subtly, across research perspectives. These serve different purposes and bring different worlds into view (MacBeth, 2001). Broadly, notions of reflexivity have developed from standpoint theory, critical theory, textual deconstruction, and anthropological and sociological perspectives on agency, power and knowledge (MacBeth, 2001). Different approaches to reflexivity are not always distinct and can be combined in practice (Stronach, Garratt, Pearce, & Piper, 2007).

As an introductory comment to the subject of reflexivity, Alvesson’s (2002) comparison between a simple version of research and a postmodern approach to a more complex version of research is relevant. In a simple version, (a) collection of data is followed by (b) the production of transcripts, (c) structuring of the data, (d) analysis and further data reduction, (e) creating a logical and ordered report which is (f) finally written up as a text. Alvesson challenges this understanding of the research process by arguing that a far more complex process takes place. Influencing, driving and forming the data collection include issues such as the theoretical, political and philosophical alliances of the researcher, the expectations of the participants, and relationships between researcher and participants. Analysis is influenced by struggles over the construction of categories and established academic conventions and writing up results is informed by language use, politics, expectations concerning the authority and persuasiveness of findings. Alvesson holds that

the final result – the text – is an outcome of a multitude of processes, involving a set of complexities that cannot be handled in a rational and objective manner. One could argue that one, some or all of the other elements take over and make a stronger input to the final text than the reality it is supposed to inform the reader about (p. 8).

Boje, Luhman, and Baack (1999) speak of “coming out from behind the safe and comfortable mask of [the] third person hegemonic voice” (p. 356). Letherby (2003) explains that “when we use ‘I’ we question traditional styles of academic writing where ‘we’, ‘the author’ and ‘he’ are meant to represent distance and objectivity” (p. 7). Self-disclosure of this nature requires a degree of vulnerability. Subjectivity is a term that is frequently encountered in literature concerning reflexivity, across a range of different perspectives. Pillow (2003) describes researcher subjectivity as involving questions such as “how does who I am, who I have been, who I think I am, and how I feel affect data collection and analysis?” (p. 176). Subjectivity is not simply viewed as a resource in qualitative research, but it is our reflexive engagement in the research that transforms the “merely subjective’ into a self-consciously and deliberately assumed position” (Parker, 2005, p. 26). Peshkin (1998) explains that

researchers should systematically seek out their subjectivity, not respectively when the data have been collected and the analysis is complete, but while their research is actively in progress. The purpose of doing so is to enable researchers to be aware of how their subjectivity may be shaping their inquiry and its outcomes (p. 17).

It is argued that, when subjectivity remains unconscious, the personal stakes of the researcher are insinuated and reinforced (Peshkin, 1998).

Fine (1998) discusses what she terms “working the hyphen” (p. 130) between Self-Other, the hyphen that both merges and separates identities. She criticises research that presumes to describe the Other from a ‘neutral’, invisible position that carries no body, race, gender, class or voice, thereby dismissing the hyphen. She argues that

when we look, get involved, demur, analyse, interpret, probe, speak, remain silent, walk away, organise for outrage, or sanitise our stories, and when we construct our texts in or on their words, we decide how to nuance our relations with/for/despite those who have been deemed Others (p. 139).

She surveys research that ceases to attempt to ‘know’ the Other or to ‘give a voice’ to the Other, but rather listens to the “plural voices of those Othered, as constructors and agents of knowledge” (p. 140). She argues that, in order to do this, we need to locate ourselves as researchers as gendered, classed, raced and sexual subjects and negotiate our positions in relationships of dominance.

MacBeth (2001) explains that the various perspectives on reflexivity flow from differences in how the relationship between properties of represented objects and our systems of representation are perceived. An apparently straightforward reflexivity typology is presented by Willig (2008). She refers to two types of reflexivity: personal reflexivity and epistemological reflexivity. Personal reflexivity entails a reflection upon the manner in which the researcher’s beliefs, values, experiences, life goals, political affiliations and social identities form the research. This type of reflexivity also involves examining how the research transforms the researcher. Epistemological reflexivity involves critically examining how the design of the study, and the research questions, enable and limit what can and cannot be ‘uncovered’ as well as how the design and analysis have created both the data and the findings. This form of reflexivity asks how the research questions could have been explored differently and the potential impact which this could have had on the understanding of the phenomenon. Although offering a step towards understanding and writing about reflexivity, I propose that Willig’s guidelines offer an over-simplistic binary: researcher/research. With regards to this particular

study, the more I attempted to process reflexivity, the more difficult (and unhelpful) it became to separate reflexivity that operated at a 'personal' level and reflexivity that operated at an 'epistemological' level.

Another typology is offered by Finlay (2002a). She defines reflexivity broadly as "explicit self-aware meta-analysis" (p. 209) and explores five "variants" or "maps" (p. 212) of reflexivity: introspection; intersubjective reflection; mutual collaboration; social critique; and discursive deconstruction. When reflexivity functions as introspection, the (often more phenomenologically oriented) researcher's intuiting, thinking, reflecting and reacting are utilised as primary evidence. The researcher explores his/her own experiences and meaning making for their own sake and "insights can emerge from personal introspection which then form the basis of more generalised understanding and interpretations" (Finlay, 2002a, p. 214). This is the challenge: to move beyond mere subjectivity as an end in itself and to be explicit about the links between personal experiences (of the participants and the researcher), knowledge claims and the social context.

Reflexivity as intersubjective reflection (which could be used within a range of research approaches including phenomenological, psychodynamically oriented, and even discourse analysis) involves the exploration of mutual meanings that emerge within the research relationship. This relationship is considered to be negotiated and situated. In other words, the "self-in-relation-to-others becomes both the aim and object of the focus" (Finlay, 2002a, p. 216).

Reflexivity as mutual collaboration is also employed in a range of research paradigms. Here, the research is viewed as a "co-constituted account" (Finlay, 2002a, p. 218). Research participants are also viewed as reflexive participants and as co-researchers. In the least, participants' interpretations inform how the researcher confronts and modifies his/her own interpretations. A more complete application of this variant of reflexivity would involve cycles of mutual experience and reflection between researcher and participants. Finlay notes that

While these studies are to be valued for their collaborative, democratic, inclusive spirit, critics reject the pronounced element of compromise and negotiation which could potentially 'water down' the insights of single researchers. In reply, collaborative researchers argue that dialogue within a group allows members to move beyond their preconceived theories and subjective biases towards representing multiple voices (p. 219).

Reflexivity as social critique is used by researchers concerned with the power imbalance between participant and researcher, particularly influenced by differing social positions. This variant of reflexivity is used particularly by social constructionist and feminist researchers (although it has been used in other kinds of research as well, for example, phenomenological studies). Parker (1992) emphasises that reflexivity can only effectively connect the individual and the social if it takes into account the political nature and function of the connection. Reflexivity as social critique offers the potential to situate experiential accounts within theoretical frameworks concerning the social construction of power. This type of reflexivity also acknowledges multiple and shifting positions between researcher and participant. Critics caution, however, that such focus on negotiation and egalitarianism can, paradoxically, lay claim to further authority. Parker argues that we cannot escape discourse. Although reflecting on what we speak, write and do is necessary, reflexivity cannot "dissolve discourse" (Parker, 1992, p. 21).

In response, the fifth variant of reflexivity (largely postmodern, poststructuralist and social constructionist) focuses on the ambiguity and multiplicity of meanings in language through discursive deconstruction. The

concern here is also on reflexive accounts as being themselves texts open to deconstruction (Riley, Schouton, & Cahill, 2003). A reflexive account is one of many versions of the experiences and processes that occurred during the research. As opposed to being a reflection then, a reflexive account can be conceived of as a new construction. Riley et al. highlight that,

as a version rather than a reflection of reality, a reflexive account can be interrogated as a text and analysed for the constructions that make it meaningful. This meaning making is understood as embedded within power relations that occur in the research process (p. 42).

This position resonates in many ways with the approaches to reflexivity assumed by Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005). Parker (1992) discusses reflexivity as the process of examining both ourselves and our language through which we signify our conscious awareness of our role and of our similarity and difference in relation to others. This awareness of self needs to operate particularly in relation to the researcher's (co)-construction of meanings throughout the research process, including the design of the study. Gee (2005) explores reflexivity as having to do with how meaning is "situated in actual contexts of use" (p. 97). Language simultaneously reflects and constructs language and in this sense language and context act like two mirrors facing each other and reflecting their own images. Researchers therefore need to ask how and why they use particular words in particular situations and also how the situation was deemed to be so due to the words that were used. Davies et al. (2004) describe reflexivity as implying

A critical consciousness of the discourses that hold us in place, that is, a capacity to distance ourselves from them at the same time as we are constituted by them, a capacity to see the work they do and to question their effects at the same time as we live those effects. This does not mean that one is outside of language or floating free of discourse. It means, rather, that the possibility exists of reflexively turning the gaze of language on itself (p. 380).

After consideration of the above, the definition of reflexivity guiding the position assumed in the current research is one offered by MacBeth (2001): reflexivity is "a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself" (p. 35). This definition is characterised by the idea of intersection, and deconstruction of this self-other-text-context intersection involves critical self-reflection, critical examination of relational and contextual dynamics and positions and a deconstruction of the text produced. This was engaged with throughout the research process in making explicit the motivations behind the study's conceptualisation and design, in reflecting critically on the literature reviewed, in an examination of the role of the interviewer in the social construction of interview data and in the analysis thereof.

MacBeth (2001) begins his discussion of reflexivity by exploring positional reflexivity. Positional reflexivity is concerned with the position and positioning of the researcher in the world. Section 3.7 in the previous chapter presented the concept of positioning. Positional reflexivity, specifically, refers to the "disciplined view and articulation of one's analytically situated self" (MacBeth, 2001, p. 38). Marcus (1998) cautions against the practice of positioning remaining only a form of positional identity pronouncement which then merely reinforces existing politically correct concepts and identities. In addition he encourages engagement with the following kinds of questions:

- How does the author position her/himself?

- How does the text position itself through the use of certain themes, through its relations with other texts which give it its meaning? (This may not align with the responses to the first question)
- How is this a gendered text?
- Within what kind of racial milieu does this text position itself?

These questions were persistently wrestled with throughout the process of research. The final chapter in this dissertation presents a description of the engagement with these questions (in section 6.4). The concern that MacBeth (2001) levels against positional reflexivity is that the reflexive task is still carried out by the “sceptical-analytic ego” (p. 41). In other words, as articulated more clearly by Davies et al. (2004, p. 361), “the consciousness of self that reflexive writing requires may be seen to imply the very self that contradicts the focus on the constitutive power of discourse and on the necessarily shifting and fragmented nature of the (always) discursively constituted subject”. Reflexive research can be seen to demand a critique of the presence of the subject of the researcher whilst discursive textual analysis deconstructs the self. In other words the subject of the researcher both exists and does not exist. Davies et al. explain that this is a conundrum, much greater than the puzzle of being the gazer and simultaneously the object gazed upon:

If the gaze is understood as constitutive, and if we are foregrounding the insufficiencies of language and the production of meaning-effects, producing truth as a problem, then the object gazed at (oneself as subject and oneself as the conductor of the reflexive gaze) is a slippery object indeed (p. 362).

Davies et al. (2004) speak to this confusion by reminding their readers that both Butler and Derrida did not, in fact, claim destruction of the subject. Deconstruction is not obliteration. The subject is understood as always inscribed in language and the focus lies upon the construction and political meaning of the subject. The self is no longer a noun, but a verb, continuously in process. Poststructuralism allows the subject to see itself as multiple, contradictory and shifting as well as to see the continuous, constitutive forces of discourses through which it assumes its existence. In other words,

the self who carries out research and the self who is the subject of the researcher’s gaze is thus not denied in this model, but neither is it made central or separate: It is there, *as an effect of discourse*, and it is an important presence in any research (and thus important to be acknowledged) (p. 364).

The subject—as an effect of multiple discourses—can be understood as examining and being examined without reverting to the notion of prediscursive, unified self.

MacBeth (2001) also discusses textual reflexivity. All textual reflexivity is also positional in that authors are automatically involved in the exercise, which he explains as involving reflexive analysis of the text as it is produced. In textual reflexivity the disruption of realist representations is written into the text itself. Is the focus of reflexivity, then, reflexive critique of the positioned (multiple, constructed) self or the text? Davies et al. (2004) explore the notion that the self (whilst remaining an embodied subject) is given birth to within the writing of the text. In other words, “the texts are thus oneselves, and oneselves are there, embodied in the texts—able to be written and read in multiple ways” (p. 365). Chapter six in this dissertation, particularly, provides reflexive reflection upon both the text and the ‘self’ of the author and the ways in which these co-constructed each other. My positions as psychology student/researcher, woman, mother, adoptive mother, and as White were salient with regards to feeding my creation of this text and they were constructed and reconstructed through the text itself.

4.11 CONCLUSION

The synthesised approach to discourse analysis utilised in this study weaves together the work of Gee (2005) and Parker (1992, 2005), drawing from both linguistics and social theory. This form of data analysis is situated within a qualitative methodology which values context, advocates holistic investigations of phenomena and can contain multiple layers of meaning. This chapter has provided a description of the methodology used to design and conduct the research, including detailed explanations of sampling (through purposive and snowball techniques), data collection (in the form of in-depth interviews) and data preparation (through the verbatim transcription of audio recorded interviews). Research quality was then explored. It is acknowledged that this study is situated, partial and contextual. This does not validate conclusions on grounds of relativism. According to Kvale (1996), the qualitative researcher's task is the production of "defensible knowledge claims" (p. 26). The role of the current chapter in building this defense has included an explanation of how the methodology is theoretically located; an argument for the quality of the sampling procedure and data collection tool, namely the in-depth interview (as a situated, co-constructed practice), guided by questions posed to participants that sufficiently address the research question, accurately reflect the topic, and allow for the production of new insights and the exploration of inconsistencies. Central to the establishment of qualitative research quality is reflexivity. This chapter described how the present study utilises MacBeth's (2001) definition of reflexivity as "a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself" (p. 35). This reflexive conversation will continue throughout the remaining chapters, particularly in the closing chapter.

Chapter five presents the findings of the data analysis. These findings are also discussed within this following chapter. As mentioned in chapter one, within the explanation of the structuring of this dissertation, research reports presenting research that utilises discourse analysis are frequently structured somewhat differently to traditional psychology theses (Harper et al., 2008). Based on pragmatic decisions, chapters may be written in a different order and, instead of merely listing all the discourses that emerged from the data, specific features of interest may be highlighted. Discourses and constructs that emerged through the process of analysis of the interviews could be woven together into three strands. In fact this interweaving appeared crucial to a coherent understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, instead of writing two chapters separating findings and the discussion thereof, the combination of these appeared to offer a helpful structuring of meaning in relation to acknowledging the complexity of and interrelations between discursive themes whilst containing these intricacies in a clear, logical format. The following chapter thus presents the discourses and constructs that emerged through the discourse analysis of the interviews through three main arguments.

CHAPTER FIVE

Findings and Discussion

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will present the findings of the data analysis, in relation to participants' constructions of mothering and in terms of how these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering. However, as I explore these processes in detail, three chief conclusions emerge and I suggest that they offer contributions to the areas of adoptive mothering, foster mothering and mothering in general. The first relates to a mechanism of *how* the ideology of intensive mothering operates through the manner in which it constructs *natural mothering* and *good mothering* (how natural mothering enables good mothering and how the good mother is viewed as able to mother naturally). The second conclusion reached is that ambivalence is a key component of the constructions of adoptive and foster mothers. Thirdly, I conclude that, despite the clear resistance shown by participants to many features of the ideology of intensive mothering, despite the fact that adoptive and foster mothering is, by its very nature, fundamentally resistant to many dominant discourses that hold this particular one in place, and despite participants' frequently expressed ambivalent relationship to this discourse, the queen of the ideology of intensive mothering remains intact. The good mother walks away from this thesis unscathed. At times she is stretched a little and troubled to a degree, but deconstructed she is not. I develop a proposition for why this might be the case. My goal is not to argue that there should be no grounds upon which to assess mothering practices that may be beneficial to children and mothers and mothering practices that may be detrimental to children and mothers. My intent, rather, is to deconstruct the singular, prescriptive, and contextually resistant construct of the quintessential good mother that is formed through the operations of the ideology of intensive mothering.

This chapter will begin with a brief description of each of the participants. This will be followed by a presentation of the ways in which participants engaged in construction and how they reflected upon this construction. This involved 12 main construction 'activities' as well as six other aspects of discursive reflection. Ten overarching discourses that emerged within the data will then be identified as well as eight constructs operating within these discourses. The chapter will then proceed with an in-depth discussion of the three arguments mentioned above which will integrate an exploration of the discourses and constructs identified. This is prefaced with a description of the manner in which participants engaged with the constructs of adoption and fostering particularly (these are two of the eight main constructs identified in the data) as this provides a contextual framework.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS

Due to the extremely rich nature of the data, saturation was reached after 21 interviews had been conducted. Table 5.1 presents an overview of the participants' general information. 'F' refers to 'female' and 'AP' refers to 'at placement'. Nine participants are mothering adopted children and biological children; five are mothering an adopted child / adopted children only; two are fostering only; one participant is mothering a biological child, an adopted child and mothered foster children in the past; one is mothering an adopted child and foster children; one is mothering an adopted child, foster children and was pregnant at the time of the interview; one is mothering a biological child, an adopted child and step-children; and one is mothering foster children and

biological children. Their children range in age from two months to 26 years old. All participants in this study who are raising adopted children are doing so in the context of closed adoptions. All participants who are fostering children are doing so in the context of legally formalised foster care (as opposed to informal foster care). The specific type of adoption or fostering engaged in by participants was not stipulated at the outset. These features of the sample emerged due to the nature of the adoption and fostering contexts of the participants who were identified (according to the sampling criteria listed in section 4.4) and who volunteered to participate. Two participants are Black (KN and AN) and 19 are White. This racial imbalance is a limitation of the study (and will be discussed further in the following chapter). More variation in the race and in the cultural identification of participants would have been preferable in order to explore the manner in which this may (or may not) relate to discursive patterns regarding mothering. Four participants are mothering fostered and/or adopted children of the same race (as constructed by participants) as themselves and 17 are mothering fostered and/or adopted children of a different race. Fourteen participants are married, three are divorced, three are single and one is co-habiting. Eight participants are not employed, four are employed part-time, seven are employed full-time in jobs unrelated to their children's care, two are employed full-time as foster mothers within a children's home.

Table 5.1: Participant information

No.	Initials	Marital status	Race	Biological children	Step children	Adopted children	Foster children
1	DL	Divorced	White	-	-	1. F; Black; 11 yrs; 2 days AP 2. F; Black; 8 yrs; 3 mnths AP 3. F; Black; 5 yrs; 2 mnths AP 4. F; Black; 5 yrs; 2 mnths AP	-
2	TN	Married	White	1. M; 22 yrs	-	1. F; Black; 12 yrs; 3 mnths AP	5 in total; M & F; (last fostered 5 yrs ago); birth - 6 mnths
3	KN	Married	Black	1. F; 14 mnths 2. M; 2 mnths	-	-	1. F; 20 yrs; 14 yrs AP 2. M; 19 yrs; 12 yrs AP 3. F; 16 yrs; 9 yrs AP
4	UC	Married	White	1. M; 2 yrs	-	1. M; Black; 3 yrs; 5 mnths AP	-
5	OS	Married	White	1. M; 12 yrs 2. M; 10 yrs	-	1. F; Black; 3 yrs; 7 mnths AP	-
6	KM	Single	White	-	-	1. M; 2 yrs; adopted at 2, previously fostered	1. F; Black; 9 wks; 3 wks AP 2. F; Black; 7 mnths; 6 mnths AP 3. F; Black; 7 mnths; 7 mnths AP
7	IR	Married	White	-	-	-	1. M; Black; 4 yrs; 1 yr AP
8	CT	Single	White	-	-	1. F; Black; 10 mnths; 6 mnths	-
9	NF	Married	White	1. F; 14 yrs 2. M; 12 yrs	-	1. M; Black; 3 yrs; 3 mnths	-
10	NU	Divorced	White	1. F; 26 yrs 2. F; 23 yrs 3. F; 20 yrs 4. F; 14 yrs	-	1. F; White; 13 yrs; 1 yr AP	-

No.	Initials	Marital status	Race	Biological children	Step children	Adopted children	Foster children
11	BD	Married	White	1. M; 8 yrs 2. M; 6 yrs		1. M; Black; 5 yrs; 5 mnths 2. F; Black; 3 yrs; 2 mnths	-
12	CF	Co-habiting	White			1. F; Black; 4 yrs; 1 yr AP	-
13	BH	Single	White	-		-	1. M; Black; 4 yrs; 3 yrs AP 2. F; Black; 5 yrs; 2 yrs AP 3. F; Black; 5 yrs; 2 yrs AP 4. F; Black; 6 yrs; 3 yrs AP 5. M; Black; 5 yrs; 2 yrs AP 6. M; Black; 6 yrs; 3 yrs AP 7. M; Black; 8 yrs; 5 yrs AP 8. F; Black; 8 yrs; 5 yrs AP 9. F; Black; 9 yrs; 6 yrs AP 10. F; Black; 11 yrs; 8 yrs AP 11. F; Black; 11 yrs; 8 yrs AP 12. M; Black; 9 yrs; 6 yrs AP
14	DC	Married	White			1. F; White; 16 yrs; birth AP 2. M; White; 11 yrs; birth AP	-
15	EW	Married	White	1. F; 19 yrs	1. F; White; 22 yrs 2. M; White; 19 yrs	1. F; Black; 18 yrs; 1 yr 3 mnths AP	-
16	LL	Married	White	(pregnant)	-	1. M; Black; 2 yrs; 18 mnths AP	1. M; Black; 3 yrs; 2 yrs AP 2. M; Black; 14 mnths; 8 wks AP 3. M; Black; 10 mnths; 9 mnths AP
17	DN	Married	White	1. M; 5 yrs	-	1. F; Black; 7 yrs; 3 wks AP	-
18	DD	Married	White	1. M; 6 yrs 2. M; 4 yrs	-	1. F; Black; 3 yrs; 11 mnths AP	-

No.	Initials	Marital status	Race	Biological children	Step children	Adopted children	Foster children
19	AN	Divorced	Black	-	-	1. M; Black; 6 years; 6 mnths AP	-
20	DE	Married	White	1. M; 4 yrs	-	1. M; Black; 7 yrs; 6 wks AP	-
21	MB	Married	White	1. F; 7 yrs	-	1. F; Coloured; 18 mnths; 3 wks AP	-

5.3 THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION

Many of the 21 women interviewed not only evoked particular constructions related to adoptive and foster mothering but they also spoke about *how* they engage in construction. Twelve main construction ‘activities’ emerged (sections 5.3.1.1 to 5.3.1.12), as well as six other aspects of discursive reflection (sections 5.3.2.1 to 5.3.2.6). Direct quotes that are included from the interview transcripts are referenced in relation to the interview number and the line number within that particular interview. For example, 6:17 would refer to a quote from interview number 6 (Table 5.1 indicates that interview 6 refers to the interview with OS) and line 17 from that interview transcript. The full interview transcripts are included as appendices (one in Appendix D and the rest on the attached CD).

5.3.1 THE ACTIVITY OF CONSTRUCTION

Participants engage in the following forms of meaning making relating to mothering:

5.3.1.1 TALKING WITH FRIENDS (IN GENERAL)

In women’s talk with one another collaborative construction takes place. One of the participants, OS, made the following statement: “most of my friends are mothers so that gives us that common link and we support each other and chat about our concerns and frustrations and things like that” (5:178). Participants spoke of friendships as a vehicle for giving advice and for learning, and of the value of a shared discursive space. NF commented on the function of friendships between mothers as offering opportunities for “getting together and saying ‘so we’re all in this boat’” (9:892).

5.3.1.2 TALKING WITH FRIENDS WHO HAVE ADOPTED

Participants who are adoptive mothers spoke specifically about the function of talking with friends who have also adopted. This space provides opportunities for the exploration of issues related to adoption such as: “are you struggling with them being a boy ‘cause it’s a boy or are you struggling because it’s a Black, adopted boy?” (5:338). However, participants also specifically mentioned that when adoptive mothers talk to one another this talk does not only entail matters relating to adoption, but also “day to day kids’ stuff” (11:452).

5.3.1.3 TALKING TO OTHER PEOPLE WHO HAVE HAD SIMILAR EXPERIENCES

Participants spoke of using talk with others who have had similar experiences in order to glean advice and form meaning through seeing what ‘worked’ for others. For example, EW said

Ja, just to see their experiences and if somebody does say something really horrible to them how they reacted to it or, you know, maybe they made a mistake the first time and they thought about it and did it differently the second time and it worked or, ja, just to maybe cope with the family.

Families may reject you and the child and you may need to know ‘what do I do now?’ or things like that, ja (15:471).

Participants used this kind of talk to voice their experiences in a space that they experience as supportive. EW also commented: “fortunately for us we do belong to a church where there are quite a few families that do adopt so we could go to any of them and say ‘this is what’s been happening to me’” (15:495). Participants also use talk with others who have similar experiences in order to construct their own situation as ‘normal’. CF, an adoptive mother, said,

Because I think you see, like where you, where maybe there've been things that you've thought about or you hear other people's stories and you think oh, it's, you kind of feel ok, there are other people out there, you know, with maybe like the same things...I often maybe chat to people like K about things. And just like to hear ok that's how she's got on and kind of like it's the same thing for me (12:447).

5.3.1.4 TALKING WITH THEIR HUSBANDS

Participants spoke both about mutual meaning making between themselves and their spouses and about instances where there were differences in construction of meaning (specifically relating to the decision to adopt). For example, DN commented:

we had very different reasons for adoption, if you looked at the core of it, and very different, uh, I think parameters. Like what do you call it? Like risk profile. I was like, I'm happy, whatever baby. And he was a lot more cautious about it (17:54).

She then said "Um, subsequently my reasons have changed...Um, and, um, my reasons have changed in that I've probably moved a lot closer to him and I'm not sure that he's moved closer..." (17:66).

5.3.1.5 TALKING AS A FAMILY

DL spoke of how she and her transracially adopted daughters talk together about issues such as race:

I can see with my kids, they just don't care, talk about it all the time. We talk about them being Black, me White, their friends will talk about it, they'll talk about their White mother. It just, because it's, that's how we've always been, so there's no other way to react. It's not like I have to defend anything, they don't have to defend anything. What is there to defend? So it's that kind of, being totally at peace with the fact that I *am* their mother, and that's not gonna change. It's not. It's just the way it is (1:322).

5.3.1.6 CONSULTING PEOPLE CONSIDERED TO HAVE EXPERT KNOWLEDGE / WHO ONE TRUSTS

Meaning is constructed through talking with trusted and respected sources, for example, a child psychologist (4:693) or the head of a support group (4:747). According to UC, "you won't just take advice from anyone off the street" (4:739). CF explained that she did not want to contact a woman who she understood was the head of the children's home for advice as she "hadn't build up any relationship with her" (12:455).

5.3.1.7 THROUGH NARRATIVES

As OS discussed the topic of talking to her daughter about adoption she said, "I've been using stories and trying to relate it to her in that way" (5:321). SM spoke of her own experience of adoption contrasting the narratives presented to her:

She fits in with the family more than I imagined she would. Um, it's easier. It's so much easier than I ever imagined it would be. 'Cause I've always heard horror stories about adoption, and you always see these horror movies, you know, and it's always traumatic (2:117).

BD expressed that she would like to have more access to story books that she could read to her adopted children that would assist her in constructing meaning for them (11:419). BH spoke of reading narratives through online blogs (13:671). However, in this regard, DD stated that she lacked access to the stories of others, saying: "that's where I just felt there was nothing. I'm not big on online forums and stuff, I don't know, maybe there's blogs out there, I don't know, but nothing that came easily" (18:462).

5.3.1.8 DRAWING ON DISCOURSES OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES / SPIRITUAL BELIEF

Participants drew on discourses of religious belief in order to construct meaning related to a number of aspects of adopting and/or fostering. For many, this informed their decision-making process (related to whether to adopt and which child to adopt in particular). The following offer examples of this: “we are Christians and we prayed about it” (4:20); “religion’s a big thing for us so we prayed about it and prayed that the right child would be brought to us...so when we met her there was no overwhelming sense of no, this is not the child for you, so it was kind of how can we say no?” (18:151); and “adopting was God’s idea” (2:8). AN related a conversation with a social worker concerning choosing between two children to adopt:

So I just didn’t know how to choose so, I, by the way don’t even go to church, but then I said ‘can I just pray between now and Wednesday (laughs) and then on Wednesday can you choose one for me, then I’ll come and pick him up on Friday?’ (19:82).

This discourse also shaped the meaning of adoption: “Um, it’s like being adopted into God’s family, you can’t, you know, you can’t, He won’t ever let you go” (11:477). CT made the following comment:

I was helping out with youth and M used their adoption certificate of D to illustrate adoption in Christianity and how we are adopted into the family through Christ. And it’s those words ‘as if of my blood’ and that has always been, that has stuck with me. And that is what shapes why I say just copy and paste because she, it’s as if I bore her anyway. That’s where it is for me. So, I think that’s one of the biggest things that shapes my view of adoption and my relationship to B (8:346).

Participants also used a religious discourse to construct meaning related to relationships with extended family, constructions of womanhood, and caring for a child with HIV. The following quote by EW illustrates how this discourse was used to construct meanings of mothering particularly: “As my Christianity has developed, because I’ve been a Christian for ten years I’ve learned a lot, I’ve matured in that perspective as well and how to mother and how to parent so yes it has changed for me” (15:270). She also draws on this discourse within her construction of meanings of race:

It would depend on what she asks me and I would probably refer her to the Bible and to God about what does the Bible say? No-one’s any better or worse or anybody’s any different. God made us all different, there are different races in the Bible (15:426).

There were also instances where participants resisted certain ways in which others drew on religious meaning to construct aspects of adoption, choosing to interpret meaning differently. LL, for example, made the following comment:

I mean, a lot of people told us ‘but you won’t know how to love your own child, you know, you won’t be able to love him ‘cause you don’t know how to love your own child yet and you should give birth to your own child first’. And now I can be a light to them ‘cause now I’m talking about how I can’t imagine loving this child I’m about to birth as much as I love my son. ‘Cause it’s like, to me my love for him is so strong I just can’t imagine loving another child as much as this. So it’s, you know, they had that worldly mindset that they thought was from God that they thought they were telling us, they thought God, and I’m like ‘God’s the one who shows us how to love’. It’s not, however we get our children we’re going to love them through God’s love not through our own (16:483).

LL, who has an adopted child who is HIV positive, considered the possibility of losing her child to the illness and how this may impact on her belief system. She said, “‘Lord will I still be able to still, you know, come to you?’ How will I be able to deal with that?” (16:610). This discourse informs how she makes sense of mothering, however, experiences of mothering and competing discourses offering alternate views of what could be considered right, just and fair would also inform how she engages with this religious discourse.

5.3.1.9 DISCUSSION WITH THE BIRTHMOTHER

IR, a foster mother who is in contact with the child’s birthmother, explained that “If there was an issue specifically about race we would go and speak to his mom and we would talk to him together” (7:278). Other participants involved in foster mothering did not have contact with the children’s birthparents. Participants in the study who are adoptive parents mother in the context of closed adoptions (or ‘confidential adoptions’), as opposed to open adoptions (or ‘fully disclosed adoptions’) or semi-open (or ‘mediated’) adoptions in which there would be contact – varying in extensiveness – with birthparents (Grotevant, 2000). Increased interactions between foster parents and biological parents, particularly, has been proposed in literature as being possibly beneficial to foster children and biological families although this has yet to be soundly empirically investigated (Linares, Montalto, Li, & Oza, 2006).

5.3.1.10 IN RELATION TO DISCURSIVE FRAMEWORKS CONSTRUCTED THROUGH SOCIALISATION AND UPBRINGING

The discourses that were imparted to participants during their upbringing inform meanings related to having children and how to raise children. CT commented,

But I don’t know if that was something that was socialised into me because, you know, you grow up with fairly strong messages of, you know, ‘until you’ve had a baby you haven’t lived’ kind of thing. So, or whether that’s just a real emotion, that you feel incomplete without a child (8:180).

BH discussed how this provided her with the construct of the good mother and how she engages in attempting to resist this:

A good mother takes her children to church, shows up on time with them dressed, well fed and they look good and, ‘cause that’s what my mother, she, that was important to her. Not the church part but, so we looked nice, that was really important to my mother. So I’m trying to struggle to get out of that whole picture where that’s not really what a good mother is because you can take your children to church with bad hair and you can still be a good mom. But I’m struggling to get out of what my mother’s picture of what it was (13:509).

5.3.1.11 IN RELATION TO CULTURAL / SOCIAL / HISTORICAL TRENDS

NU reflected upon changes within mothering trends:

Because I was really totally over the top with my first, you know? And yet I think the world is changing with that. They’re talking about kangaroo mothering, I don’t know if you saw that on TV the other day? Where, if you have twins those babies come and they lay on you and I’m a firm believer in that. Now when I had my first it was like no she’s crying don’t run, give her a chance to wake up and make a noise and...I mean I would have held that baby like all, no, that’s spoiling. I’m talking 26 years ago. And I think that’s so vital. I think we’ve got a lot to learn with regard to bonding with our kids and, ja, I think a lot’s changed. It needs to change, you know? (10:280).

5.3.1.12 IN RELATION TO EXPERIENCE

Chapter three, in this thesis, included a slim window into the debate around the social constructionist exclusion of experience as a generator of meaning in its own right. I reflected on my own position, acknowledging that mothering involves both discursive construction and lived experience. The following three quotes, the first by LL, and the second and third by DN, are relevant in this regard:

“It’s become more meaningful to me being a mom” (16:298).

“What I want to say intellectually is different to what I’ve experienced” (17:507).

And the thing that I’m finding quite hard to accept, and this is my own journey, is the prominence that mom takes over dad in the early years, Um, and I guess it’s my own assumption that the relationship M and I have always been sharing, and equal and, um, you know that’s what we talk about, that’s how we do things and, um, I get quite resentful when it’s always I’ve got to be the one in the middle of the night, I’ve got to be the one tucking them in and, you know, that’s what they want...especially baby. And once I could just, and you’ve got to kind of surrender to that a little bit, you know, once I could just let it go and say ‘this is what it is for now’ and in a way look back and say ‘I hope I don’t regret the fact that I didn’t surrender to that then’. So I’m trying to, because I know, like I can see it with H, he’s like, when he’s sick it’s me but most of the time now it’s got to the stage where we’re interchangeable. Uh, but for A it’s not there, but I think it’s just age. So there is, so just to concede that there is something quite primal about motherhood that children need (17:344).

In relation to the third quote, DN had held firmly to a discourse that constructed the role of man and woman, and husband and wife. Her child’s persistent demands for her attention, however, did not align with the principles of her discourse. She spoke of ‘surrender’ and deciding to ‘concede’. This concession, though, is ‘for now’, and she holds the hope that this is a temporary shift that needs to occur in relation to the discourse that she holds and advocates for.

5.3.2 DISCURSIVE REFLECTION

Although sections 5.3.1 and 5.3.2 could have been collapsed into one longer list describing how participants reflect on the process of meaning making, I do suggest that these last six points function at a slightly higher reflexive level than the 12 activities mentioned above. Where the previous 12 points illustrated how participants construct meaning (the meaning sources upon which they draw), here we see examples of how they think about the process of construction itself.

5.3.2.1 DIFFICULTIES IN TALKING ABOUT HOW MOTHERING IS CONSTRUCTED

A number of mothers expressed difficulty directly reflecting upon the construction of mothering. For example, IR said “It’s a difficult one...I’d have to think about that” (7:59); whilst CT asked “How do you understand mothering? That’s a big question” (8:144).

5.3.2.2 AWARENESS OF THE CONSTRUCTIVE POWERS OF THE LANGUAGE THAT ONE USES AND DOES NOT USE

A number of participants explicitly reflected upon the constructive power of language and also the ambivalence that is contained within their own language use. DN describes identity construction as having a ‘basket of definition’:

I remember the early days of democracy. Obviously there was all this non-racialism being bantered about and it was quite controversial. It's not a right or wrong thing, it's just how you view it and what you choose to put into your little basket of definition, you know? Of who you are. Am I woman? Am I White, am I Black, am I...I'm a mixed-race family? (17:557).

She also discusses her awareness of the role of language in potentially constructing for her child a sense of being different. The following two quotes provide examples of this:

...now it really, I realise my own, like, you always preface, um, a definition of somebody with race. That Black woman that did this, that White guy that did that, that Coloured lady that did that. And it's just how we're conditioned. And then you realise that this is their language, so he speaks like that, at five. 'You know that brown baby mommy?' or 'that brown this' or 'that lady' or 'why is it that all brown people work, sweep the floor?' And then you're 'well that's not...'. (17:105).

...let's say we're in a social situation, a braai or something and somebody says 'Oh why don't you like for the maid or domestic worker 'why don't you just get the girl to do it?' And I'm like, 'she's not a girl. She's a 50 year old woman and this is a three year-old girl listening to you talk about somebody that looks like her as a girl'. Like 'you've got to stop this'. You know, like, so trying to constantly filter what she sees as an image of herself. That was the big thing that I got myself really worked up about. Like she is able to do anything any other, but hearing these kinds of things are going to make her feel different...it's in our language and it's in how we see the world (17:133).

Participants also expressed uncertainty regarding which language they are 'supposed' to use. For example, OS said:

I know the more we talk about it it becomes common lingo in the house and it's not a shock for her, that it's just, we've used the word 'adoptive' for a long time. The social worker advised us to use it in our vocab. I mean even from a baby I'd go 'agh, my gorgeous adopted daughter'. Things like that. Now C, this friend of ours says she's never really used that 'cause she doesn't want him to feel different. Um, so it's hard to know what the right thing to do is (5:303).

LL reflects on the language that she uses in the interview and shows an awareness of how she contradicts herself:

'cause now I'm telling you there's nothing different with adoption, there's nothing different with my son and this one I'm going to birth, you know, it's the same to me. But then when I describe him I describe him as adopted. Like I box, ok, this one's adopted, this one's not adopted (16:572).

5.3.2.3 AWARENESS OF POSITIONING OF SELF IN RELATION TO DISCOURSES AND THE SITUATING OF CONSTRUCTS WITHIN THE DISCOURSE

In response to asking NF how being a mother relates to being a woman, she replied, "Do you want the feminist answer?" (9:212). She assumes that I am operating from a particular (feminist) discourse and therefore hold a specific stance on 'right' and 'wrong' answers. By asking the question she indicates her ability to position herself within that discourse if so required, yet also shows her distance from it.

BH spoke of the difference between how she positions herself in relation to the construct of therapy compared to how the organisation she works for constructs this notion:

If I were to be honest I'm also under a director of a ministry, ok, so their standards of where

children, what children should receive is different in my experience. I'm an occupational therapist from before when I went into ministry. And if I had this child adopted I would have this child in OT, I would have her in speech, I would have her in play therapy. Do you understand? I would have her in every kind of intervention to try and get better. But they come from the standpoint where they don't really believe in those kinds of things strongly, or they haven't utilised those things for their children, the two that they've adopted. Do you understand? So I can't really go and spend all this money of the ministry's...And they just have very differing opinions. 'Cause I'm coming from that therapy background and they're not. They're coming from a much more spiritual, they're coming from a: this child will, it'll just drop off and, after you've prayed for them for a few years. And I'm going 'no, no, no' (13:394).

5.3.2.4 DECONSTRUCTION

Although, whenever women are resisting a certain discourse they are involved in a potential act of deconstruction, this section refers to the times when participants specifically commented on the act of deconstruction or explicitly discussed the need for deconstruction. Participants most frequently reflected upon deconstruction when discussing race. DN spoke of her annoyance in relation to people not seeing their own racial prejudices: "and it's hard work showing it up for people because they get defensive. You're accusing people of being racist" (17:152). AN argued that "if you understand politics as well it helps you not to be a prisoner of something that was made to confuse you and sort of direct your thinking and way of life" (19:302). DE explained how she models deconstruction for her daughter:

There was a little girl who said 'how come you don't look like your family?' and I happened to be there so I said 'do you look like your brother?' She was like 'oh, no, he's a boy!' I said 'do you look like your mom?' She says 'no, I've got blonde hair'. So I said 'exactly, you don't look like your family either'. And she was like 'huh'. And I know that's not what she was getting at (laughs) but it, it sorted it for then (20:841).

She also deconstructs the construct 'African':

I kind of see race as being different colours. So we talk about all of us being African, all born in South Africa. That's how we are and you can have White Africans and Black Africans depending on your skin colour. As opposed to race...I was asked at a shop once, um, 'is he yours?' and I said 'yes' and they said 'but he's African?' and I said 'So am I'. And the person said to me 'oh, and his dad?', I said 'he's also African'. And they said 'ja but, you don't get what I'm saying. He's African'. I said 'I know what you're saying, he was born in this country and I was born in this country and my husband was born in this country'. So he said 'is your husband a Black African?' I said 'no, he's a White African, but he's African too'. He was like 'but then how did you get?' (laughs) (20:610).

5.3.2.5 RESISTING DECONSTRUCTION

Although some participants advocated for a deconstruction of the difference between different types of mothering, BH emphatically argued for the retention of the idea of fostering as 'different' (from adoption, in this case). She said

So when I say I love you, I do care for her deeply and I sit with her and I make sacrifices for her and we go places and all of that, it's just not like a, I know it's just not that kind of love that I would have if

she came in at age six and I said 'I'm adopting you for life'. It's not that same, it's not the same (13:385).

She seeks to be assessed by a different yardstick rather than being accommodated within the dominant construction of mothering.

5.3.2.6 LACK OF CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL

Many of the participants spoke of a lack of available information relating to issues they encountered. Although, simplistically, this section could have been entitled 'lack of information', it relates to participants' quests to gain access to discursive constructs that they can hold onto, use or resist in order to strengthen their sense of positioning. Two broad areas emerged in which these adoptive and foster mothers expressed a need for more information (or more 'construction material'): the day-to-day mothering of an adopted and/or fostered child and answering difficult questions that their adopted and/or foster children may pose to them. BD spoke in relation to the first area:

In terms of just information about adoption and issues you might have and now you've got two White kids you're going to have another kid, what issues might come out of that? Bonding issues, um, just what to do with their hair, what to do with their skin [and the social worker] said 'actually it's up to you to go find that stuff out and read about it or join a support group' (11:151).

BH and DD specifically referred to a lack of information relating to bonding and attachment with fostered and adopted children respectively:

I don't think there's much education in this country especially. In America there're so many adoptions internationally, there're so many books, everyone has blogs, like everyone has support groups, conferences, there's like a whole lifestyle there that teaches you about attachment and bonding with your child. Here, not even the W's [leaders of the ministry she's involved with] know about it (laughs). Like, I feel like I'm always working with people that know nothing about, really, attachment and you have to know about it in order to foster and adopt. If you're adopting older children or children who've been through any kind of trauma before they get to you (13:294).

I sort of said to [the social worker] 'please, if you've got people going through a similar situation to us please tell them to phone me'. So, I don't want to, I'm not going to give them horror stories but at least so that, you know they can maybe have an idea of what to expect, that it's not all gonna be, you know, plain sailing. Just some stuff to be aware of. You know you don't want to give people horror stories but just open their eyes a little bit to some of the issues they might face. And that's where I just felt there was nothing (18:454).

There appears to be a particular need for South African material: "The web, the internet's not very helpful 'cause the stuff on cross-racial, trans-racial whatever adoptions is very American, um, and it's not applicable at all to South African context" (11:406); "I've read books and they don't, a lot of them are American so they don't really, they've got limited application in this country" (4:766).

In relation to approaching the 'difficult questions' posed by her child, OS commented:

I think it would be nice if there was a little bit more information out there for adoptive mothers on how to handle things and, you know how to answer those tough questions. I've struggled to find information on that kind of thing you know (5:487).

KM said,

Wow, he's gonna ask those questions, he's gonna, the what if's, the whys. How do I broach this difficult one with him that he's actually the product of rape? And I'm, *that's* when I think I would really need some support and some guidance from someone who's gone there before me. How do you deal with the questions they're gonna ask. He might not ask them when he's, you know four or 10, but he's gonna ask them at some point. I'm sure he is. So, ja, how do you deal with that? (6:742).

Through engaging in the processes listed in this section, participants develop and resist many constructs and engage with numerous discourses. These will now be presented.

5.4 CONSTRUCTS AND DISCOURSES IDENTIFIED WITHIN THE DATA

Through utilising the synthesis of Gee (2005) and Parker's (1992; 2005) approaches to discourse analysis, explained in chapter four, interviews were explored in detail through identifying situated meanings, objects, activities, subjects/identities, relationships, intertextuality, systems and knowledge, coherence and contradiction, reflexivity, history, institutions, as well as politics, power and ideology. The objects, subjects, activities, relationships and institutions that exist within discourse could be explored as discourses. Let's take, for example, 'the good mother'. This could be conceived of as functioning as a discourse: it provides a "system of statements which constructs an object" (Parker, 1992, p. 5). As a system it enables and restricts what can and cannot be said. It can be argued to be an example of "language-in-use" (Gee, 2005, p. 7) and is political, very much so, in that it presents definite understandings of what is 'right', 'real', 'normal' and 'appropriate'. However, 'the good mother' can also be construed to be a subject within certain discourses. She is a certain 'type of person'; she can say certain things and not other things, her identity, feelings, values, and knowledge are constructed in particular ways. Larger discourses support this subject and give her particular relevance. Another example, the family, could be discussed as a discourse. However, it could also be explored in terms of how it operates as an object, as an activity (what does it mean to 'do' family?), and as a set of social relationships. Adoption and fostering, also, could be investigated as discourses, or they could be discussed as activities or relationships (even possibly as objects, although I suggest that that is less useful in the context of this research where emphasis is placed on the activity of mothering).

The purpose of this slightly obscure meandering is to acknowledge that the findings of this study's analysis could be presented in numerous ways. What appears, to me, to be most helpful is to discuss certain aspects of the participants' talk as participating in the constitution of 'constructs' and other aspects of their talk as evoking and drawing upon certain 'discourses' (all of this being, in itself a construction, with the intention of being a highly transparent and reflexive one). Relatively distinct (and by that I by no means mean 'neat', 'unitary' or 'uncontested') objects, subjects, activities and relationships are described under the umbrella of 'constructs' whilst language-in-use or systems of statements that are operating at a broader, more all-encompassing level (including perspectives on objects, subjects, relationships and so on) are discussed as discourses. Constructs are, clearly, embedded in discourses. Therefore, as each construct is discussed this intrinsically involves exploring how certain discourses are drawn upon and resisted as part of the construction process, as well as how the construct is nestled within discourses.

A summary of the findings of the analysis can be presented as follows. Participants engage with a discourse of *natural mothering* (which is constructed in comparison to *unnatural mothering* and *supernatural mothering*). Participants also engage with the discourse of *good mothering*, in which the constructs of *the good mother*,

the good adoptive mother and *the good foster mother* operate. These two broad discourses are informed by the construct of *the family* (and what is of particular interest here, in relation to this study, is how the family unit manages its boundaries). Constructions of *adoption* and *fostering* are formed in relation to notions of the family; and this family construct also largely informs and is informed by the discourse of *legitimate belonging*, the construct of *the child*; and the discourse of *collaborative parenting*. These discourses and constructs have conversations with and are formed in relation to broader discourses of *gender* (in this case, the focus is on *woman*) *race*, *culture* and *HIV/AIDS*. Adoption and fostering occur in relation to discourses that operate within *the institution* and in relation to dealing with the institution as a construct. Finally, engagement with these discourses and constructs informs how the discourse of *support* is constructed in relation to adoptive and foster mothering. These constructs and discourses will be explored in detail throughout this chapter in an integrated manner as the three central arguments are presented.

5.5 CONSTRUCTIONS OF ADOPTION AND FOSTERING

Before commencing with the discussion of these arguments, a contextual description of the manner in which participants constructed 'adoption' and 'fostering' will be provided.

5.5.1 ADOPTION

Participants initially expressed difficulty in formulating meanings of adoption. Although many constructed definitions as the interview proceeded, their primary responses to being asked how they would write a dictionary definition of adoption were as follows:

DL: "That's quite a tough one" (1:3).

TN: "I can't give you a dictionary definition" (2:4).

UC: "Um, ooh, what do you mean? On the process, or...?" ADS: 'The meaning of the word adoption for you'. UC: 'Hmm, gosh. I've never thought of it like that' (4:6).

OS: "Shoo. Um...I suppose...It's a hard one, 'cause I've never really thought of it" (5:3).

NF: "I have to think do I? (laughs) A dictionary definition...I don't know, maybe...it's difficult to say..." (9:3).

NU: "Oi, I don't actually know" (10:3).

BD: "Hmm, (laughs)...A permanent solution...no, not solution...ah, can I think about that one?" (11:3).

DC: "Um, shoo, that's a hard question" (14:3).

AN: "(Laughs). Um...I don't know, arranged parenthood? (Laughs) I don't know" (19:3).

DD: "That's a hard one...um...Ok, this is going to be clumsy but I'll just express my thoughts" (18:3).

DE: "You should have told me this before....Um...um...I don't know, it's giving a child...I don't know..." (20:1).

It is notable that so many participants responded in this manner. This first question that I posed to them served an 'ice-breaker' function. Perhaps this informed the initial expressive reluctance as the participants may have still been 'warming' to the interview process. There may also have been other factors at play though. As mentioned earlier, DL, an adoptive mother of four girls, said, "mothering is such a big thing hey?" (1:211). In the data, the construct of adoptive and foster mothering holds even more than the construct of biological mothering (in terms of, for example, legal and administrative implications, emotional meaning, meaning in terms of construction of the self as a mother, expanding the boundaries of what a family unit can contain, and extended criteria for achieving the status of 'good mother'). The complexity and 'bigness' of the construct may therefore challenge discursive reflection.

Another factor at play here may be the perceived relationship between mothering and cognitive processing. In chapter two, reference was made to Winnicott's (1965) influential perspective on women's capacity to mother as stemming from feeling rather than knowledge, and the parental distinction between mothers as *being* and fathers as *doing*. Although feminist critique has served to deconstruct this position, a number of authors still reflect upon the manner in which the demands of the child on the mother perpetuate an experience in which cognitive processing takes a 'backseat'. Wolf (2003) put forward her view on this matter as follows:

Motherhood is the pitilessness of the present tense. Reflective space is obliterated. This relentless and infinite present destroys all that is subtle, indeterminate, unknowing in one's thinking. It's not that mothers stop being able to think. It's that we think in another order - the order of immediacy. Ha! Is this what is meant by maternal instinct? That we are forced into a kind of survival mode, a chronic crisis, the endless horror of Groundhog Day? (p. 6).

Bobel (2002) explains how the impulse to be a mother is constructed as "intuitive, even instinctual...It is not something that can be easily explained; rather, it is the product of 'just knowing' what feels right" (p. 12). Participants in this study echoed this maternal focus on 'doing' and 'feeling' through making comments such as: "isn't it crazy how you just don't process these kinds of things?" (1:207); "you do what your heart says you should do" (3:155); "you're asking me all these questions, I haven't even thought about what mothering is" (9:152); "I think generally for most moms it's a completely emotional thing, you know? And that's what I think kids need" (10:226); "it was after about nine months, I decided, well not 'I decided', but I felt a lot more, um, capable of looking after him" (11:95); "So that kicked in and it's so important, that protective mothering, and it was just there. Like I say, I can't explain it" (15:76).

Interestingly, however, in addition to initially presenting an uncertain construction of adoption, followed by constructions of mothering as involving feeling and doing rather than conscious, cognitive reflection, many participants in this study then proceeded to also construct adoptive mothering as an activity that requires *more* cognitive processing than is demanded in biological mothering. When participants speak of adoptive mothering in particular, they tend to make more frequent comments that include the element of 'thinking about' their mothering and having a higher level of reflexive awareness as opposed to reacting instinctively or simply replicating the approach that their own parents' utilised (1:305; 1:460; 3:191; 12:226). DD spoke of mothering her adopted daughter as being

a much more conscious process of mothering her whereas with the biological children I just did what I needed to do. With her I had to, would I have done the same with the boys? Would I have responded the same? Would, because I didn't feel the same about her I had to like, kind of really

talk myself through it and that also became hard because then I second guessed everything I did and judged everything I did. 'Aw, you're being a bad mother here!' Um, or 'you wouldn't have done this', or 'you're too hard on her' or whatever. Instead of just letting that go and just kind of going with the flow (18:475).

In Rothman's (2005) description of her own experience as a transracial adoptive family she writes,

We don't look like a family. I'm White, and Victoria is Black. So we've learned, over the years, the little tricks we need, to make you see us as a family. I learned to stand behind her with my hand clearly on her shoulder when we rang the violin teacher's door. 'Hello, I'm Barbara and this is my daughter Victoria', I say before the teacher can so much as open her mouth. And put her foot in it. I call Victoria 'my daughter' like a newlywed on a fifties sitcom said 'my husband'. Often. With a big smile. Straight at you. Victoria and I 'do' family, 'present' as family. We're just doing what 'normal' people do, but we *know* we're doing it (p. 4).

Rothman continues by saying

For those who are doing what they are expected to do, ordinary girls and women doing the expected gender stuff, the accomplishment is hidden, naturalised. Even we don't realise what we're doing most of the time. That doesn't mean we're not doing it. That doesn't mean that we can't recognise the things we do if you call them to our attention. It just means we don't have to think about it...If you're not ordinary, you have to show just how ordinary a family you indeed are. That 'ordinariness' is an accomplishment...We notice that we are *doing* what other people think they are just *being* (p. 5).

Once participants had responded to the initial question of defining adoption as something of a conundrum, they then began to construct a number of facets of meaning. Adoption means in relation to legislature (6:797) and other systems (for example, medical aid (3:97)). Adoption also means in relation to individual children. Participants speak of "giving life to someone...giving somebody else a chance" (4:12); "loving someone you didn't give birth to" (5:4); "giving a home to someone who doesn't have a home" (9:5); "there's so many children out there who are so hurting and so, even sickly kids who just have no-one, you know?" (10:440); "making a difference in a child's life" (11:482); "when you adopt you choose to bring that child into your family, you choose to love that child no matter what, to see that child through their entire life" (13:236); "children placed in lifelong families" (13:621); "it's making a child whole again" (20:6). Two participants, who had both experienced infertility, spoke of adoption as meaning from the perspective of the mother. DE said "I swear on my life, he saved me. From what, I don't know, but just from the absolute grief" (20:291); and MB's comment was, "she's completely healed me. I mean obviously you get sad and upset and it's still unfair but she just brings the most incredible joy (laughs)" (21:86).

Participants spoke of adoption meaning in relation to the family through statements such as "coming home with us for good" (5:39); "adoption is the legal and emotional, uh, assimilation of a child into a family" (17:3); and "incorporating a non-biological child into a biological family" (18:5). Participants also constructed the meaning of adoption in relation to societal change. A few examples from the data include comments such as "helping in society" (4:13); adoption is a way of "doing something about the problem in this country" (5:46); adoption "encompasses a whole societal thing actually" (9:9); adoption is a way of addressing the "big

problem in South Africa” (11:7); and adoption is “such a way of integrating the country and it’s like quite a healing expression” (17:460).

Adoption was constructed in the data as a moral discourse. Some participants constructed adoption in relation to it being the ‘right’ thing for them to do. This emerged through comments such as “we felt that it was right and appropriate for us to do...We’d reached the point where we’d decided that if any one of our family or friends didn’t want us to do this or was very anti it then we’d actually sever that relationship, if we needed to” (4:405).

Although the sample was more homogenous than would have been ideal in relation to the constructed cultural identifications of the participants, variations in adoption constructions emerged that were associated with systems of meaning making ascribed to ‘cultural groups’. AN, who identifies as Zulu, said the following:

...we don’t sort of call it adoption you know, where I come from. I was not raised by my parents. My, uh, father’s aunt, uh, who had raised my dad raised me from I think the age of five to maybe 14. And um, it was, you know and she also helped other relatives. And it was just, you know, nice and it made an impact on me in a sense that I could see that it’s possible to love a person even if you’re not related to that person by blood ‘cause in some cases she would take someone, today I have relatives through her I still don’t know how, you know, we got linked somehow. So it was, I suppose, and also the, the, what it did for me, you know, the period I spent with her. In the end I went back to my birthparents but, as I say, it’s a family, so it was not, it was never defined as adoption. But it was that (19:8).

She explains the notion that, “your child is my child, you know. We really practice that, you know, literally. In most Black communities they do that” (19:35). However, she proceeds to confirm Zimmerman’s (2003) findings that, key to this construction of ‘adoption’, is the fact that “you know where the child comes from” (19:215). He/she is either a family member or the child of a friend. It is not just ‘any child’ who is regarded as ‘your child’.

AN then adopted her own child through the formalised system of Johannesburg Child Welfare and she speaks of this process as “different” (19:213). She talks of this system as a ‘box’: “it has to be in that box, I think” (19:210). The child she adopted was not known or connected to her biological family in any way. When I asked her whether her family has been supportive of the adoption, she responded:

My family, no not really. My, I think they just got used to it. Um, but, um, I mean for instance I was doing my will last week and there’s a part where you say who will look after your child should you die before, and I couldn’t put any of my five sisters or my mom. So, they’re not like bad people, they’re not bad people, but it’s something that they’re not used to. Like I say you would normally take a child that you know, you know, so ja, sometimes there’ll be things like ‘what if this child wants, uh, some, um, traditional whatever, rituals?’ and then you don’t even know the surname of the child, which I don’t by the way (19:221).

In their talk, participants evoked constructions of their reasons for pursuing adoption generally, their reasons for adopting their specific child, as well as mentioning reasons why people do not adopt and factors that do not necessarily lead to adoption. General reasons for adopting link strongly to participants’ constructions of what adoption ‘is’. They speak of adopting due to the “problem” of orphaned children in South Africa” (5:88; 11:7; 16:825; 20:34). For DN, this reason shifted. She, firstly, commented,

...my reasons for adoption are quite, what's the word I'm looking for, they're around social justice issues. They, I know that this country's, you know, got this huge problem of orphans. I personally work in the areas of, um, social change, and I have, I think quite a deep commitment to racial change in the country. I think if you had to kind of get to the crux of it I think I was wanting to show that you can have a cross-racial family without it being a huge issue (17:58).

She then proceeded to say,

...subsequently my reasons have changed. They've become a lot more, that was the initial idea, that's still quite core...my reasons have changed in that I've probably moved a lot closer to [my husband]. [He] was far more pragmatic, you know, his was like, we don't necessarily want to have biological children, this is a child we can help. Um and it's like one child. That's it. He wasn't like let's change the world, like, you know (17:69).

Although there were a range of reasons cited for pursuing adoption generally, some of the main discursive themes that emerged were exposure to orphaned children through work or volunteering (2:13; 12:8; 15:8; 20:65); witnessing other people adopt and this informing their own construction of adoption as a potential option for their family (1:29; 11:7; 17:28); a sense of knowing that this is what one is meant to do (8:86; 14:11; 16:37); always wanting to adopt (1:30; 19:21; 20:310); and infertility (8:55; 14:8; 20:18; 21:72). It is interesting to note that only four of the 21 participants interviewed in this study adopted in relation to experiencing infertility. Although the bearing of biological children emerged as a dominant normative baseline in relation to mothering and gender, these women also displayed agency in this regard by constructing adoption in relation to personal choice, individual experiences and convictions formed through multiple structures such as religious belief systems.

In terms of adopting a particular child, reasons mentioned included experiencing a "connection" upon meeting this individual (2:31; 9:25; 15:21). This is sometimes constructed as "falling in love" with a certain child (6:68; 16:53), or relating to a feeling that this child is the "one" (20:278). Some participants constructed their decision to select a particular child in relation to direction from God (16:193; 20:299). Others spoke of a practical 'match' between "he needed a home we needed a child" (20:30).

Participants proposed reasons that may prompt others to decide against adoption. These included the potential challenges and uncertainties of the legal process and financial implications (9:890; 12:18) and perceptions of others regarding whether or not this was a "sensible" (20:136) decision. The perception was challenged that whenever you volunteer at a children's home and meet orphaned children you will automatically want to adopt. EW commented in this regard, saying, "you actually don't. You love them and you care for them, but then you leave and that's it" (15:16).

Adoption timing was also constructed in a variety of ways. Some participants spoke of thinking about the decision for an extended period, others described the process of waiting for their husband to "catch up" (16:59) to the idea. Some made the decision in relation to the spacing between their children and others related the timing of adoption to their journey through infertility. Others expressed how meeting a particular child triggered their decision to adopt and how this differed from their former plan regarding timing. For example, NF said,

Ja, you know it was one of these where [my husband] had always said you know 'if we do adopt it'll be older kids, they'll be siblings, they'll be sort of eight and ten or whatever, they'll fit in with our kids', you know, um. And when D came along it was like 'oh, ok' (9:60).

5.5.2 FOSTERING

Fostering is also constructed in the data as meaning in terms of multiple layers. Fostering means in relation to caring for the individual child ("taking somebody and looking after them and caring for them" (3:18); "caring, helping, looking after, loving a child" (7:3)). In this sense it also entails assuming responsibility for the child (6:139). Fostering is constructed through the legal lens of having children "in your name" (6:29). When birthparents are still involved fostering is constructed as shared or negotiated parenting (7:289). In addition to meaning at the level of the individual child fostering is, like adoption, also spoken of as a means to contribute to a social problem, namely caring for the high number of orphaned children in this country (13:610; 16:813).

Fostering is also constructed as "being their mum for a season" (6:45). It is not "a whole life-long commitment" (13:244). Entailed in this notion of mothering for a season are factors such as living with uncertainty ("in two years time once his foster care comes to an end, he'll be placed back with his family or, you know, who knows" (6:239)) and the emotional challenges of relinquishing the child. LL spoke of the soon-to-be adoptive parents coming to visit her foster child:

I just feel like this slow band aid being ripped or just like, every time they come and they just, you know, and you see these, all these, you know, or the day 'daddy' and I'm like 'No, no, you're not the daddy yet!' (laughs) 'We're still the parents!' And just the responsibility shifting and it gets quite painful (16:217).

Some participants framed fostering in relation to the value of "giving a child in need of care a good start in life" (6:54) and "minimising trauma" (2:7). In participants' constructions of fostering, a recurrent and central theme was the holding of ambivalence. This will be explored fully in section 5.7. Fostering in South Africa, particularly, was constructed largely in terms of lack of adequate support (13:452), being expected to care for more children than would be the case in other countries (6:129; 13:164), administrative difficulties related to legal documentation (3:113; 7:367) and inadequate financial grants (7:372). Motivations for fostering cited in the data included responding to encountering the need of a specific child (7:40); the foster child providing a receptacle for the love that the mother feels she has available to give (7:80); responding to a more general desire to assist children in need of care (2:5; 6:24; 13:612); the desire to transform traumatised children (13:55); caring for children as an expression of femininity (13:481); and fostering due to legal barriers preventing adoption (3:22). The timing of fostering was mentioned in the data in relation to when the participant met the child (7:17) and also in relation to meeting the child, developing a relationship with him/her over time and parallel developments in the woman's own life in relation to marriage and her husband's growing willingness to foster (3:27).

5.5.3 TRANSRACIAL ADOPTION AND TRANSRACIAL FOSTERING

Although race will be discussed further as the chapter proceeds there are certain broader constructions of transracial mothering that emerged in the data that contribute to the contextual background provided in this section. When participants spoke about this kind of mothering as 'different', race was central, but did not eclipse the wide variety of facets of mothering. For example, CF discussed mothering her transracially adopted child as being different in relation to bonding:

...you know if you are going through that thing, you kind of like feel like you're on your own. Because nobody's been under that same, um, people have had children but it's not quite the same. Um, as I say you haven't, like maybe when the child's in you you still feel like you've done that bonding with the child for like nine months. So I think there is a, I think it would be nice if there was like some sort of support group and I think it would help (12:460).

Although these mothers also explored race, DN spoke of mothering her transracially adopted child as being 'different' in relation to issues such as the initial lack of responsiveness of the child, feeding problems, more frequent illnesses (17:319). DD referred to differences in relation to reaching milestones at different times (18:488).

DE specifically resisted the idea of race taking centre stage in meanings of adoption within her response to my question concerning the term 'mixed-race family':

We're a family. Um, I don't think it needs to kind of be recognised like that, but the reality is we are. I'm prepared to accept it but I, I don't think we actually need to get into that. A family's a family. Does it matter? (20:775).

However, many participants who mother within the bounds of that which is constructed as 'transracial adoption' or 'transracial fostering' did foreground race as a key factor in the construction of their activity of mothering as being 'different'. NF used the phrase "doing the mommy thing across racial things" (9:725) to describe transracial mothering. This implies that one needs, perhaps, to stretch across race or navigate one's way across race in order to mother in this context. EW focussed on race as the main feature that distinguished her adoptive mothering from biological mothering:

...why have a support group for an adoptive mom with a child with anger problems? Why not just have a support group with children with anger problems? Only the racial thing, you know, how to handle that kind of thing. How's your child coping? But only from a racial perspective but not from a parenting perspective because then you're separating 'I'm an adoptive parent' to a biological parent. The only thing I can think of maybe where people need support is maybe the racial, you know (15:453).

DD commented:

As much as I knew we were going to get a Black baby and, as much as you *think* it's not going to be an issue, changing a Black bum is different to changing a White bum when you're a White person. It's just other things, I mean Black skin is different, Black hair is different to White hair and White skin and, completely out of my realm and having to ask advice, 'how do I deal with this? What do I do with that?', you know, 'What's the best thing? This cream isn't working, what should I try now?' Wondering when is she going to start noticing that she looks different to the family (18:245).

We see in the following quotation by NF the ambivalence between the ideas that race does not 'matter', but perhaps race does 'matter':

Even now he's saying to me 'why don't you have curly eyelashes? Mine don't look like yours' and I'm thinking 'oh my word!' you know. Or 'mommy!' and he's always playing with my hair and I'm thinking, I'm trying to think, yours is curly hair, no-one else in our family has got curly hair you know. Um, you know, so, I sometimes wonder whether it's fair on the adopted child to be in a family that's not their own colour. But then I sort of hope that we've got over all of that nonsense (9:384).

DN described transracial adoption as

such an opportunity to learn about the country and about who you are and what does Whiteness mean? What does Blackness mean? How do you deal with your own identity here? Especially obviously in mixed race but, so that wouldn't apply to same-race, what are they called? (laughs) White babies. Um, I, you know, I think the journey for both of us and still to come has been profound about living in South Africa. So I think there's, on both fronts, in fact I've dealt more, I've had to deal more with the race issues than with the adoptive issues (17:584).

We see in the above quotation that, for some participants, this form of adoption was specifically constructed as a social project. Participants also spoke of extended family members' shifting racial positions in response to gaining a family member of a different skin colour (9:96; 12:298; 15:483; 20:357). Statements made concerning transracial adoption as a social project also relate to taking positions on transracial adoption as a moral endeavour. CT made the following comment:

So I think for [Black people] it's definitely got to do with the loss of culture and them wanting to keep their culture together, wanting to be sort of collective about it. But then at the same time I would say to them 'get up off your rumps and do something about adopting the orphans that are out there' (8:242).

Such a statement invites deconstruction from multiple angles. Participants' (highly ambivalent, contradictory, fragmented and loose) constructions of race and culture will be explored in section 5.7.2. What 'doing something about' (Black) orphans entails also requires investigation concerning meanings and meanings for whom.

Other participants resisted the notion of their own process of adopting transracially being linked to attempting to engage in broader social issues. For example, NF said,

You know I, growing up I never thought I would ever, ever adopt a Black child. I mean maybe it's just because of the way we were brought up and stuff and I kept thinking people who do that have a guilt thing and they, they do it because they 'oh we feel so bad about society' and stuff. And then, um, ja, we just sort of adopted him and just carried on and just thought we'd raise him like we've raised our other two. So we haven't sort of set a whole thing and said 'oh this is what we're going to do and this is what we're going to achieve' and stuff (9:74).

Transracial adoption will be discussed throughout this chapter in relation to various aspects of mothering as these emerged within the data, however, we see, even here, how construction takes place through engagement with meaning at a personal level, at the level of the family and at broader social levels. All forms of mothering - according to the very premise upon which this social constructionist piece of research is grounded - involve positioning and discursive engagement at each of these 'levels' (i.e. personal positioning as a mother is always a social, political and cultural process). Transracial mothering, however, highlights some of these intersections even more starkly. One of the areas in which this manifests appears to be in adoptive mothers' encounters with racism. Race, after all, "is situated where meaning meets social structure, where identity frames inequality" (Winant, 2000, p. 171).

Participants spoke of experiencing racism from within their own families. For example, DE said, "going into G's brother's home and stuff, like when he was very little, I always had to turn the, I mean the first time we ever arrived at their house with J I turned the chair to face me 'cause I knew nobody wanted to see him"

(20:508). They also spoke of racism directed towards their nuclear family. NF recited an incident that occurred on a recent cruise ship holiday:

We had these old ladies sit next to us. They didn't sit next to us again. And then we happened to sit somewhere and there was another family and I heard the family say 'now they're following us around with this Black child'. I was like 'huh? We're just sitting here, what is your problem?' (9:839).

TN spoke of an encounter in which the following comment was directed towards her by a Black man as a White mother of a Black child: "if you want a Black child I'll f* you and give you your own" (2:454).

A theme that emerged in the manner in which White participants spoke about racism was the way in which they remarked, with a degree of surprise, on the convergence between social constructions of race and the individuality of their child. The following comment by TN provides an example of this:

...what has this child done to this man? Nothing. And here, at um, Wimpy, she was about four months, in the pram, and she started to cry. So I picked her up and kissed her and a man in the table next to me pushed the table and says 'I'm going to vomit'. Those things hurt so badly. It really hurt. And I found I started to get very angry. And you almost...I'd almost come out thinking 'Come, make my day. Just make my day'. Um, it took a long time to get over that anger, and resentment. But my anger was towards thinking what has she done? What has she done to you?...Um, so we've been hurt quite a lot by racialism...We went through a lot. We did. I didn't expect that when we adopted her. You say what did I expect? I didn't expect any of that. I didn't think it had anything to do with anybody else (2:432).

UC spoke of an incident in a post office where a White lady reprimanded her child:

And I got home and I told [my husband] this whole story and 'how dare she pick on my child?' and that. And he said to me 'Ja, but she probably didn't realise that he was your child. Because here's this little Black boy fiddling with the rope standing away from you'...And it's only then that it dawned on me, and I thought oh, ok, ja, alright, now I see it. It's just some Black kid who's messing around when he shouldn't be (4: 279).

These participants speak of moments where the response of others towards their child is driven by a body of knowledge concerning the social meaning of race as a category. The child is not received as an individual. The child and his/her behaviour are viewed through a collective social lens. Finchilescu (2005) explained how the experience of being stereotyped is often unpleasant in relation to feelings of being "de-individualised, of having one's personal qualities and experiences dismissed, and being subsumed within a large category" (p. 465).

KM made a similar comment, not relating to racism in particular, but as a more general reflection on the relationship between the body of knowledge that 'African' people use as a lens in evaluating the behaviour of her individual child:

And I find with S he's a very busy little boy, you go in the shops and he's into everything and wants to touch everything and I often find the African ladies and men come up and go 'wow your little boy's naughty'. Now to me he's not, he's just actually being a busy two year-old boy. But they perceive he's being naughty because he's wanting to touch everything...I think I was

shocked by her reaction. A complete stranger comes and tells me my child is spoilt. 'Well you don't know my child' (6:499).

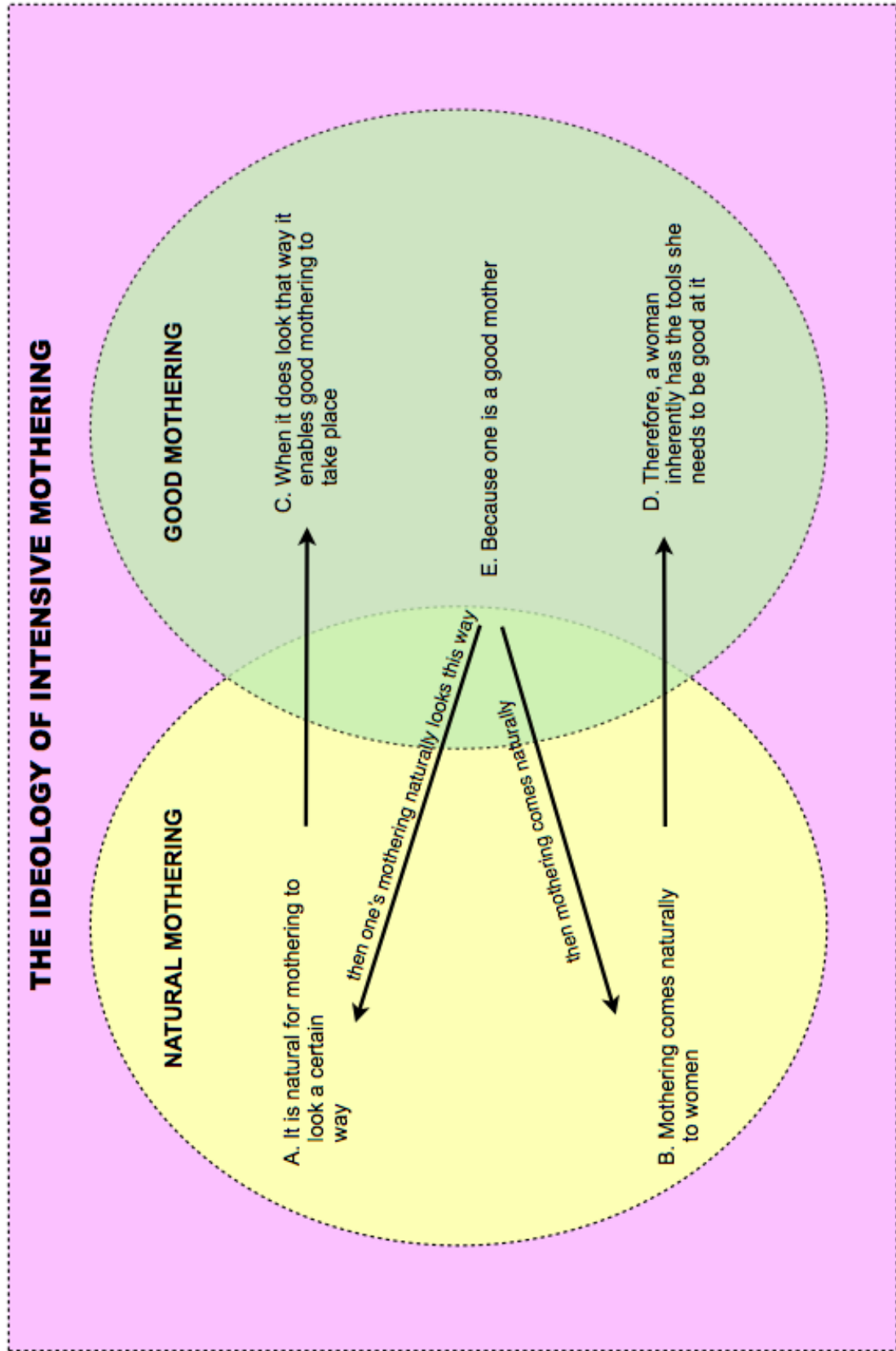
In each of these three examples, participants appear bemused at the fact that their children are not regarded as individuals, but are received as representative of, or evaluated in relation to, social and cultural systems, by asking questions and making statements such as: What has my child done to you? How dare you pick on my child? You don't know my child. Perhaps Whiteness as privilege includes the expectation that one's child will not be received prejudicially. The data suggests that White mothers seem to expect their children to be judged on individual characteristics (characteristics that the assessor has taken the time to adequately get to know), not as carriers of stereotypical meaning simply through association with a group. As White mothers encounter these types of responses to their Black children, these taken-for-granted expectations come to light. The manner in which participants engaged with the construct of race will be explored further within the remainder of the chapter, where relevant, in relation to the three key arguments presented, the first of which we will now turn to.

5.6 ARGUMENT 1: THE IDEOLOGY OF INTENSIVE MOTHERING FUNCTIONS THROUGH THE MECHANISM OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN 'NATURAL MOTHERING' AND 'GOOD MOTHERING'

The ideology of intensive mothering (Hays, 1996) prescribes what is natural and what is good. Although these are interrelated, they appear to function in somewhat distinct ways as part of the mechanism of how this ideology operates. Within participants' constructions of mothering, the notion of natural mothering appears to hold two main ideas: (A) It is natural for mothering to look a certain way, and (B) mothering comes naturally. These two ideas feed into the realm of good mothering, where two related ideas are also at play. Firstly, mothering looks a certain way (according to A) and this enables good mothering to take place (this concept shall be labeled C). Secondly, (and this shall be labeled D), good mothering contains the idea that, because mothering comes naturally, a woman inherently has the tools she needs to be good at it. Foucault's (1978) theory was that cultural hegemony is sustained by setting up for failure those who endeavour to oppose hegemonic forces. We see how this is in operation within the ideology of intensive mothering precisely by the manner in which alignment with this natural picture of mothering enables one to fulfil the criteria of good mothering.

The data also seems to support Miller's (2005) statement explaining that "pervasive ideologies and practices shaping expectations of motherhood, can be seen to powerfully reinforce notions of appropriate ways of preparing for becoming a mother and how a good mother 'naturally' acts" (p. 47). In other words, not only do notions of natural mothering feed into constructions of good mothering, but it is the good mother who is 'able' to mother naturally (this is labeled E). Figure 5.1 provides a diagrammatic representation of the ideology of intensive mothering, as operating in this manner. Throughout this chapter, (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E) will relate to this diagram.

Figure 5.1: The ideology of intensive mothering



As discussed in chapter two, Hays (1996) characterises the ideology of intensive mothering as containing certain key features. This dominant, child-centred ideology relies on discourses of mother as heterosexual and married, who finds motherhood to be the fulfilment of womanhood, who has an innate ability to parent, is the primary caregiver, gives her child significant resources, loves her child selflessly and unconditionally, views mothering as being more important than paid work and makes decisions accordingly; and who finds mothering to be continuously rewarding and satisfying (Bell, 2006; Hays, 1996). I propose that these features relate to the processes involved at (A), (B), (C), (D) and (E) within natural and good mothering. The current portion of this chapter will show how these five broad ideas (A-E) emerged in the data and the relationships between them. I suggest that, in this way, the data reveals how the ideology of intensive mothering operates.

Two points are important to bear in mind before commencing with this discussion. Firstly, natural mothering has been constructed as “biologically determined, instinctive and therefore universally experienced” (Miller, 2005, p. 46). This notion shapes normative expectations and excludes alternative mothering practices and maternal identities. However, we know that, in fact, what ‘counts’ as natural mothering and, hence, as good mothering is defined according to the time and place within which the activity is taking place. The very concept of ‘natural’ is far from natural or universal, but is historically, culturally, socially, politically and morally constructed (Miller, 2005; O’Reilly, 2004; Thurer, 1994). This underpins the discussion in this section in the sense that the discursive content of natural mothering and good mothering is acknowledged to be directly related to the social, political, cultural and economic worlds which these particular urban, middle-class participants inhabit. Also, there are occurrences in the data where the participants themselves reflect upon the nature of mothering as socially constructed, and this will be highlighted.

Secondly, the participants in this study both evoked and deployed the key features of the ideology of intensive mothering *and* they also demonstrated resistance, when positioned as ‘mother’ and when positioned as ‘adoptive mother’ or ‘foster mother’. They also had ambivalent relationships between deployment and resistance. Although certain ways in which this resistance takes place will be included in this section, and instances of ambivalence will begin to become clear, these two aspects will be discussed further in the remaining two sections of this chapter, as these processes provide the foundations for my second and third arguments.

5.6.1 THE PICTURE OF NATURAL MOTHERING

Natural mothering was constructed in the data as possessing a number of facets. The natural mother is married, she is the primary caregiver, she is the biological mother (therefore she has birthed this child, she is able to breastfeed the child and, commonly, she is the same race as the child). Natural mothering also involves mothering a child who is ‘normal’ (i.e. who does not have special needs, who has not been abused and/or traumatised, and who is not HIV-positive). The natural picture also involves mothering that is continuous and mothering that is authorised. The following sections present the ways in which participants evoked, engaged with and resisted these facets.

5.6.1.1 THE MARRIED MOTHER AS THE GOOD MOTHER / THE GOOD MOTHER AS THE MARRIED MOTHER

The picture of natural mothering painted by the data includes the placement of the season of mothering within a woman’s life. Mothering is constructed as part of the natural, expected progression from being a single woman, to becoming a married woman, to becoming a mother. In DC’s words, “You know, I mean, it’s the

next step. You get married, you have kids and then you're parents and that's kind of what you do" (14:111). From this viewpoint, women should parent collaboratively with men. This is part of the picture of natural mothering. DL, a single mother of four adopted girls, mentioned the strain of mothering alone (1:218). There are 'gaps' that she cannot fill (1:665; 1:672; 1:680; 1:686). NU, also a single mother, mentioned the financial responsibility of mothering alone. Accordingly, when mothering with a husband, there is, then, less financial pressure and the mother is better able to fulfil the precepts of the ideology of intensive mothering in being able to provide the financial resources that her children require. CF assumed that she would not be able to adopt due to the fact that she is single, however, she discovered that this criterion has been lifted seeing as there are so many children needing homes. In other words, only due to the great numbers of children requiring care, women who are single now 'qualify' to adopt. BH commented on reaching the number of 12 foster children in eight months and said, "It was very difficult emotionally for me because I was a single woman and then went to that magnitude was such a big jump" (13:124). She implies that if she was not single this may not have been as emotionally difficult. When describing her adopted daughter's continuous crying in the early days of adopting her DD says,

We didn't know children could cry in such agony. And it didn't help, didn't matter what we did, if we picked her up, if we sat with her, if we left her, she would scream and scream. That was absolute torture. And you know the nights were the worst but then there'd be times in the day as well. And it really didn't help the bonding 'cause now you have this child who is, um, being revolting quite frankly, and wasn't letting you sleep. So my husband and I were both tired, we had to take it in terms because we'd get to the point where we're like: 'you'd better deal with her because I don't know what I'll do if I have to stay there and listen to it anymore' (18:85).

She drew on the support of her husband so that she could retain her behaviour as a good mother. BH comments on her role as the disciplinarian in the home:

...a typical family would say, ok, you're going to do that, father, whatever, so I don't feel I'm functioning as a woman, a typical woman's role where you're married and you, you see your husband in a certain, your husband does certain things, you do certain things, there's a team approach, you know what I'm saying? (13:439).

When working as a 'team' you are able to fulfil your role (which comes naturally to you as a woman) because your husband is fulfilling his role. In other words, according to this construction, when the family looks the way it naturally should, you are enabled to be a good mother.

5.6.1.2 THE PRIMARY CAREGIVER AS THE GOOD MOTHER / THE GOOD MOTHER AS THE PRIMARY CAREGIVER

KM defined mothering as: "you are their main care giver. When they're small they look to you for everything" (6:178). As mentioned earlier, DN had intentionally positioned herself in resistance to the notion of mother as primary caregiver. However, due to the demands of her child, she found that she had to yield to "the prominence that mom takes over dad in the early years...So there is, so just to concede that there is something quite primal about motherhood, that children need" (17:344). Although she holds onto the belief that this will not always be the case, DN relinquishes the picture she had previously painted in resistance to this aspect of dominant notions of mothering and concedes that the mother may be required to be the primary

caregiver in relation to the 'natural' demands placed on her by her child. In order to be a good mother (to meet her children's needs) she needs to 'surrender' to that picture.

One of the key features of the construct of the good mother that emerged in the data is that she is present and available for her children. This links to the components of the ideology of intensive mothering related to the mother's investment of significant resources in her child as well as her prioritising childrearing above paid work. NF affirmed this component of the dominant discourse by stating,

I almost feel that a lot of society's issues are because moms aren't moms anymore, they're just running around doing everything else and not looking after their kids. Um, that's a huge thing for me and sort of think, you know, half of society's problems would be gone if the mom was a mom. And if woman felt comfortable with just being a mom (9:264).

Although this aspect of good mothering will be discussed further under section 5.6.3.1.1, the relationship between mothering and career pursuits is currently relevant. A number of participants mentioned making adjustments to their work schedule in relation to prioritising meeting the needs of their children. UC explained: "I've just recently resigned from work, um, largely because I cannot get the children to school on time...and then fetch them on time again" (4:229). She concluded, "it's more important to have more flexibility with my work time to be there for my children than vice versa" (4:232). NU spoke of her children being her first priority: "probably to their and my detriment. I tend to be a bit soft. Starting my own business at the moment and it's been very hard trying to balance everything, you know?" (10:164). She speaks of the development of her business taking second place to prioritising the needs of her children. DD constructed her life as planned around mothering:

school-lifts, play-dates, you know, where are the kids? What's happening? Plan, ja, generally plan around it. My mornings are my own. They're all at nursery school or primary school. Um, I do a bit of work and then in the afternoons generally I'm at home with them (18:203).

Similarly, DE said, "I work only mornings so I can be home with my kids in the afternoon" (20:405). It appears in many of the participants' talk, that the woman who has time for her children is enabled to be the good mother who is present and available. Flexibility appears to be a key construct in this regard.

When I asked DC to speak about how being a woman relates to being a mother she responded,

I'm not connecting to your question because of the fact that I'm the main breadwinner in the house. Um, and I'm very career-driven. I'm very um, I have a successful career. So I don't really see, I'm not really the nurturing, although when my kids are hurt I'm the one they want. When they've got an emotional thing I'm the one they talk to because I'm a woman but, um, you know I don't sit and play Barbies and do tea parties and stuff like that with them. So maybe I'm a different kind of mom (14:164).

Being career-driven is one of the attributes she ascribes to making her 'a different kind of mother'. In her drive to be a successful career woman she constructs herself as not fitting the natural picture of the 'nurturing mother'. She does retain aspects of natural mothering though. With reference to figure 5.1, although she does not identify with aspects of (A), in that her form of mothering looks different, she does still tap into aspects of (C) in that, through being a woman, she is naturally the one her children turn to when hurt or when there is an emotional issue that they would like to discuss.

Prior to this mention of DC's position, we see how the comments made by UC, NU, DD and DE can also relate to (E). When a woman is a good mother she is inclined to make choices that prioritise having time to be available for her children. It is natural for her to want to be present for her children. DC's statements resist this idea and she constructs herself as a good mother even though her 'natural' inclination is not to reproduce the dominant notion of natural mothering. Many participants who spoke of 'achieving' the dimension of the picture of natural mothering related to having the 'right' amount of time available for their children as the primary caregiver, do not necessarily talk of this as being easy. KN uses words that evoke a sense of loss:

I was not giving any of them my all...when I was at work I was feeling guilty about being at work and when I was at home I was thinking about work...You know, I wasn't, I was never fully anywhere. So I just felt like...I need to cut, one of these two needs to die...And my career died for a while (3:443).

She continues to say, "I was getting phone calls and offers that just felt like, you know, only a fool would say no" (3:449). Expectations prescribed by the dominant discourse of mothering construct one as a 'bad mother' when insufficient time is dedicated to one's children and yet dominant discourses of the successful career person construct her as a 'fool' for rejecting such opportunities.

DD spoke of the challenges she experienced as she stopped working:

It's been a big journey for me in terms of my identity. After my first child was born it probably took about a year to really coming to grips with who am I? Now I've stopped working, I'm looking after this child all day, so where's my worth? Is it, you know everyone thinks I'm sitting around, having coffee and on holiday for a year when it's nothing at all like that. You go out and meet people and they say 'what do you do?' 'Well I'm a mother'. Instead of saying 'I'm' you know I think we so easily define ourselves by our careers, you know, what we do. And I found that that had been pulled away from me. So now who was I? Yes, I was a mother, ok? But I must be more than just that (18:209).

Positioning as woman, mother and career person rely on discourses that are often incompatible (Miller, 2005). Hays (1996) described the ideology of intensive mothering as standing in tension with the logic of the marketplace. Existing studies in this area indicate that the ideology of intensive mothering is internalised by both at-home and employed mothers; however, women position themselves in various ways within the expectations of this ideology (Hattery, 2001; Johnston & Swanson, 2006). Although KN's and DD's quotes mentioned above provide examples of difficulties attuning to this construct, EW speaks of having established a sense of 'balance':

Fortunately I have other things. I mean I have work, which is very important so I do have my time, I'm not a stay-at-home mom. So as a woman I do get the time. My husband and I do have a special relationship so I do get time alone with him. She goes down between half-past six and seven so we have two, three hours. So I think my balance is right, you know. And I try not to completely let my children consume me and just find my balance, ja. But like I say I work, I do have other interests, you know you have your social and, I have a good relationship with my husband. So hopefully there's a balance (15:181).

EW does present herself as a good mother, for example, she identifies with key aspects of the good mother in speaking of mothering as involving

nurturing, protecting, um, loving, daily stuff, feeding, um, basics, all the practical stuff as well as the emotional stuff, praying for her, letting her grow up, uh, you know. I'm a very protective mother by

instinct so I had to learn to let my own child be autonomous when she does grow up, when she gets to that age (15:145).

She is resisting the prerequisite of full-time (or flexible, part-time) mothering laid down by the ideology of intensive mothering as necessary for enabling good mothering. However, even more so than in the case of DC, she strongly deploys the (C) dimension of natural mothering (i.e. mothering comes naturally). When I asked EW to talk about how mothering fits into her daily life she explained:

I just nurture. If I don't have anyone to nurture I start to doubt myself. So, I, you know, just to nurture and make sure everyone around me is ok and, um, ja. Just be a mom and encourage them and, ja. Just nurturing them. I just love it. It does get tiring because they are, she is very active at this stage which is what we're not used to. We're used to having our own time. So you know with my daily activities it does get tiring. But I love the routine, you know, I love the school environment, you know, just watching them go and play and just my daily life, I love that. And obviously the routine of it, feeding and that, but also just, ja, it's just, it's my day, it just fits into my life perfectly (15:165).

The first notion she drew on in her construction of mothering was 'nurture'. Here she talks of nurturing as a key component of who she is and what she does. She speaks of how she loves the requirements of mothering, indicating a strong sense of identification with the dimension of intensive mothering relating to the relationship between (C) and (D). As a result, her position as a good mother appears to be highly reinforced which may then mitigate the discrepancy between her engagement in full-time employment and the element of the picture of natural mothering that frames this as undesirable. Also, in her interview, EW does construct herself as meeting other requirements of the picture of natural mothering, even though in this area her statements offer resistance to the dominant discourse.

5.6.1.3 THE BIOLOGICAL MOTHER AS THE GOOD MOTHER / THE GOOD MOTHER AS THE BIOLOGICAL MOTHER

NF spoke of her conviction that "you have to have a heart for wanting to have somebody else's child. I don't think everybody could do it...I think there has to be a special place in your heart *for* it, I don't think everybody is cut out to be an adoptive mom" (9:355). When the child is your 'own' biological child you are 'cut out' to be a good mother to that child. DC speaks of a having "quite a deep sense of sadness...that they aren't mine biologically...it's almost a pity in a way" (14:128). She also speaks of knowing that she would have difficulty conceiving biologically and, instead of attempting fertility treatment, her and her husband "did something quite unusual in that we took adoption almost as a first option" (14:8). Adopting before attempting fertility treatment is thus constructed as 'unusual'. Mothers should 'normally' want to try and have biological children. Literature on mothering repeatedly contains definitive statements such as "becoming a mother involves a biological act...It involves an embodied experience" (Miller, 2005, p. 14). By definition, this is a facet of natural mothering that sets adoptive and foster mothers up for a lack of credibility, at best, and moral downfall at worst. We see in the data even how adoptive and foster mothers who participated in this study, on the whole, constructed the idea of the biological mother being enabled to be a good mother as the norm. This section will demonstrate how this facet of natural mothering is constructed through the idea that the mother births the child, that she breastfeeds the child and that she and her child are typically of the same race.

5.6.1.3.1 She is enabled to be a good mother because she births the child

A key component of the biological dimension of the natural mothering picture is that the mother births the child. Prior to the birth, she carries this child in her womb for nine months. OS finds it difficult to talk to her child about the idea that she “grew in someone else’s tummy” (5:297). CF highlights that “...when you’re pregnant you’ve got nine months to think ok, you’re going to have this child” (12:90). For DD, adoption

was incredibly difficult. It was basically like having to treat a complete strange child as your own, um, with no warming up period. I mean, no pregnancy, no nothing to get used to the child. So for me, particularly having had the biological children it was hard (18:29).

BD spoke of the experience of adopting a child as challenging whereas her husband constructed it as normal from the start: “my husband just sees it as normal. Actually for him the whole process has been very normal. Getting the kids has been normal” (11:247). I posed the question, “Normal in relation to having biological children?” to which she replied “Ja, very similar, for him, I mean he didn’t go through the whole pregnancy and all the business, the baby just arrived. So with [our adopted children], they just arrived. It was exactly the same so for him he had no issues” (11:249). Her ‘issues’ relate, in part to the lack of the ‘natural’ experience of pregnancy and the ‘natural’ arrival of the baby. This was an area that she identified as particularly meaningful for her as opposed to her husband.

Also, the idea of birthing a child is pivotal to the construct of ‘woman’. CF drew on this facet of the ideology of intensive mothering by stating, “being a woman, it’s like I suppose actually giving birth to that child, like that like relates to, to being like a woman” (12:153).

The biological child is also not ‘chosen’. Adoptive mothers speak of ‘problems’ that may result from ‘choosing a child’. This links to the idea that, naturally, when you birth a child, ‘you get the child you get’. Using the construction of ‘this is the child that was meant for us’ appears to UC to be more helpful for her in navigating this question than facing the potential of later asking: this is the child we chose, but maybe we should have chosen a different one? She affirms the view that

God gives you the children that you’re going to raise and deal with and it might not be the easiest thing, you might have personality clashes but I think if you stick with them...And I suppose it comes down to unconditional love, really, that’s a big part of being a good mother. So that’s what I’d say (11:346).

She uses the idea: God has given me this child (and He knows best), so I can therefore endure challenging times and love this child regardless.

5.6.1.3.2 Because this is her biological child she is able to breastfeed; Good mothers naturally breastfeed

DN discussed this aspect of the picture of natural mothering in relation to her adopted daughter and biological son. She commented,

because I wasn’t breastfeeding her, [my husband] would take her and I would take him. Um, so, she probably experienced, that’s probably part of her own defiance with lots of things, was that she wasn’t getting enough of my attention. Um, and then I was feeling, that was compounded because I was feeling inadequate and I wasn’t able to bond with her. So I was, um, ja, it was very different (17:379).

She continued by saying:

And I would say the big thing, if I had to advise anyone on adoption, if you can, uh, I know that this seems weird, but if you can breastfeed. And there are ways, and I did try but I was so stressed out and I just couldn't get her to latch enough. But if your baby's young enough try and get at least some skin-on-skin connection. Like that was, if I look back if there's one thing, it was like the fact that your child has to feed from you. And also just like, you letting, like this is what it is, you have to sit for half an hour and this child is getting all its nutrients from me. Not some bloody powder in a box. Which really, like that was also like, you can't get healthy enough formula, sorry, you know, it's just, I think you compromise...I was a bottle-fed baby, my mom didn't breastfeed me. But I think your system's so compromised (17:385).

DN proposes that it is possible for an adoptive mother to breastfeed (i.e. she can fulfil the picture of natural mothering); however, from this excerpt we see that this can be more difficult. She constructs the reason for this difficulty as her own state of being 'so stressed out'. In other words, this suggests the view that the good mother (E) can naturally breastfeed (A) whilst the stressed mother finds this difficult. The good mother is then able to provide skin-on-skin contact, her undivided, unhurried attention for chunks of time, and 'perfect' nutrition as opposed to formula, which can never be 'healthy enough'. For DN, when the mother 'compromises' on breastfeeding, her baby 'becomes compromised'. Good mothers do not produce compromised children. In her own assessment (and in her construction of herself as 'stressed out') she does not fulfil the requirements of (E) and therefore does not attain (A).

5.6.1.3.3 Mothers and their biological children are the same race, and this plays a role in enabling good mothering

DD's talk of relinquishing her idealised daughter brings us once again to the construct of race. Due to the richness of the data in this regard, exploring the ways in which these participants' talk provides insight into how race operates discursively in this country could easily constitute the length and breadth of another entire dissertation. However, within the constraints of the present document, only a few aspects will be selected for consideration.

DN, who mothers a biological son and a transracially adopted daughter, spoke of race as a primary feature of life in South Africa. She describes race as

very prevalent. It's an underlying identity, primary identity in this country that prefaces everything. And we are unaware of it, for the most part. Some people are like we don't want to deal with race, but it comes up, it just comes up in everything and it's just under, what do you call it? It's a fault line (17:121).

When speaking of her biological son's view of his adopted sister she says, "somewhere down the line when he was really little, somebody pointed it out that him and A were different and it was reinforced. And so now he sees everything, like any South African" (17:102). When DD discussed her young, transracially adopted, Black daughter chatting to another young, White girl, she noted that her child was probably thinking:

she's a little girl and I'm a little girl and we're both little girls together. Not realising that other people would look and, maybe because of who we are, brought up here in South Africa, you know. They're two different looking little girls (18:295).

In the data, race was constructed largely as difference. Transracial families, particularly, were also constructed as different. EW commented: “from the racial perspective, it’s different. We will always be a different family. It doesn’t matter where you go or what you do, even if you leave the country and go somewhere else you will always be a different family” (15:254).

The idea of natural mothering looking a certain way includes, therefore, the picture of a mother, who is constructed as belonging to a certain racial category, and her child, who belongs to the same racial category. Many participants, both adoptive and foster mothers, who are mothering transracially evoked this notion when talking about others’ responses to them and their children. In relation to her transracially adopted daughter, CF commented, “when I go to school they’ll, the kids’ll say ‘why’re you White and she’s Black?’” (12:358). BH, a foster mother spoke of being in “the queue and the lady taking our food, you know the grocery store queue, she’ll try and speak to the children in another language about me. She’ll say, you know, ‘what are you doing with this White mother?’” (13:603). MB spoke of questions that are posed to her when she is out with her blonde, biological daughter and her Coloured, adopted daughter:

...I get *lots* of questions. They drive me mad. Do you as well? (laughs) I think also ‘cause she could be, she could be mine. She’s quite fair. So like if I was married to a Black guy it’s possible, you know? Even a Coloured guy. You know it’s very possible. I just get random strangers saying to me ‘ooh, one’s so blonde and one’s so dark. How did that happen?’ You just want to say (whispers:) ‘shh, I had an affair, I just haven’t told my husband’. Like what do they think? (21:188).

CF mentioned, however, that she believes that the rigidity of this criterion of natural mothering may be shifting as more people become exposed to the dynamic of transracial adoption:

it’s becoming much more the norm, if that’s the right way to put it. When I first got her, especially because she’s Black, it became, it was, like people would come up, I had someone coming up to me and asking if she was my maid’s child (laughs). So it was like quite a thing (12:260).

In other words, CF speaks of aspects of the meaning of transracial adoption changing. Participants discuss this in relation to meanings of race shifting in South Africa over time (for example, as evidenced through increased integrated schooling).

A number of participants also discussed how transracial adoption means differently in different spaces. This is an area in which participants resist dominant notions of natural mothering (although their attempts to deconstruct meanings of race still involve a high degree of ambivalence). There is awareness that what is considered unnatural in one geographical area is more likely to be accommodated in the realm of the natural in another. Johannesburg is constructed as a city that is more open to the notion of transracial adoption. For example, DL said,

obviously it’s very *obvious* so you get a lot of, um, like, attention, and you do realise, ok, ja, I’m White [laughs]. You know and especially if you, maybe in South Africa, especially in Jo’burg we’re more, people are more relaxed and don’t really look anymore, but when you go out of it or when you travel, so you do, you’re very aware of it (1:456).

She then said “but like if you’re on the beach, like ‘specially if you go into the rural, more rural areas, like we’ll go to the Eastern Cape, you’ll get people standing on the thing just watching. It’s like, just watching, for hours” (1:368). NF said,

When you go down to my parents then they just stare at you and they don't want anything to do with you. So, um, and that's just antagonistic and very sort of, you know, 'what on earth did you think you were doing?'. Whereas up here people are more, they're really just inquisitive and sort of wanting to know 'why did you do this?' and 'how did you do it?' you know? (9:453).

KM, a White mother of Black foster children commented, "You know there's a lot of cross-cultural adoptions now and things so it's not such an uncommon kind of thing particularly living in Jo'burg...When I get to Balito I feel like I'm on a different planet" (6:571). CF and LL also discussed Johannesburg as being a city that is more accepting of transracial adoption. DD assigned this higher degree of openness to the nature of "big cities" (18:360). This finding is interesting to note in relation to American research by Feigelman (2000) who concluded that the area in which a transracial family lives has a substantial impact on the adopted child's adjustment, particularly in terms of their discomfort in relation to appearance. In his study, Black, transracially adopted children experienced higher levels of appearance discomfort when living in predominantly White areas than those living in integrated areas.

Natural mothering, as involving a mother and child of the same socially constructed racial category, also appears to mean differently in private and public spaces. Although CF spoke of being stared at when visiting family and friends in other areas, she said that within her home "she's my child" (12:429). When I asked TN, a mother of a transracially adopted daughter (and a biological son; and previously a foster mother) how she experienced her own Whiteness she responded:

...in private moments at home you don't, I promise you, you don't. [My daughter] once said to me 'you know mom I've got to look at my arms to remind myself I'm Black'...when we're alone there is no colour issues. When we're in public: yes. I notice it because we get stared at. I notice because of the comments people will make, stupid ones like 'ah shame, did you settle for second best?'. Um, and there's so many racial comments made, 24/7 when you're in public. People tell jokes against Blacks. And I'm very aware that my child is Black, *then* (2:402).

There are a number of key issues at play in this quote. When alone, at home, this mother-daughter pair feel natural, as opposed to when they are in certain public spaces and receive stares and antagonistic comments. However, it does not appear that the construction of 'natural' in the private space is as a result of the transracial aspect of the relationship being (re)defined as natural. The transracial aspect of the relationship seems to disappear (and the relationship therefore looks natural). Does this mean that neither the race of the mother nor the child holds relevance to them? The mother speaks of not experiencing her Whiteness *and* the daughter speaks of 'forgetting' that she is Black.

It is not quite that simple. Whiteness has a history of invisibility and, central to its discourse, is the function of power. Does the mother in this instance not notice her Whiteness, or does Whiteness function in the way that the anecdote of accents does: I don't speak with an accent, I speak normally; it is you who has an accent? Prior to the daughter looking at her arms to remember that she is Black, did her self-image not include the component of race or was she holding an association with Whiteness? A number of participants made comments that suggest that the second interpretation may potentially hold water. For example, DD said

it's hard, if you look at [my Black, adopted daughter], who's brought up in a White family she's going to feel White but look Black, you know. So that's a whole different ball game...so she thinks she's one of

us 'cause she's part of our family. And I suppose the day will come when she realises she doesn't look the same as us but she feels like one of us. So then, you know, where does that leave her? (18:274).

Also, the invisibility of Whiteness, despite Steyn's (2007) critique, was certainly present in participants' constructions of race, which also affirms the second interpretation, in terms of how the White participant constructs what is taking place. When I asked participants whether / how they experienced their own Whiteness, there were three common responses involving puzzlement at the question, an outright response to the contrary, or evoking constructions of the child's Blackness (at times contrasting that with constructions of Whiteness, whilst on other occasions this remained the extent of the response to constructing Whiteness). Examples of the first type of response include: "In what way? What do you mean?" (OS, 5:429); "My Whiteness? (laughs)" (LL, 16:558). Examples of the second type of response include: "Hm-mm. No. She's her and I'm me, we're mom and daughter and that's it" (BS, 8:378); "No, not really" (CF, 12:412); "No, not at all" (EW, 15:400). Examples of the third type of response include the following:

[My Black adopted daughter] loves chicken (laughs). I swear. Kentucky's her favourite, and that seems to be such a Black thing. She does do things that are funny like if, um, if she swims she'll do that [wipes her hand over her face from forehead to chin]. That is a Black thing. Whites don't do that (TN, 2:385).

After LL laughed at the oddity of the question she then said,

Sometimes, I mean you can see, like, he's naturally, he's not so, I mean our foster son I think we notice 'cause he's naturally like the dancer, you know, like he's got rhythm. That's like a traditional African trait. They just naturally have rhythm and I think it'll, he's just very athletic and stuff and I think the African culture is very athletic and fast so we see that with our foster son (16:558).

For the few participants who engaged with Whiteness as being more 'visible', one spoke of realising that her "world" is very White (DN, 17:163) and two evoked the notion of privilege: "I think it's certainly opened my eyes a bit more. Um, just in terms of how much privilege White people have had in this country. You know things that I take for granted" (UC, 4:626); "Ja...It's very much a case of because of the family I was born into I am who I am and I am where I am. And it's kind of...you know, why was I chosen to be White and not Black?" (DD, 18:323).

IR's stance on paying attention to the race of family members is as follows: "I think it's wrong...You're one family. There is a Black child but we don't see the colour anymore. And I think that's, for me, for us, it doesn't exist" (7:263). NF said "we just don't see him as Black and you sort of, people always say 'oh, you've got a Black child!' 'oh yes, we do'" (9:688) and BD, referring to her two transracially adopted children, said "I don't even see their colour anymore in a way, you know what I mean? 'Cause they're mine" (11:369). This colour blind approach resonates with Perry's (1994) perspective of liberal colour-blind individualism utilised by transracial parents (in contrast to the perspective of colour and community consciousness) as well as Lee's (2003) first strategy of cultural socialisation employed by transracial adoptive parents, namely, cultural assimilation, in which racial differences are minimised. Rothman's (2005) discussion of this colour-blind approach also resonates with a number of such comments that emerged in the data of the current study. She commented,

A baby is a baby is a baby. That could not, of course, be more true. In each and all of the daily acts of nurturance, the race of the baby is completely beside the point. Diapers and diaper rash, breasts and

bottles and baby food, early language acquisition, peek-a-boo, skinned knees – these have nothing to do with race. But blackness is a quality assigned to the child, even if not to the relationship...And as the child grows, larger and larger loom the societal expectations about race (p. 140).

One of the aspects of this perspective, that also emerged in the data, is the idea that ‘if I love him/her enough then race won’t matter’. When talking to her transracially adopted child about racism, TN says, “the bottom line is: do you love us? We love you” (2:459). TN also states, “I wish more Whites would open up their eyes, and I wish the Blacks would grow up and stop thinking we’ve got ulterior motives. We’re loving their kids. Deal with that” (2:478). She maintains that love is what is most important. Seeing as she is loving the child, other issues are discounted. Whilst discussing issues that her transracially adopted child may encounter as a teenager, DD’s perspective is that, although her child may be a different race,

we’re trying now to sow in as much as we can about how loved she is and how much she’s part of the family so that when those issues start coming she’ll, sure she’ll go like ‘ok, well, someone rejected me and that’s terrible’ but hopefully she’ll have that base of knowing she’s completely loved, completely accepted (18:260).

BH, a foster mother, holds the belief that the needs of a child for love and care overshadow any potential need to have a mother who is the same race him/her:

I think that they really love me and it’s fine that I’m White. I think it’s something, um...I don’t think they love me particularly because I’m White, just they love me and that’s just the way it is. Um, and that’s just how we look. And I think that some of them have been so exposed to bad parenting and horrible situations that they couldn’t care less. They just want someone to give them, I’m serving them the food on the table, I’m giving them a bath and, that’s like a home run (13:589).

For other participants who mother transracially, the race of their child is highly visible. LA spoke of reading an article by a Black woman who was adopted as a child by a White woman in Britain. The adoptive mother disregarded the child’s race, telling her, “you’re not, you know your skin colour’s dark, but you’re not really Black, you know, you’re like me” (21:444). The grown woman now writes of how destructive this experience was and MB describes the article as “devastating” (2:445), upsetting and challenging. DN stated, “I can’t say it’s like ‘oh, we’re all the same, I don’t see her colour’. I see her colour everyday” (17:206). She immediately continues, however, to say the following about the relationship she has with her transracially adopted daughter in comparison to her biological son:

You know, it’s like, I feel differently about the two children. You know, I love her for different reasons but I love him because he’s my biological son. It’s different. I don’t know if it’s ‘cause he’s a son, or, uh, you know, so I don’t know if it’s a gender thing or biology thing. But their love is very different. And, uh, the journey with both of them will be very different. So I don’t pretend, think, that we’re the same...It’s been a slow love. It’s not been an immediate love with [my adopted daughter]. So it’s been a, I’ve now, it’s taken me a while to very primally bond with her. The first year was very hard. I did what I needed to do but I didn’t feel like this was my child, you know (17:207).

DD also spoke of the visibility of her transracially adopted daughter’s race:

Um, I think, ja, a lot of my thoughts have been about race and, so does this make me a racist because I don’t like her Black skin? You know, am I a terrible person to even admit that, to think that, to feel that? Where does that leave me? And, and it doesn’t, we all like the known. We like the

same. And it doesn't mean I'm passing judgement on Black skin, it's just that I know what I know and I know what's familiar to me and, ja, so White skin is familiar to me, it's known. Um, and it doesn't make me a racist, I don't think anything about Black people. You know, I treat, I try and treat every person as an individual and...But it's very uncomfortable, especially in this country, you know, where we're so conscious of skin colour and how we interact, because of our past, you know we're all try and be so PC and, you know, 'I'm not racist', 'I'm not racist'. I think we were all brought up, our parents and we've been brought up inherently racist so to try and slough off those layers is hard. Um, and also then just to say 'it's ok, we're different, and that's ok, we're different'" (18:303).

For MB, adopting transracially was something that prompted fear in her:

I was also, as much as I never considered myself a racist, I was suddenly confronted with this little child forever having to love completely and I just was terrified. So it was very much a bit of a leap of faith. And we did it, and we also went the Coloured route just because I just wasn't ready for a little Black baby, you know, as much as I wish that I was and I wanted to and all the other things. I thought let's start with, you know, (laughs), gradual transgression. And, um, ja, anyway so then we did the whole thing and then, ja, we got G at three weeks and I was just completely and utterly besotted and I still am. She's just the most lovely little thing in the whole world (21:76).

Later on in the interview, however, she commented on how she now constructs the skin colour of her Coloured, adopted daughter:

Um, but like her skin, I mean, ja I suppose it's just interesting because like when I had [my biological daughter], I used to sit with her and our skin was exactly the same colour, you know? And I used to think what would it be like if it was so different? But now like I look at [my adopted daughter] and I think there's such a richness to her colour. I just love her colour. It's like we lie in the sun for hours trying to get that colour. And, um and there's, and then I look at little White babies and I think 'they're so pale! It looks terrible.' They look so anaemic. It's just an incredible thing for me 'cause all I wanted was this little baby, this little White baby and I lost them. And all my friends who were pregnant and it was just horrendous for me, you know? And now I see them and I'm like 'agh, my baby's this gorgeous golden colour' (laughs) (21:365).

Some participants presented the concept that one can acknowledge colour without this being constructed as 'problematic' or as implying that a certain race is preferable. DE spoke of valuing

the ability to see colour and not see that it's a problem. For me race, because of us growing up in this country, race is 'there are different colours and there's a problem'. It's like specified 'you are this or you are this'. Whereas for me it's just having people of different colour because that's how God made them and they're all living together in harmony (20:674).

She also said,

So I mean every day from birth, every time we bathed him I held him up to the mirror and we kissed and we looked in the mirror and we cuddled so from early on he would see we look different, we look different and that's fine (20:769).

MB spoke of race by saying,

it's not a good thing, bad thing, or, it's just how it is. It's like you've got dark eyes and I've got, you've got brown eyes, I've got blue eyes. It's not one's better or worse it's just how it is, you know? (21:476).

DE reflected on her child being confronted by racism as he grows older:

But the reality is as he gets older he is going to see that there is racism. It's all over the world. But for him to be confident enough in himself to say you know what, God made me and He made me like this and this is who I am and to hell with everybody else (20:856).

According to a number of participants, the role of race within the picture of natural mothering was also constructed differently by people of different racial groups. This is constructed in contrasting ways. CT said,

I don't want to bring this down to a race issue, but it almost is. When I go shopping with her White folk are like 'wow, that's amazing'. Unfortunately from Black families I get a lot of very skew, kind of suspicious looks, so, they kind of, I've never been approached by anybody but you kind of get the feeling that they don't quite like or condone the idea (8:231).

NF commented "some of the Black people are very anti us Whites taking on Black kids. It's like 'don't you think we can look after our own kids?'" (9:463). DL, on the other hand, described comments she received such as "'God will just bless you', and especially from Black people, they're just so overwhelmed" (1:352).

As these last few points indicate, participants engage with the role race plays in constructing their mothering as natural or not in a variety of ways. Some resist the essentialist qualities of 'natural' by showing an awareness that mothering transracially means differently in different spaces and for different people. They are, however, aware that they live in a city that is more 'open' to the inclusion of transracial mothering in the category of acceptable (if not, slowly tending towards 'natural' in an increasingly politically accepting culture, although this can be debated). The good adoptive mother is also constructed in the data as managing the social spaces that her family operates within. She knows that some people construct her family as unnatural (at best) and she discontinues relationships with these people. UC, for example, made the following comment:

We'd reached the point where we'd decided that if any one of our family or friends didn't want us to do this or was very anti it then we'd actually sever that relationship, if we needed to. I mean obviously it's not something you want to do but we had made that decision, that if we have friends who make inappropriate remarks, I mean, then we just won't see them anymore (4:409).

She also described how they changed churches "to one that was more integrated" (4:634). Therefore, although participants deconstruct the essentialist notion of 'natural', they still position themselves in social spaces where their form of mothering is more likely to be accepted as natural. Another method of race engagement that was discussed above in terms of navigating the natural, was for mothers of transracially adopted and fostered children to discount their child's race and the significance of their own race. When race is not an 'issue' the whole subject of natural mothering involving a mother and child of the same race is bypassed. This may, however, come at a cost to the child. Two participants mentioned above (DD and MB), placed the race of their child in a spotlight as opposed to dismissing it. For DD, however, she discussed this in relation to the differences in the development of her relationship with her transracially adopted child (a 'slow love') and her biological child. MB, on the other hand, appears to have completely embraced her child's race (or, more precisely, the colour of her child's skin). From the quote provided above illustrating how she

now constructs the meaning of her daughter's 'gorgeous golden colour', she appears to be confidently enabled to idealise her daughter's beauty and respond adoringly (as good mothers do). Is this, then, an example of a woman resisting the picture of natural mothering whilst still being enabled to be the good mother? Apparently not, according to a statement that MB makes a little later on in the interview when I asked her whether, if her and her husband adopted another child, she would consider adopting a Black child:

I don't know yet, we don't know. Mmm, I don't know. Probably not. My [husband] wants a little Black boy. Ja, but I don't know...I also wanted a Coloured baby for a lot of other reasons. Um, and that was that, I didn't want to deal, at that time, because of all the other stuff, I didn't want to deal with additional issues. So for example, if we get a little Xhosa boy and he's not circumcised, if we get another, you know I discussed all these things with lots of people. And the language and the, and in a way it's like the soft option. So I feel like we've gone with the easy route, that actually we don't need to, like a lot of the cross-cultural stuff is not really applicable. Besides her skin colour it's not, you know, and she's, she could be, people have said to me 'is she Brazilian?' You know, I mean, she's just, you know what I mean, she could be Italian. So, um, so I think, you know if we got a Black boy, we might, then it'll be a whole different set of stuff we'd have to think about and deal with and work out how we're gonna do it (21:390).

She embraces the 'difference' of her daughter's skin colour by constructing it within the continuum of what could be within the realm of 'natural' from her perspective. Her child could 'pass' as Brazilian, or Italian. In other words, she is not so different after all. Her enablement to be a good mother is, still, fed by an unchallenged notion of natural mothering.

DL did directly resist the idea that mothers and their children should be the same race. She said,

I suppose if they criticised your...if they just criticise you just for the mere fact that you're White and your kids are Black. That would really get my back up because it's such a stupid thing. But actually I don't really, I just ignore it now, 'cause I think I've got really good boundaries with it, like, 'well actually it's your problem, you've got no clue' (1:345).

She dismantles this dominant notion as 'stupid'. Assessment as a good mother should not be dependent upon this notion of 'natural'. She is arguing for additional images to be added to the canvas of natural mothering. It is important to note, as will be discussed in the final section of this chapter, that, despite this angle of resistance, the construct of the good mother is not challenged, merely the validity of the grounds of her critique. Later on in the same interview, however, DL comments on disciplining her children in public and says, "It's unfortunate because, you know, when you would normally just shout at your child you can't. You are aware that actually people are watching so you don't, which is probably not the right thing to do" (1:468). These two comments juxtaposed alongside one another provide a clear example of the ambivalence that will be discussed shortly. In the second, instead of activating the boundaries she has instituted around her own construction of natural, she is informed by others' positioning of her relationship with her child and behaves accordingly. Instead of disciplining her child (which would be the 'right' thing to do), she is disempowered in this regard and therefore cannot fulfil the requirements of good mothering.

The negotiation of public discipline as an instance of where not meeting the requirements of natural mothering ((A) in figure 5.1) impacts upon a mother's capacity to be a good mother ((C) in the same figure) was explored by a number of participants. The theme of these statements was either that this impacted on

her decision to discipline her child or that she felt she had to defend her actions when she did discipline publicly. OS commented:

If I ever have to discipline her, you know, for whatever reason, 'cause she's got a very strong will, um, then I'm a bit like woah. Then I'm a bit like here's this White lady with this Black child type thing. That's where, perhaps, the, what's the word I'm thinking of? Not insecurity, apprehension maybe, comes in (5:126).

NF explained,

I'm a lot more self-conscious that I'm smacking a Black child in a shop than I am if I'm smacking my own child. But at the same time I've just decided if you're going to come and say something I'm just going to say 'He's my child, do you want me to treat him differently because he's Black?'...I mean I've had Black people get very protective: 'Whose child is this?' 'What are you doing to him?' But um, ja. Other than that I think it's something you just end up dealing with. I sort of think, well do I discipline, don't I? And I'm very much: you've been naughty, you'll get smacked right there and then and deal with it and move on (9:849).

My own adopted daughter has a habit of letting loose ferocious temper tantrums in airports. I know the embarrassment inevitably faced by every parent as one receives the force of your child's misbehaviour in a public space. I am also raising biological, twin boys. I know what mothers feel when this construction of bad mothering shines for all to see. However, the picture of a White woman dragging a Black child through an airport while her body thrashes wildly and her screams utilise the full capacity of her surprisingly small lungs (including, over and over, the word 'Daddeeeee!!!' 'Daddeeeee!!!') has only one possible caption (at least in my mind, in that moment). Child trafficking. Then and there, being positioned as a 'bad mother' would be a relief. It would be a gracious rescindment of construction as criminal. Despite researching this very topic for the last few years, despite reading many books, talking to many women, writing many pages, I still avoid airports.

When I am in a situation where the risk is closer to that of being positioned as a bad mother, as opposed to a criminal (due to my discursive imagination quietening a little), I find that I become immobile. I am trapped between two discursive spaces. If I hand my transracially adopted child the sweet that she is shrieking for in the grocery shop queue, then I have broken the rules of good mothering. If I do not hand her sweet then I am a White lady being mean to a Black child...and mean ladies cannot possibly be good mothers (or good White citizens of a 'New' South Africa for that matter). I am engaged in two discursive worlds simultaneously without finding much success in either.

5.6.1.4 MOTHERS HAVE NORMAL CHILDREN AND THIS FACILITATES GOOD MOTHERING

Thus far, three aspects of natural mothering have been noted that appear, from the data, to enable good mothering: the mother is married, she is the primary caregiver, and she is the biological mother of her child. There are two further aspects of the picture of natural mothering that I would like to highlight in this section: mothers have normal children; and there are particular qualities that characterise the 'natural' mother-child relationship. With regard to the first of these, the picture of natural mothering does not include a child with special needs, one who has been abused / is traumatised, or one with a serious illness.

5.6.1.4.1 Mothering a child with special needs

NU spoke of mothering her adopted daughter with special needs as being:

totally different...it's like someone, when you actually have a baby and you think you're going to America and you end up in Italy because your child isn't normal, there's something very wrong with her, um, she's emotionally not ok...Frustrating, I get very frustrated with her, ja. It can get very frustrating (10:55).

She talks of this child as being "a difficult child" (10:16). Good mothers are constructed in this data as being 'in tune with' their children and as understanding their children, however, NU finds that it is difficult to emotionally read her child with special needs: "She was happy and then she'd cry and cry and cry and you know you don't always know why. She couldn't talk" (10: 82). The good mother meets her child's needs, however, mothering a child with 'special needs' increases these demands. NU explains that she experiences mothering this child as "very demanding" (10:191); "children with special needs require you to give, give, give" (10:150). LL spoke of the added pressure of questioning whether she is giving enough:

With our foster son who's got the brain condition I mean just raising a child with a special need I'm daily thinking 'am I doing enough that he's gonna, you know, 'cause there's therapy that I can do to help him improve the way he's gonna be in the long term and I think 'am I doing enough for him?' you know? Like 'today I didn't do therapy with him' and, you know I want him to grow up, I don't want him to grow up to be crippled, I want him to grow up strong. So there's always an added pressure when you take a child with a special need (16:700).

One of the aspects of the construction of the good adoptive mother and the good foster mother entails her ability to balance the needs of her children (biological, adopted, and foster). NU, a mother of three biological daughters and an adopted daughter with special needs speaks of the difficulty of balancing the needs of all her children.

5.6.1.4.2 Mothering a child who has experienced abuse / trauma

BH is a foster mother to 12 children, most of whom have experienced abuse and trauma. She offers a narrative in which she talks of taking one of her foster children to a play therapist. Firstly, BH evokes another aspect of the picture of natural mothering, namely, natural mothering only involves the care of a few children. She describes the play therapist as having

a lot of expectations of me that I couldn't meet, like I can't spend thirty minutes a day with a child one-on-one. It's just unrealistic. So she was, um, giving me all this critique about how I should do this and this and communicate differently with the child and spend more time with this particular child and I just said 'oh'. She said 'but this is used in foster care in the States' and I said 'Well, foster care is usually three or less children or four children or less'. So I'm trying to, when I'm communicating, realising that people have different expectations of what, I mean I'm a mother of a children's home with 12 children. It's different than if I was fostering three children. I'm just trying to be realistic (13:162).

BH then refers specifically to the life experiences of the child and the relationship between this and her mothering:

I understand where [the play therapist is] coming from but a Northern suburbs child is not going to be the same as a child that's been neglected and witnessed murder and, you know, been raped and had syphilis. You know what I'm saying? It's just not the same, it's not...It looks so different because we love each other but, from a, and I love who she is, but I haven't walked the road with her from birth, I don't know how she got syphilis, I don't know why she doesn't brush her teeth because she hates getting things in her mouth. I don't know those things. I can only say to her 'C, you must brush your teeth', 'C, let me brush your teeth for you, I'm going to do it'. But I don't know why, the background of that. So when I say I love you, I do care for her deeply and I sit with her and I make sacrifices for her and we go places and all of that, it's just not like a, I know it's just not that kind of love that I would have if she came in at age six and I said 'I'm adopting you for life'. It's not the same, it's not the same (13:353).

BH's talk presents a kind of mothering that she finds to be very different to the picture of natural mothering. As a result, as mentioned in section 5.3.2.5, she emphasises that she mothers as best as she can, but that mothering does not look the same as the mothering delivered by the idealised good mother. For her, this difference is so pronounced that she continuously uses words and phrases that position myself as the interviewer (and, I suggest, myself standing in the place of any potential listener) as one who is unlikely to understand. Note the following quotations from her interview (and the number of times that many of them were repeated):

"do you understand what I'm saying?" (13:18, 76, 91, 106, 231, 281, 350, 403, 449, 649, 694, 695)

"does that make sense?" (13:241, 426)

"do you know what I'm saying?" (13:258, 446, 455, 490, 686)

"most mothers don't know what that's like" (13:332)

"most mothers have no flippin' idea" (13:336)

"do you know?" (13:656)

BH spoke of her hopes for what mothering her foster children would be like and then states,

I was surprised by the amount of difficulty the children have this late in the game, but then I know that's realistic based on what they've been through. So I'm just surprised that it doesn't match up with my fantasy world. It's not that the children have done anything wrong, it's just my fantasy has crumbled (13:93).

5.6.1.4.3 Mothering a child who is HIV-positive

LL mothers an adopted son who is HIV-positive. She speaks of meeting him at the children's home and how "families would come in and they would see him and 'Oh, yeah, da da da, we'd love him, da da da' and then 'Oh, but he's HIV' and then they'd say 'never mind' and take another child" (16:87). This is interesting to note in relation to Townsend and Dawes' (2004) South African study in which they found that adoptive mothers were statistically significantly more likely to prefer adopting a child who was HIV-negative than one who was HIV-positive. Regarding foster mothers, however, there was not a statistically significant difference.

In Sandelowski and Barroso's (2003) review of qualitative findings on motherhood in HIV-positive women, they discuss how HIV-positive women find it difficult to escape the pervasive notion that they are bad mothers. DN speaks of her adopted daughter as being

sick a lot, her immune system is very compromised. So this is, I guess attributed, her mother was HIV positive, weak immune system. She got meningitis at four weeks old so she was on a hectic dose of antibiotics for two weeks in hospital (17:249).

She also says, "her mother was HIV-positive, and suicidal, her mother tried to commit suicide, so, um, she's got all sorts of biological baggage" (17:255). This is one of the instances in the data where the mother is held responsible for the health and wellbeing of the child. The link between the child with HIV/AIDS and the 'bad mother' prompts LL, in certain situations, to inform people that her child is adopted so as to avoid being positioned in that manner:

...sometimes I say it 'cause I'm at the doctor's office and they can see he's older than we are married and so I'll say something about our son and, or anywhere in any context and you're talking about him and I say 'he's almost three' and then we're married two and a half years and then people are like 'ahhh...' and then I'm like 'he's adopted!' (laughs). Like I think that's fine 'cause I don't want them to think that we had him before and I think sometimes when I say, if I say he's HIV-positive then also I feel the need to say, 'cause I don't want them also to think, which is me being embarrassed that someone might think I'm HIV-positive, you know. So it's more my, I shouldn't even worry about what they think (16:588).

The two participants in this study with children who are HIV-positive (BH and LL) constructed the meaning of their child's illness differently in relation to their mothering. When discussing mothering a child with HIV, BH commented that it has "taken more money and energy and capacity for me personally to deal with a child that's cognitively delayed than the HIV-positive is nothing. I mean you take them to the clinic, you get their medicine, it's not that bad" (13:64). Here we see an instance of resistance to (C): because mothering does not actually have to look like that (A) my mothering can still qualify as good. In other words, having a child who is HIV-positive does not actually serve as notably deviant from the norm (as it is relatively straightforward to manage), therefore the picture itself should accommodate this and I can be a good mother in relation to this expanded picture of 'natural'.

LL, on the other hand, constructed mothering a child with HIV as quite different from that which is classified as 'natural mothering':

I think just emotionally it's, it's harder than I thought it would be. And I mean I would tell people 'oh no, it's fine adopting an HIV child. Their life span is this, they're on medicine and he's healthy' and this and that. And then I started realising, no it's actually, emotionally it's quite a strain and I wouldn't recommend it to everyone. You know, I've felt what it is to really take on that kind of pressure...'Cause there've been times that I've really been struggling and I'm down one week and I don't know who to go to (16:693).

She commented further on the extra pressure involved in mothering a child who requires a regimen of medication:

You know, some days we slip on medicine and it's half an hour or, you know, and for days I'm beating myself up thinking 'what have I done?' Like, how could we have made that mistake? How did we miss

the alarm? How did this happen? And so the more that has happened the more I've realised you know, my, that it's gotten harder on me as a mother. I think that opened the door to, you know when we started, 'cause were like on the dot and then all of a sudden there'd be a day that we'd miss it and this and that, not miss for all day but miss it for any length of time, you just, even if it's for five minutes you almost feel like (breathes in deeply). And then I got over five minutes, it's not a huge deal but then like a half an hour you think 'oh my gosh, is my child gonna die and... (16:664).

She also said,

...he's got a life threatening disease. How do we explain to him, you know, that God still loves, I mean it's not like, it wasn't his fault, it's not his fault that he has it and that's, you know, God still has a plan and a purpose for him. Um, just how do we make him grow up seeing that that's not, you know, that God still loves him? He can easily think 'well how could God, you know, love someone and give a child that did nothing, give them this life threatening disease that's considered such a, that's looked down on because it's, you know, 'oh it's a sexual disease' you know? (16:410).

LL evokes (and then resists) the idea that having HIV/AIDS may mean that God does not love him and comments on the injustice of a child having this disease when he did not do anything to 'deserve' it. She constructs HIV/AIDS as life threatening. She says that "my bond is a lot stronger with him. Um, because of it, because daily I have to battle with you know, the fear of losing him" (16:602). Although the natural mother-child relationship is a bonded one (as will be discussed in the following section) this does not typically involve the persistently central fear of loss as described by LL. Although a good mother is protective of her child, she also does not overcompensate, and balances protection with giving her child freedom. The good mother is also calm and relaxed (11:289). LL's engagement with the constructions of the implications of HIV outlined above challenge some of these features of the good mother. The good mother is also enabled to be so because she has support (1:404; 5:178; 11:446). LL said,

I don't know anyone else who's adopted an HIV child and I can go to someone and they can encourage me. But it's like you don't, they don't understand the burden that I'm feeling at that time. And so that would be nice and, you know, not a family where say the mom is HIV and has an HIV child but a family that they also don't know anything about the disease, they don't have it. It's that their children do (16:790).

LL does construct her motivation to adopt a child with HIV as being related to her heart being "touched" (16:94), a strong compassion for the child relating to him having HIV (16:95), a desire for children with HIV to belong, to have a family and to have significance. These attributes of the desire to care for a child, a response of compassion, and the desire to offer a child belonging and significance within a family resonate with that which comes naturally to women, providing a woman with the tools to mother well. Women and mothers are constructed in the data through statements such as: women are "the nurturers and the carers" (5:156); mothers instinctively draw the child to them (10:464); "liking children is part of what it means to be a woman" (1:656); "a mother loves her child unconditionally because she is a woman and that's characteristic of being a woman" (2:297); "like often times there's a challenge that you kind of think I don't know if I could do that, but taking a child into your home and raising them is like kind of like a natural thing, I think" (20:49). It is also constructed as natural for a woman to want to care for a child in need. BH commented, "well it's hard, I mean [the social workers] call you with all these sob stories. I mean, and the stories sound beautiful. Not beautiful, beautifully horrible (laughs), and you want to take them..." (13:115). DE said, "I just thought maybe

I should go over and meet him. Which I did, which is lethal, I mean he was two days old, I mean (laughs)” (20:80). Therefore, for LL, although the construction of mothering a child with HIV does not fall within the picture of natural mothering, thus challenging her as a mother, she contends for her position within the realm of natural mothering through her talk of possessing the ‘tools’ that come naturally.

5.6.1.5 THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IS A CONTINUOUS ONE AND THIS ENABLES GOOD MOTHERING / THE GOOD MOTHER HAS A RELATIONSHIP OF CONTINUITY WITH HER CHILD

Within the data, the continuity of the ‘normal’ mother-child relationship was constructed at a broader level and at a day-to-day level. As mentioned earlier, natural mothering involves birthing a child and then proceeding forward in a sustained relationship over time. This notion includes the idea that mothers do not normally ‘miss out’ on seasons of their child’s life. BD discussed the contrast between this and her experiences with her adopted children: “I’d kind of missed out on five months of his life, which was a big thing for me, so I took a long time to bond with him” (11:36). Later on in the interview she constructs those five months as characterised by

all that stuff of knowing what he looked like when he was born, what he was like as a baby, you know? Was he a good baby? Things that you deal with when you’ve got a biological child and you get them straight away (11:102).

KN, a long-term foster mother, speaks of her regret at

not having found my kids at a younger age. ‘Cause I would have loved to see them through certain stages in their life. I mean, there’re certain things that pain me like, I don’t have any baby pictures of them, you know, and for these [biological] little ones I don’t know how many photo shoots they’ve had but we’ve got thousands of pictures...And I just, my heart pains that I could not have had all of that earlier (3:681).

In relation to the 60-day waiting period in which the biological mother is free to change her mind and retract the adoption, DE commented, “if she *wasn’t* going to change her mind we wanted *that* part of J as well” (20:323).

On the other hand, one participant, CF, spoke of purposefully electing to adopt a slightly older child:

I didn’t want like a baby baby, that was just the thing. I didn’t want a really tiny child. Um, ja, I don’t know. I don’t know if it was just like a, I didn’t know if I would cope with the sleepless nights and, you know, like, and ja, so I just, like, decided (12:47).

This could be viewed as a display of agency as an adoptive mother in selecting to bypass a stage that she felt she may not cope with.

Part of the normal continuity of mothering involves possessing records of one’s child’s life and a history of their experiences and behaviour. The adoptive and foster mothers in this study spoke of the difficulties involved when such information is not available (9:746; 10:347; 11:447; 13:380; 15:204; 16:420).

Participants constructed mothering as an activity that is engaged in 24/7 (3:632; 6:188). BH, a foster mother, encounters this notion ambivalently. She reflects on the construction of the ‘real mother’ as entailing a lifetime commitment to a child as well as never having a ‘day off’. The conversation proceeded as follows:

BH: So that’s how people view me is I’m not really a mother. So then, but the question is how do I look

past that to sacrifice and be a mother for these children even when people don't see me really as a mother? 'Cause I'm not really their mother, I'm their foster mother which is totally different.

ADS: Do you feel like a real mother?

BH: I think so, I think so. But it looks different than when I'll be a real mother. I mean, not that I won't end up adopting, not that I won't, I'm just saying, it's totally different. But I know that's what's people are thinking, 'cause they say that.

ADS: How would you define a real mother?

BH: I think a real mother is committed to a child 'til death. I think. Uh, not even that, I think it, C [leader in her ministry] will say 'a real mother doesn't have a day off'. That's her big thing: a real mother doesn't have a day off. And I do have days off and, um, but to be honest I couldn't survive without a day off. I think I deserve a day off for heaven's sake (laughs) (13:477).

Validation as a 'real mother' appears to enable or support the sacrifice that is required to be a good mother. BH encounters the constructions of others that invalidate her as a 'real mother' in this regard, she holds this construction herself and she also resists this idea. In her talk we see that her construction of 'good foster mother' is enabled by a kind of mothering activity that *does* include 'days off'. Not only does she speak of this being necessary for good mothering, but for 'survival'. Earlier on in the interview, BH says,

I mean I think, um, I don't honestly think that my, the children that I care for know the difference, that I'm not, that I haven't adopted them. They think I'm just as loving as any, but their standard has been very low. So they don't realise that it's not normal, an adoptive mother wouldn't go away for the evening, or for the day on a day off. Do you understand? (13:226).

In her talk we see how she conflates biological mothering and adoptive mothering as both fitting the 'normal' picture constructed in (A). This enables a particular kind of (ideal) good mothering. For her, foster mothering is different, and the assessment of the 'good foster mother' cannot be made on the grounds of the picture of natural mothering presented in (A). KM also speaks of the distinction between foster mothering and adoptive mothering in relation to the idea of 'days off': "I mean, with [my adopted son] it's 24/7, I don't get days off from him. With your own children you don't get days off from them, but with my foster children I do" (6:641).

In a different vein, LL, an adoptive mother and a foster mother, constructs absence from her children (both adopted and fostered) in the following way:

There's not like a time where I'm not a mom anymore. It's always my position. If I'm out then I'm thinking of them and want to get home to them. If I'm at the grocery store I'm not going to lolly around, I want to get home to them, I want to know what they're doing and so I think it's part of everyday life (16:331).

Both BH and KM foster with the assistance of staff, whereas LL does not. BH and KM also care for a greater number of children. They mother within a context that they speak of as a children's home whereas LL explains the importance of offering a child a "family" (16:820). There seems, therefore, to be a distinction in this regard between constructions of 'mother' (biological / adoptive/foster) and 'children's home mother'. The 'natural' picture of a children's home mother is constructed as being different and therefore feeding into a

construction of a 'good mother' that should be evaluated differently. When I asked BH whether she felt like the children's mother she said "I feel like their children's home mother" (13:157).

5.6.1.6 THE MOTHER-CHILD RELATIONSHIP IS AN AUTHORISED ONE AND THIS ENABLES GOOD MOTHERING

The picture of natural mothering includes the legitimation of the child as 'yours'. The biological mother-child relationship is legitimated by birth and genetic connection. The adoptive mother-child relationship and the foster mother-child relationship are legitimated by institutions (involving, for example, the law, government agencies and social workers). The natural mothering picture is underpinned by axiomatic legitimation that enables the good mother to have the freedom to make decisions regarding her child's care. Adoptive mothers enter this picture through a different frame and foster mothers often continuously struggle to enter the picture frame at all in many respects.

When this legitimation is not fully present legally there are a number of implications for mothering. KN, a long-term foster mother explained that without all the relevant documentation,

You can be a mother but you can only be so much of a mother. You can't be *all* of a mother. 'Cause I can't even sign anything that says I'm a mother, you know? Um, I can't take responsibility to some extent. Um, there were also restrictions like, you can't just leave the kids, you've got to know, before a certain point in the placement, we couldn't just leave the kids with anybody, we had to be there 24/7. So I can't, for instance, if my dad was coming, I couldn't just leave him with them. You would leave your kids with them, with your parents and stuff like that. It was just part of the agreement that, you know, so it was very, sort of, artificial in a sense, and it was just a constant reminder that, you know, 'we can take your kids away at any time' (3:128).

KN also said, "I didn't really go out to be a foster mom. I wanted to go out and just be a normal parent without the issues and without the state being involved and all these other things" (3:82). She continued,

If I want to do anything, on what grounds do I do it without legal documents. I mean we're essentially in no-man's land at the moment when it comes to the older two...'Cause we went about three years without documents, *any* documents and it was really difficult (3:110).

The natural mother is free to travel with her children as she pleases. Travelling with foster children is much more difficult. IR explained, "taking a foster child out of the country is such a mission. Even if it's done on paper you can't take him out" (7:303). She also said "that's why we never adopted 'cause that's the same problem, you can't take that child out. Not even to visit your family. That's our worst nightmare ever" (7:315).

Participants constructed their relationship with the institution as a relatively powerless one in certain regards. The institution determines the time-schedule for adoption to proceed and determines administrative requirements for adoption and fostering. The institution is spoken of in the data as not always trustworthy (1:61; 3:118; 13:14), fragmented (3:117), disorganised (13:476; 20:41), and out of touch. For example, in relation to grants provided to foster mothers, IR said "R98 a month. What do you buy for that? Really, what do you get for R98? They said when he was smaller it pays for the nappies. Ja, for sure. But that's what they think" (7:372). Many participants spoke of information being communicated poorly, particularly by social workers (11:159; 12:484; 13:14).

What emerged from the data, however, was that there are limits to the reach of the constructive powers of the institution and that participants display agency in this regard. KN made the following comment:

So, um, fortunately for me, unlike a lot of people, I don't have a cross-racial, so it's not so obvious that my kids are adopted, 'cause I don't want people to know my kids are adopted. And I don't want them to think of them as adopted kids (3:699).

What is notable here is that, legally, KN is a foster mother. She has not been able to legally adopt her children even though she wanted to, due to institutional obstacles. She, however, still constructs them as adopted children, choosing this meaning for herself, regardless of how this is legally constructed. Participants also distinguish between meanings derived from a legal discourse and meanings that are part of 'personal', 'emotive' or 'experiential' discourses. UC defined adoption through saying, "Well, I suppose from a dictionary definition adoption is to take over and legally become one's father or mother. Um, obviously since adopting the word has become far more emotive to me, personally" (4:6). CT defined adoption as:

Uh, from a legal definition...Piles of bureaucracy. No, um...from an emotional standpoint...I think it's just the legalisation of love. Ja. That would be it. 'Cause literally that's all that's happening. I know she's my daughter and that just needs to be made legal. That's all (8:34).

She also said, "I think just the legalisation is just the cherry on the top" (8:141). She constructs the child as her daughter because of her love for her. She needs that to be recognised legally in order to accomplish the full activity of mothering, however, the love legitimates the relationship for her personally, not the law. EW said, "Once you bring them into your home it's like it changes. They're now your child. The adoption hasn't gone through but she is now your child" (15:209). LL commented,

I mean when we went for foster care for our three year old, he's the only one that's actually been in our foster care, the others are places of safety. I say foster care 'cause that's what it is, but there's no legal documents that they're in my foster care. It'd be place of safety (16:729).

She constructs the child's care as 'foster care' because, to her, that is what it is.

We see, therefore, that, on the one hand, foster mothers and adoptive mothers (in the initial stages of the process) talk of difficulties in meeting the requirements of the picture of natural mothering from the perspective of legitimate belonging, and how this may impact on aspects of good mothering. We see also, on the other hand, how agency is exercised in this regard and how the constructive powers of the institution do not hold a monopoly on meaning generation.

5.6.1.7 THE MOTHER FUNCTIONS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF A SUPPORTIVE EXTENDED FAMILY AND THIS ENABLES GOOD MOTHERING

Mothering within the context of a supportive extended family is constructed as preferable and beneficial. For example, in relation to her discussion of lack of support from the extended family AN said, "it's sad sometimes actually that my son has only me, you know" (19:272). On the same subject MB commented, "I feel desperately sorry for people who don't have that 'cause I think there are people who don't have that relationship, you know?" (21:290).

KN constructed the meaning of support from the extended family as encapsulated in the sentiment "We accept the choice that you've made...And we support you and we're part of that choice" (3:775). IR described her extended family's warm and accepting response towards her foster child: "[My husband's] father sees him

as his own grandchild. He's grandchild number three so in the family there is no difference" (7:243). UC said "our families have generally been very excepting" (4:403). Similarly, OS said "they've been amazing, I mean she's absolutely adored by everybody. Um, and I think because we got her as a baby it made the process that much easier" (5:85). NU commented, "the family welcomed her with open arms, the whole family did, they really did" (10:39).

Other participants did not have this experience. KN describes a process in which her family moved further towards this position over time, however, in light of the natural picture of mothering, which involves biological children, KN explained "You know the thing is with my biological kids, there's family. If anything ever happens to me and S, they can go to my family. That, that's not up for negotiation" (3:649). This is not always the case, however, with adoptive or foster children. NF explained that the initial response of her in-laws was: "you choose us or you choose him" (9:107). Here the family is defined with a clear boundary and the adopted child is constructed as an unwanted outsider. DE said,

about a week before we got him, um, his, my husband's parents said that if we adopt him they'll have nothing more to do with us. And it was kind of a decision about do we lose him and them or just them? So we chose we'd lose them. So that was a bit stressful (20:126).

BD was faced with a similar dilemma and spoke of her decision to affirm her position on the adoption of her child, but also discussed the implications of this. At the time she was struggling to bond with her adopted child:

BD: I decided, um, I was committed to what we'd done. I didn't, I actually kind of left my family, you know you leave and cleave and I hadn't actually 'leaved and cleaved' properly so it actually made a proper break for me in terms of not having their influence, their stuff influence me too much anymore. I mean, if I bought a dress I'd phone my mother and say 'this colour, do you think it would suit me?' kind of thing. You know, which, there's nothing bad in doing that but I was too, I relied too much on her opinion and her stuff and, um, so in terms of that it did our marriage the world of good and just us as a family unit the world of good.

ADS: Was it hard doing that 'leaving' when you were still struggling to bond?

BD: Oh ja, 'cause I couldn't tell my folks that it's actually not going so well. 'Cause I knew I'd get an 'I told you so', you know, that kind of thinking? I couldn't show that I was having any difficulty with any discipline stuff or anything, it was just all fine, you know? So we turned, I turned to other friends and things for that kind of help (11:52).

KN stated: "I've just had to come up to the reality that not everybody, not everybody in the family just accepts, is just gonna love them and accept them as flesh and blood" (3:664). She also described discussions she has had to have with her children:

I've had to sit down with them and talk to them about what they need to do if anything every happens to me and S. 'Cause I don't want them to have that assumption that someone will take care of them and then it doesn't happen. I've just seen that too many times. I've seen it too many times. I work in an industry where we see what happens with them. So, I don't want that to happen to my kids. I mean nobody wants to have those morbid discussions but I'm like dammit, thou shalt know what to do if anything happens to me (3:659).

AN, also a Black participant spoke of a similar dynamic within her own family regarding the lack of support she received in relation to her adoption, and spoke of how she subsequently chose to distance herself:

I mean for instance I was doing my will last week and there's a part where you say who will look after your child should you die before, and I couldn't put any of my five sisters or my mom (laughs). So, they're not like bad people, they're not bad people but it's something that they're not used to. Like I say you would normally take a child that you know, you know, so ja, sometimes there'll be things like 'what if this child wants, uh, some, um, traditional whatever, rituals and then you don't even know the surname of the child?', which I don't by the way. So it's just that but I, um, I know that you can remove yourself from a situation which is something that I have to teach him, uh, as well, that you have to look at yourself as an individual. You must not link your life too much to other people (19:230).

The expected outcome of a couple bringing a new child into an extended family network is joy and fulfilment. Typically, one does not expect one's child to bring 'complications', troublesome 'issues' or even splits between family members. In relation to her own parents' difficulties with the issue of transracial adoption particularly, NF asked:

I wonder what it must be like for them? We visit and then we leave and they've got to deal with all the people. And um, I mean my mom at one stage, 'cause [our domestic worker (L)] stays with us and my mom came to me and said, oh my dad said 'it must be nice having L here when you go to the shops 'cause people think he's L's child'. And I was like 'that's such a bizarre comment dad!' ...No my dad still, he still sort of 'can't L come to the shops with us 'cause then you know it'll' and I'm like 'dad, get over it' you know. So, but then you realise it's a mindset they're coming from and it's almost, he's trying to make it easier for everybody, you know, if there's another Black person around (9:477).

NF spoke of encountering comments from family members such as: "How can you put this criminal element in your family? How can you, you know, wreck your perfect little family and he's going to stab you when he's 18" (9:110). She resists this view as "horrendous" (9:221).

DE spoke of her extended family's response to transracial adoption in the following manner:

...there was a *lot*, and my husband's a minister, so you must know, there was a lot of antagonism. And uh, my father-in-law didn't take any responsibility for causing family splits. And my husband, um, my husband said 'the Bible says if you're out of sync with anybody you phone and apologise'. I'm like 'you are not phoning them'. And he did. He said he does not apologise for adopting, he apologises that he hurt his father's feelings and that what he does was something his father disagrees with and he apologised for that. But I was just like he's a good man. Ja, so, that was quite something (20:378).

LL spoke of her husband's parents experiencing their decision to foster and adopt as a shock:

Like, ok, you know, this is something in the church that the, like on his side, like his grandparents, thought that was like, you know you don't, Black and White they don't mix. It's like, it's just such a crazy new concept for them (16:462).

DN said,

there're just little kind of, on both sides of our family we've had, especially older men that just cannot cope. You know like, don't say anything nasty but can't look at the child, can't pick up the child, can't,

you know? (17:87).

NF explained that the attitudes of their extended family have changed over time, but that it has been a “long road” (9:90). A number of participants spoke of journeying through a process with extended family members towards a position that is characterised by greater acceptance (KN, NF, CF, EW, DE, and MB). MB described this as follows:

My, my mom was always dead keen. I think also because we’d been through so much, you know they just desperately wanted us to have a baby however. My dad was very anti. He actually, he called it a genetic cesspit, which is a fabulous expression. Ja, and um, ja and then G’s folks were, ugh, I mean his dad’s not a very, you’re never quite sure what he’s thinking but his mom was also, his mom and my mom are very, you know they would love a child regardless of what colour or anything else. Ja, so, but then when we brought her home everyone came round and everyone was absolutely, completely in love and still is. So, it’s been wonderful, it really has been great (21:294).

Participants spoke of the impact of adoption and fostering on extended family members, but also the impact of the family members’ responses upon the adopted or fostered child. For example, NF said:

we didn’t expect the sort of antagonism in the extent that we experienced it...You know to the point that we almost gave D back ‘cause it was like ‘do we really want to put this child in this situation where the other kids get treated differently and they’re favoured and he doesn’t get what they’ve got from the grandparents ‘cause they just can’t accept it?’” (9:87).

Further on in the interview she said

we had this huge, sort of carrying on about ‘is it fair?’ Is it fair? You know we haven’t adopted him yet. Should we rather just give him back, you know? Is it really, is there not another family out there who’s not gonna have all this other nonsense coming from the extended family and stuff? (9:129).

BD spoke of the opposition that she received from her extended family as contributing to the difficulties that she experienced in bonding with her adopted son (11:46). On the other hand, DE discussed how antagonism from family members reinforced the bond she developed with her son. As mentioned earlier in the discussion on participants’ encounters with racism (in section 5.6.1.3.3), she said,

going into [my husband’s] brother’s home and stuff like when he was very little I always had to turn the, I mean the first time we ever arrived at their house with J I turned the chair to face me ‘cause I knew no-body wanted to see him. So I think that’s also created quite a bond for me there (20:508).

It appears, therefore, within this particular sample of adoptive and foster mothers, that support from the extended family is valued and considered to be an affirming aspect of the picture of natural mothering. Where this support is absent, or where blatant antagonism is received, this can either undermine capacities for good mothering or can result in a strengthening of determination to care for and protect the child in the face of what is experienced as something of an external ‘attack’.

5.6.2 MOTHERING COMES NATURALLY TO WOMEN

A key discourse that emerged in the data was that mothering comes naturally to women. In other words, women are naturally endowed with the ability to be good mothers. There are three facets of this that will be explored in this section. Firstly, participants forged the relationship between the constructs

'woman' and 'mother'. Secondly, they also conceptualised this relationship either through viewing the two constructs as overlapping entirely or through constructing their position as mother as forming a part of their sense of identity. Thirdly, they spoke, through resistance and self-surveillance, of mothering as not coming naturally and talked about their experiences of not having the tools necessary for good mothering.

5.6.2.1 FORGING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'WOMAN' AND 'MOTHER'

Fusing the constructs 'woman' and 'mother' occurred through the evocation of three notions: women are mothers, women mother and women want to be mothers. These will be presented in turn.

5.6.2.1.1 Women are mothers

Participants constructed women as mothers through the following statements:

DL: It seems to me such an instinctual, it's like God just made you that way and I really believe you have to cut yourself off *not* to be one...I think you'd have to make a concerted effort not to be. You know you'd really have to make a conscious effort to dislike children or not be a...a nurturer, 'cause I think it is so much a part of who we are. I mean we were just created to have children, to be... (1:647).

OS: "I think you are mother because you're a woman. You know, the two go hand-in-hand" (5:154).

KM: "I think for most women it's something that's in them" (6:196).

CF: Being a woman, it's like I suppose actually giving birth to that child, like that like relates to, to being like a woman. But I think like in this, in a case like this, even though you actually haven't physically given birth it's still, it's still that nurturing, it's still like a nurturing instinct. Um, which I think is, um, so ja it's still that connection with being feminine and having that nurturing feeling (12:153).

LL: "I think it's just what we were designed as women to be mothers" (16:354).

BH comments on this idea cautiously in a way that indicates her awareness of competing discursive constructions of women:

I do question if that woman is really fulfilled if she is not caring for children in some way. So what I'm saying is not everyone has to produce babies right away, or adopt or whatever. I'm just saying, but I'm sure there's a part of her that wants to care for children. I guess I think that's all how we're made, which sounds really, but I don't know (13:492).

The notion of women being natural mothers is also built through the construct of maternal instinct. Maternal instinct is described frequently in the data in terms of a protective response to one's child that emerges as something of a reflex. CF explained that it is "that feeling of instinctively wanting to take care of somebody and like if anybody does anything to her you'll be absolutely enraged" (12:161). EW described maternal instinct as

a desire for the child to be protected, cared for, loved, not to be hurt by anyone. I know you can't, uh, stop that, but then you can handle it in a way that makes them more able to accept, you know, what's been said or, so it's just a protection instinct I think. And just to love them, just to want them to know that they're loved (15:278).

5.6.2.1.2 Women mother

Women are constructed in the data as naturally engaging in the activity of mothering. The following quotations provide examples of this:

KN: "I think it's very, very hard for a woman to just, to not mother. It's very hard. There...I struggle to come up with names, any woman that I can say have just never mothered in their whole entire life" (3:614).

LL: "God created us to raise our children...So, I think, um, a mother and a woman, I think it's just what we were designed as women to be mothers" (16:351).

DE: "Like often times there's a challenge that you kind of think I don't know if I could do that but taking a child into your home and raising them is like kind of like a natural thing, I think" (20: 49).

Two particular activities that mothers are constructed as naturally engaging in are bonding with their children and loving their children. These will both be presented here in a little more detail. Many participants evoked the notion of bonding in their discussion of mothering. Bonding was constructed in a variety of ways (and appeared to overlap fluidly at times with constructions of attachment and constructions of love). Bonding was often spoken of as "connection", particularly as a "deep connection" (1:248), a "very intense" connection (8:90), or "a real heart connection" (6:87). Participants also constructed bonding in relation to knowing that the child is or will be "mine" (4:74; 5:30; 6:65). Participants who are mothering foster children spoke of bonding differently with a child who will not be in their care permanently (2:261; 16:17). Bonding is constructed not as a decision, but as an impulse or a feeling (11:97; 12:124). Bonding is constructed as "vital" (2:81) for the mother-child relationship. The discursive position that biological mothers automatically and instinctively bond with their children was present in the data (1:265; 11:36; 15:69), but so too was resistance to this idea: "you have mothers who birth their children and never bond with them" (1:19).

Bonding, as a characteristic of natural mothering, was constructed as involving the participation and influence of both parties, the mother and the child. The mother and child "react" to one another (1:273). One of the aspects of the child that was constructed as influencing bonding was life experience. For example, bonding is spoken of as difficult when the child has been in an orphanage and has received insufficient responsiveness from caregivers (1:270) or has had multiple caregivers (11:39). A baby is constructed as a 'clean slate' whereas older adopted children come with "baggage" (5:264). OS commented in relation to the adoption of her daughter: "I really do think because we got her younger it's made it so much easier. You know and I think maybe for the moms who get them at even *birth* it's even easier" (5:267). KM commented, "It's easier when they come tiny 'cause it's much easier to bond with them" (6:115). Other aspects of the child that were constructed as influencing bonding were the response of the child to the mother and to people in general (e.g. "he loves people and he's, um...Ja, so you know for us the bonding really wasn't a problem" (4:110)); and the needs of the child ("I think when they're so small they're vulnerable and they're so needy that that helps the bonding. Whereas [when we adopted him] at five months he was a big fat guy that sat and ate his food" (11:105)). The personality of the child was also constructed as influencing bonding (either the 'type of personality': "I would say the foster children, some of them you bond with easier than others. And that's possibly personality" (6:87) or the perceived presence of a personality: "I had a problem with bonding because S...already had a personality" (11:34); as was the child's emotional makeup (13:290); and the child's behaviour (e.g. difficulties in relation to persistent crying). Additional features of the child that were

constructed as influencing bonding were physical features and genetic makeup (e.g. “A biological child is instant. The moment that you know you’re pregnant it’s just there. But an adopted child, you get to know them, you know, they don’t look like you, they don’t have anything really of you that you can relate to” (15:69)); and gender (e.g. “C was much easier, she was just almost immediate. I don’t know if there was, because there was a gender difference as well” (11:43)).

We see from these quotes that natural mothering involves a bonding response to a child who is born to the mother without a prior history, born as a vulnerable infant, dependent on the mother for care and sustenance, and born with genetic characteristics that embody the link between parents and child. These features enable bonding to take place. The good mother bonds with her child. It is clear in many of the above quotes that the absence of these features provided challenges for the participants. EW described the instantaneous bond that she believes is experienced with a biological child. She attributed this to physical similarities and then explained that, in the absence of such features, the bond that develops with an adopted child is one characterised by “all just pure love and wanting to care for them, wanting to protect them and your mother instinct kicks in” (15:69). This ‘pure love’ seems to be ‘pure’ in that it is not a response to the child, but is a love that exists despite the lack of the factors that would prompt a ‘natural’ love response from a mother. However, she does also speak of a mother instinct ‘kicking in’. Therefore, in the data it appears that when the picture looks different from the dominant ideal of mothering with regards to the features of the child that stimulate a ‘natural’ bonding response from the mother, this can either evoke bonding challenges or elevate the mother to a ‘higher’ level of ‘pure’ bonding where she is still able to be a good mother. What appears to assist this, however, according to EW, is (B): the mother is naturally endowed with maternal instinct and this seems to ‘kick in’ to a degree that mediates the discrepancies in (A) and provides her with the tools to still be the good mother (D).

Aspects of the mother that are constructed in the data as influencing bonding are the ability to provide security and safety. EW commented,

She’s bonded and she knows without a doubt that we are there. We are the ones that give her, you know, that, they need that anchor, other than God, that people are there, um, that, uh, ja. Just to, that safety, and I want her to have that with us (15:292).

TN constructed bonding as:

She had to trust me. She had to. Like if I walked, it got to the stage when I came there she only wanted me to feed her. That was good. It would’ve, I couldn’t have taken her to my own home unless she felt that comfort, that connection with me. I think that’s cruel (2:82).

Bonding also occurs through the mother’s holding of the child (1:272; 10:286).

The functions of bonding are also constructed as relating to both the child and the mother. Bonding instils in a mother the desire to protect the child (1:263), enables the child to feel safe, and provides the child with the ability to relate to others. BH spoke of children who have not experienced early bonding as potentially having relational problems later on: “I don’t know how C will ever have relationships, um, with a husband or, I don’t know, we have to see breakthrough in her life if she’s going to have normal relationships” (13:322). For the mother, bonding is constructed as helping her cope with irritations and frustrations (6:102), as giving her a sense of purpose (13:342), and as constructing legitimate belonging (1:273). Bonding gives the mother a sense that the relationship is significant to the child. BD said that in the beginning, “I was just another

caregiver to him for a while 'cause he'd had a few. So for him I wasn't that, I wasn't his mom yet. So that was difficult for me" (11:37). We see here the notion that there is supposed to be an 'exclusive' relationship between a mother and her baby. They are together from the start and she is the main caregiver who the child bonds with. BH recounted the following narrative:

when I first had G, the first child I had, I would take her to church to um, to go to children's church and she couldn't care less about me. You know, I'd be standing there and she's hurt herself and she'd go to every other person and I'm going 'hello! I change your nappies every day!' Who am I? Am I dog poop or something? And the first time I took her to church and she cried for me I was like 'thank you Lord!' (laughs). I was so happy! (13:313).

Bonding with a child, as a feature of natural mothering that then enables good mothering, comes with risk at certain points in the adoption process and throughout fostering. Adoptive mothers who participated in this study spoke of the initial period when the biological mother is still legally entitled to change her mind and the period of time when the adolescent / young adult may choose to seek the birthmother as particularly anxiety provoking in relation to the risks inherent in bonding. CT spoke of the initial fear of

her parents wanting her back...I expected that it would be a long, lengthy process and fairly painful and very fraught with anxiety...And then the, that 60 day cool-off period after the signing was very nerve wracking. That was very scary. I must admit I did have a lot of anxiety around that period, just waiting for them to turn around and say 'actually we've changed our mind, we want her back' (8:95).

OS explained how, initially,

there was a problem with the adoption 'cause they thought they'd found a relative so we thought the whole thing was off and I was heartbroken...and then in the January they phoned to say 'no, mom's signed consent, are we still interested?'...Our social worker had advised me not to [visit her] 'cause she knew how attached I'd already got to her after two weeks so it was hard so I just pushed her out my mind (5:29).

OS also spoke about the stage that may lie ahead:

...that's a fear, that, ja, I suppose one day she'll choose her over us or *something* like that. I haven't really thought about it too in-depth 'cause it's almost a bit stressful to go there, you know, and I just think I must just take it one day at a time and deal with each age as we get there and each issue you know? (5:236).

Foster mothers speak of the emotional risk of bonding and then having to relinquish the child. LL said,

It's difficult. I try and postpone it. Like in my heart I think it's not going to happen, something's going to go wrong. Like, you know, like I want the adoption to happen but then, our first one was with our little girl, she's been our only girl and so she was my first daughter and it was very special, and the first foster child we took in...And then I just realised the sooner she leaves the sooner I can deal with it 'cause now I want to postpone it the whole time and actually once she leaves it's going to, 'cause I just thought, I was in denial, like it's not happening, its not happening (16:188).

Even with long-term fostering, this risk of loss is mentioned. KN said "So, it nearly sort of stops you from putting your all into it. Because of the fear that it can be revoked from you...You do the maths and you're like, what if, what if, what if?" (3:141). IR spoke of her foster child visiting his biological family in Zimbabwe: "That's

something we have to go through. There's a possibility he doesn't come back from Zim now. That's what we go through every time" (7:94).

In addition to bonding, loving one's child is spoken of as a primary component of natural mothering. Loving the child should come naturally. Love is described as "key" (1:206) to the mother-child relationship. Mothering is constructed in essence as "just loving them" (4:171). A good mother is "someone who, obviously, loves her child" (6:360; 21:341). Good mothers are constructed as loving their children unconditionally (2:294; 4:487; 5:134; 9:503; 11:350; 12:137; 13:236; 15:320; 16:300). CT said, "I think any mother who loves her child unconditionally is a good mom. I think that is a good mother. Because out of that love you give whatever you can give and that's the only thing that matters" (8:325). Participants also spoke not only about the good mother loving her children unconditionally, but ensuring that her children *feel* unconditionally loved (9:166). This unconditional love is also constructed as a love that should be selfless and sacrificing (16:300). EW remarked, "you want to love them because they deserve love not because you want them to love you unconditionally so you have someone who loves you unconditionally" (15:320). BH challenges this notion by deconstructing what is taken for granted in the construct of maternal sacrificial love. She said,

I find it frustrating. I think I um, she knows me now, I get very frustrated when she walks by and she doesn't say anything. Now she'll say 'hi' (laughs). So she tries to, um, and I think it's mothering someone that you can't, that doesn't love you back. I know that sounds sick because mothering isn't supposed to be about what you receive but then again most mothers don't know what that's like. So, I understand how warped that sounds for me to say but this child has nothing. Not that they have to, I don't know, give me anything, but just giving me relationship, I mean that we have a relationship, means something to me. Most mothers have no flippin' idea what that's like, mothering a child that doesn't give anything back. Because they don't realise how much a child does give back, a smile and a hug and you know what I'm saying? I think that that gives you a, um, to me that gives me purpose, um, energises me. It shows me that I'm doing something worthwhile. If you have a child that's not responding to you, you feel like you're not doing anything (13:327).

She also said, in relation to this child,

She is like a blob, she's like a, she's like a wall. She has nothing, she can't relate, she can't, it's extremely frustrating. So you're loving this child and you're trying to have a relationship with them and they're going 'la la la' off in their dream world and just dissociating all the time. So I can't blame her, it's just difficult dealing with attachment disordered children that don't have the ability to bond with you and then you look like an idiot (laughs) (13:304).

In her fostering of children who have experienced neglect BH speaks of feeling frustrated, as she is involved in a kind of mothering that is not what it is 'supposed' to be. She speaks of feeling a lack of energy, purpose and a sense of achievement. She speaks of looking like an 'idiot'. She does not construct herself as matching the ideal of the 'good mother'. She reframes this, then, by drawing into question the selfless, sacrificial mother who naturally loves unconditionally regardless of whether she receives any response from her child. She challenges this as involving taken-for-granted responsiveness of the child. She opposes a keystone of the ideology of intensive mothering by arguing that the mother's love may not be purely selfless, but may be fed by love that the child offers in return.

Adoptive mothers speak of encountering the notion that one loves one's biological child more than one would love an adopted child. In this sense, love that comes naturally occurs within the picture of natural mothering (in other words, A feeds B). The expectation exists that because a child is your biological offspring (fulfilling the picture of what natural mothering should look like) you are enabled to love this child (more so than you would love a child who was not your biological offspring). OS mentioned wondering, "would I love her as much? Would I feel any different?" (5:102). Participants spoke in varied ways about loving their adopted children. NF stated,

I think naturally people love their offspring more than they love other people's kids, because it's well, you know, they are part of you and you sort of see yourself in them and you see little mannerisms in them and stuff and you think 'ah, ja' you know?...Whereas you're taking on somebody else's child and you sort of, you know, at the back of your mind there is that sort of nigggle. Where did they come from? What genetic defects are they gonna have?... And I mean I just watched this because I kept thinking 'how am I going to deal with it, do I really have enough love for an adopted child?' (9:369).

The idea of only a biological child qualifying to be considered as 'part of you' was resisted by CT and DE respectively, in relation to their adopted children: "Imagining losing her, I think I would have been devastated. I would have been absolutely just shattered. Literally like having a part of me wrenched away. So, I tried not to think about it too much 'cause it was quite depressing" (8:124); "Um, I think from the moment somebody says to you 'this is your child' it's yours. And it's like so part of you" (20:453). This is the type of resistance to the dominant ideology of intensive mothering that says: because mothering does not actually have to look that way, my mothering still qualifies as good. It is not only a biological child that is 'part of you'. An adopted child can also be. Therefore my good mothering of this child is still enabled through this idea that the child is part of me (therefore I understand and know him/her).

DD spoke boldly of her difficulties in mothering her adopted daughter. She commented that in the initial phase of mothering her adopted child she was aware of thinking: "I love my boys so much, as a mother loves her children, now I have this strange child, who wasn't even physically cute at the time..." (18:37). LL discusses encountering this concept in relation to others' comments about her love for her adopted child versus her love for the child that she is pregnant with:

I mean just yesterday someone was like, you know, saying 'You love him but you're going to, it'll be different with this one'. And I just sat there and I laughed. I'm like 'yeah!' (laughs) you know? 'You'll still love him but it'll be different'. And I'm just like 'you've never adopted'. 'Cause at first I got offended and then I was like, you know, especially when we were still trying to get pregnant and I was, you know, people would tell us 'but it's different when you have your own' and this and that and I'd get so offended and think 'you've never adopted before. How do you know?' And then I'm like well I've never had a child. So now carrying a child I feel the bond as a mother with this child growing in me and I also can't imagine, you know, how there's going to be any difference. And so now I don't get offended I just laugh it off...But, um, there's not like a limit to how much love you can give. So, ja, it's, um, the way people see it (16:497).

MB also explains that this was the picture she held in her mind:

I had a very, very intense relationship with [my biological daughter]. Maybe also because she was an only child for so long and it was one of the massive fears with adopting was how could I possibly love a child that isn't of me the same, you know. 'Cause I love [my biological daughter] so much. And it's so not the case (21:246).

Despite OS's concerns, she concluded after adopting, "I can honestly say I love her like I love the boys" (5:103); "A big thing for me is realising I can love a child that I didn't give birth to. And that for me, but I mean that struck me after just being with her for two weeks...that for me was huge" (5:257).

5.6.2.1.3 Women want to be mothers

MB adopted a daughter after experiencing infertility and the deaths of her babies. She had an ectopic pregnancy, three unsuccessful IVF treatments, and gave birth to twins at 33 weeks who died 27 hours later. She explained: "it was my body that was basically poisoning the babies' blood, it was destroying the babies' red blood cells, um, so, ja the babies' blood when they came out looked like water" (21:50). She then experienced the death of another baby 22 weeks in-utero, followed by two failed surrogacy attempts. She described how her husband stated that he could not persist with any further assisted fertility attempts whilst she maintained: "I would have probably carried on forever" (21:71). As far as she is concerned, "it is an inherent desire to be a mother as a woman" (21:243). She speaks of her journey through infertility as being "unfair" (21:89).

IR responded to the question of what it means for a woman not to be a mother by saying

I think it's horrible. I went through it, I know what it is not to be able to have children. You don't feel like you are a full woman because there's something that you want and you can't have it, and you need it (7:75).

DE spoke of finding out about the news of her infertility at Christmas time:

We hadn't told the family yet that we couldn't have kids. 'Cause my husband didn't want anyone to know before Christmas, he didn't want to ruin their Christmas. I really didn't give a stuff about anybody else's Christmas, mine was already ruined (20:85).

When other participants, who had not experienced infertility personally, were asked what it means for a woman not to be a mother, they made comments such as: "I think it's, for women who don't have children it's something often they, if they either can't have children or they're not married or whatever, because often it's something they struggle with" (6:199); and

I know women who are really hurting. There's a woman at our church who's tried, she's tried IVF, she's tried everything. I know they're trying to adopt and my heart breaks for them. 'Cause I have actually birthed like five children and it's like, there's such an experience, you know? It's, I wouldn't give it up for anything (10:238).

In section 5.6.1.3 (the biological mother as the good mother / the good mother as the biological mother) it was mentioned that a number of participants spoke of a primary desire to adopt (2:137; 16:137; 18:11). However, the desire to birth biological children was still constructed as dominant.

Another aspect of women wanting to be mothers that emerged in the data is the idea that good mothers enjoy mothering (4:131; 9:176; 15:168; 17:315; 21:203). This is clearly in alignment with the ideology of intensive mothering.

5.6.2.2 CONCEPTUALISING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 'WOMAN' AND 'MOTHER'

These three discourses mentioned above (women are mothers; women mother; and women want to be mothers) build a sturdy bridge between the constructs 'woman' and 'mother'. As this chapter has explored, via the data collected in this particular study, each discourse also contains moral perspectives on the kind of mother a woman should be, the way in which her mothering should be performed and the nature and expression of her desire to be a mother in the first place.

It is clear in the quotations included in the previous section that, not only does this construction of inherent identity, capacity and desire appear to underpin resultant good mothering behaviour, but to be a woman who does not mother is constructed as making a concerted *effort* to go against this natural tendency, cutting oneself off from a part of oneself (a part that God created) and as disliking children (which a good *person* does not have discursive permission to admit, let alone a good *mother*). That 'part' would then be dormant or wasted (as in having a limb that no longer works). The rigidity of the statement that one is a mother *because* one is a woman leaves no room for an alternate position. We see, again, how these statements hold not only views on what is natural, but views on what is moral (for example, in relation to alternate life choices being regarded as going against what God has designed).

Although the quotes presented illustrate how the link between 'mother' and 'women' was constructively forged in the data, these are not always viewed as one and the same position. For some participants, this is the case and the construct 'woman' overlaps entirely with the construct 'mother'. For example, IR said, "I think it goes together, for *me*, it's one" (7:72). LL said that mothering is "everything I think. It's my whole day. There's not like a time where I'm not a mom anymore. It's always my position" (16:331). DE reflected on this by saying

I think for me being a mom permeates everything. Because even if like, like I've said to my husband before 'let's go out and do something by ourselves' it's like 'are the kids ok?'. It is, it's like, it's in you. I've never had a situation where it's like 'I just want to get away from my kids', you know?...So I think it does, it permeates everything (20:414).

For other participants, however, the two constructs were separate. NF stated,

For me it's a concerted effort to sort of almost switch across...I don't know if it necessarily for me is a, um, is very, very related. To me you can do it totally separately. I don't know if that makes sense? Because being a mom you almost have your mommy clothes and being a woman you have your woman clothes...So for me there's a very different, a woman versus the mom role (9:247).

CT said "I don't equate the two, at all really...They feel very separate to me" (8:164); whilst MB commented, "And now that I've got two girls I just love it and I think it's important that they see the woman as well as just the mother, if that makes any sense?" (21:227).

Between entirely overlapping positions and separate positions, for some participants being a 'mother' was constructed as 'part' of oneself. Some spoke of mothering being a central or primary part of who they are. For example, OS said,

it's an integral part, it's who I am, um, I'm a mother and, you know I'm still N and I've still got my own identity and I teach and all that kind of stuff, but I'm a mom and my children are my priority, besides my husband D, my kids, you know, they're my priority (5:184).

NF emphasised that being a mother *should* only be a part of who one is as a woman: “for me I have to guard against becoming this all-encompassing ‘I am a mommy and that’s it’. Um, you know and my husband must just wait on the sidelines until the kids have grown up” (9:277).

5.6.2.3 WHEN MOTHERING DOES NOT COME NATURALLY

According to Miller (2005),

women are expected instinctively to know how to mother. Indeed, their ‘femaleness’ may be questioned if they experience normal difficulties. Yet any examination of the cultural practices and ways of knowing about mothering shows the variation that exists: mothering is not a universally standard experience. Many of the skills associated with mothering, fathering and parenting are only gradually acquired (p. 15).

What happens when mothering does not ‘come naturally’ to a woman? How is this navigated in relation to dominant discourses of mothering? Of key concern to the current thesis, is the question of what happens when an adoptive or foster mother encounters the thought: but this does not feel like it’s coming naturally...

Five principle positions emerged in relation to these questions. Two embody forms of resistance to the discourse itself and three take on the form of self-surveillance:

- (i) Resistance: Perhaps mothering does not always come naturally to women (even when they do fit the natural picture).
- (ii) Self-surveillance: Mothering comes naturally to other women, but it did not come naturally to me.
- (iii) Resistance: One cannot be expected to mother naturally when the picture in which one’s mothering takes place is not the natural one.
- (iv) Self-surveillance: Even when mothering does not fit the picture, it should still come naturally otherwise there is something wrong with me.
- (v) Self-surveillance: I have always been a good mother (with my biological children) but now it is not coming naturally (with my adopted child).

In Bobel’s (2002) book *The Paradox of Natural Mothering*, she writes that the ideology of natural mothering contains a twofold theme:

an enduring conviction that nature is a force to be trusted and respected, coupled with steadfast deference to the ‘natural’ bond between mother and child. In this view, nature is preeminent; in fact, nature shapes behaviour. And, in the biologically determinist view, those who resist nature suffer. But in spite of these convictions, some natural mothers...[have] to make a series of adjustments so that their lives as natural mothers would ‘work’. The fact that natural mothering doesn’t just ‘happen’ suggests that the natural life does not come ‘naturally’ (p. 11).

A few participants either spoke of knowing someone who was not a ‘natural’ mother (6:197; 16:339; 9:323; 15:193) or assessed themselves as one to whom mothering did not ‘come naturally’. Regarding the latter, some compared their experiences to the notion that, as natural mothers, women want to have children. For example, DL said, “I’ve never been a broody person” (1:192). Others compared their experience to the idea that women engage easily with children. DC said, “I don’t have natural motherly...I mean I love my kids but I don’t love, I’m not one that goes and picks up anybody’s babies” (14:82). TN commented, “I’m not a child

person at all” (2:91). She also does not concur personally with the idea that women need to be mothers: “I think I would have been fine if I didn’t have children. I do think so” (2:317). Quite a number of participants voiced resistance or a personal lack of resonance with one of the key components of the ideology of intensive mothering, namely that good mothers always enjoy mothering. DL described mothering as “a difficult journey” (1:379). OS spoke of times when she asks herself “Remind me again why I wanted to be a mother? And to *three*? You know I must be mental!” (5:383). Although NF said,

some days I wish I wasn’t a mother (laughs)” (9:154), the laughter at the end of her sentence serves to soften the contrary nature of the statement in relation to the dominant notion of the desire to mother. She also spoke of “the days when it’s really difficult and you think ‘ah, I’ll just give you back’ you know ‘you’re not my child, little brat’ da da da da. And we all have days like that even with our own kids (9:351).

CF said that “bringing up children isn’t easy” (12:131). DC described the first few years of mothering her adopted daughter as “unbelievably traumatic ‘cause all she did was scream and the more she screamed the more tense I got and the more tense I got the more she screamed. So we had quite a rough start” (14:48). In DN’s reflection upon the child’s primal need for the mother, she commented,

I think I met the need very well with H and I experienced it, as I said, it wasn’t like this is what I want to do again and again (laughs) but it was, it was special, it was a special time, and it was hard” (17:371).

Participants spoke of mothering being tiring (3:639; 15:171; 16:308). They also discussed experiencing mothering their children at certain developmental stages as more enjoyable than at other stages (14:00; 17:318; 20:534). What is important to note is that participants typically made comments about difficulties or challenges that they experienced in mothering and then immediately followed up these statements with ones that affirmed their decision to mother or that communicated the ultimate sense of fulfilment that they find in mothering. Also, when participants made statements about their enjoyment of mothering they would often balance this with comments that mothering is also difficult and tiring.

DN contrasted her own experience with the idea that women understand mothering naturally / as natural:

(Laughs) Ja...mothering...I laugh because it’s such an un-...I’d like to say unnatural, it’s such a...I don’t get, let me start by what I don’t understand about mothering, Let me start by what I don’t understand about mothering. I don’t get all these women who are dying to be pregnant and have little babies and, um, and live for that, give up everything else that they’ve got in their lives for that. I so take my hat off to them, I’m like God, I wish I could be more like that but I’m not (17:302).

We see in this last statement that, even though she does not identify with this position, there is a desire to fit the picture. What is also interesting to note is that DL also stated that mothering is instinctual, DC emphasised that, even though she does not pick up everyone else’s babies, she does love her own children. TN described her experience of adoption as:

It’s better than I thought...When A crept into my heart she crept deep. And honestly having my own child and an adopted child I can honestly tell you: there’s no difference. In fact I think my daughter and I have a better connection sometimes than my son and I. She’s my daughter. She really is my daughter...I would lay down my life for both of them (2:90).

Therefore, when participants do not experience personal resonance with the idea of mothering as a core, natural component of being a woman this may take various forms. Women may resist the notion but this appears to occur with ambivalence. Examples in addition to those mentioned above include comments by UC, CT and TN. UC stated, “I know I said that not all women have to have children but I think really women are generally wired to have children, I mean that’s what makes the human race carry on” (4:207). CT pondered aloud:

I don’t feel more of a woman just because I’ve got a baby...Thinking back though, before I met B and before I thought about the possibility of becoming a mom I did feel like, it wasn’t quite complete, being a woman without a baby. So there was a little bit of, almost incompleteness. But I don’t know if that was something that was socialised into me because, you know, you grow up with fairly strong messages of, you know, ‘until you’ve had a baby you haven’t lived’ kind of thing. So, or whether that’s just a real emotion, that you feel incomplete without a child (8:173).

TN stated, “I’m not complete because I’m a mother. That’s just part of my personality. It’s not *me*. I think I would have been fine if I didn’t have children” (2:300). Although she does not frame being a mother as ‘completing’ her and even though she says, quite emphatically, that her sense of ‘me’ is independent from her self-construct as ‘mother’, she *also* says that being a mother is part of her personality.

Alternatively, participants resisted the notion of women naturally being mothers in relation to not conforming to a notion of being ‘motherly’ in a general sense whilst still retaining the components of good mothering in relation to their own children. Even if the drive to become a mother was not experienced strongly, once they did become mothers they speak of fierce selfless love and protection towards their children. There may not be a ‘naturally’ experienced pull into the ideology of intensive mothering for these particular women, however, once they do become mothers they then operate in relation to it.

Two of the specific areas of mothering that some participants explored as not coming naturally was bonding and loving. Although some participants described not experiencing difficulties bonding with their adopted child (2:101; 16:456; 19:106; 21:281), a few even describing an instantaneous bond (4:59; 8:63; 9:64; 21:281), others spoke of bonding with an adopted child taking longer (11:78; 12:98; 14:28; 17:220). A number described particular difficulties in this area:

CF: You know if you are going through that thing, you kind of like feel like you’re on your own. Because nobody’s been under that same, um, people have had children but it’s not quite the same. Um, as I say you haven’t, like maybe when the child’s in you you still feel like you’ve done that bonding with the child for like nine months. So I think there is a, I think it would be nice if there was like some sort of support group and I think it would help (12:460).

BD: I thought well, I can’t bond with the child so there’s obviously something wrong with me...You know no-one warned me. I think that was the big thing, no one actually warned me that there would be any bonding problem. Everyone I spoke to it was wonderful and great and, you know, there’s no problem and that was a bit of a shock (11:79).

DD: The bonding thing has been the biggest issue. Even still she goes through good phases and difficult phases. And as soon as it’s a difficult phase it feels like oh, it’s my bonding issue and she’s just really irritating to be around. I would never feel like this about my biological child. Whereas, maybe I

would. Um, it's taken a lot for me to stop assigning everything to her being adopted and my bonding issues (18:467).

DN: It's taken me a while to very primally bond with her. The first year was very hard. I did what I needed to do but I didn't feel like this was my child, you know (17:222).

DD also said the following:

And I suppose with G again it was, you know, like, who am I in this mess? You know, I'm finding it so hard. I'm finding it really hard to bond with her. Although she bonded with me quite quickly but I was battling to reciprocate so what does that make me as a person in this? Um, ja and I suppose, ja, so that's why I've come to realise: being a mother is one of my most crucial roles but it's not all of who I am (18:220).

She found it very difficult to fulfil the picture prescribed by (A) (in fact the picture appears to be a 'mess') and, as a result, questioned herself. She appeared to then use the strategy of reframing herself as more than a mother. Her position as a good mother (C) was threatened and so she enlarged her 'self' in order to include more 'roles' in which she could construct herself as competent.

KM constructed knowing that you have bonded with a child when "his cries reach your heart" (6:82). She spoke of experiencing difficulty in bonding with some of her foster children. If this is her construction of bonding, one wonders how KM may construct meaning in relation to her sense of self as a mother when she is mothering a child and yet his cries do not 'reach her heart' in the same way. How might one engage with constructions of self as a 'good mother' in that context and with meanings of how mothering 'should be' in relation to dominant discourses? She provides some clues in the following comment about foster children with whom she did not bond:

It was hard. It was really hard 'cause I feel like I'm their foster mother and I should really love them yet I'm not, not bonding with them and actually this child is frustrating me and we just seem to be clashing and I felt guilty that I wasn't loving them in the way that I should whereas the others weren't getting to me like that particular child was. And whatever I did I just *couldn't* seem to bond. There was just two of them that I've never bonded with. I found it very difficult because they were cry-y babies...It was really hard. It was kind of like I longed for them to go to their forever family, to someone who would really love them 'cause I knew I wasn't loving them in the way that I should. But I felt guilty that I wasn't loving them 'cause I should be 'cause this child's been placed with me for a season and I'm supposed to be their foster mother yet I'm not, not bonding with them. So it was hard, 'cause you can't *make* yourself bond with them. And it's hard when they come, I do find it hard as well, like the one we got yesterday, when they come from seven or eight months of something else...Because understandably so they've been in one set of circumstances, now they're placed here and they're old enough to know 'mm-mm, this is people I don't know, things I don't know, places...' and so they're very demanding and take a lot of your time. And sometimes it's hard to have the patience, especially when there're lots of other children around as well. I mean if you just had the one that would be, but when you've also got, so it can be kind of hard because you feel like you actually just need to sit and devote all your time to that child because they're now struggling to adjust to their new environment but actually you don't, I don't have the time to do that 'cause I've got lots of them (6:90).

KM constructs this experience of bonding with a foster child as not coming naturally, being hard, and as evoking guilt seeing as she is supposed to be bonding and supposed to be loving them in a particular way. She affirms the view that one cannot make oneself bond with a child (it should simply come naturally) and she does not resist this position. Through self-surveillance she regards herself as one who does not fulfil this criterion in relation to these particular children.

When MB received a photograph of the child that had been chosen for her to adopt, her initial response was:

She really looked horrendous and, um, [my husband] was actually quite worried that we would get there and I'd turn around and say 'I'm not having this baby' (laughs). Which was never an option. It didn't even cross my mind. But on the other hand I was absolutely terrified. I mean I thought she was so ugly and I thought what are we doing? How am I possibly going to love this child?...And, um, and when I saw her, I promise you, I thought she was the most beautiful baby I've ever seen in my entire, she was and still is, very, very cute. She's a very pretty little thing. And she looked nothing like the photo's (laughs). Ja, she was just adorable (21:153).

Although she feared that she would not be able to love this child, the child's attractive appearance seemed to play a role in mediating her response. For DD on the other hand, who adopted transracially, she felt that she was 'given' a particular child, but this was not the idealised child she expected and, as a result, she found loving her daughter difficult. She explained:

I mean I think also getting raised, we'd always dreamed of having a daughter and it was, it was one of these funny things that I realised at the beginning...I dreamed of brushing out this long blonde hair. And now I was never going to do that. *This* is the daughter I was given. I didn't even know *how* to do her hair. When I tried and touched her hair she screeched and screamed. So gone was this long beautiful hair with ponies and plaits and pigtails and all that sort of stuff. It was weird (18:330).

This did not fit her picture of natural mothering and she did not feel enabled to be a good mother in this regard. This raises the question of how she might speak of giving birth to a child who may have dark, curly, unmanageable hair. Does the construction of the biological child, complete with 'normal' processes of conception as opposed to assisted conception, pregnancy, birth, breastfeeding, rituals such as looking at family photos to see whether he/she has a certain uncle's nose and so on, mediate discrepancies between the real child and the idealised child, particularly in terms of physical appearance?

DD, who also has two biological sons, spoke of the first year with her adopted daughter by saying,

I went through huge issues and a deep depression actually over this period because it was, I love my boys, but I wasn't able to love her. And it made me feel like: what's wrong with *me*? Why can't I accept this child and love her? Why can't I feel the same about her as I feel about these boys? What's wrong with me? Um, ja, I've kind of come out of *that* and realised it was a difficult time and you can't expect to just fall in love with someone else's child (18:116).

Her 'justification' for not fulfilling the criteria of mothering coming naturally in this regard, is based on the premise that she does not fit the picture of natural mothering, in that this is not her biological child. She utilises the system depicted in figure 5.1 to defend the way in which she sees herself as not meeting the requirements of good mothering. BH spoke of adoptive mothering as involving a choice "to bring that child into your family. You choose to love that child no matter what, to see that child through their entire life"

(13:236). The components of the natural picture that allow for mothering to emerge naturally may or may not be present. The adoptive mother is constructed as one who has chosen to love.

5.6.3 ADOPTION AND FOSTERING: WHEN NATURAL MOTHERING AND GOOD MOTHERING CHANGE SHAPE

The two previous sections have demonstrated how participants painted a picture of natural mothering and how they evoked the discourse that mothering should come naturally to women. Although we have seen that these ideas are resisted at times and that there is some dissonance that occurs in the process of self-surveillance, the characteristics of natural mothering as a relatively unitary discourse - which is then engaged with - appear quite clearly. In relation to this, two features that can be identified in the data are the construction of adoptive and foster mothering as 'unnatural' and as 'supernatural' or 'special'. When constructed as unnatural, I suggest that this could be conceptualised as the resources available in the first circle of figure 5.1 (natural mothering) being limited in some ways. This would also question the premise of (E) leading to (A) and (B) (i.e., if I really was a good mother my mothering would look like (A) and feel like (B)). When constructed as supernatural (as an adoptive mother or a foster mother one is a special kind of mother with a special capacity to be a good mother) then the first circle in figure 5.1 could be conceptualised as being enlarged. This mother should have more than enough resources to fulfil the mandate of good mothering (as illustrated in the second circle). Questions arise, then, when this is not necessarily her experience.

The good mother is going to be presented in this section in more detail. What becomes clear in the data is that the good adoptive mother and the good foster mother encompass all the requirements of the good mother *plus* they have additional characteristics. In other words, the task of the adoptive or foster mother is constructed as greater than that of the biological mother. Figure 5.2 illustrates these two situations. In part (i) we see the dynamic of unnatural mothering where fewer resources in the first circle (natural mothering) are available in order to enable the mother to meet the even greater demands in the second circle (good mothering). In part (ii) we see the dynamic of supernatural mothering where the first circle is constructed as overly large so that more resources should be available to meet the demands (even the greater demands) of the second circle. I suggest that, although the second situation may empower the adoptive/foster mother and she may utilise this discourse from a position of agency, both part (i) and part (ii) also have the potential to disempower the adoptive/foster mother by positioning her outside of the normative discourse and by setting her up for potential failure.

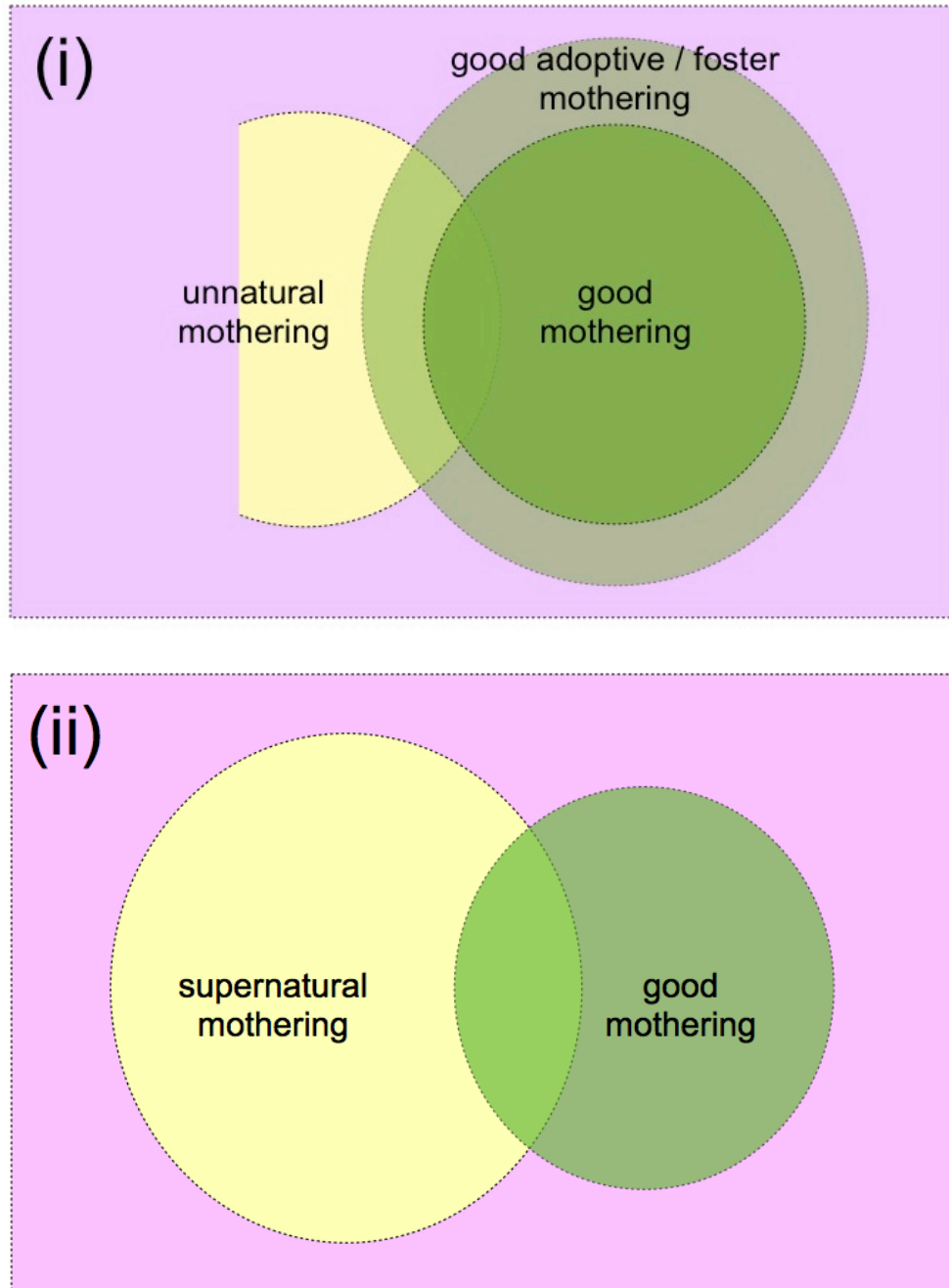


Figure 5.2: Unnatural and supernatural mothering

Findings in this section will be presented according to constructions of the good mother, the good adoptive mother and the good foster mother; followed by a discussion of the discourses of unnatural and supernatural adoptive/foster mothering.

5.6.3.1 THE GOOD MOTHER

In the data, the good mother was referred to both in terms of the tasks that she accomplishes as well as her personal characteristics. In other words, the good mother is constructed in terms of who she is as well as what she does. In this section the first 10 themes refer to her tasks and the next two themes, 11 and 12, refer

to characteristics of the good mother as a person. Following the presentation of these themes, the manner in which participants discussed assessment of the good mother will be explored.

5.6.3.1.1 Tasks achieved by the good mother

The first theme is that good mothers meet their children's needs. 'Caring' and 'nurturing' were terms that were repeatedly used to describe the behaviour and role of the good mother (5:134; 7:207; 8:145; 9:148; 11:208; 12:137; 15:145; 18:157; 19:142). She also ensures that her children *feel* cared for (12:344). She meets their emotional needs (3:165; 6:184; 20:393). She allows her children to express their feelings (20:56) and she ensures that her children know that they are accepted (20:400). The good mother also provides for the physical needs of her children (5:135; 6:177; 7:62; 15:145; 19:14). She looks after her children when they are sick or hurt (5:150; 6:186; 10:160; 11:205; 16:623) and tries to ensure that they remain healthy (17:258). The good mother provides security (4:122; 15:311; 19:143), protection and a sense of safety (4:337; 7:365; 15:145; 20:53) and predictability (7:63). DE explained good mothering as "constantly just ensuring that there is a sense of security and a sense of safety 'cause that's going to develop self-esteem and that's what we want in the long run" (20:58). The good mother creates routines for the home (3:273; 7:219; 12:305; 17:425; 18:55). She also assists her children with their daily activities and keeps the household running (18:170). According to OS, mothering is "the getting up, the dressing, making sure the homework's done, making sure they've had breakfast, their vitamins, getting to school on time, fetching, activities, lunch" (5:147). The good mother plans and manages her children's schedules. AN described her role as "chief planning officer" (19:149). The good mothers ensure that their children are receiving a good education (7:62; 8:293; 9:200; 10:157; 19:336). Especially when her child is young, she provides and manages the stimulation that the child receives (4:96; 6:185; 11:178). She also provides spiritual holding and guidance (3:409; 11:206; 15:147; 16:307). She meets her children's needs in a loving manner. In addition to her loving role (as explored in section 5.6.2.1.2), the good mother is required to balance loving and being firm (9:492; 14:192). The good mother is constructed as consistent (6:510; 7:199; 10:432; 12:207; 17:424) and reliable (10:220; 14:143). The good mother also has endless patience (4:524; 6:366; 11:286; 12:342; 20:532). She is calm (15:265; 20:532) and establishes a peaceful tone in the home (3:403) and she has self-control (11:326).

The second theme is that the good mother is present and available. She is not self-absorbed (1:387). She is physically present in her child's life (6:777; 11:37; 17:447). Good mothering is about "being there" for one's children (9:154; 5:137). UC said,

I think for me the big thing is just really interacting with your child, being *there* for them. I think that's very much the style of mothering *these* days. I mean, when I grew up it was more, you know, 'go off and play children, don't bother mommy, she's busy'. And she probably was busy. But these days the family unit is, in a lot of ways, closer (4:534).

The good mother is consistently present and mothering is constructed as "24/7" (3:632; 6:188; 15:125). BD said that mothering is "full-time" (11:208) and UC said that mothering is "the always being there...mommy's just always there, part of the furniture, part of the infrastructure" (4:157). KN spoke of a mother who has been a role model to her and explained that even though this woman also ran a successful business "she's always available for her kids" (3:416). The good mother spends time with her children (2:339; 9:182; 13:164; 16:488; 17:392; 18:205; 19:339; 21:340). She specifically gives her child "quality" time (16:491).

The good mother is available "physically, mentally, spiritually, financially" (2:372). DD commented:

Availability for me is a huge thing as a mother, to be available to your children, emotionally and physically, ja. If you're always away from them who're they going to turn to and talk to? You know, they can't develop a relationship with us if we're not around. Doesn't mean to say you can't work but it just means, ja, time is important. It's not just about quality time, they need (18:409).

A number of other participants also said that a mother should be emotionally present to her children (2:305; 10:227; 20:393). The good mother is also mentally present. DN said

you know you struggle to switch off when you get home from work and, or there's other stuff going on and then even though you're saying don't take it out on the kids, it's there, it's kind of like in the back of your mind. So your presence isn't uncensored, or, you know, whatever it should be. So, um, I think good motherhood is the ability to be completely present, you know (17:441).

As mentioned earlier, LL spoke of holding her children in her mind even when she was not physically present with them:

If I'm out then I'm thinking of them and want to get home to them. If I'm at the grocery store I'm not going to lolly around, I want to get home to them, I want to know what they're doing and so I think it's part of everyday life (16:331).

Good mothers are available for their children to talk to (4:128; 5:137; 9:475; 10:332; 18:411; 20:537; 21:496) and good mothers listen (1:408; 2:305; 10:299). Good mothers engage with their children and they are responsive (18:45). For UC, "just engaging with the child for me is the mothering" (4:129). Also, good mothers know what is happening in the lives of all the family members (18:170).

DN spoke of her need to be involved in activities other than being entirely present and available for her children, but then questions her deviation from the dominant discourse:

I mean I can absolutely feel that primal connection with a child and it makes me quite claustrophobic. So I have it in doses and my children both know that they have part of me. They don't have...So for me mothering is different. It's the, it's providing the underlying security that you are there and you are, love them the most and you are the person in the world that is doing other things beyond taking care of the children. And then this is also why I beat myself up a bit 'cause then I'm like maybe this, maybe I should be home more, maybe I should be enjoying this more (17:308).

Thirdly, in a related theme, the good mother regards her children as her priority (5:143; 6:190; 12:321; 18:203). MB explains that, as a good mother, "you put your kids before yourself" (21:339). A number of participants spoke about the manner in which a good mother gives 'her all' to her children. According to KN, the good mother "will do everything" (3:406). She "will do what it takes to get her children where they need to go" (3:407). For OS, mothering is "all-consuming" (5:143). Two participants expressed the view that children should be one's priority, but not above one's relationship with one's husband (4:218; 5:187). NF said, however, that, especially when one's children are young there are instances where this does occur though. In the following quote, 'M' refers to her husband and 'D' refers to her adopted son:

We surprised the kids and took them on a cruise but it definitely wasn't a holiday...I think if we'd been doing it as a couple then going back to the role of the woman it would have been a

very different role that I was playing on holiday than this mom who was just running around saying 'M, just wait, wait, wait, wait, I'm just getting D' (9:303).

Good mothers sacrifice for the good of their children (1:262; 3:400; 4:232; 7:67; 9:149; 10:495; 18:157; 21:199). TN said, "the love of a mom is so sacrificial. So sacrificial" (2:301). As LL explained, as a mother, "you're sacrificing everything" (16:304). She also called mothering

a sacrificial occupation. And you really give up, I mean, you give up a lot of stuff to always be there. You give up relationships and friendships and anything, you know, things for yourself. I think more of my kids than myself. If I go out shopping I'm going to shop for them I'm not, I don't even think of myself I'm like 'oh those clothes are so cute for them' (16:322).

The good mother chooses to make this sacrifice and does not mind. CT spoke of being awake with her child at two o'clock in the morning:

Consoling a crying child and doing that willingly, not minding the sacrifice. Um, ja, I think it's the not minding the sacrifices, *choosing* to make those sacrifices you know that's...It's ok that I don't go on holiday this year 'cause I've got to buy nappies or, you know, or I've got to send my child to school. It's ok (8:332).

The fourth theme identified in the data, in relation to tasks achieved by the good mother, is that she takes responsibility. She is aware of the weight of responsibility of mothering a child and behaves accordingly (3:371; 6:237; 9:820; 12:87; 15:124; 16:306). AN constructed this aspect as so core to mothering that, without demonstrating this ability to take responsibility for one's child, one is not only not a good mother, but one does not even qualify as a mother. She explained,

a woman is a woman probably who's capable of making babies, you know, but not necessarily that that person can be a mum. But you don't just become a mother just because you've also given birth or because you've adopted a child. Because you can do that but not do, um, the responsibilities that come with that, ja. So I would say that a woman is a free agent (laughs) and a mother is someone with extra responsibilities (19:169).

The fifth theme is that the good mother is invested in her child's development. She has dreams for her children's future (13:645) and is excited about her children's future (but does not want her children to grow up "too fast" (6:274)). She is concerned with their holistic development (11:207), facilitating development in every area. Participants spoke of the good mother helping her child to develop emotionally (6:186; 15:300; 20:60). Good mothers are teachers (8:146; 10:232; 11:208; 21:341). Good mothers discipline their children (4:348; 5:135; 6:184; 9:859; 9:868; 21:340). They believe in their children's capacity to grow (4:452; 6:361; 15:168) and give their children space to grow (15:146). They nurture their children's uniqueness (15:156). The good mother has a long-term perspective (15:297) and she prepares her children for the future (3:323; 4:673; 6:176; 7:207; 8:145; 9:148; 9:165; 11:205; 16:308). She particularly helps her children to develop independence (8:146; 9:485; 10:388; 14:104; 15:148; 19:258). She ensures that her children are confident (19:352). Her investment in her child's development is expressed through the balance between allowing freedom and providing boundaries (15:160; 17:413; 19:153; 7:207). The good mother offers wise counsel and guidance (3:404; 4:123; 5:136; 8:145; 11:336; 17:482).

In the sixth theme, the good mother assists her children with social relationships. She mediates between siblings (5:150; 6:187), she monitors her children's romantic relationships when they begin to date (10:72), and she desires good friendships for her children (21:494).

The seventh theme that was identified in the data is that the good mother understands her children (4:448). The good mother 'tunes in' to each of her individual children (1:212; 3:465; 4:130; 5:110; 6:284; 9:498; 11:271; 15:156; 18:173). The eighth theme entails the notion that the good mother holds authority (9:480). UC described her adopted son as having "a very strong leader-type personality" (4:694). She then says "but he can't be in charge 'cause he's only four and I am the mommy and I have to be in charge" (4:695). The ninth theme involves the good mother's respect for her children. She treats them with dignity and, in this way, instils within them a sense of self-worth (4:543). She also apologises to her children when she makes a mistake (20:551).

The tenth theme contains data that pertains to the good mother being busy (1:185; 7:67) or doing many different activities. KM said that, as a mother, "you're all sorts of things...You are a whole range of things...You're a teacher, you're a nurse, you're a taxi driver, you're juggling many balls" (6:182). BD said

I find it a big learning curve as just a person to be, not responsible for them in a...but...being like, having to be everything, not everything to them but you know what I mean? Like being a lot of things to them. Um, I think that's just motherhood though, that you have to be able to do a whole lot of things (11:273).

This quotation indicates the rigidity of the construct of the good mother and the high standard that is demanded: *having* to be *everything*; you *have* to be able to do a whole lot of things. NU commented on how difficult this can be to achieve:

And it's like, ok, so in between the kids and the cooking and the, ja, ok, so let me try and listen. I find that very hard. There's one mother and she's got to listen to everyone's needs and be a psychologist and psychiatrist and everything all at the same time (10:302).

There are times, however, when the good mother is required to recognise her own limitations and make alternative arrangements accordingly. NF was homeschooling her children as she believes that this was the best educational avenue for them. However, her children have now reached high school level. She reflected on this by saying:

it's very different from doing primary school. I didn't do science at school, I barely passed maths. So I was like, I'm not a maths, science person at all and H wants to be a vet and I just said to her 'you need to go back to school, I can't do this' (9:188).

5.6.3.1.2 Personal characteristics of the good mother

The next group of themes refers to the qualities of the good mother as a person. The eleventh theme is that the good mother is adaptable and flexible. DL explains that

mothering's a constantly evolving thing because, just different things happen. Like if there's learning problems with one then you've got to do a another mothering role there, become more of a teacher, or if this one's having problems with...it's just a constantly growing thing, it never stops...of learning stuff (1:390).

KM speaks of needing to adjust to what 'works' for a certain child:

sometimes you want kids to be a certain thing and they're not that thing...always having to constantly remember that God has uniquely made everybody and what works for you doesn't necessarily work for them (3:466).

Good mothers are able to adapt their approach according to the changing developmental needs of their children (3:547; 9:312; 11:264; 12:305). Good mothers are women who are continuously open to growing and learning (1:394; 4:747; 9:500).

In the twelfth theme the good mother is constructed in the data as being positive (15:297). She enjoys life (1:421) and she lets go of her mistakes (16:681; 20:551). Good mothers are also not anxious (17:247).

5.6.3.1.3 Assessment of the good mother

Participants reflected upon how the good mother is assessed and how they self-assess. Two participants cited difficulties in defining motherhood and the good mother due to the variation that exists between women. BD commented, "but, you know, mothers are also different. So I think it's hard to define a mother, or being a good mother" (11:328). AN said, similarly, "I don't think there's one definition for motherhood, you know, so, because we are all different. We all raise differently, we have different standards" (19:166). A number of participants acknowledged that contextual factors are involved in determining the standard against which the good mother is assessed. DE explained that the responsibilities of a mother change as the child grows (20:531). NU spoke of how trends in mothering change over time:

I was really totally over the top with my first, you know? And yet I think the world is changing with that. They're talking about kangaroo mothering, I don't know if you saw that on TV the other day? Where, if you have twins those babies come and they lay on you and I'm a firm believer in that. Now when I had my first it was like 'no she's crying don't run, give her a chance to wake up and make a noise and...' I mean I would have held that baby like all, 'no, that's spoiling'. I'm talking 26 years ago. And I think that's so vital. I think we've got a lot to learn with regard to bonding with our kids and, ja, I think a lot's changed. It needs to change, you know? (10:280).

BH emphasised that the standard used to evaluate good mothering must take into account the socio-economic background and social and residential context of the child. In her discussion of a visit to a play therapist with one of her foster children she commented:

and it doesn't help when you go, that's where I went wrong going to that professional that only sees White, rich children. You know she wasn't aware of the issues and very, uh, critical of me which I didn't need to take that on. I need to see people that are like aware of the issues with children's homes that can help me (13:345).

BD utilised a religious discourse in her discussion of assessment, by saying,

I think first of all being a good mother in God's eyes is important for me. Not so in the world's eyes or even in my children's eyes. But if I've met God's, not that I'll ever meet God's standards for mothering, but if I can aim, you know, for that, then I think I've been a good mother (11:321).

Two participants spoke of their children's assessment of them as good mothers. KN explained that when she buys items for one of her foster children the response from the child is: "I've got the best mom in the world" (3:570) whereas with her other foster child the response could be "but you know that I don't like this, aaahh, don't you love me?" (3:556). BH also discussed her foster children's assessment of her as a mother: "They

think I'm just as loving as any, but their standard has been very low. So they don't realise that it's not normal, an adoptive mother wouldn't go away for the evening, or for the day on a day off' (13:228). She also said,

I think that some of them have been so exposed to bad parenting and horrible situations that they couldn't care less. They just want someone to give them, I'm serving them the food on the table, I'm giving them a bath and, that's like a home run (13:590).

Participants reflected upon how they assess themselves as mothers. OS explained that she has the same expectations of herself as a mother to her adopted daughter as she has of herself as a mother to her two biological sons (5:388). DC said

I was needing, trying to be the best mother in the world. I remember, I'm trying to think, who was that theorist? Winnicott I think? And he wrote, um, I can't even remember the statement, but I remember reading that when A was about three or four and it was 'the true measure of a parent is merely when the parent holds the child and the child sees itself reflected in the mother's eyes'. And it was such a liberating thing for me because I really realised that it's not about *doing* the best mother but it was just about *being* a mother (14:87).

She exchanged one conceptualisation of what 'counts' as good mothering for another. DC also shifted her construction of what 'counts' as good mothering towards valuing providing her child with more freedom:

well now I'm a much better mother because um, because they're older. So I'm much more enjoying them at this kind of parenting. And I'm not as, I let go, I think it was initially, if A was a wonderful child that was a reflection of me being ok as a mother but I've definitely moved away from that. I mean I've done a lot of personal development as well and she's also free to be who she is (14:99).

Participants in this study spoke of times when they question themselves as mothers and their ability to be good mothers. KM, a foster and adoptive mother said the following regarding her adopted son:

I mean I look at people that have raised, you know, that have got teenagers and I think 'wow, am I gonna be able to raise him?' And they turn out, you know, and I think is my child gonna be the one that's like off the rails, so, 'cause he's a fairly wild personality anyway...It's like, 'wow, can I do this?' (6:278).

When speaking of her foster children as well as her adopted son she asked:

how do we manage, you know these two together? How do I meet his needs? How do I make sure he has time? How do I make sure they are, I'm really on top of their care and what's going on with them? (6:695).

Both KM and CF, defined the good mother as having patience and then 'admitted' that they often don't have 'enough' patience. This reflection on their own perceived lack of patience does not produce in them a questioning of the construction of the good mother, but, instead, results in their own self-assessment as not measuring up to the standard. In section 5.6.1.4.3, LL was quoted in relation to the standard she holds herself to in caring for her adopted son who is HIV-positive, including instances of criticising herself for not giving him his medication at precisely the right time.

Winnicott's construction of the good enough mother (as discussed in chapter two) underpinned a number of statements made by the participants in relation to good mothering. DN and DD emphasised that, as a mother,

one will be good at some aspects of mothering and not as good at others. They stated that it is important to acknowledge one's limitations (17:336; 18:400). A number of participants presented the good mother as doing the best she can (19:332; 20:556). DE said that good mothers

try their best. Which means you're going to fail and you're going to make mistakes but you're going to be able to pick yourself up and keep going. Um, for me, you know a good enough mom is someone who can say sorry when they've made mistakes and can apologise to their kids because we all do make mistakes (20:551).

BD asked "are you ever a good mother?" (11:321). The following quotations highlight participants' emphasis that the good mother should not be a 'perfect' mother:

EW: "You can never be perfect, you're always far from perfect as a mom" (15:267).

DD: "there's no perfect mother, there's no perfect person, and we all work within our limitations. So I think to know and accept that is really important. Um, realistic expectations. Just chatting with a friend of mine, recently, you know where we try and be perfect and we can't and we're setting ourselves up for failure. And it's sort of then it's a downward spiral" (18:400).

DD: "If I had felt like I had to pretend that I was the perfect mom I think it would have killed me. It would have been awful. Um, ja, we're in a very blessed situation where we've got really good friends around us who we can be real with and share that things aren't going so well and they didn't think an less of me or think any less of G or whatever and just let us be who we are" (18:380).

DE: "So an ideal mother is probably just as damaging to the child as a neglectful mother because everything always has to be 100%" (20:547).

The ultimate assessment of the good mother is built upon one cornerstone: the good mother produces good children. This concept was formulated in the data through a number of statements. Firstly, mothers hold genetic responsibility for the children they produce. DE's son asks her questions about his birthmother:

you'll hear him talk about aunty J, the lady who's tummy he grew in, and he'll say like 'was aunty J a nice person?' I said to him 'she must have been 'cause you're really nice and you grew in her tummy'. I can only imagine that this person must have been amazing 'cause my child is incredible. And there's got to be enough genetics in there (20:266).

They also hold responsibility in terms of the child's prenatal environment: "her mother was HIV positive, and suicidal, her mother tried to commit suicide, so, um, she's got all sorts of biological baggage" (17:256). Mothers are also constructed as responsible for their children's growth. KN used the metaphor of nurturing a tree: "ah, this tree was this tall and I watered it, I clipped it. I don't have to work as hard as I once worked on it" (3:471). Individuals' religious convictions can be ascribed to their mothers: "they all serve the Lord. I think thanks a lot to their mom" (3:410). Good mothers produce children who make a difference in the world (9:155). Good mothers impart in their children the ability to make wise decisions. LL said,

I've got to impart all those things into his life that he needs to carry through the rest of his life and, it's just, you almost get tired just thinking about like (breathes in deeply) everything, you know, that you sacrifice to just get them through those first eighteen years and then they're on their own. I mean even, you know, these years are so important 'cause then once they hit those teenage years they're kind of on their own like in their own minds and they've already got to know what to do if this

situation happens, you know. Do we date? Do we sleep around? Do we drink? You know, they need to know all those things before that that they make the decision themselves that I'm not going to date until, you know, until I'm this age or until I find the woman I want to marry or this and that or whatever decision they've made (16:308).

Good mothers produce healthy children. For example, DN made the following two comments, the first (as also cited earlier) relating to her adopted daughter and the birth mother and the second related to her biological son and to herself:

Like she's sick a lot, her immune system is very compromised. So this is, I guess attributed, her mother was HIV positive, weak immune system. She got meningitis at four weeks old so she was on a hectic dose of antibiotics for two weeks in hospital" (17:249).

I can really see the effects of being quite conscious of my own health and state of mind during my pregnancy and with him and he's turned out, biologically as well. Like he's as strong as an ox (17:262).

Good mothers transform their children through loving them. As a result of being loved, TN explains how her foster children's faces changed from appearing "dead" (2:200) to being "alive" (2:206). She also described a boy who changed from being "skinny" to being "so fat" and says that "I don't think it was just food, it was just that he was loved" (2:219). She also maintains that foster and adopted children who are loved become confident (2:221) and become "whole children" (2:238). NF spoke of the transformation in her adopted son:

I mean when they saw him he couldn't even lift, I mean when I saw him at BH I thought 'oh gracious'. He tried to do this smile and he just drooled and had this skew face. So I was like 'mm, ok, H?' You know. Um, ja, so I don't think it bothers me anymore now. I mean when we were thinking about it I just kept telling myself 'he just needs love, he just needs love, he just needs love', but at the back of my mind I kept thinking 'what if, you know, he does have a brain problem or he does have'...So I think for me going back to the OT and she said 'nah, take him home, don't bother me again' I was like thank you'. Which I think shows the value of being in a family and just being loved and being played with (9:779).

BH, in her foster mothering of traumatised and abused children, reflects on being confronted with the limits of her power to transform a child. She mentions the factor of the age at which the child is placed:

if you get them before age seven they're mouldable and, uh, after age seven they're too street-like, which I do agree with, but I think I would have taken ages two to five (laughs)...Well, to be honest, my, G, the five year old, came to BH when she was 18 months. Now she is so damaged because of neglect and abuse. So that was 18 months (13:33).

She also said,

obviously I had very hopeful intentions that you take these children out of horrible circumstances and then you put them in nice clothing, you give them a bath, and you pray for them and suddenly they turn into princesses. So I thought that, I thought, um, that it would be a little bit easier than it has been, obviously. I didn't realise how many of the children would have such significant problems (13:55).

Her statement of a crumbling fantasy (13:95) was mentioned earlier. The good mother is constructed as an exceptionally powerful figure. To experience powerlessness therefore appears to inherently challenge one's accomplishment of the standard of good mothering.

5.6.3.2 THE GOOD ADOPTIVE MOTHER

Adoptive mothers are also spoken of as being diverse (11:200). They do not automatically have numerous areas of common ground simply because they have all experienced adopting a child. UC commented on support groups by saying:

you go to them and the people are so diverse that you have nothing in common with them anyway so that's why a lot of them *don't* work 'cause you've got people from such a cross-section of society that unless you have a group within your circle of friends who've adopted I think it's unlikely to work (4:701).

Therefore, just as mothers in general were constructed as having a variety of approaches and characteristics which need to be taken into account when making an assessment, so too were adoptive mothers.

The good adoptive mother is constructed in the data as being the same as the good mother (6:371; 15:326; 16:511). In fact she 'should' be the same (11:354). She should love her adopted child in the same way that she loves her biological child (2:109; 6:8). She should treat and respond to her adopted children and biological children in the same manner (if she has biological children or as she would if she did have biological children). For OS, being a good adoptive mother means:

not treating her any differently to my boys, you know, not having, um, different expectations or thoughts or things like that...There must be no difference because she's my child. The only difference is I didn't give birth (5:378).

Here, the good adoptive mother is not even permitted to have different 'thoughts'. NF said,

I don't think we're doing anything different being an adoptive mom as opposed to a biological mom because I don't want him to feel different. I don't want him at the end of the day to say 'yes, but you treated me differently 'cause I was adopted' you know? Um, ja, and sometimes it's quite difficult. Sometimes I think 'shame' you know. I then I think 'no! no, no, no'. Um, yes I don't know if there's a difference between adoptive mom and being a biological mom because I don't know, when you adopt surely that child becomes your child so he is like your biological child so he should just be treated like that (9:519).

We see in this quote the idea that through 'treating' your adopted child the same you construct him as the same as your biological children and you hope he will therefore feel the same. Participants constructed the good adoptive mother as one who does not overcompensate. TN said, "I try not to overcompensate...I don't give her sympathy because she's adopted...because she's better off than a lot of kids. So I don't overcompensate" (2:356). DD spoke of guilt that she experienced because she felt differently about and reacted differently to her adopted daughter and her biological sons (18:196). She held the dominant notion that her response to her adopted daughter should be the same. The notion of overcompensation is a construct itself and one that is taken for granted in the framework utilised by adoptive mothers in order to assess the quality of their mothering. Although, as will be mentioned momentarily, this idea is not consistently applied. In and of itself it is not challenged or critically reflected upon.

The good adoptive mother is committed to her child (6:71). The following statements affirm this:

BD: For me it's the same as, it's a permanent thing. It's definitely a permanent thing, it's forever. Um, it's like being adopted into God's family, you can't, you know, you can't, He won't ever let you go. And I think I find for my kids that's a big thing for them, that it's going to be forever. Um, even if they don't like it (11:476).

BH: "But, I mean, I, when you adopt you choose to bring that child into your family. You choose to love that child no matter what, to see that child through their entire life" (13:236).

AN: "You do the best you can until, you know, the day you die. I think you, your child, even if your child is 60 years old (laughs) it's still your child, it's still your child" (19:377).

In the same way that good mothers are constructed as achieving certain tasks, the good adoptive mother, specifically, is constructed similarly. In addition to fulfilling the tasks required of a good mother, participants added additional tasks or framed the nature of the tasks differently in light of the child's 'history'. The adoptive mother is also constructed specifically as prioritising her children (9:90; 10:138; 10:252) and her family unit (11:52) as well as being present and available for her children. As discussed earlier, participants who mother in a children's home environment contrasted this with the idea that adoptive mothers do not get a "day off" (6:642; 13:489) from their children. Good adoptive mothers provide their children with comfort (4:490; 10:89). DD discussed how, initially, her adopted daughter was very unsettled. DD was

expecting her to be like the boys but she was completely different. And obviously she had kind of issues of like, ok, well when're you gonna leave me? And almost felt at times trying to push us away. Um, massive tantrums, ja, it was very difficult...Initially she didn't cry and she slept fine because being in a home you don't cry because no-one picks you up. So she slept beautifully initially and then she learned that if you cry people will respond. I can't remember when it was but it was about four or so, four or six months after we got her, she would start waking up, for about two hours in the middle of the night. Say about 10 to 12, something like that, and scream, and there was nothing we could do. And she would scream like you were pulling out her fingernails. And our boys are also pretty even-tempered. We never, you know, obviously they have their moments and have their crying and whatever but nothing like this, nothing. We didn't know children could cry in such agony. And it didn't help, didn't matter what we did, if we picked her up, if we sat with her, if we left her, she would scream and scream. That was absolute torture. And you know the nights were the worst but then there'd be times in the day as well (18:64).

DD explains how this impacted her experience of bonding with her daughter. She also explains that

with her I was terrified. If I heard her crying I was like 'ah, I don't know what to do'. I would lie in bed thinking, 'I'm scared to go because if I go will it make it worse? If I leave her will she just start...'
(18:103).

A good mother knows how to comfort her child. A good adoptive mother should know how to comfort a child who arrives in her home "malnourished...sick...developmentally delayed and emotionally blunted...very weak...who wasn't even physically cute at the time" (18:37). She should know how to comfort a child who has been "in a home for so long realising that if she cried no-one did anything. So she didn't do anything. She didn't smile, she didn't cry, she just kind of looked at you with these blank eyes" (18:46). DD speaks of the depression that she experienced during this season.

Good adoptive mothers provide their children with security (4:504; 16:236; 20:894). EW mentioned that her adopted daughter

knows without a doubt that we are there. We are the ones that give her, you know, that, they need that anchor, other than God, that people are there, um, that, uh, ja. Just to, that safety, and I want her to have that with us (15:292).

Good adoptive mothers support the development of their child's self-esteem. In this regard, EW also said in relation to racism, "God...made us all special and, you know, I, I'm actually starting to pray now that somehow it just bounces off her, that it doesn't affect her whatsoever" (15:428). Good adoptive mothers discipline their children well. When BD was struggling in this area she found it hard to voice this to others: "I couldn't show that I was having any difficulty with any discipline stuff or anything, it was just all fine, you know?" (11:67).

On the one hand, therefore, the good adoptive mother must be the same as the good mother. She must feel the same feelings, think the same thoughts and respond behaviourally in the same manner that she does or that she would towards her biological offspring. She must not overcompensate. However, on the other hand, participants hold an alternate construct of the good adoptive mother. She must do more. Participants made the following comments:

NF: You make more of an effort as an adoptive mom to sort of make sure they're loved and make sure they know they're loved. Whereas you almost feel that your biological kids know that they're loved (9:734).

NU: We gave her a lovely little baptism. You know like a dedication and she had the best dedication of all. All because I just went and bought flowers and asked the florist to stick some flowers in her cake, you know? But I think I went all out to make this extra special for her. It didn't cost me a fortune but I just didn't think of that stuff with the other kids...With her I found I did more so, I just did (10:358).

CF: I mean you've got to give the same things that you give, and maybe a little bit more, because you've got to make that child feel that you are the family...I think that there are, there's, later in life they can, um, feel you know that why didn't their moms want them and there's all the questions that come up. So I think from that point you've got to be aware and more, um...ja, I don't really know what the right word is. It's making them ensured that they feel loved and that they're wanted (12:213).

The good adoptive mother is more trustworthy. DC expressed this as follows:

What's important is to be stable and reliable. Especially with adopted kids, I think you've got to be very, um, I don't mess them around. You know if I say something I do it, if I say I'm going to be on time I'm on time. Because I always believe that, uh, adopted kids are almost hypervigilant to their environment being a little unstable because they've already had, I get a sense that when they're born they're moved from one environment hearing these voices, sounds, connections, whatever, into a completely different environment. And I think there is that sense of abandonment. I don't know if it's just in my own head. So parenting, mothering for me and mothering adopted kids is very much about being very stable for them (14:143).

She is also more protective towards her adopted child. She is quick to defend her child (4:300), to protect her child due to the nature of his or her “hard start in life” (4:314). She focusses on protecting him or her from negative perceptions of extended family members and believes that this is crucial seeing as he or she has already experienced rejection once (9:127). When the child arrives in her home malnourished and ill she is more protective over the child as a result (10:252). She protects her adoptive child more because she fears that he or she may experience more pain as he or she grows up (20:479). She is also focussed on protecting her transracially adopted child from “the ugly side’ of racism” (4:306). One participant, NU, has not informed her child that she is adopted and spoke of wanting to protect her from this information. She said the following:

I agree with telling kids, but because her life revolved around my husband, she adored him, and he basically upped and left, and didn’t invite them to his wedding and I think G is feeling very hurt and, and I just don’t want to, you know, she’s already had her whole little world shattered, you know. For about a year after we adopted her she cried and cried...But there’s a lot of rejection. I think, you know, kids know, at some stage that something’s different. And I’m waiting for it to happen. I really am...Ja, but let’s hope it doesn’t happen (10:76).

The good adoptive mother works harder to understand her adopted child. The notion evoked by NF’s comment, mentioned earlier (in section 6.2.2.1.2) that a biological child is “part of you” (9:370), is related to the concept that, because this biological child is part of you or comes from you, you will automatically stand a better chance of understanding and knowing him/her, or even that this is a child that you ‘already know’. Mothers are “usually given the unenviable task of being in the position of the one who is supposed to know” (Baraitser, 2009, p. 21). According to Baraitser, this contradicts many biological mothers’ experiences of the first few moments after birth being “a surprising encounter with otherness” (p. 20). Ruddick (1980) speaks, in relation to giving birth to a baby, of the child being an “‘open structure’ whose acts are irregular, unpredictable, often mysterious” (p. 352). Despite this, the notion that one should ‘know’ one’s biological child prevails. UC spoke of the lack of shared genetic material between them as parents and their adopted child resulting in a lack of intuitive understanding. She explained “he’s not, he’s not like us, he is a different personality” (4:454). She also said,

I think you have a much better chance of understanding [your biological children] intuitively. Where it’s an adopted child the personality mix that the child has is not from you and it’s not from your husband. So I mean with [our adopted child] we sometimes look at him and think where does that come from? And you think, ok, it comes from somewhere in his past (4:491).

UC asked, “how do we discipline him? I actually don’t know. Um, we’re thinking now of going to see a child psychologist to find out how do we deal with this? ‘Cause he’s a very strong leader-type personality, I’m not” (4:686). In terms of comparing her adopted daughter to her biological sons, DD said,

She’s completely different to the boys who are, I suppose my husband and I are pretty even field generally and the boys are...Ja, I mean, we’re obviously getting to know her now but there’s still sometimes (laughs) like, I don’t understand you because I’m so different from her that I...As someone, a friend of mine who’s adopted put it: ‘biological children, often you can see where a sort of behaviour comes from’. You can say ‘ooh ja, I’m a bit like that’ or ‘my husband’s like that’ but with her it’s like none of us are like that (18:128).

In EW's opinion, you do not simply 'know' an adopted child (as you do your biological child), you have to 'get to know' him or her. This is because "they don't look like you, they don't have anything really of you that you can relate to" (15:69). She repeated this point later on in the interview when she defined being an adoptive mother as:

Just that you have to get to know them. You know, you know nothing about their background, you, uh, she's asthmatic which I'm not used to because, you know, health wise, so there's different things that you have to cope with that don't come from your particular environment (15:203).

LL constructs the unfolding knowledge, as opposed to immediate or intuitive knowledge of her adopted child as 'exciting' as opposed to problematic or difficult:

We have no idea what he's gonna become, we don't know if he's gonna be an athlete or a, you know, we can kind of predict OK, well, both of us are really athletic so maybe our child will also be athletic or we're tall so maybe he'll be tall. You don't know what to expect with O and I think that's an exciting part of adoption 'cause we don't know and we get to wait and find out. And we're not predicting I mean we get to 'ok, let's experiment, let's try music, let's try sport, let's do that' 'cause we don't know. I think it's exciting and it's fun and, um, and we're just so excited to see what he's going to be become (16:425).

In my own personal experience of mothering both an adopted daughter and biological sons I have encountered my own constructions of the impact of 'buying into' the concept that one automatically knows one's biological children. At the first indication of fussy eating, my son must be just like his father and I mentally plot out his future relationship with food accordingly. At the first indication of my other son's impeccable sense of direction, I immediately infer that, in terms of spatial orientation, he is most definitely not like me and has therefore been spared my dire need for GPS. These constructions of meaning impact upon my activity of mothering them and, invariably, play a role in influencing and in socially constructing their sense of self. I became aware of this, precisely as LL discussed, in encountering the 'not knowing' of my adopted child. When her anger rages I cannot say: "oh well, there you go, just like Aunty Susan". When her teacher comments on her exceptional fine motor skills or leadership potential I cannot puff out my chest with the satisfied knowledge that "she must have got that from me". In recognising all that I did 'not know' about my adopted child I found myself questioning what I thought I knew about my biological children. Despite the value of genetic evidence for the impact of hereditary factors (Arvey, Zhang, Avolio, & Krueger, 2007; Rebollo & Boomsma, 2006; Stevenson, 1997) I began to question the value of allowing the knowledge of my biological children a little more room for 'unfolding'. BD also (tentatively) challenged this notion through her statement:

with a biological child I think first, not even actually, I was going to say that, um, you might get, personality-wise you understand your kids better because they come from the same set of genes but that's not actually true because you can get very different kids, biological kids. I don't know (11:342).

Although she is reluctant to put all her eggs in this basket, so to speak, she does flirt with the idea that biological children may have personalities that appear to be very different to their parents.

DD spoke of not knowing how to mother her adopted daughter because she felt that she did not know her (in comparison to her biological sons):

When one of the boys woke up at night I knew what to do with them. I knew what would, generally what was wrong, what could be wrong and how to get them back to sleep. With her I was terrified. If I heard her crying I was like ah, I don't know what to do. I would lie in bed thinking I'm scared to go because if I go will it make it worse? If I leave her will she just start...It was, ja, it was just completely not knowing her. I think that was one of the big things, I didn't feel like I knew her, whereas with your own, or if you have children from babies I think you get to know their cries, you get to know them. I now obviously I know her, I've had her for two years. But then I didn't know what would work with her (18:103).

A mother knows her child. This is what natural mothering looks like. She knows her child because her child has common genetic characteristics, she birthed this child, and she has been relating intimately with this child from birth. This knowing of her child then enables her to *know how to* mother her child, in other words, how to be a good mother. Later on in the interview, however, DD voiced the view that, as an adoptive mother, one may not be able to fully understand one's adopted child: "I think as an adoptive mother, ja, you've got to realise maybe we don't understand everything about our children and that's ok" (18:431). Here we see one of the very few examples in the data where a participant states that it is 'ok' for her mothering not to fit an aspect of the picture of natural mothering provided by the dominant discourse. The fact that it is 'ok' also implies that she can conceive of this alternate view as not precluding her potential to be a good mother.

The good adoptive mother needs to have a strong(er) sense of self in order not to, in DC's words, "be threatened by a biological kind of presence or whatever" (14:201). She should also have processed her infertility experience, if this is relevant, before adopting. DE explained that her and her husband were approved as fit to adopt by social workers, however, she says that, as a social worker herself, had she been assessing a couple in their position "there's no chance on this *planet* I would have done it. I would *immediately* send them for six sessions *at least* of counseling in terms of infertility and dealing with the issues" (20:156). Although she acknowledges that this is how she would assess another couple, and therefore does ascribe to this thinking, she describes how, for her, adopting a child in amidst experiencing the pain of infertility was "the beginning of my healing" (20:149).

The good adoptive mother is constructed as having the task of social integration and balance. She is required to ensure that her adopted child is fully integrated into the nuclear and extended family (20:895). She ensures that her child, and the family as a whole, has a racially integrated social circle when the adoption is transracial (17:163; 20:866). When the adoptive mother also has biological children and/or foster children she is required to balance the needs of all her children (6:692; 9:195; 10:124; 11:72; 16:139; 17:326; 17:488).

She also guides her child through transitions and stages related to adoption. She manages the transition of the child into the new family and home. The following three quotations provide examples of this:

DL: I could tell that she'd just been left in a cot for three months. So you could just leave her lying there and she wouldn't cry, nothing. So I carried her all the time until when she did, almost did the opposite, just that you'd get a reaction when you put her down. Just to try and bring the balance back. So it's just to try and perceive where they are and where they need the connection, if that makes sense? (1:270).

UC: And for the first little while he was just exhausted, he wasn't used to all the stimulation. Um, 'cause we actually went away that first weekend that we had him so we were with friends and

everyone wanted to see him and, you know I tried to keep him at home when we got back after that weekend as much as possible just so we could settle him down and learn that this is home (4:96).

CF: I suppose she'd been in like the routine of the orphanage. Um, so it was different for her as well, I suppose also like coming into a whole new...For me I'd had no routine. I mean my routine was that I went to work. I didn't have to come home, you know, so, it was, and I'd never been like a huge lover of routine (laughs). So I must say it, I think probably that, also it was that year it was me getting to grips with, ok now. And I mean now I'm fine with, you know, I mean it's like you settle down to it and, uh, ja, so it was like difficult, I have to say, it was like difficult for me. And I think for her as well. You know, it was a whole new routine for her (12:319).

The good adoptive mother guides her child through adoption related issues in the teenage years (5:207; 20:482). She also supports the child through meeting the birthmother if this is the child's wish (14:76).

There is a task that the good adoptive mother is required to fulfil that emerged prominently in the data. The good adoptive mother is a discursive gatekeeper. She attempts to filter, shape and process the discursive input that her child receives. One may think of the metaphor of a mother bird chewing the worms before feeding them to her babies. Wrobel, Kohler, Grotevant, and McRoy's (2003) findings resonate with this in that they term the adoptive mother a "communication broker" (p. 54) in the sense that she consistently communicates with her children regarding adoption (and her involvement in adoption communication is greater than the role played by the adoptive father). TN, a mother of a transracially adopted daughter (A), spoke of feeling angry when her role as the discursive gatekeeper is bypassed:

We have had many incidents where, from little, people would go to A and ask her questions and I used to, I still, resent that a lot. From when she was about four they'd go to her and say 'Why is your mom White?' and I'd get very angry. Come speak to me, don't speak to my little four year-old (2:134).

All mothers perform discursive gatekeeping, but adoptive mothers, specifically, have additional gates to guard and also appear to view this role as central to being a good adoptive mother. This emerges much more prominently when participants construct 'the good adoptive mother' as opposed to when they construct 'the good mother'. OS said, "I think the biggest thing about being an adoptive mom is in the future when she does start asking the tough questions" (5:201). In relation to transracial adoptive mothering, specifically, LL said,

I mean, you know, [my biological child] is not going to ask me 'why am I a different colour than you mommy?' you know? It's, when you adopt a child you're gonna have to explain all those things and how are they gonna react? (16:437).

Adoptive mothers who participated in this study engaged in discursive gatekeeping in a number of ways. All but one (NU) embraced the view that it is important to talk about the adoption with the child (1:600; 4:549; 5:303; 12:226; 19:181). These are not always easy conversations (14:131). It is constructed as important to allow this information 'in' and 'out'. For example, DC said, "we've always spoken to her about it, we've spoken to each other about it, we've spoken to other people about it" (14:63). DN emphasised the importance of not trying to protect one's adopted children from the 'issues' that they will face:

I think you've got to take on dealing with the South African issues at hand, if you, and it doesn't mean you need a degree or, to be any more aware of reading the papers, but you, you can't close your

eyes to these things. I think it's damaging to your children, ultimately, by trying to protect them (17:470).

On the one hand, therefore, there is the acknowledgement that exposure is important, however, on the other hand, the good adoptive mother is also constructed as limiting her child's exposure. There are other discourses that participants speak of attempting to shield their children from. As mentioned earlier, UC said in relation to S, her adopted son and J, her biological son,

I'm much more protective over S than J. Um, far more quick to, um, defend him and step in. So from that point of view, I think, ja, just a bit more protective...I'm becoming more and more aware that he's noticing differences. He's...And I'm trying to, I'm trying to shield him from, I mean we still live in a very racially separate country. I'm trying to shield him from the ugly side of it. Um, you know, so I won't, so I watch what people say to him (4:300).

We see here that when UC positions herself as an adoptive mother she speaks of needing a stronger, sturdier discursive 'gate' in this regard than when she positions herself as a biological mother. LL spoke of wanting to shield her children from being teased due to their family looking different, but acknowledges that this is not always possible. She said

I want my kids to grow up where they're so surrounded by other families where it's so natural that if someone teases them they almost won't understand why they're being teased. Like, what? But you can't protect them from everything, and kids are mean, that's a fact (16:772).

Participants attempt to shield their adopted children by managing social interactions and social spaces. KN explained how they encounter comments

that are completely insensitive and I don't hang around with some people anymore because of that. Because they say things insensitively and I don't want my kids to hear that. I don't want them to, ja, I don't want them to think that their parents would also be around people who don't accept them (3:713).

The good adoptive mother performs discursive gatekeeping age-appropriately (4:755; 4:761; 5:220). She also makes preparations for later on in the child's life. DE said,

you know at the moment he hasn't too many questions and stuff. It's just really, I suppose I worry about him more, I worry about him in his teenage years. And I try to put things in place now that I think kind of might prep for the questions that might come later (20:482).

She also prepares her children for the responses of others. For example, DE explained an occasion when she was required to do this:

When he was three or four or whatever it was, when the school asked for all the children to bring a photo of their families to school and I didn't know yet whether he even knew, that was a huge thing for me. That was a huge thing 'cause I knew he was going to stand up in class for show and tell and say 'this is my family' and what the heck were all the other kids gonna do? That was a huge thing so we had a sit-down preparation chat before that even happened (20:705).

In this preparation, the good adoptive mother is required to provide the child with a discursive framework to use in order to interpret experiences (although there are instances where the child does not always automatically accept this (2:421)). In the data we see how participants actively work at constructing such

discursive frameworks in order to be able to offer these to their children. The following excerpt from the interview with CT also illustrates this:

CT: There is the, the thought of *how* am I going to teach her about where she comes from. What am I going to say to her? And I've been doing a lot of thinking about, you know, she is obviously going to realise that we're of different ethnicity. When she's older she's really gonna understand that and she's gonna want to know. And to, to be able to tell her with integrity and honesty that, you, know, um, that her parents actually did love her, but that they, because of that love they chose to give her up, because they couldn't afford to keep her, or educate her or do anything for her. I think that would be, that's like my biggest thought of the future.

ADS: Does that conversation concern you?

CT: Um, it used to concern me, I don't think it does anymore 'cause I've really worked it out in my head. You know, of what I'd like to say to her and how I'd like to have her understand it. You know that she wasn't just dumped and she wasn't abandoned but that they just couldn't, and they chose to give her up so that she could have something better than what they could offer, so, and that that was a very brave thing to do actually.

It is clear how central discursive gatekeeping is in CT's construction of the good adoptive mother. She speaks of how she has "worked out" in her head how to present information to her daughter regarding her adoption story. Her role is then to provide her daughter with this construction. In this quote by CT we also see how a key component of discursive gatekeeping for the adoptive mother is the construction of the child's adoption story, or the "family story" (Walsh, 2012, p. 227). Participants spoke of the importance of telling their child 'the' story of their adoption and their child's life prior to adoption, however, this story is a *constructed* story. The good adoptive mother provides the child with the best possible version of the story. This 'should' also be presented in a pleasing manner: "You know they always say make a little book for your child, you know, which, if you're a *good mother* you will do (laughs). So they've got their story" (11:417). DE said the following:

I've got a friend who told her child the mom died, she gave birth to you and that's what happened. It wasn't the case, the child was aborted. You know? I wouldn't tell the child that either but don't tell them the mom died because she didn't because they'll find that out. I mean what if at 18 they have access to their files. So I would rather give them what you can, feign ignorance when there's really complex stuff, stuff that you don't really want to go into but don't lie. Don't cover up something like that with a lie (20:582).

The role of the good adoptive mother is therefore not to lie, *but* she should reveal events selectively. TN discussed how, from when her daughter was very young, "she started saying to me 'Mom, why're you White? Why am I Black?'...So our first story to her was that your mom and dad died, and God sent us to the hospital to come and fetch you and you're our child" (2:151). When her child was older she began to ask whether her birthmother had attempted to abort her. TN said to her daughter, A:

Sho A, I think you were'. So she said 'why?' So I said 'Your mom had HIV' and through counseling this does happen where women don't want to have their babies 'cause they don't want their babies to be sick. So I said to A 'maybe your mom knew that you would be very ill and so she aborted you' and I said 'and in doing that she saved your life 'cause you don't have AIDS. Had she gone full term

you might have had full-blown AIDS'. And she just looked at me and said 'Mmm, I like that story, let's stick to that story' (2:180).

TN's daughter is aware of the constructed nature of the story and is party to accepting this particular 'version'. TN explained to me that A's birthmother "stuck a needle up herself and left her in the gutter. And then A was taken to hospital. She was born at 28 weeks" (2:190). She explained that these events are "something I will never tell her" (2:178).

DN mentioned how her family speaks 'openly' of their daughter's adoption process and her biological son "talks about X, the place we adopted her from, all the time. He was there, we took him, he was two and he remembers it and he tells her about it, you know. So it's very real. We're not taking that away" (17:238). However, their daughter's story is carefully framed so that certain features are constructed in particular ways, for example, her daughter is frequently told: "you're so special, we chose you" (17:229). The concept of being 'chosen' is provided to the daughter as the keystone of her story.

The motivations of the birthmother or birthparents are an important component of the constructed story. Another example of this is provided by CT:

You know that she wasn't just dumped and she wasn't abandoned but that they just couldn't, and they chose to give her up so that she could have something better than what they could offer, so, and that that was a very brave thing to do actually (8:308).

DE speaks to her adopted son and tells him:

she wanted you to go to school and have an education. I don't know how much money she had but she probably didn't have very much. You would have maybe been sitting, some of them sit by the robots with their little kids, she didn't want that for you, she wanted something more for you and that's how much she loved you. I think if they know they were loved even if it's going to raise the question later in terms of being given up, so to know they were loved, it was just an impossibility as opposed to just wasn't wanted or I was left to die (20:592).

A number of participants spoke of not knowing how to go about discussing aspects of their child's adoption story with them:

OS: I think the biggest thing about being an adoptive mom is in the future when she does start asking the tough questions. Um, because, around her birth it was not easy and it's not a pleasant story. And um, you know, when she's old enough she can go look in the files. We don't know all the details...So, um, I think it's just how to handle when we do eventually, um, when she starts asking the difficult questions, how do I answer? You know? Do we tell her exactly what happened or not? (5:204)

NF: That fear of he's going to think 'ah, nobody loved me and I was just left alone'. I mean we keep thinking we have *no* history for him. We can't even say to him 'oh, you know, your mom died and that's why we've got you'. We've got *nothing*. So it's going to be very interesting I think. But it's quite scary at the same time. You start thinking, you know, how much do you say? (9:745).

Participants explored the difficulty of constructing an adoption story that involved issues such as rape, HIV and abandonment:

KM: There's gonna be questions that, I mean, you know he is the product of rape. One day he is going to have to know that. I sometimes think, gosh, how will I know when, how will I know how to broach this with him? Somebody said to me 'just lie'. I said 'I'm not going to lie to him because that will wreck my relationship with him'. Obviously he's not going to know when he's four but at some point he's gonna ask...I'm like, 'wow, he's gonna ask those questions, he's gonna, the what if's, the whys'. How do I broach this difficult one with him that he's actually the product of rape? (6:731).

LL: I've wondered what he's going to think growing up, his mom was 21 when she gave birth to him but she was raped by two men and, just to have to explain to him how he was born and how he was conceived and why his mom didn't want him...how do I explain to him? You know, his natural father was a man that did something so hurtful to a woman and violated a woman in such a way...So I think those things are starting to play into, now he's got a life threatening disease. How do we explain to him, you know, that God still loves, I mean it's not like, it wasn't this fault, it's not his fault that he has it and that's, you know, God still has a plan and a purpose for him. Um, just how do we make him grow up seeing that that's not, you know, that God still loves him? He can easily think 'well how could God, you know, love someone and give a child that did nothing give them this life threatening disease that's considered such a, that's looked down on because it's, you know, oh it's a sexual disease you know?' (16:385).

NF: I think I'm a bit nervous about when he grows up and wants to know where he came from and, you know, we have to deal with that whole 'my mom didn't want me' type thing 'cause I still don't know if there's the ideal way of doing that. Um, you know, do you say to him 'you were found under a bridge'? Or do you just say, you know, 'we prayed and we wanted another child and you came along'. Or, how much do you say? How much do you actually...? (9:706).

In addition to constructing the adoption story, the good adoptive mother is also tasked with constructing the family situation as 'normal'. DL explained,

I have to be completely confident that this is, I'm *safe* with this. I'm safe with being their mother. Because, you know, stuff comes at you from outside. Um, because they're going to pick up how safe I am and they're gonna live out what I'm, my relaxed, who I am more than what other people come with. So I'd almost when they were babies practiced telling them, you know, 'you're adopted', just tell them so that it was such a natural thing for me so that by the time they could really understand that it wasn't a, wasn't a biggie at all (1:306).

NF said

we've just decided this is just normal and it's, you know, he's one of us, you don't sort of have any, ja, we don't have any funny outlooks on how we're going to treat him differently or whether, he's just part of the family and that's it (9:931).

BD stated that "it would be nice to have, like, a little book to download or something where you can just read to the child about adoption and how, you know, its normal, in our family, it's normal, or whatever" (11:419). Normalisation is often achieved through purposefully spending time with other families who have also adopted (11:457; 12:447; 14:227; 20:893).

The ways in which participants who are transracial adoptive mothers engage with race has already been explored in previous sections. A brief mention will be made here as well, as it is particularly relevant. ME said, “I think that to me is one of the most, one of the factors that I think about the most is, you know, how are we going to deal with the ‘why do I live in your family when I look different?’” (9:712). One of the tasks of the good transracial adoptive mother, as identified in the data, is to teach her child to embrace his/her race and culture (2:427). This is not, however, a simple assignment. MB describes the complexities involved in the task of discursive gatekeeping for one’s adopted child in the area of race:

If we see a man walking down the street, he’s got a red jacket she’d say ‘he’s a red man’. You know, and, in class she would say, ‘oh there’s a new boy in the class, um, T [Zulu name]’. I’d say, ‘oh, what does he look like?’ ‘Well you know mom, he was wearing that blue shirt and...’ It wouldn’t cross her mind to use the colour. But I’ve also been very deliberate not to say ‘the Black person’ or ‘the White person’ or whatever. And then with G, um, like when people ask me questions about ‘well, why does she look different?’ I’ll say ‘well, she’s Coloured’. You know, I mean, I, and then I feel awkward because I don’t want her to be defined by this. But then I was talking to, um, another girl about it, she teaches high school kids and, um, there’re obviously different races in the class and she said ‘but where we grew up, um, that in a way saying ‘oh that’s a Black person’ it did have negative connotations in a way’. And maybe that’s why I don’t want to describe someone as that because I don’t want them to feel I’m insulting them in some way. But actually that’s my stuff, you know. And she was saying that in her class they talk about it all the time. And it’s not a good thing, bad thing, or, it’s just how it is. It’s like you’ve got dark eyes and I’ve got, you’ve got brown eyes, I’ve got blue eyes. It’s not one’s better or worse it’s just how it is, you know? So then I think with G I shouldn’t not say that she’s, cause when I say ‘oh she’s Coloured’ then I kind of feel I shouldn’t have said that. But she is. Hey? It’s like so what? I mean she is (21:457).

For a White South African to refer to racial classification of individuals can have negative political connotations. For a transracially adoptive mother to disregard the race of her child can be argued to be problematic. How does the good transracially adoptive mother navigate these conflicting positions in order to provide her child with a meaning making system? This topic will be explored further in the section on ambivalence, as the good transracial adoptive mother’s task of providing her child with a discursive framework within which to make sense of race is impacted crucially by the ambivalence that consistently permeated racial construction in the data.

The good adoptive mother models discursive gatekeeping so that her child can begin to do this for himself/herself as he/she grows older. In reference to her adopted daughter, CF said

I suppose there’s always going to be somebody that thinks that it’s wrong or, you know that’s also something that she’s, that I’m going to have to help her deal with. But it’s also something that she’s got to, got to learn to, um, deal with (12:403).

DE discussed (as mentioned earlier in the section on deconstruction) how she models discursive gatekeeping for her adopted son:

...people *are* going to say things and I’m not always going to be around as the big mommy to fix it. Um, and at the moment people have said things that he’s been like, you know, there was a little girl who said ‘how come you don’t look like your family?’ and I happened to be there so I said ‘do you

look like your brother?’ She was like ‘oh, no, he’s a boy!’ I said ‘do you look like your mom?’ She says ‘no, I’ve got blonde hair’. So I said ‘exactly, you don’t look like your family either’. And she was like ‘huh’. And I know that’s not what she was getting at (laughs) but it, it sorted it for then. But I’m not always going to be there. He needs to understand that there are issues, um, and we’ve already tried to manage it like he’ll say ‘but how come it’s Black people that don’t have cars?’ ‘Cause there’re more Black people in this country than White people so for every White person that doesn’t have a job there’re ten Black people that don’t have a job’. ‘Why is it always Black people who are the baddies?’ Well there’re more Black people without jobs because there’re more Black people in the country’. But the reality is as he gets older he is going to see that there is racism. It’s all over the world. But for him to be confident enough in himself to say you know what, God made me and He made me like this and this is who I am and to hell with everybody else. That’s what I want (20:838).

A final comment on discursive gatekeeping is illustrated in a comment made by DN. She evokes a tension between knowing when to actively resist a discourse (when to prevent it from ‘entering through the gate’) and when to make peace with the fact that you and your child will continuously face this discourse and so trying to keep the ‘gate’ closed may be a waste of energy:

...I have to say, it’s just a time thing, being with A, you just learn to take yourself less seriously. So these things are important and they made me unhappy for a long time and it’s not worth it. You’ve got to like do what you can and laugh at the other stuff, you know what I mean?...So now, you know, before when I used to go into Pick ‘n Pay or Woolies or whatever with a Black baby, you know you get all sorts of responses ‘oh this...!’ and ‘oh that...!’. But you get lots of attention. You know, everybody’s looking, everybody has a look, like a double take, you know? Um, and it just used to, I’d be very self-conscious. So I just don’t make eye contact and I stay down and I push my trolley. And people say silly things so if it’s H and A, typically, I’m stereotyping here, but if it’s a Black teller she’ll only pay attention to, and it’s mostly a she, to A. And then I’m like ‘well I’ve got two children sitting here’ you know? And if it’s a White woman, mostly woman shoppers so you don’t, well men don’t come up to you, so a White woman will just like be sweet and ‘oh nice’ and sometimes I get like nice stories like ‘oh, my sister’s cousin whatever, whatever’ but sometimes I get ‘oh, is this your maid’s child?’ And A can now hear and understand, right? So it’s so inappropriate. You know? Um, so, and now I’m like, she’s resilient. She’ll, you know, I’m trying to be less protective about it (17:173).

Not only is the good mother tasked with discursive gatekeeping, she is also required to position herself as advocate. Firstly, she advocates for her child (4:274; 9:87; 11:52). Secondly, she advocates for adoption and educates others about adoption. For example, UC commented on her response to questions from strangers:

I usually have to give them the whole schpeel about how the adoption process works, but I don’t mind doing that because I think the more babies that are adopted the better quite frankly because then they can at least grow up in decent, loving homes as opposed to an institution (4:378).

When NF encounters a child staring at her and her transracially adopted child in a shop and the child’s mother tells her not to stare, NF replies “it’s fine, do you want to know why we’ve adopted him?” (9:445). Mothers who have adopted transracially are also constructed as advocates for racial equality. One participant, DN, speaks of her committed to functioning within this role, however, she describes it as “hard work” (17:133).

Just as participants reflected on the process of assessing the good mother, the ways in which the good adoptive mother is assessed was also explored. In the data we see examples of how this process of assessment and self-assessment can be more extensive than in the case of biological mothering. Prospective adoptive mothers are screened by social workers prior to being deemed eligible to adopt a child. The role of the institution is highly visible here in pronouncing whether a woman is fit to parent, or has the potential to be a good mother (2:52; 3:119; 5:69; 17:43).

DD discussed how adoptive mothering triggers an increased degree of self-assessment in comparison to biological mothering. She explained (as mentioned earlier in relation to adoptive mothers cognitively processing their mothering experience as opposed to responding purely intuitively) that she had to learn

...to stop second guessing myself. I think that's the one thing I've done. With her it was a much more conscious process of mothering her whereas with the biological children I just did what I needed to do. With her I had to, would I have done the same with the boys? Would I have responded the same? Would...Because I didn't *feel* the same about her I had to like, kind of really talk myself through it and that also became hard because then I second guessed everything I did and judged everything I did. 'Aw, you're being a bad mother here!' Um, or 'you wouldn't have done this', or 'you're too hard on her' or whatever. Instead of just letting that go and just kind of going with the flow (18:474).

In relation to assessment of oneself as a good adoptive mother AN said,

you just take it one day at a time and I know that if you do your best, you do your best and you know, you're honest, in your heart and if anything goes wrong like anything can go wrong even if the child was biologically mine, it goes wrong (19:381).

Participants, however, spoke of times when they did / do not feel like good adoptive mothers. They specifically mentioned not constructing themselves as good enough in relation to feeling as if they were inadequately meeting their child's needs, not loving their child in the way they perceived they should, as well as not being 'enough' in terms of racial identity (1:143), language (1:530), cultural heritage (1:532; 2:486), and not being 'enough' as a single parent (12:296). The following quotes illustrate the first two points. DN described her adopted daughter in the following way:

...she was sick often, still is, and she didn't eat, um, and she wasn't a great feeder and got very very, like, and we just get anxious about it, she got really, um, dug her heels in. Like, agh, it was a horrible time, she'd just like throw food around and scream and it doesn't matter if you try turn it into a game, she saw through it, just not interested. And it got me. So those were some of the symptoms and I was like 'I'm doing this all wrong'...I thought I was being an unworthy mother. I think that was part of my, I was like I'm not mothering this child right, you know? (17:266).

DD acknowledged that she needed additional support and spoke of the social worker assessing the situation as problematic:

...we're supposed to be all grateful and absolutely in love with our children when I wasn't and...I don't know if people would completely understand me. And, ja, so I think, maybe, no, I know I reached out to people but it would have been nice to have more support specifically for people in my situation. Now I'm guessing there's more and more people like me, I don't know? It's not *that* uncommon anymore. Um, and I said to our social worker, 'cause *she* was caught a bit off-guard,

um, on one of her follow up visits she kind of, like I sort of, I tried to not make it sound so terrible that she thought she would have to take the child away from me, but I think she was like 'oh, gosh, there're some issues here' (18:481).

When participants spoke of difficulties that they experienced in mothering their adopted child, this was most frequently accompanied by a comment affirming their decision to adopt and their commitment to mothering their child. In other words, when a statement was made that, in some way, countered the prerogatives of good mothering, participants immediately realigned themselves by positioning once again as good mothers. The following few examples illustrate this action:

UC: "...obviously as children grow up there're challenges where some days you think 'argh, wooh, you must listen to your mom' but it's never that we didn't want him" (4:83).

KM: "I think also when I found out yesterday I was like 'wow, what a responsibility, he's mine, I can't give him back', not that I was ever planning to" (6:237).

NF: My folks live in the heart of rural racial Africa. You go there and you feel like you're in this glass, everybody's looking at you the whole time. We still get funny remarks and, but um, I don't think I would do it differently. I don't. So, ja, it's been good (9:69).

NU: "It kind of just absorbed all the time and energy and whatever else I had, basically, ja. Um, but I wouldn't have given any less. I'd give all of myself, you know what I'm saying?" (10:255).

Only one participant, DD, attempted to express regret related to adopting (although she did not commit to fully completing her sentences) and did not follow these comments up with a contradictory counter-statement. She said, "If I'd known now, well, ok now it's different, but if I'd known after we had adopted what it would be like (laughs) I think that would have made me, it was hard, it was very, very hard" (18:24).

This section has attempted to illustrate how, in addition to being required to accomplish the tasks of good mothering, adoptive mothers are assigned with additional tasks and are exposed to even further layers of assessment. The following section will indicate how the good foster mother was constructed in the data.

5.6.3.3 THE GOOD FOSTER MOTHER

Three participants spoke of foster mothering as being the same as biological mothering. KM described fostering as: "basically treating them like your own children" (6:6). For IR, as far as the day-to-day mothering is concerned, she said, "I don't see the difference. Why should you?" (7:370). She also said "even though I know he can be taken away. But for me, for the moment, there's no difference" (7:91). LL commented: "you don't reserve yourself, we don't reserve ourselves, we treat them like our own" (16:14). The good foster mother meets her children's needs (6:147; 13:182). She provides a sense of belonging and home (13:176), security (7:136), and stability (7:158) and she protects her children (13:107). She cares for the child when he/she is ill (7:161; 13:184). She also prepares him/her for developmental changes (13:459). She is invested in her child's development. She ensures that children who require therapy receive such services (13:46), are developing educationally (13:181; 13:285), are developing healthy social relationships (13:275) and demonstrate socially appropriate behaviour (13:450), as well as having the capacity to dream of a future (13:633). The good foster mother also gets to know her children (6:710). She understands what they need

(6:698), adapts to those needs (3:256) and detects when something is wrong with the child (6:151). She takes responsibility for her children (6:139; 7:319).

BH said,

I do think that's important, I feel like that's important to love them like they're going to be there for a long period and give them everything you can, as far as schooling and therapy and homework and all that stuff" (13:283).

BH then says, however, as mentioned earlier,

So when I say I love you, I do care for her deeply and I sit with her and I make sacrifices for her and we go places and all of that, it's just not like a, I know it's just not that kind of love that I would have if she came in at age six and I said 'I'm adopting you for life'. It's not the same, it's not the same...I know it sounds horrible (13:385).

We saw in the previous section that the good adoptive mother is constructed, in some regards, as being expected to fulfil the same requirements as the good mother. However, there are some conflicting requirements that come into play, especially related to expectations that she should do more. In foster mothering, the ambivalence is even greater, due to navigating between the assumption that one should be accomplishing good mothering (in the sense that the dominant discourse defines this construct to operate) and the co-existent construction (and lived experience) that foster mothering is 'different'. Although ambivalence is the topic of the second main section of this chapter, it already emerges clearly here and this will inform the latter conclusions.

The good foster mother is constructed frequently in the data as one who should love and bond with her foster children but in a different 'way'. KM said, "I mean I would say I love all of them, but it is a different bond" (6:68). The narrative that BH presented, involving her visit to the play therapist, was also mentioned earlier. In relation to the current point it is worth repeating part of her comment, however:

you have to understand, when I say I love you and she says she loves me it's gonna look different than if I had had C from birth. I mean that I love C and I'm hugging her and I'm, but it's not going to look as natural as if I'd known C when she was two months old. I'm sorry that's basic, do you understand what I'm saying?...It looks so different because we love each other but, from a, and I love who she is, but I haven't walked the road with her from birth... (13:366).

Participants spoke of bonding with and loving their foster children whilst simultaneously 'holding back' as they know that the child is not placed permanently with them. TN explained that a good adoptive mother loves her biological and adopted children the same (2:109) whereas a foster mother (can) hold something back (2:251), although she does her best for them, loving and giving as much as she can (2:250). She holds back so that giving the child to adoptive parents down the line will not "shatter" her (2:259) or "traumatise" her (2:261). KM commented on this by saying,

...you always know they're not totally yours. I mean, they can go back to their family, they can be adopted by a family. So, there's always that, you kind of bond with them but knowing they're not totally yours and they can be removed. So it's, although foster care is semi long-term it's not permanent. So there's always that. I know when S was fostered I had many times when I was like 'is he going to be taken away?' Is he, you know, you pour your life into the child but knowing they're

not totally yours...I'm pouring my life into him but he might be taken away. I don't know how I'm going to deal with that if he is taken away but he might be (6:217).

BH said, "I have to guard my heart that I'm not envisioning that child as my flower girl, or whatever, at my wedding, when they're going to get adopted" (13:253). Although IR's foster son is legally in her care until he is 16 years old, she stated in relation to his birthparents that "we are willing if they go back to Zimbabwe and he wants to go he goes. We, it's not our child, we have to let him go...Mom and dad, if they want him to go with and he really wants to and he understands what it is we've decided to let him go" (7:151). Bonding with a foster child involves the risk (often the likely risk) of being required to part with the child. The good foster mother is expected to know how to deal with this loss (16:745).

Although participants construct foster mothering as involving a kind of bonding and loving that looks "different" to the way in which the picture of natural mothering is constructed, there is still mention of the sense that it "should" be the same. KM was quoted earlier as saying, in terms of some of the foster children that she has cared for:

I felt guilty that I wasn't loving them in the way that I should...I felt guilty that I wasn't loving them 'cause I should be 'cause this child's been placed with me for a season and I'm supposed to be their foster mother yet I'm not, not bonding with them (6:97).

As KM's statement indicates, good foster mothering is constructed as 'good mothering for a season' (6:45; 13:253; 16:12). This contrasts the permanency of the nature of the relationship as prescribed in the picture of natural mothering. However, participant foster mothers speak of giving their children "the best love and care that I can for that season, for however long you know that season is" (6:45). Although the picture is different, the foster mother should still fulfil the requirements of good mothering within that season. During that time, she is as committed to the child as she would be if the relationship was permanent. For example, KM said, "If the going gets tough you can't just say 'sorry, I've had enough now'. You have to work through it like any other mum" (6:318). EW said,

So I think there's a certain degree of love that says, a foster mother says 'I'm going to, this child's coming to me, I'm going to take them as they are and I'm going to work through this stuff'. You don't say 'Ugh, well that one has too many health problems for me' or whatever (13:531).

Good foster mothers are also required to manage transitions. She assists the child in adjusting to his/her new environment (6:124), she helps the child in the transition to the adoptive family (16:263) and she is concerned with any movements between foster placements that are required (16:739). Good foster mothers are future minded and, although the child will not be in their care permanently, they are deeply invested in the future wellbeing of the child (2:272; 3:659; 6:48; 13:620; 16:14). The good foster mother is also constructed as acting in the best interest of her whole family. The balance can be difficult to achieve in relation to accepting new foster children whilst acting in the best interest of the children who are already in her care (13:104).

In the data, the idea of the good foster mother as possessing the ability to transform her foster children emerged (2:234; 13:86). As mentioned earlier, BH reflected on her shifting ideas in relation to this and on her process of realising the limits of her transformational powers. She said,

obviously I had very hopeful intentions that you take these children out of horrible circumstances and then you put them in nice clothing, you give them a bath, and you pray for them and suddenly they turn into princesses. So I thought that, I thought, um, that it would be a little bit easier than it

has been, obviously. I didn't realise how many of the children would have such significant problems (13:55).

She relates this also to the foster care system in South Africa: "because of the, um, the system in this country, um, foster care is so, um, not well monitored so a lot of the children came from other foster care situations that were abusive, which I didn't realise" (13:11).

Although the good mother is constructed as sacrificial, the good foster mother is constructed as even more so. As KM said, "you pour your life into the child but knowing they're not totally yours" (6:226). The good foster mother invests in the child knowing that she is unlikely to see the fruits of that investment. TN speaks of the child she loved leaving her and being "just fine...They've just gone and they're fine. Which I often thought then 'didn't they ever love me?' But they're fine" (2:279). In other words, she loved the child in order to develop in him/her the capacity to love someone else (the 'real' mom and dad (2:261)). BH reflects similarly:

S, the baby that I had for a year, she sat on my lap every Sunday at church, she was with me all the time, we were very well bonded, um, but then she got up and on a day she left and I haven't seen her since 'cause she moved to Cape Town. So I'm not, I didn't waste, I feel good knowing that I didn't, I gave her everything I had, and obviously there's a grieving period after you lose a child, so I do love like they're going to be with me forever, 'cause you have to, because they might be (laughs). And I think that that builds, for instance in S's case, she was 18 months when she came, or 16 months or something like that, the mother changed the birthdate later, um, but I built that bond with her that she could transfer to her next mother. See if she'd been in another home where there wasn't a mother, so there was no bonding or there was no care, then she would have missed out on that whole year of learning how to bond with another, with a caregiver. So yes it's hard to rip her away but she's able to bond because she knows how (13:262).

It was discussed earlier how BH is viewed as not being a 'real mother' and yet she is required to mother sacrificially (13:477). She sacrifices within her mothering and she sacrifices the status of mother through the ways in which she does not conform to the dominant notion of mothering. The resources assigned through this accreditation are therefore not offered to her and yet her task of mothering is greater in the level of sacrifice that is demanded of her. This directly relates to the illustration provided in figure 5.2 which will now be clarified further in the discussion on unnatural and supernatural mothering.

5.6.3.4 UNNATURAL MOTHERING

Rothman (2005) writes, "few things seem as obvious as family...Adoptions challenge the natural order; adoptions across race lines do so all the more" (p. 28). It is clear through the discussion thus far that fostering falls within the same realm. Although the construction of natural mothering presented in this chapter automatically offers binary perspectives in terms of the characteristics explored, participants also discussed being positioned as unnatural specifically.

Particularly as a transracial mother-child pair, one attracts attention. Out of all forms of adoption, transracial adoption is considered to be the most visible and differences between parents and child are more apparent (Lee, 2003). TN referred to this directly in her comment: "Because of the colour difference, it's obvious I'm not her mom, her biological mom" (2:150). This impacts privacy regulation as a family seeing as the nature of the family construction is "on visual display to be challenged by an outsider" (Galvin, 2003, p. 244). Through the

responses of others one becomes aware that one is constructed differently (4:264; 9:668; 17:184). LL said, “I don’t go out thinking other people are going to stare because he’s Black and I’m White or what are they going to think, you know? I see people staring and I’m like ‘oh I guess it does probably look different, you know, it’s not normal” (16:527). Participants spoke about feeling tired of being “watched” (1:371), “stared at” (2:488) and “noticed” (2:139). The following comments illustrate this further:

OS: I mean it’s awkward sometimes when you’re out and people, I mean people do stare, particularly the Black people, they do, they look and, I mean, they do, I mean I’ve been asked ‘where’s her mom?’ And I’m like ‘I’m her mom’...For me I do often wish I could suddenly miraculously understand what the, you know, like sometimes you’ll see with me when I’m at the shops with her at the tills packers and, they’re talking, and I *know* they’re talking about us (5:122).

NF: Um, I think for me, doing the whole White thing is definitely when I’m visiting my parents. I mean we were down there last weekend and I just said ‘I’m not going to the shops, I don’t like being stared at’. I just said ‘M, you go, I’m going to stay at home’. Purely just because it starts irritating me eventually. Um, maybe it’s just because we’re not aware of the fact that he’s Black (9:673).

BD: “I did feel like I just stood out wherever I went and I wasn’t all that comfortable with that” (11:385).

MB: I find strangers are very interested and I don’t know whether they’re, they’re probably just nosey, like I am. Maybe when I see someone with a little Black kid I’m also interested, you know, I also want to go and ask them. But then in a way when I do it it’s ‘cause I want to say ‘ah, isn’t it wonderful?’ you know? Whereas they, I often find people are very nosey. A lot of quite hurtful remarks (21:310).

Participants discussed how this construction as unnatural involves judgement by others. KN, a foster mother said,

Some people, um, because, there’re some people who will, for instance, say ‘Ja, but I also give to charity’. You know! And my kids are not charity! Which immediately makes you think that there’s a level of guilt and they feel as if I’m going to judge them on their good deeds. I’m not God and I don’t know what you’re doing and not doing and I, half the time I don’t care and I don’t really want to know. I don’t care to know. But this is not a good deed and that’s where my problem lies...People want to see you slip up, people wanna, people feel guilty about their own lives and they think ‘my life doesn’t match up’ or whatever the story. It’s like it’s a competition and it’s not a competition. You know, it’s not a competition. This is my life, you go live your life (3:732).

A number of other participants also reflected on this matter. KM described

walking with him when he was tiny in the push-chair and people are like going (makes a facial expression) and I’m like ‘do you want to make that so obvious there that you...?’ And I had one person that walked by me and went ‘tut tut tut tut’ (shaking her head). I was like...And I actually turned around and said ‘He’s a little boy’ (6:586).

IR explained an experience she had at a shopping centre: “I’ve been cornered at the shops by a lady, that was not nice, and I ran, luckily the Pep store people knew us so they were there for us, but it’s not nice to be

cornered like you've stolen the child or kidnapped the child and things like that" (7:127). NF said, "we expected to have a lot of flak from people and we got it" (9:82). She explained,

In a way you almost, you know my sort of thing was I was just going to stay at home with him and not go out so people wouldn't be asking me questions and I wouldn't have to sort of say 'oh no, everything's hunky dory' you know and stuff like that (9:133).

Later on in the interview she also said, "they watch you in a different way to sort of see how you are relating to this Black child" (9:811). MB mentioned an encounter with an individual who said to her sarcastically:

'Well done all you White people who've adopted all these poor orphans' you know? 'Pat yourself on the back, well done'. I was very upset. I thought 'if you knew how much I love my little girl'. It's not a, I'm doing this, she said 'now you can call yourself a liberal' or something. Mmm. Anyway (21:484).

Participants discussed being constructed as unnatural not only in relation to transracial adoption and fostering. KN, a Black participant who is the long-term foster mother of Black children (and also a mother to biological children) mentioned that she "would just love for it to be more natural and not such a strange...I feel like I'm trying to fit a square peg into a round hole or visa versa" (3:705). She explained that, in her experience,

Some people treat you when you have adopted kids as if you're a serial killer or something strange like that and to me, I...That pains me, you know, that pains me...That they treat us as different. Why can't they just accept it, what's so hard to reconcile in your mind? You know, why is it, why do you, why do you feel so guilty that I'm doing this? (3:718).

NF has encountered the notion that one should have biological children in order to generationally 'replace' oneself and one's husband and that this therefore makes adoption 'unnatural' (9:336). LL discussed that the more foster children she takes into her care the more unnatural she and her situation are constructed to be, especially at a young age:

I think we notice people staring at us a lot more the more kids we had so when we got four foster, four with, you know, we'd go to the grocery store and I felt like a movie star sometimes. Literally people stopped and pointed like 'Look at...!' and I'm like 'Oh OK!' (laughs). I just remember the first time going out, going from three to four was like this huge, dramatic difference for people. And it was just like, I mean people literally like stopped, double take, you know. I just felt, I wanted to leave, 'cause I didn't like attention so 'I just got to get out of here! I feel so embarrassed'. So, um, I think the more we had the more people were thinking 'what's with this family?' And now I don't notice it as much I mean we go out as a family, we go out all four and people probably look at us thinking 'You're so young' and we're pushing, you know, two double strollers (16:467).

This construction as unnatural was evoked as well as resisted (1:12; 2:285; 5:8; 8:348). Participants spoke of their own meaning making process and how adoption, particularly, became more 'normal' to them as they interacted with other adoptive families (1:27; 2:285; 3:547; 4:22; 5:42; 7:278; 11:7; 12:447; 17:20). For example, LL said,

I like our kids to be around other adopted kids. Um, that it's so natural for them, not like I only want them to have friends that are in this environment but it makes it so natural for them to think, you know I don't want them to be the only kids growing up with parents of a different colour and then think 'what's

wrong with us?’ But that they’re so used to seeing kids, you know, that are White, Black, whatever colour in a family group. Um, so I think it would be nice to have like, I’ve wanted, not like a support group but you know like play groups where it’s just a natural place where you can bond with another mom that’s also adopted and, um, and like that’s just the way the kids grow up (16:754).

Adoption and fostering also becomes natural over time (1:30; 2:100; 4:263; 5:108). In relation to discursive gatekeeping, participants presented the idea that the adoptive and foster situation will be as natural as they construct it to be (1:314). However, despite her awareness of her constructive powers, in the data the adoptive and foster mother is still acutely aware of how her mothering is constructed by others as unnatural.

5.6.3.5 SUPERNATURAL MOTHERING

On the one hand, then, the foster mother and adoptive mother are constructed as unnatural. On the other hand, they are constructed as supernatural or special. Participants spoke of receiving the response that they are particularly deserving of blessing due to the fact that they have adopted (1:353). When I asked BD how people responded to her as an adopted mother she said, “Ooh, they think I’m so noble (laughs). ‘You’re so fabulous!’” (11:239). DC said, “I think that all adoptive mothers are wonderful (laughs). They just, I think they are characterised by a giving-ness much more than a, it’s not so much about them, it’s not so much about what the child can do for them it’s about what they can do for the child” (14:204). UC’s response to the question was, “Um, the only thing I have had is some Black woman coming up to me and saying ‘Thank you. Thank you for what you’re doing’, that sort of thing, which is very sweet” (4:297) whilst OS said, “the few [Black people] who have spoken to me have all said ‘You’re doing such a great thing. What a special thing you’re doing’” (5:250). In terms of fostering, KM said that “most people think ‘wow, you’re doing an amazing thing, I couldn’t do it’” (6:298).

KN opposes this notion:

A lot of people see this as a good deed. ‘Wow, you’re doing such a wonderful thing’. I’m like ‘I’m not. I just...You’re doing a wonderful thing, you gave birth!’ I just don’t want to give birth anymore! (laughs). I love my kids, I wanted my kids, I took my kids and, you know, thank God I have my kids. But, uh, no, I just wish people didn’t see it as being so different. Or tell my kids ‘you ought to be grateful’ (3:734).

This construction of the adoptive and foster mother as special and as doing something ‘the rest of us’ could not do serves to other her in the same way that constructing her as unnatural does. Although this construction may confer a degree of status and may offer empowerment possibilities, instances of resistance appear to function as an attempt to re-enter the picture of natural mothering. For example, after BD explained how people view her as noble, she said,

Well, in the day-to-day life it’s not that at all! We didn’t do it out of noble reasons at all! You know, we didn’t do it so people could look at us and see us as this fantastic family. I mean, you know, we’re not (laughs). We’ve all got our problems and issues and difficulties. That’s how they see me which I try very hard to discredit, you know (11:239).

As discussed earlier, BD spoke of experiencing challenges in bonding with her adopted child. In terms of constructing meaning, how should she go about navigating being “noble” and “fantastic” whilst not feeling that she met the standard of good mothering? She explained feeling as if “there’s obviously something wrong with me” (11:72). MB also spoke of how the construction of being noble did not act as a resource:

before I adopted I thought that it was a noble thing, that it was a, um, that it was like you're doing someone a favour in a way. And that was actually what terrified me about it because I wanted the relationship I have with R with the rest of my children and in a way I wasn't prepared to go into it if I wasn't going to get that, you know? (21:258).

One way in which participants constructed adoptive and foster mothering as supernatural was through drawing on religious or spiritual meaning making perspectives. A number constructed adoption and/or fostering as a 'calling' from God or explained adoption and/or fostering as stemming from obedience to a prompting from God (1:83; 2:8; 4:418; 6:50; 11:16; 15:48; 16:195). This construction does appear to be utilised as a resource. As a result of drawing on this viewpoint, UC concludes: "So you know for us there's no doubt that what we've done is the right thing. Which is encouraging, 'specially on those days when they're both being monsters and you 'why am I a mommy?' (laughs)" (4:418). DE said, "I just think for me God has a way of matching families. I really do. And I think that's why when you connect with a child and you know it's the one I believe it's from God" (20:472). In this way, participants appear to draw on the concept that God designed this mother-child pairing which appears to offer reassurance during times that are regarded as difficult. However, the role of God in the pairing of the adoptive/foster mother and child also appears to result in other offshoots of meaning. In the data, we see instances where this is interpreted as carrying a particular weight of responsibility: "you just realise how much favour's been placed upon you, and sometimes you just think God must really trust me and that's scary sometimes" (3:641); "God has still entrusted him to me to raise" (16:281). Simply because God is attributed with pairing the mother and child does not equate to the resulting relationships being an easy one: "I think God gives you the children that you're going to raise and deal with and it might not be the easiest thing, you might have personality clashes" (11: 346). Also, for a foster mother, God may be ascribed as determining if and when the child should leave the mother's care. For example,

it's never easy to let them go but it's, you know, in my heart I know that that's where God was placing them 'cause He wasn't placing them with us, you know. Some it's like 'Oh, we could keep him forever! I would just love that' you know. Um, so there's a bond like you feel like that could have been forever. Um, but you know that there is a family out there that's coming in for them, so, ja (16:26).

On the one hand, this process of meaning making may provide the mother with a sense of comfort and purpose, however, on the other, there appear to be complex dynamics involved in relation to agency.

5.6.3.6 THE UNNATURAL / SUPERNATURAL MOTHER AS THE GOOD ADOPTIVE / GOOD FOSTER MOTHER

Returning to figure 5.2, we see now more clearly how the adoptive/foster mother is constructed as unnatural and/or supernatural. We see, also, in the data, the manner in which the good adoptive mother and good foster mother are constructed as accomplishing a wider range of tasks (although this idea is ambivalently held alongside the notion that she should be the same as the good mother). I suggest that this positions the adoptive and foster mother problematically and limits her chances for succeeding at that which is socially defined as good mothering. Complicating matters even more, and leading us further into the terrain of the ambivalence which is about to be more thoroughly explored, we see that despite the fact that adoptive and foster mothering is socially constructed as unnatural or supernatural, participants also continue to receive simultaneous discursive messages that it should be the same. If my mothering is not going 'well' then "there's

obviously something wrong with me” (11:72). Deconstructing these processes requires reframing from numerous trajectories, including what counts as natural mothering, and what counts as good mothering.

5.7 ARGUMENT 2: AMBIVALENCE IS A KEY FEATURE OF THE CONSTRUCTIONS OF ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER MOTHERS

Mothering involves ambivalence. This is by no means a novel conclusion and is documented to a degree in literature (Hollway & Featherstone, 1997; Murray & Finn, 2011; Sevon, 2005; Wager, 2000). Participants in this study spoke both from their position as mother and from their positions as adoptive mother and/or foster mother. When positioned as mother their talk gives further insight into how mothers in general hold an ambivalent relationship with the ideology of intensive mothering. For example, section 5.6.2.3 presented the ambivalent constructions of participants in relation to their enjoyment of mothering.

The ideology of intensive mothering by its nature serves to position a number of mothers as deviant, for example, single mothers, immigrant mothers and lesbian mothers (Arendell, 2000), as well as adoptive and foster mothers (Weingarten et al., 1998). Their relationship with this discourse is, therefore, strained even further. Indeed, the data from this study appears to indicate that adoptive and foster mothers relate to this discourse with an even greater ambivalence. In many ways we see how participants do experience resonance with features of this dominant discourse. In some respects they do construct their mothering as fitting the natural picture, they do argue that adoptive and foster mothering can come naturally and explain how this then resources them as good mothers. We see that they do construct themselves as good mothers and how, because they are positioned in this way, they are enabled to fit the natural picture. However, we see in the data how this is *also* not the case and this chapter has revealed how this occurs both through resistance and within processes of self-surveillance. What is key is that discrepancies did not only emerge in the manner in which constructs were formed and discourses were engaged with *between* participants, but ambivalence consistently emerged *within* individual interviews. Importantly, also, is that discursive contradictions were very infrequently reflected upon by participants themselves. The level of awareness of the ambivalence at play was very low.

Although, as mentioned, many sites of ambivalence have already been highlighted in this chapter, two areas of ambivalence will receive further attention here: the notion of legitimate belonging between mother and child, and constructions of race. This section will close with a discussion of support for adoptive and foster mothers.

5.7.1 LEGITIMATE BELONGING BETWEEN MOTHER AND CHILD

In the data, ambivalence emerged in the area of constructing a child as ‘my child’ and in constructing oneself as the child’s mother. (These two angles are not necessarily synonymous, as demonstrated in a quote by BD: “nine months later I kind of felt like his mother....I knew he was my child from the beginning” (11:189).) This discourse of belonging and of ownership is an ideologically loaded one. Rothman (2005) explains how it is associated with a discourse of rights: Who does the child belong to? Who has rights of ownership? Who has rights to access information about the child? Who has the right to adopt or foster at all? It is also formed in relation to consumerism. She argues the following:

On the one hand, mothers produce babies. On the other hand, mothers 'consume' babies: we use babies to produce ourselves as mothers...For most parents, by birth or adoption, the image of the child as a product and a commodity is indelible, and ownership inevitable (p. 37; p. 48).

It is interesting to note in the data how the term 'my child' is used with reference to a biological child, an adopted child and a foster child. When a participant has a biological child and an adopted child, 'my own child' typically refers to the biological child. When a woman has an adopted child and foster children then 'my own child' typically refers to the adopted child. For example, KM spoke of her adopted son (S) and foster children by saying, "I mean, with S it's 24/7, I don't get days off from him. With your own children you don't get days off from them, but with my foster children I do" (6:641). In comparing her adopted child and her foster children, even though she talks about 'my' foster children, they are not constructed as her own children whereas S, her adopted child is constructed as her own child. The positioning of a child can shift though. For example, NF, who has an adopted child and biological children, refers to an adopted child as "somebody else's child" (9:350). Similarly, she also says "especially on the days when it's really difficult and you think 'ah, I'll just give you back' you know 'you're not my child, little brat' da da da da. And we all have days like that even with our own kids" (9:351). However, later on in the interview she speaks of establishing homes for orphaned children and says:

it would just be something that the community would sort of almost adopt and run as a community, you know, with the intention that those kids would stay in that house until they were 18 and be part of a family and they would, you know, all...So in our situation there would be our two kids, and D's obviously our kid so there'd be three and then you'd have three others (9:408).

Here, their adopted child becomes 'obviously our kid'.

The legitimacy of the child as 'yours' is constructed through various systems and institutions. KM explained that she is not threatened by her son's biological parents "cause I know they have zero rights to him" (6:411). CT said "she will soon be legally my daughter. And nobody can change that" (8:132). Later on in the interview, however, CT said,

...the Childcare Act makes provision now for an adopted child to legally meet their parents if they would like to, and that's now built into the contract that you sign. So, um...Ja, it was after 18 in the past, the age of adulthood. But now they say that from, I think it was like six years old, if they're not happy in their adoptive family they can choose to go back. Um, and then also from nine years old they can choose to go and meet their parents....I think it would, you know it's all bravado, it's not going to affect me at all. But I think if she did sort of go and meet her family I would feel a little bit insecure (8:199).

KN wanted to adopt her children, but was prevented from doing so due to legal complications. She said, "I didn't really go out to be a foster mom. I wanted to go out and just be a normal parent without the issues and without the state being involved and all these other things" (3:82). (Here, she positions an adoptive mother as a 'normal parent' in relation to her experience of fostering.) She elaborated through the following statements: "There're so many things that just highlight the fact that they're not your biological children, you know? Like the fact that there's only one medical aid that would cover us" (3:91); "I can't even sign anything that says I'm a mother, you know?" (3:131). When KM described fostering she said: "it means, you know, you'll have all the children in your name, they'll be yours kind of thing" (6:29). Legally her children are 'kind of' hers.

Not only do legal systems support the 'normal' mother's legitimate ownership of and belonging with her child, but she is socially accepted as the child's mother as well. As described in the section on unnatural mothering, participants who mother transracially, in particular, can be confronted with a lack of this kind of affirmation. CF recited how, "When I first got her, especially because she's Black, it became, it was, like people would come up, I had someone coming up to me and asking if she was my maid's child (laughs). So it was like quite a thing" (12:261). DL spoke of times when she has "had Black women want to take the twins away" (1:338). NF explained feeling "a lot more self-conscious that I'm smacking a Black child in a shop than I am if I'm smacking my own child" (9:849). Even though later on she speaks of her adopted child as her "own" (9:412), here the child who is her own and the child who is not her own are constructed according to race. DE, a White mother of a biological son and a transracially adopted son explained,

you often do have the thing, like a school teacher walked past me the other day and she said 'oh, which one's yours?' Like which *one's* mine? Do you know what I mean? Like, the Black one's mine, the White one isn't. You know, it's really dof. But, so there are stupid things that get to me (20:754).

OS said

Ja, I'm her mom. I mean it's awkward sometimes when you're out and people, I mean people do stare, particularly the Black people, they do, they look and, I mean, they do, I mean I've been asked 'where's her mom?' And I'm like 'I'm her mom'. And if I ever have to discipline her, you know, for whatever reason, 'cause she's got a very strong will, um, then I'm a bit like woah, then I'm a bit like 'here's this White lady with this Black child' type thing. That's where, perhaps, the, what's the word I'm thinking of? Not insecurity, apprehension maybe, comes in. But in terms of her as my child, she's my child. I don't see it as any different (5:122).

She contends for her status as the child's mother in response to the questioning she experiences from others. KM commented similarly,

I was on the beach recently and I, this little ten year old came up to me and said 'who does he' he kind of twigged that he probably belonged to me 'who does he belong to?' So I said '*he* is my little boy. He belongs to me. I'm his mum'. He went 'No way!'. I was like 'yeah, isn't he lovely?' (6:576).

We see, therefore, the role that race can play in challenging the legitimacy of the mother-child pair. TN said, "because of the colour difference it's obvious I'm not her mom, her biological mom" (2:150). We see also in the above quotes how participants resist this idea. KM responds to people's disapproval of her and her son together by saying that

to me he is a little boy. I don't see that he's Black and I'm White. He's just a little boy. He's S. I don't see his colour. I mean yes to acknowledge that he's from, but I don't see his, he's my little boy and I'm not raising him any different than I would raise my own natural child, you know (6:587).

She receives external challenges to legitimacy through others' views that the pairing is unnatural and even 'wrong' (6:586). She responds through dialoguing with this notion by saying that he is not a little Black boy, he is 'just a little boy'. She first says "I don't see his colour" and then repeats this and says "I don't see his", omitting the word 'colour' altogether. Does S become 'my little boy' as he becomes no longer 'a little Black boy'? Can S be constructed as (fully) Black *and* still be her little boy? BD said, in relation to her two transracially adopted children, "I don't even see their colour anymore in a way, you know what I mean?"

'Cause they're mine. Ja" (11:369). If they no longer 'have' a colour because they are hers then the same question begs to be asked. The ambivalence of the construction of race itself will be discussed momentarily.

At times in the data a child is constructed as 'yours' when you have bonded with him/her (1:17; 15:35) and when there is difficulty bonding then the child is still constructed during that phase as "someone else's child" (18:119). On the other hand, other participants drew on the construction that: because this is my child we have therefore bonded (6:65; 12:118). In addition, others conflated the two. For example, DC made both of the following comments. The first relates to her experience of being present at the birth of the child whom she then adopted:

You know obviously I didn't have a bond with the child, so it wasn't like seeing my child born. I mean I knew I was going to be the carer of this child but I hadn't, you know, done any sort of emotional attachment stuff yet (14:28).

The second relates to her developing relationship with the child over time: "I knew it that she was my child and never doubted that I would bond with her but I think, I mean, she was my child from the start but our bond developed over time" (14:41).

'My child' is also constructed in the data in relation to permanency (5:39; 6:8; 11:195; 19:267; 20:335). On these grounds, a foster child is not your own. TN said, "you know that this child is never going to be yours...I knew this was temporary" (2:249). Despite this, however, LL still speaks of her foster children as feeling like her own:

I consider each of them like my own. Um, it is short term, mentally, so, um, it's not, I try, you know you have to know that these children will go eventually. Your hope is that they'll get adopted eventually so you, but you don't reserve yourself, we don't reserve ourselves, we treat them like our own. So, um, it's similar, just a different bond 'cause you know they probably won't be with you forever. So, um, they still feel like my own children and the love doesn't change from the one to the other (16:12).

Participant foster mothers' statements were characterised by this notion: I am not this child's mother, but, for now, I am *being* this child's mother. For example, KM describes fostering in relation to this

idea of being their mum for a season and, I mean for most of our babies we know they're going to get adopted, so knowing that I can give them the best love and care that I can for that season, for however long you know that season is. But I do always look at it as they're not totally mine, you know, they actually belong to somebody else, 'til when God brings whoever it is along that's going to adopt them but to know, ja, that just I've loved them for that season when they were in need of care before they either get placed back with their natural family or, you know, their forever family comes along. And knowing that you've given them that good start in life (6:44).

KM also said:

basically you are actually acting as their parent. I think that, I think the first time I had a child placed in my care and I had to go to court and [the social worker] said 'So you're basically acting as this child's parent and you have her for two years, obviously unless she goes to be adopted' and that hit home. It's like wow, I'm being that child's parent. Not just I'm looking after her, I actually have to be her mum for this season, for however long it is. So that was quite a, ja, quite an eye-opener really. And two years is

a fairly long time, it's not six weeks, if I've had enough I can just...It's, I mean it's, it's never, obviously adoption is permanent, fostering's not but two years is a pretty long time. Again, if the going gets tough you can't just say 'sorry, I've had enough now'. You have to work through it like any other mum (6:307).

Maternal positioning, then, becomes rather complex. The foster mother is the child's mother and she is not. Her foster child is her child and he/she is not. KM highlighted this complexity further by saying

What does it mean to be a foster mother? Well you should be taking on the child as if they're your own. Loving them as if they're your own. But obviously you always know they're not totally yours. I mean, they can go back to their family, they can be adopted by a family. So, there's always that, you kind of bond with them but knowing they're not totally yours and they can be removed (6:217).

The current research has focussed on mothering as opposed to motherhood; the activity of mothering (Ruddick, 1980) as opposed to maternal identity. Here we see a distillation of the two concepts quite clearly. In the data, the activity of mothering a child is constructed as serving to validate the legitimacy of the mother-child relationship, however, it is also constructed as not doing so. Although featuring more prominently in the speech of participants who are foster mothers, this played a role in interviews with adoptive mothers as well.

In AN words (as mentioned earlier), it is the activity of taking responsibility for one's child that confers upon one the status of 'mother':

A woman is a woman probably who's capable of making babies, you know, but not necessarily that that person can be a mum. But you don't just become a mother just because you've also given birth or because you've adopted a child. Because you can do that but not do, um, the responsibilities that come with that, ja. So I would say that a woman is a free agent (laughs) and a mother is someone with extra responsibilities (19:169).

In relation to not feeling threatened by her adopted children looking for their birthmother, DL said, "Nobody can replace the fact that I've been their mother for 18 years" (1:615). She has been actively involved in being their mother and this role as their mother, therefore, is "not something that can be stolen" (1:634). On the other hand, another participant, DN, said in relation to the first year of mothering her adopted child: "The first year was very hard. I did what I needed to do but I didn't feel like this was my child, you know" (17:222). For her the activity of mothering did not automatically position her as the child's mother.

The period of time experienced by some participants when the child has been assigned to them, but is still residing in an orphanage while administrative procedures are completed also gains meaning in relation to maternal activity. For the mother the child has been constructed as her child, but she is not yet free to perform the activity of mothering him/her. When DL described waiting to be able to take her child home from the orphanage she said, "just waiting for, knowing that the child is yours, is lying in a cot was a complete freak out for me, I hated that idea" (1:293). The child has already been constructed as her child, but she cannot yet fulfil the social activity of mothering yet. She experienced this as highly distressing:

they'd found her for us but we couldn't have her, and we had to wait two weeks. *That* nearly killed me. I couldn't...With J they phoned the day before, I didn't sleep the whole night, you know, and now I had two weeks. That was horrific. Neither myself or my husband slept, we couldn't, it was terrible (1:282).

BD also described the period of time that her son spent in the orphanage before she took him home:

I didn't really enjoy it. We didn't, you know it was, I was busy with the two and I didn't have, and working, and I didn't have time to go and visit him every day and then you feel guilty 'cause you're not seeing him every day and then he's not getting stimulation from me and, you know, all that business, and is he going to be worse off 'cause he's not getting the two weeks from me (11:173).

IR, a foster mother, said "when he started staying here almost permanently, that's when it...we had to look after him more and we grew closer and closer" (7:186). In terms of being his parents, IR explained,

We are his parents and they are his mum and dad. And that's where he goes to when he wants something really that he doesn't get from us. And that's how he works it out. But for the normal routine and everything he wants us (7:25).

For her the 'parents' are constructed as the ones who offer the normal routine. LL, a mother who, as mentioned, considers her foster children 'like her own' narrated the following:

I mean we've had this one child almost a year that's going. It'll be a year in about a week and so it's like, it's just strange to think that you're not the one in control. You're not his, it won't be long and then he's gonna, it's their responsibility, they, you know, all these things we've taught him and you know, the nap routine and all these things, it won't be me anymore, it's them. And however they choose to raise him and it is hard to see, I mean, now he'll call us Aunty and Uncle and (laughs) not mommy and daddy and it's strange (16:251).

It is difficult for her to transition between being the woman who mothers the child and relinquishing this role to another mother, as she turns into an 'aunty'. She continued by saying:

...until the day that the transition comes, so that's almost the painful thing because I still feel like his mom and then when they come and are his parents almost and you feel like it's a hard, you're almost fighting, you know, I almost just have to step back and think just not even gonna, I don't even want to be in the room 'cause I don't want to get hurt by if they say something and I feel hurt, you know, 'oh, our baby boy!'. He's just started walking and they say 'our baby boy's walking!' I'm like 'he's *my* baby boy still!' So, um, but then I want them to also experience that so it's that tear, like I don't want to take away from them the joy. I mean I've been there and I've adopted an older child so I don't want to like, you know, I wasn't there for his first step, I wasn't there for a lot of things, so it is special that they, you know, get to see that (16:282).

5.7.2 AMBIVALENT CONSTRUCTIONS OF RACE

Rothman (2005) argues that one of the clearest ways of seeing how race and family are 'put together' is to examine how a child of one race is raised in a family of another race. She contends:

They're put together - race constructs family and family constructs race - when a Black woman is raising a Black child and when a White woman is raising a White child, but it's almost invisible. It's that water-to-a-fish thing. But move across that race line in your mothering and the relationship between motherhood and race jumps right out at you (p. 7).

This became very apparent in the data. What also emerged starkly is that, for the participants involved in this study, who live and mother in South Africa, the construct of race is slippery, contentious and persistently ambiguous. As mentioned in the literature review in chapter two, research by DeBerry et al. (1996), Greene (1990), Hollingsworth (1998) and Yoon (2001) emphasises the role of adoptive parents in the identity

development of the transracially adopted child. This is, thus, constructed as a key task of the good mother of a transracially adopted and fostered child. How, though, is the mother expected to accomplish the task of assisting her child to develop a positive racial identity (however that may be constructed) when the construct of race, itself, is so elusive? How is she to function effectively as the discursive gatekeeper for her child in terms of race and racism when she herself has such an ambivalent relationship to the construct?

When I asked participants to define race, some of their answers directly addressed their uncertainty. For example:

KM: "That's a hard one to put into words" (6:379).

DN: "I don't know how I would define race" (17:121).

EW: "I don't really understand the word race, um, I must be honest" (15:342).

A few participants also reflected on the notion that the meaning of the construct of race changes over time:

OS: I think growing up in this country there is such, um, issues made of it anyway. I don't think so much with the kids now in schools and stuff. But I mean when we, when I was at school we were a Whites only school. Um, I grew up when people still had their passes, I don't remember too much of it because, although I mean I must say I was in varsity when the new government came in. So I'd already grown up like that whereas I think now for my boys they've got, they bring home Black friends to play with, it's, it's the norm for them. So for us we were sort of in the transition phase (5:453).

CF: But I think, you know like when I have a look at the schools there so much, it's so different today than what it was so many years ago...Um, I think things are changing and even by the time she gets to high school and that I think things will be different (12:396).

EW: So, though you're brought up in times where you, well I was brought up in that time, um, where you are, you do notice the difference because you didn't have that integrated at school and you all of a sudden have, you definitely notice the race, I mean you know the difference (15:333).

I did not ask participants who were mothering children of the same race (Black or White) to construct race seeing as my particular interest in the context of this study was in the way race manifests with a transracial relationship. Seeing as the participants who are mothering transracially are all White, this section therefore presents the constructions of White participants only. Every one of the 17 White participants mothering transracially used statements that intentionally positioned them as non-racist and demonstrated an explicit alignment with egalitarian discourses:

DL: "...if they just criticise you just for the mere fact that you're White and your kids are Black. That would really get my back up because it's such a stupid thing" (1:345).

TN: ...we love Black babies, we really do, just to see them being loved and nurtured...Um, there's enough people who would foster White babies, they don't need me to foster White babies. There's a lot of people who will not touch a Black baby. I'm happy to. So, there's no need for White foster parents (2:224).

UC: "I mean the chances of getting a White baby were remote and we actually didn't want that" (4:49);
"I'm trying to shield him from, I mean we still live in a very racially separate country. I'm trying to shield

him from the ugly side of it. Um, you know, so I won't, so I watch what people say to him... 'Cause I don't want him hearing that stuff. It's all a lot of rubbish anyway" (4:306).

OS: "I don't see the colour anymore. You know in the beginning I did used to think "ooh, you know, I've got this little Black baby" but I've always loved little Black babies" (5:448).

Km: Whether they're White, Black, green or blue, there's only one way to, I mean obviously every parent has their differences but, you know, it's not 'you look after a Black child in *this* way and you look after a White child in *this* way'... They're a child at the end of the day (6:424).

IR: "It is just another colour. For me there's no difference in person. They have a different colour and that's it. That's all for me" (7:235).

CT: "Race to me is, ja, it's a very, it should be abolished, quite frankly" (8:355).

NF: I mean I feel more comfortable in a setting with Black people than White people. I mean if you go to a business meeting Black people seem to be more relaxed almost, but then I just think I find White people uptight (laughs). I don't know what it is (9:550).

BD: "I don't treat my kids any differently" (11:232).

CF: "race is just a different colour skin" (12:372).

BH: "so the colour of their skin is basically the major thing" (13:552).

EW: I think I may have read it, they said 'What is this with racists, because we're all one human race. So how can you be a racist because then you're against the human race'. You know, but it's so true because we're all one human race and it makes absolutely no difference (15:329).

LL: "I don't see O as anything but the same as me. I mean I don't look at him as, by the colour of his skin" (16:522).

DN: ...let's say we're in a social situation, a braai or something and somebody says 'Oh why don't you' like for the maid or domestic worker 'why don't you just get the girl to do it?' And I'm like, 'she's not a girl. She's a 50 year old woman and this is a three year-old girl listening to you talk about somebody that looks like her as a girl'. Like 'you've got to stop this' (17:133).

DD: ...it's no judgement passed it's just people are different, and it's ok, we are different and that's fine. We've all got our place in the world" (18:280); "...it doesn't make me a racist, I don't think anything about Black people. You know, I treat, I try and treat every person as an individual (18:310).

DE: Sighs. Colour. Pretty much. Um, ja. We've kind of tried to work around that um terms of, you know, all of us are African. And that's not a race, I kind of see race as being different colours. So we talk about all of us being African, all born in South Africa. That's how we are and you can have White Africans and Black Africans depending on your skin colour. As opposed to race (20:608).

MB: "I just love her colour. It's like we lie in the sun for hours trying to get that colour. And, um and there's, and then I look at little White babies and I think 'they're so pale! It looks terrible'" (21:370).

However, most of these participants proceeded to construct a relationship with race and racism that demonstrated more complex ambiguity. This section will explore a range of facets related to the ambiguity and the conflictual nature of race construction in the data in more detail. Before these facets are discussed

as organised topics drawing from the data as whole, I would like to emphasise the point once again, that ambivalence did not only emerge *between* interviews (i.e. my point is not only that different participants constructed meaning in multiple, contradictory ways), but that ambivalence consistently emerged *within* interviews (i.e. individual participants constructed meaning in multiple, contradictory ways at different points within the same interview). As an introduction, therefore, a short list of statements will be provided from three interviews (and many excerpts from other interviews could have been selected to demonstrate the same point). The first set of comments were all made by KM, a White foster mother and adoptive mother of Black children:

[Race is] like someone who's from another culture, you know, S's from another culture from me so he's a different race, he's from the Zulu tribe, or whatever, but he could be from, you know, there's numerous African tribes. But you know, there's the Chinese race, there's the, you know, just someone who's a different...country from you, different cultural background from you (6:379).

"He's just a little boy. He's S. I don't see his colour" (6:592).

"...when you've got a child that's from a different race or different culture you need to, I think you need to acknowledge that and address that" (6:394).

I would like him to have, um, so I think you do, you know, just little things we do here like it's very tempting because I'm White just to feed them all English food but to remember, you know, that Africans eat pap so we feed them pap, you know. Not lots but we feed them, just little things that are to do with their culture. You know, like I want him to, I don't want him to grow up just speaking English, I want him to grow up speaking Zulu. He needs Zulu (6:395).

Whether they're White, Black, green or blue, there's only one way to, I mean obviously every parent has their differences but, you know, it's not 'you look after a Black child in *this* way and you look after a White child in *this* way'...They're a child at the end of the day (6:424).

...you know people will sometimes say to you 'oh, you've adopted a little Black boy'. To me he's S, he's not...To me it's not, to me it's not, I don't know what he sees 'cause he's only two. But having said that whenever I'm in a shopping mall he says hello to all the Black people, never the White people. Which I was just saying I find quite interesting. Because I'd, I mean nobody here mentions anything about colour, or...um and obviously I'm White so he obviously doesn't, I mean he's not, I don't know where he's picked it up, but I find it fascinating that in the mall he'll go 'Hello! Hi! How are you?' and it's all the Black people. Never to the White people. And I just find it interesting. I think 'now why's that then?' (6:549).

In KM's interview we see the blurring of meaning related to the constructs of race, culture, tribe, and nationality. We see, also, conflict between the visibility and invisibility of race, between the idea that race matters and race does not matter, and between the idea that race is an attribute that does not relate to other personal features and that perhaps race does relate to certain behaviours.

The second interview I would like to use as an example was conducted with UC, a White mother of a biological son (J) and an adopted Black son (S). She made the following statements:

I mean already we've had, it started when he was 18 months noticing skin colour and, ah, it's just so heartbreaking, the other day he asked me 'When I grow up will I have the same skin colour as J

[brother]?. Ooh, I had to say to him 'no'. And I'm trying to tell him that skin colour shouldn't matter too much, it shouldn't actually matter. But the horrible reality is in this country it still does. Um, to, I think to a lessening extent but there are still pockets of that kind of nonsense (4:460).

Well I just don't want people boxed in terms of, just because of their race. I mean S happens to be Black and J happens to be White, well so what? It's, you know I don't think it's, it's only skin colour really (4:652).

Before S came along I would have said that race and culture is, well, maybe culture, culture is irrelevant. Culture is what you grow up with. Um, I'm beginning to suspect that that's not actually the case. And I don't, I don't think it's only that S's a different colour. Um, he has such an affinity for Black people. You know, at his school he will gravitate towards the other Black children. He will play with them, not that he doesn't play with the White kids as well but...You can see there's a link, there's a bond, something there that doesn't exist between him and White kids. It's different. And how race is different to culture I'm not entirely sure because you know if you have a kids that's born from an Afrikaans home and you bring them up in an English speaking home, I can't, I couldn't see how they would possibly feel different. But I think, I think there's something there (4:488).

In these quotes we see that race should not matter, race does not matter and race does matter. UC also mentioned a narrative which, I suggest, illustrates the complex relationships between constructions of race, culture, language, and knowledge systems:

Well, I'm becoming more and more aware that he's noticing differences. He's, and I'm trying to, I'm trying to shield him from, I mean we still live in a very racially separate country. I'm trying to shield him from the ugly side of it... 'Cause I don't want him hearing that stuff. It's all a lot of rubbish anyway. Um, I think I'm just protective of him because he's had a hard start in life, you know, and, just trying to shield him from some of the uglier side of things. And it's one of the, initially I wanted my nanny to speak to him in her language, Xhosa and then afterwards, but it's not, this is not just actually because of S, it's, because of, well, I don't speak Xhosa and I wanted him to learn because he has to learn a vernacular. He has to, J should, he really should as well. We all should learn, one, at least. Um, and I wanted the nanny to talk to him in Xhosa so he could learn it and then when I listened to what she was saying I thought no, actually I don't want her to because I can't understand when she speaks in Xhosa so I can't stop her from saying things that I don't think are appropriate. And I mean from her point of view it's not anything bad, she was just saying silly things like, if he bumped his head into the table she was saying 'oh, naughty table' and I was saying to her 'no, the table hasn't moved, he's moved, he's bumped the table, the table hasn't bumped him'. You know, it's sort of, I think it's just a different philosophy and a different way of looking at things. Um, and I've also had to make her stop talking about crime in front of the children. It freaks them out. You know, she's talking about hijackings and I'm saying to her 'shut up', they don't need to hear this stuff (4:316).

UC is discussing race and racism when she flows directly into talking about her domestic worker exposing her adopted son to an African language. In this quote UC's domestic worker is positioned as Xhosa speaking and as Black due to the context of the discourse in which she is exploring the meaning of her son's race. This Black, Xhosa speaking woman is referred to as saying 'silly things' which UC attributes to her having a different 'point of view', a 'different philosophy' and a 'different way of looking at things' as well as discussing inappropriate topics. UC constructs these perspectives as 'incorrect' (e.g. the table has not moved, the child

has moved), but then adjusts to describing this as 'different'. (To frame this as 'incorrect' would be to overtly privilege her knowledge system and she is aware that that would be politically incorrect so she reframes it relatively.) We see how race, language and knowledge systems discursively entwine.

The third interview which will be cited here as an example of containing inter-interview conflictual, ambivalent or complex constructions of race is one conducted with TN. The conversation evolved as follows:

ADS...how do you understand that word 'race'?

TN: I know race is supposed to mean differences, well, that's how I understand it. If you're that race you're like that and if you're that race you're like that. Um, but I think, having adopted a Black child, you realise there's not that much difference at all. When she cuts herself her skin's pink and there's blood. Very simple, really. So to me race is actually a hang-up. I wish they'd get rid of that word.

ADS: And in the context of your relationship with your child, all your children, have you experienced your Whiteness in any particular way?

TN: A loves chicken (laughs). I swear. Kentucky's her favourite, and that seems to be such a Black thing. She does do things that are funny like if, um, if she swims she'll do that [wipes her hand over her face from forehead to chin]. That is a Black thing. Whites don't do that. And it's funny to watch that. When she puts cream on her face she does that [makes a similar motion]. And that's quite amusing. It's very funny (2:379).

On the one hand, TN deconstructs perceived differences between Black people and White people, but on the other hand she (then immediately) attributes differences in food preference and hand motions to race. TN made another comment that indicates the manner in which discussions of race merge in complex ways with constructs of culture, language and class. Indeed, these constructs are intimately related and rely on each other's meaning systems, but I suggest that this also indicates a fundamental difficulty in crystallising what race 'is'. When talking about the future, TN said the following:

I'm scared she'll marry a guy who will abuse her because of she had a privileged upbringing. I'm worried she'll marry a guy who she cannot identify with his family because we're so different to a Black family. Um, I want her to marry a Black guy, for her sake. Because we're all sick of being stared at. And if she marries a White guy, for the rest of her life she's going to be stared at. So for her sake I'd like her to marry a Black guy. But in a perfect world she'll marry a Black guy who's adopted by Whites. That would be a perfect scenario. But otherwise, I'm hoping she chooses someone in our class, who's not into slaughtering chickens and goats and what...all that stuff. A doesn't want to speak Zulu, she's not interested. She doesn't want to know the cultural differences. To her, she's English. That's it. She gets a lot of flack when we go shopping from, say Pick 'n Pay, if she doesn't speak Zulu they say 'Urgh, are you stupid? Are you stupid?' So she gets a lot of flack for that and yet she does not want to learn Zulu, and I'm not going to make her. Our social worker said to us, 'cause we said 'must we teach her culture?' Firstly we don't know which culture she is, we don't, but besides that, she said 'if you do that you're dividing your family. You're saying this is your culture, this is our culture'. And we really thought about that. And we've got a lot of Black friends and they said 'No, no, no, you are a family. That's it'. So on, I think, good advice from some very bright Black people, they've said to us 'don't make her a separate child. She's your child'. And when we said 'should we make her speak Zulu?' they said 'No, she's English. Leave her English'. Whether it's right or wrong I don't know, I don't know. So her

husband'd better speak English. She said to me if she marries a White, 'my child will come out coloured, hey?' So she says 'will they know I'm English? Or will they speak funny?' (laughs). She's worried they won't come out speaking English. As if the baby comes out speaking...So that's my main concern, is her marriage future. That's all I'm worried about, really. And I worry about her in-laws, how will they treat her? Will they try prove she's Black? Those are my fears (2:484).

After examining the statements made by these three particular participants, let us look further at how some of these constructions of race emerged in the data. In TN's comments it was noted how she held simultaneous and contradictory notions of race as being and not being unrelated to other 'differences'. This was also apparent in the data as a whole. A number of participants constructed race as difference in skin colour. They clarified that this difference relates *only* to skin colour. IR defined race as "just another colour. For me there's no difference in person. They have a different colour and that's it. That's all for me" (7:235). NF said, in relation to her transracially adopted son,

I mean once or twice I thought 'he's very *loud*, is this a Black thing?' you know, or is it just a three year old thing. I keep trying to remember back to what W was like as a three year old and I think 'oh, no, no, it's just a three year old thing' (9:669).

LL's view regarding her son is that,

if we raise him in this way this is how he's going to be. He's not gonna, it's not like, you know, you can generalise: Black people are like this and White people are like this and, I don't generalise him and think he's gonna be this certain way, I mean, ja (16:531).

DE resisted the practice of utilising race within a description of an individual:

What I'll often have is family members and they'll be like 'and you know there was this nurse at the hospital and she was a Black nurse'. And I always like go 'we don't need colour. What does colour actually tell you about the person? So tell me about the person, did they do a good job or did they do a bad job? Does it matter what the colour was?' (20:656).

She also said, "all of us are exactly the same underneath it's just a different colour on the skin" (20:712).

Other statements were made in the data, though, that did draw a link between the colour of an individual's skin and a variety of associated characteristics or behaviours (as TN did in her reference to KFC and face cream application). To DL and LL race relates to nationality and origin (1:472; 16:515). NF said

I mean I feel more comfortable in a setting with Black people than White people. I mean if you go to a business meeting Black people seem to be more relaxed almost, but then I just think I find White people uptight (laughs) (9:550).

BD associated race and shared history: "Ja, race is, ja I'd see it as possibly different colours and it has a lot to do with culture, and history, what their history is" (11:360). As mentioned earlier, in relation to a question about her Whiteness, LL said,

My Whiteness? (laughs). Sometimes, I mean you can see, like, he's naturally, he's not so, I mean our foster son I think we notice 'cause he's naturally like the dancer, you know, like he's got rhythm. That's like a traditional African trait. They just naturally have rhythm and I think it'll, he's just very athletic and stuff and I think the African culture is very athletic and fast so we see that with our foster son (16:558).

EW spoke of racial differences relating to differences in behaviour and in 'mindset': "who Black people are compared to White...they very often believe in different things than we do" (15:354); "The mindset is so different" (15:361).

For BH, an American working in South Africa, race is associated with a range of other differences, but she emphasises that these are learned:

For me it's the colour of their skin and it's the, where they've come from. I'm trying to be very careful not to raise little Americans. But at the same time it's very hard to, the language part of it, since I don't speak Zulu or Tswana or whatever, I struggle with that. Um...Now, three years later the children have more of a [inaudible] to be like me so the colour of their skin is basically the major thing. Whereas when they first come, I haven't ever lived in a settlement, I've never hidden in an outhouse when I was cold or, totally different lifestyle. I've never starved, been starved from food or I've never, whatever, you know what I'm saying, lived in poverty. So that, there's a huge difference. Now three years, having a child for three years, there's not a huge difference. It's basically 'you're brown, I'm White'. I think. It's changed, over the years. Um because they don't eat pap every day, or they don't eat samp every day, they don't eat all those, what's that one called that they like so much? Atcha, or whatever (laughs). We eat it once a week or whatever. So there's less and less difference for me (13:546).

The association between race and language also emerged in the data. Participants with transracially adopted, Black children encounter the discourse that claims: "if you are Black you should speak an African language" (9:367; 20:814). In particular, regardless of the background of the biological family, participants spoke of being confronted with the notion that their Black adopted child should learn Zulu (2:496; 5:402; 6:405). For example, NF explained,

I had a guy on the way back from Durban saying 'so does he speak Zulu?' 'No, he's learning English'. 'Why's he learning English?' I said 'because it's universal, everybody learns English'. And he was like 'ah, mm, but he should be learning Zulu'. I said, 'but he's not a Zulu, is he?' You know, so why can't he speak Xhosa then? You know, I looked at this guy 'why does he have to have Zulu?' (9:643).

Some participants resisted this idea, arguing that their child is growing up in an English speaking home and so he/she will be English speaking and this is appropriate and sufficient. However, there is often still some uncertainty around this idea and participants who did hold this view also made comments such as "No, she's English. Leave her English. Whether it's right or wrong I don't know, I don't know" (2:458). Although OS concludes that she has not made an exceptional attempt to teach her adopted daughter Zulu, she begins her statement acknowledging that this is not a clear-cut issue:

...one of the things is, I've had people, I had a lady ask me what language she speaks and I'm like 'English', you know, we're English...there's a huge debate now. Do we go and teach her Zulu for example, and things like that? And D and I have discussed it a lot and, this is our personal feeling, she's, her culture is the R [surname] culture, our family's culture is her culture. And to now go and teach her Zulu is almost singling her out. I feel she'll learn Zulu at school like the boys are leaning Zulu. And we don't know what culture she came from. We don't know the background. And *this* is her culture. So she'll grow up in our culture with our family's traditions and culture (5:402).

A key site of construction confusion in the data was that of the relationship between race and culture. Many defined race as inherently referring to cultural difference:

OS: “different colour, different culture” (5:395).

KM: “It’s like someone who’s from another culture...I guess people from different races, each race has their kind of culture” (6:380).

NF: “Ja, it’s a cultural and a colour thing I think...for me, I think there’s a basic race thing is you go by colour but to me there’s a big culture thing as well” (9:531).

BD: “Colour. And culture, but then I believe culture’s learned, not innate” (11:357).

EW: “I suppose it’s just different culture” (15:339).

Participants also referred to “Black culture” (1:552; 9:533) and “Coloured culture” (21:358). In addition to this conflation of race and culture there was also clear ambivalence about whether or how the two constructs related to one another. DL initially said “there’s a big difference between culture and race” (1:475), but then she made the statement: “The Black culture is so community oriented whereas [our White culture] isn’t” (1:553). When I asked MB how she understands the word race she said “Um, I would say culture. And I guess I would say colour as well” (21:350). When I then asked her to elaborate on the relationship between race and culture she said

Um, so you could, so the two could be very different, I think because of that colour aspect as well, ja so she’s Coloured in terms of her race but her culture’s not a Coloured culture at all. Ja. But then that’s also, what is a Coloured culture? I don’t know. So, ja...Because like even though G’s culture will be...English Anglo-Saxon I guess, or whatever we are, her colour is still, she’s still Coloured so we can’t change that, you know? So her race in a way is still, is never gonna change (21:352).

Participants evoked the notion that good mothers of transracially adopted or fostered children should expose their children to the culture of their biological families. Like race, however, it appears to be very difficult to construct ‘culture’. This results in difficulties thinking about what it might mean to expose one’s adopted or fostered child to the culture of his/her birth family. Even when participants demonstrate a slightly clearer construction of culture there is still uncertainty as to what ‘exposing one’s child to his/her culture’ means and how one is expected to do this. UC supported the view that “you should bring something of your child’s culture into the home” (4:610). When I asked her whether she would consider doing that and how she might go about it she said

I don’t know, you see, that’s the really difficult thing. I don’t know *how* to do it...I just don’t know how to do it...Does it mean I have to introduce him to food from his culture? I mean S won’t eat pap, not that pap is just really Black culture, but he doesn’t, ja, I just don’t know how to do it... Do I put a few African paintings on the wall? But I don’t think it’s about that (4:615).

TN asked the social worker, “Must we teach her [her] culture?...Does it mean teaching your child the language of their birth-family?” (2:451). CT resigned herself to the fact that “there’s only so much culture that you can pick up from going to a cultural village or reading about your culture in a book or speaking to people of your original culture” (8:251). CF explored this topic by saying:

Before I got her I always thought like you need to have like that culture. But she’s from Zimbabwe so it’s not even like, I mean her parents were from Zimbabwe so it’s not even like they were South

African, um, came from a South African culture. Um, so some of that, I think I need to go and learn an African language and that (12:391).

Culture was constructed in the data in many different ways. It was constructed as relating to difference (1:462; 15:339) and particularly hierarchical difference (19:292); behaviour (1:470; 3:15; 15:389); attitudes (9:550); mindset (15:367); value systems and priorities (1:557; 9:557); culture is something that one 'has' (12:391; 16:541); culture is learned (11:357), specifically through upbringing (1:556; 2:496; 3:15; 5:411; 8:239; 9:557; 11:358; 15:348; 16:531); culture relates to nationality and ethnic/tribal association (1:527; 2:451; 3:3; 5:405; 9:603; 12:391; 15:372; 16:540; 19:311) and culture relates to language (5:405; 9:603; 12:391; 19:311). Culture is constructed as relating to religious practices (19:318); and an individual can be constructed as having a personal identity that is separate from or operates in addition to a cultural identity (8:272; 19:318). It is clear that for an adoptive or foster mother to expose her child to the culture of his/her birth family is a very complex and perplexing task.

Returning to the focus of this section, namely race, a few more pertinent concepts emerged in the data related to participants' ambivalent relationships with this construct. As mentioned earlier in section 5.6.1.3.3, but necessary to repeat within this particular line of thought, two participants, DD and MB explored how to make sense of what it means to be racist:

Um, I think, ja, a lot of my thoughts have been about race and, so does this make me a racist because I don't like her Black skin? You know, am I a terrible person to even admit that, to think that, to feel that? Where does that leave me? And, and it doesn't, we all like the known. We like the same. And it doesn't mean I'm passing judgement on Black skin, it's just that I know what I know and I know what's familiar to me and, ja, so White skin is familiar to me, it's known. Um, and it doesn't make me a racist, I don't think anything about Black people. You know, I treat, I try and treat every person as an individual and...But it's very uncomfortable, especially in this country, you know, where we're so conscious of skin colour and how we interact, because of our past, you know we're all try and be so PC and, you know, 'I'm not racist', 'I'm not racist'. I think we were all brought up, our parents and we've been brought up inherently racist so to try and slough off those layers is hard. Um, and also then just to say 'it's ok, we're different, and that's ok, we're different' (18:303).

I was also as much as I never considered myself a racist, I was suddenly confronted with this little child forever having to love completely and I just was terrified. So it was very much a bit of a leap of faith. And we did it, and we also went the Coloured route just because I just wasn't ready for a little Black baby, you know, as much as I wish that I was and I wanted to and all the other things. I thought let's start with, you know, (laughs), gradual transgression (21:76).

In exploring this study's data, further questions emerge. How does preference for familiarity relate to racism? Does preferring White skin relate to preferring White people? How does meaning related to the race of those one engages with in other social settings translate into meaning in the highly intimate space between a mother and her child? How is racism constructed within these questions and what does it mean for one's ability to position as a good mother (and a good person)?

The tasks of the good adoptive mother were mentioned earlier, one being her function as a discursive gatekeeper. A difficulty that seems to present itself in relation to racial discursive gatekeeping is that even when a mother aims to deconstruct the construct of race by negating its relevance and even existence,

through her resistance she is forced to present the construct to the child. For example, UC made the following comment:

I mean already we've had, it started when he was 18 months noticing skin colour and, ah, it's just so heartbreaking, the other day he asked me 'When I grow up will I have the same skin colour as J [brother]'. Ooh, I had to say to him 'no'. And I'm trying to tell him that skin colour shouldn't matter too much, it shouldn't actually matter. But the horrible reality is in this country it still does. Um, to, I think to a lessening extent but there are still pockets of that kind of nonsense (4:460).

For her son to start asking questions about skin colour breaks her heart as a mother (also mentioned in 4:553). She equates noticing skin colour with entry into the world of the discourse of skin colour. She is the one who has to answer this question. The language she can use in her answers is determined by the discourses available to her, and even by resisting the discourses she has at her disposal she is introducing him to those very discourses. Therefore, the moment he asks the question (and she is compelled to respond because her role is to mediate his engagement with discourse) the doorway from an unconstructed relationship with race to a constructed relationship with race appears and has to be entered. This experience of a shift from the unconstructed to the constructed relationship is what this mother then experiences as heartbreaking. Why does she not construct it as challenging or exciting or empowering? Perhaps her response reflects her belief in the subjugative power of the dominant discourse and her own sense of being disempowered in the face of possible resistance? (It shouldn't matter, but it does; It is nonsense, but this is how the world works.) Later on she said "it's only skin colour really. I mean I know that there're other things that go with it, but it should only be a skin colour, it shouldn't matter, is my frustration" (4:654). DE also spoke of this difficulty in the following exchange:

DE: I think about things like one day when he goes travelling overseas, and how's that going to be? Is he going to have negativism and how's he going to feel about that? How do you prepare your child for that?

ADS: So there's something about teaching him that these things aren't actually an issue but he's in a world where it is an issue...

DE: Without creating the world's issue in him (20:829).

Standing back and looking broadly at much of what has been discussed in this chapter, we see the ambivalence that is held by transracial adoptive mothers: mothering a child of a different race is the same as mothering a child of the same race and mothering a child of a different race is different to mothering a child of the same race. This is evidenced by examining the first group of quotes that follow in relation to the second group. The first group includes these statements:

"...it's exactly the same as what you would do with other children" (12:354).

"...my husband often says to me 'You know, D, I don't even see the difference'. So, and I think it's just like that for both of us" (15:212).

You know, I don't think of his colour, I mean, um, ja. I don't, like, I would rather not even say he's adopted, you know, like separating like my first child, 'this is my first child, he's adopted'. But obviously you can look at him and be like 'oh, he's adopted'. So just, for me, I feel I, you don't even need to say, you know, to be...He's adopted and he's like, 'cause now I'm telling you there's nothing different with adoption, there's nothing different with my son and this one I'm going to birth, you know, it's the same

to me. But then when I describe him I describe him as adopted. Like I box, ok, this one's adopted, this one's not adopted, and... (16:572).

No I wouldn't change anything. I don't see it as any different, at all. And maybe I would if I didn't have a biological but I think I really thought that it would be different. And it isn't, so, it's exactly the same, ja (21:344).

The second group of quotes is as follows:

"I think it comes down to physical things I think more, that there're differences. I need to know what to do with the hair, I don't have a clue" (11:440).

I also wanted a Coloured baby for a lot of other reasons. Um, and that was that I didn't want to deal, at that time, because of all the other stuff, I didn't want to deal with additional issues. So for example, if we get a little Xhosa boy and he's not circumcised, if we get another, you know I discussed all these things with lots of people. And the language and the, and in a way it's like the soft option. So I feel like we've gone with the easy route, that actually we don't need to, like a lot of the cross-cultural stuff is not really applicable. Besides her skin colour it's not, you know, and she's, she could be, people have said to me 'is she Brazilian?' You know, I mean, she's just, you know what I mean, she could be Italian. So, um, so I think, you know if we got a Black boy, we might, then it'll be a whole different set of stuff we'd have to think about and deal with and work out how we're gonna do it. So like language, you know, do you teach them a Black language or don't you and maybe we should all in South Africa know a Black language anyway. And, ja, that whole circumcision thing and the whole, kind of there's lots of stuff that you think, anyway (21:400).

It is different for them, I think it is different for them. They're a different colour, and kids point that out. You know, they'll say 'is that your mother?' or 'is that your child?' or 'is that...?' and you know if you say 'yes' they kind of get a funny look on their face, 'how did that work?' you know? (11:460).

Only the racial thing, you know, how to handle that kind of thing, how's your child coping. But only from a racial perspective but not from a parenting perspective because then you're separating 'I'm an adoptive parent' to a biological parent. The only thing I can think of maybe where people need support is maybe the racial, you know (15:453).

For me, um, for me it's still, it's being a mom, it's still just being a mom. I don't see my mothering role as different in terms of how I treat him or how I love him or, it's just, he's mine. But obviously I, um, you know, there're obviously those issues in terms of being cross-cultural where you are going to have those sit-down chats about how it's going in school, just you know stuff that you wouldn't do with other kids, like talking about the fact that you're adopted and 'do you know what that words means?' (20:436).

What is clear in the data as a whole is the key role that ambivalence plays when participants construct meaning relating to mothering. Yes, this thesis could draw the conclusion that dominant discourses are engaged with ambivalently by participants, but this has further implications. For example, I suggest that the nature of support for adoptive and foster must be designed by taking this crucial dynamic of ambivalence into account in order for effective services to be offered to women mothering in this context. Specific recommendations for support will be discussed further in the following chapter.

5.8 ARGUMENT 3: ‘THE GOOD MOTHER’ APPEARS TO BE RESISTANT TO DECONSTRUCTION BECAUSE OF HOW SHE IS PRODUCED BY THE IDEOLOGY OF INTENSIVE MOTHERING WHICH IS HELD IN PLACE BY DISCOURSES OF GENDER, THE NORMAL FAMILY AND CHILD DEVELOPMENT

This chapter has journeyed through an exploration of the mechanisms of the ideology of intensive mothering and has highlighted how the flavour of ambivalence permeated participants’ constructions of adoptive and foster mothering. Despite the many ways in which the talk of adoptive and foster mothers in this study challenges the form of natural mothering and good mothering - as determined by the dominant discourse - the good mother remains largely intact as the plumb-line for self-surveillance and as the centre-piece around which resistance still rotates. There is very little indication of her deconstruction.

She is the product of a discourse that is very firmly supported by three kinds of scaffolding: the discourse of gender, the discourse of the normal family, and discourses of child development. This final section will briefly examine how these appear, in the data, to uphold the ideology of intensive mothering in such a way as to ensure the sustenance of the construct of the good mother.

5.8.1 GENDER

The construct ‘woman’ relies on the construct of the good mother; and the construct of ‘the good mother’ relies on the construction of woman. This chapter has already provided an argument for the manner in which these constructs were intertwined in the data. Before this is explored further, it is important to bear in mind that gender is not a stable and coherent category. ‘Woman’ is one of many available subject-positions and it is a position “within multiple, fluctuating, and sometimes converging networks of power and discursive practices” (DiQuinzio, 1993, p. 7). According to Butler (1990), gender is a “shifting and contextual phenomenon” (p. 7). When gender is positioned as a coherent, univocal experience of identity this takes place through certain operations of power and resistance within discursive practices and social fields. DiQuinzio (1993) argues that the role of feminist theory is to interrogate that which enables gender to function in this manner. Social and linguistic differences do work against the closure or completion of identity construction, but these are resisted in the service of maintaining concepts of gender.

In the data, we see participants positioning themselves, as women, in various ways. However, what is notable, even in this variety of positioning possibilities, is that ‘woman’ is discursively constructed as a position in relation to others (which resonates with Chodorow’s (1999) argument that women experience a sense of “self-in-relation” (p. viii) as mentioned in chapter two of this thesis). MB commented, “something I often find as a woman you have multiple facades, in a way, or personalities. So you have the mother, the housewife, the lover, the cook, the driver, whatever else” (21:209). Each of these roles involves another subject. NF echoed this concept:

What I’m saying is like a woman, to me, has got different definitions in terms of the relationship with whom you’re trying to be the woman. I think that’s what it is. I mean I wouldn’t dress up in my black number to go out with my friends and have tea...and to me it’s three different roles actually. Because you do, you behave differently in the three different, is that making sense?...I think you do things differently too, I suppose it’s sort of obvious, you don’t eat at MacDonald’s with your husband on a

date. So it is, it's a very much a different role for each, um, and I think as your kids get older they can start overlapping but with little kids I sort of think 'ha, there's no ways I'm going to go sit in a nice restaurant with you! Forget it!' (9:285).

The question "who is a woman?", then, is answered as "who is a woman in relationship to her husband?"; "who is a woman in relationship to her children?"; and "who is a woman in relationship to her friends?". EW offered what initially appears to be an alternate viewpoint by constructing being a woman as "being my own person, having my own time, being who I am" (15:176). This construction, however, is linked to the discourse evoked by DD:

...if I don't have that time out I just run to the end of my tether and I become, ah, ja, I'm not able to engage with the children. I'm not able to be present with them. So I'm a better mother when I take time out for myself. My husband takes them off and does something. I'm a better mother to them the rest of the time than if I tried to be always with them all the time. I just get grumpy and, ja, very short, my temper becomes very short, my patience runs out (18:422).

We see here the discourse that states that a woman should 'take' time for herself. However, this time does not ultimately serve her. This time is 'taken' so that she can then 'give' herself as an even better mother back to her children. Self-nurture is justifiable only as a means to the end of nurturing others more effectively.

'Woman' is positioned in the data chiefly in relation to children and in relation to a male partner, mostly a spouse. When positioning in relation to their children, many participants constructed women as 'natural mothers'. Morell (2000) explains how women are positioned primarily as mothers in most cultures. This occurs regardless of whether women actually become mothers or not, as key components of self-perception and definition by others occur in relation to motherhood.

Feminist shiftings of gender construction have contributed to the availability of the choice of a child-free lifestyle (Peacock, 1998; Tardy, 2000), one in which 'emptiness' could be reconstructed as open, creative space (Morell, 2000). (Although feminists have not necessarily embraced a child-free life as one that exists on an equal par with motherhood (Minden, 1996).) This idea of motherhood as a choice is evoked by certain statements in the data such as:

UC: "I've got some friends who don't have children, who've chosen *not* to have children and they're very, very happy. For me, I wanted children. Um, so, I think it just adds to the richness of life" (4:194).

NF: "It's personal choice actually" (9:329).

CF: "I don't know, I just think it's choices that you make...I mean it's choices people make" (12:198).

In relation to the idea that women are becoming free to make an autonomous choice regarding motherhood, Meyers (2001) has argued that women's decisions about childbearing and motherhood are largely not characterised by autonomy. These choices are bound by gender identity and sexuality, are intrinsically socially connected to self-esteem, and fundamentally and morally position women in relation to the family. She argues that 'pro-choice' rhetoric advocates freedom in relation to delaying and spacing childbearing rather than abstaining. How is the woman who chooses not to have children socially constructed and how does she compare in status to the good mother? Meyers presents a picture of such a woman as "commonly reproached for selfishness or pitied for immaturity" (p. 735).

When I asked TN what she thinks it means for a woman to not be a mother, the following conversation unfolded:

TN: Argh, take the bucks and run! I'm not a good person to ask. I've never had a drive to be a mother. And I know women who...it drives them to do so much to become a mother. I've never had that. There're times I wish I wasn't a mother. Um, so I'm not qualified to answer that 'cause I really don't understand how a woman doesn't feel complete unless she's got a child. I don't get that. I'm not complete because I'm a mother. That's just part of my personality. It's not me. I think I would have been fine if I didn't have children. I do think so.

ADS: 'Fine' meaning? Could you just unpack that some more?

TN: My security is not in my children. My accomplishments are not in my children. Um, I'm busy without my children. I'm happy without my children. I like myself without my children. My motherhood doesn't make me a better person. Not at all. It's selfish hey? (2:293)

TN resists notions of the ideology of intensive mothering, however, she first sets herself up as not qualified to answer the question because she does not fit the mould of natural mothering and she concludes by defining her approach as 'selfish'. Therefore, through not belonging within the bounds of natural mothering she negates the power of her resistance as having any effect to challenge notions of the good mother. We see in this example how the gendered definition of who a woman is, including her drive to be a mother and her expected experience of mothering, holds the good mother in place.

5.8.2 THE NORMAL FAMILY

The good mother is a protagonist within the good family. The persistent construction of the good and normal family supports the particular construction of the good mother, as we see her emerging in the data, in line with the precepts of the ideology of intensive mothering. The normal family was constructed in the data according to structure, functioning, functions, and characteristics. The statements used to construct the nature of the normal family include concepts described and supported by the participants as well as dominant notions that they encounter from others.

In terms of structure, the normal family contains a mother and a father (1:665; 6:655; 13:438). In this family, it is appropriate for parents to bear children when they are at a particular age (19:273). The wife and husband operate independently from their own parents (9:89; 11:53). The normal family has biological children. In African contexts this may be extended, although typically the range of 'normal' only stretches, as mentioned, to include related children or children of close friends (1:600). It is considered best for children to grow up with their biological families (20:322). The normal family only has a few children (13:83; 16:472) and they are not too far apart in age (9:85). The members of the nuclear family relate to the extended family. The extended family is accepting of the children and treat them equally (9:129). Members of the extended family will normally care for the children in the instance that death befalls the parents (3:649).

Relating to the functioning of the normal family, parents are constructed in the data as being present for their children (6:655; 6:618; 4:538). Members navigate normal developmental issues (e.g. "raging hormones" (2:355)). Families are structured around predictable patterns (3:191; 3:199). Families should love unconditionally (3:206), and they are supportive (19:222; 19:279). The functions of the normal family include bringing about the wholeness of its members (9:783; 20:6), providing a sense of belonging (20:15; 20:35),

offering members a space to “be somebody” (20:36), and facilitating the creation of who a child will be (16:405). The normal family brings joy to its members (19:280) and is appealing to its members (18:441).

Characteristics of the normal family include members being of the same race (1:326; 2:143; 7:121; 16:437). DD said, “what I’m so conscious of is what are people going to think of this family that doesn’t look like a typical family?” (18:290). In the normal family members are also of the same culture (5:83) and speak the same language (16:546). Children are considered to be like their biological parents (16:425).

This construction of the normal family holds in place a good mother who is married, has biological children, and bears these children at a certain, appropriate age. She nurtures relationships with extended family members. She is present for her children, and precipitates family patterns (e.g. establishes and maintains routines (3:272)). Her mothering contributes to the family being a loving, supportive, and joyful environment. She ensures that members feel a sense of belonging and significance. It is clear to see how this construction of the normal family contributes to the workings of the ideology of intensive mothering. As long as this construction of the normal family retains its discursive power, deconstruction of the good mother is difficult as she is defined within this structure.

In the data, participants also talked about what it means for a family unit, particularly, in this case, an adoptive and/or foster family unit, to construct itself as such and how families contain, tolerate, manage or reject difference. Galvin (2003) argued that adoptive families

must manage unique family boundary challenges involving internal dialectical tensions of openness-closedness, novelty-predictability, or autonomy-connection, as well as externally-focussed, dialectical tensions such as inclusion-connection, conventionality-uniqueness, and revelation-concealment (p. 250).

Through their talk, participants were involved in constructing the idea of family boundaries separating that which is ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. DL said “I have to be completely confident that this is, I’m safe with this. I’m safe with being their mother. Because, you know, stuff comes at you from outside” (1:306). DD defined adoption as “bringing someone into a nuclear family, transferring all privileges of a biological child onto the adopted child” (18:4). This child is brought ‘inside’ a nuclear family. This nuclear family is defined as distinct from the extended family. BD said

I actually kind of left my family, you know you leave and cleave and I hadn’t actually ‘leaved and cleaved’ properly so it actually made a proper break for me in terms of not having their influence, their stuff influence me too much anymore...so in terms of that it did our marriage the world of good and just us as a family unit the world of good (11:53).

In response to opposition to the adoption from members of her extended family, NF responded: “you choose us or you choose him” (9:107). Similarly, as mentioned earlier, DE said

about a week before we got him, um, his, my husband’s parents said that if we adopt him they’ll have nothing more to do with us. And it was kind of a decision about do we lose him and them or just them? So we chose we’d lose them. So that was a bit stressful (20:126).

Reference was made to the idea that what is ‘inside’ our family is better than what is ‘outside’ of it. This was encountered by participants from others and also emerged within their own comments. MB described her own father as “very anti. He actually, he called it a genetic cesspit, which is a fabulous expression” (21:296).

NF said “Whereas you’re taking on somebody else’s child and you sort of, you know, at the back of your mind there is that sort of niggle. Where did they come from? What genetic defects are they gonna have?” (9:372).

CF described the role of the good adoptive mother as follows:

you’ve got to make that child feel that you are the family. Um, and I think it’s a little bit harder if you adopt an older child. But that you are the, you are the mom and the dad and the actual family of that child (12:214).

One of the ways in which a family seems to create a sense of unity, a sense of ‘us’ is to negate difference. This has already emerged in relation to the colour-blind approach to race. EW describes what it means to be an adoptive mother by saying:

I can’t, I honestly can’t think of too many major differences. Once you bring them into your home it’s like it changes. They’re now your child. The adoption hasn’t gone through but she is now your child. And, um, not whether you like it or not because, uh, that you have to accept that, um, because if you can’t you just simply can’t. I don’t know if anybody’s had an experience of that but, um, for us, ja, it just, my husband often says to me ‘You know, D, I don’t even see the difference’. So, and I think it’s just like that for both of us (15:208).

According to EW, there cannot be any difference.

As we have seen, however, as much as participants attempt to minimise difference, they also evoke difference. Further ambivalence emerges when participants engage with questions such as “how do we as a family unit contain difference?” The particular differences that participants mentioned in this regard were race (“you’re Black and that makes you different” (e.g. 4:558; 3:388) versus “you’re Black, but you’re just like us” (e.g. 2:76; 5:435)); language; culture; genetic makeup; illness; special needs; the difference of entry (e.g. “I must be honest even now I find it difficult saying ‘you didn’t grow in *my* tummy, you grew in someone else’s tummy’. I find that quite hard” (5:297); “It was basically like having to treat a complete strange child as your own, um, with no warming up period. I mean, no pregnancy, no nothing to get used to the child. So for me, particularly having had the biological children it was hard” (18:24)); and the difference of behaviour. In relation to the last point, DD commented,

I think the other really hard thing was, um, the way my husband and I parent is very much that children form part of a family, the family does not revolve around the children. So children have to fit into, um, the norms of the family. You know, we don’t change our lives, you know obviously you change your life for children but,...So I mean things like sleep was a very big thing. We had to get our boys sleeping quickly. Um, everyone kind of knew their place in the family and G, for 11 months, didn’t have, you know, whereas our boys from day one had kind of, we’d, just how we’d brought them up, she didn’t have any of those norms and boundaries. And it obviously was a *huge* adjustment for her, so she was very unsettled. Um, and a huge adjustment for us. So, almost expecting her to be like the boys but she was completely different (18:53).

Although each area in which the family is required to manage its boundaries (in relation to assessing difference and determining whether and how to absorb that difference) could be discussed in more detail in relation to findings from the data, much of the necessary material for this argument is already present in this chapter. A little more detail will, however, be provided in terms of how the ‘difference’ of race is contained within a family. Participants utilised a number of strategies in order to do this. It is essential to remember that

these take place within the context of an ambivalent relationship with race itself, uncertainty regarding how to construct race and how race functions as difference, and what race means within the context of transracial families.

The 'difference' of race was de-emphasised by foregrounding other perceived differences, for example, gender. OS said "we were specific, we said we wanted a little girl 'cause we've got two boys and we thought if we got a third boy there's obvious differences now, it would be even more, whereas she's a girl, she's different anyway" (5:16). Race as difference was constructed as "nonsense" (9:390) (although the participant who made this statement, NF, also evoked race as difference). Race is constructed as physical difference, but the meaning of those physical characteristics is deconstructed so as to ensure that the child does not feel different to the rest of the family. EW said, in relation to A, her transracially adopted daughter:

I would hate A to be, you know, for someone to say to her 'Gee, you're a mixed race family'. Because then it puts her out, it puts her almost as an outsider. She's already going to know she's different. Somebody made me laugh the other day. It was my daughter's cousin who's also 19 and he said to me 'you know Auntie D, one day you're going to have to tell A that she's adopted'. (Laughs). I promise you. I'm probably not going to tell her, I think she's going to know by the time she's like three. She's going to say 'Mommy?' you know. No, I don't and I know that it's probably going to happen and that's one of the things that I was saying to you earlier that people are going to say hurtful things to her. I'm going to just pray that I deal with it in the, in a way that just helps her to process the hurt or whatever has happened. But no, I don't want her ever to feel like there's any difference in our house. There is physically, you're never gonna get away from that but I don't want words or phrases or cliches or anything to, to make her feel any different. Just the physicalness of it is the only thing that I ever want her to feel that she's any different (15:405).

Through language, the child of a different race is constructed as part of the family. For example, DD said:

I've had two people, mind you, one of these was in Joburg, two, um, Black men, interestingly enough, asking if my husband was a Black man and being most like 'no, he isn't?' And they're like 'well how does this fit in?' (laughs). 'It doesn't work'. Um, asking, 'no, we adopted her', 'oh, so you're going to keep her while she's a child and then give her back?' 'No, she's part of ours' (18:360).

Difference is also minimised: "Besides her skin colour it's not, you know, and she's, she could be, people have said to me 'is she Brazilian?' You know, I mean, she's just, you know what I mean, she could be Italian" (21:408).

In a somewhat circular process, the good mother is held in place by notions of the good, normal family. The good mother depends for her construction on her situatedness within the good, normal family. We see, in terms of how participants navigate the meaning of potential difference, that this is often minimised in order to maintain adherence with the construct of the normal family as opposed to deconstructing the boundaries of the construct itself. In NF and BD's words: "we're just a normal family" (9:922; 11:391).

5.8.3 CHILD DEVELOPMENT

Lawler (2000) acknowledges that the social construction of the category 'mother' is largely no longer contested. Although this dissertation has repeatedly presented literary acknowledgement that the good mother is a social construct, it is still clear in the data that she continues to function within the meaning

making of mothers as an objective criterion. The construct ‘childhood’, however, is even more infrequently questioned and the nature and needs of children are taken for granted. (Nsamenang (1996, 2008, 2009) does offer interesting perspectives in this regard, exploring meanings of early childhood in Africa.) Since motherhood is constructed significantly in relation to the needs of a child, this lack of attention paid to childhood in this regard results in the “radical analysis of motherhood” (Lawler, 2000, p. 35) remaining an impossibility. Unfortunately the current study is unable to address this issue with due consideration. However, the manner in which ‘the child’ is constructed in the data will be mentioned briefly as this relates to how the good mother is held in place through the ideology of intensive mothering.

The description of the good mother, presented in this chapter, also offers a clear picture of the needs of the child (as the other side of the coin). The good mother is good by virtue of the fact that she meets the needs of the child that are socially constructed as being important. Although this may appear to be circular logic, this reflects the manner in which these discursive systems operate in relation to one another. The social construction of the needs of the child (and of the nature of the normal family and the attributes of gender) hold in place the ideology of intensive mothering which defines the good mother. She is therefore good because she fulfils the criteria laid out in this discourse, as these are supported by the dominant notions of child development, family and gender.

In addition to the manner in which children were constructed through the lens of the role of the good mother, children were also directly referred to in the data in a number of ways. Children are constructed as needing love (19:146), stability (16:743), individual attention (15:235) and significance (20:40). Children are entitled to a home and a family (20:11) and have a need to experience belonging (20:37). They are a product of how they are raised (19:240). Children are a financial responsibility (10:378). The normal child responds to your love for him/her with love in return (13:293). As mentioned in the literature review in chapter two, Knowles (1996) highlights how the good mother is measured against the bad mother who does not meet these needs of the child. The good mother is therefore placed outside the realms of critique through her definition in relation to the bad mother. To oppose the good mother infers an undesirable alignment with her antonym.

The reference to some participants’ colour-blind approach to their transracially adopted children alludes to the availability of constructing a child as an essential object or as discursively free. The following statements, mentioned earlier, illustrate this idea that a child can be ‘just a child’:

KM: I don’t see his colour. To me he’s S. Obviously I’m aware that he’s Black and he’s from another race and culture, or whatever, to acknowledge that and, like I said, to speak Zulu and whatever but to me I don’t see him as, you know people will sometimes say to you ‘oh, you’ve adopted a little Black boy’. To me he’s S, he’s not, I actually don’t see, see his colour (6:546).

CT: I think a lot of Black folk are worried about the loss of the culture and the loss of, you know, or growing this child up as, for want of a better term, a coconut, you know, sort of White on the inside but Black on the outside. Um, whereas I don’t see it like that. She’s just a child, so, ja. So I think for them it’s definitely got to do with the loss of culture and them wanting to keep their culture together, wanting to be sort of collective about it (8:238).

In order to deconstruct the good mother, deconstruction of the idea that notions of ‘the child’ and ‘child development’ are discursively free and can be universally applied require thorough critique. The good mother

is crucially dependent on the social construction of the nature and needs of the child and challenging her construction is reliant on this concurrent endeavour.

5.8.4 A FINAL NOTE ON THE HOLD OF THE GOOD MOTHER

The good mother is a kind of self. She is a kind of core, essentialist self. As long as there is a belief in her existence as an idealised object and as an ideal self, her essentialist hold cannot be deconstructed. The theoretical paradigm that provides the landscape within which the current research is conducted offers the lens of social constructionism which allows us to see that the essential objects populating this landscape are in fact multi-layered and shifting social constructions with no core to speak of. We also have the tools of poststructuralism with which to dissect these dynamic, shifting forms that are created and positioned through language and power-relations. However, in the middle of this landscape, sits the good mother. We know that she is socially constructed. We know that she is not a natural form. She is not an essential object. The magic trick, however, is that she is constructed *as an object*. She is built as a core self. She functions as an essentialist ideal. Therefore, although participants question her, tussle with her, resist her and stretch her, their relationship with her is always in terms of her object status. To attempt to deconstruct her would be like trying to breathe in an ice-cube. Intrinsic to her form as object (to the way in which she has been constructed as an object) lies the barriers to her deconstruction. If we think of the contribution of psychoanalytic thinking to our construction of the maternal object, as referred to in chapter two, the role of object relations theory comes to the fore. The mother is the primary object. Initially our 'self' is fused with the object of the mother (Winnicott, 1971). At this point, to deconstruct the mother would result in a deconstruction of the self. Even after the infant has traversed through the transitional space and has a developing sense of self, to deconstruct the primary object would still result in an annihilation of self and capacity for self-other relationship. Even feminists have had trouble really tackling the mother head-on (Altman, 2003; Craig, 2007; Glenn, 1994). The good mother is a sacred object. She may function in a manner that is so central to our sense of self that to dissolve her becomes far too risky. In this way she is indestructible.

5.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented findings of the discourse analysis conducted on data that was collected through interviewing 21 adoptive and foster mothers. This was integrated with a discussion of these findings. The ways in which participants engaged in discursive construction was discussed. The construction of adoption and fostering was presented. This was followed by an exploration of the remaining constructs and discourses that were identified through the analysis within the form of three key arguments. Firstly, the manner in which the ideology of intensive mothering operates was discussed, in relation to the related notions of natural mothering and good mothering. Secondly, the role of ambivalence as vital in understanding meanings related to the construction of adoptive and foster mothering was explored. Finally, challenges to the deconstruction of the good mother were argued to relate to the ways in which the ideology of intensive mothering is supported by discourses of gender, the normal family and child development.

The following chapter will summarise the findings of the data analysis in order to present a direct response to the research questions guiding this study. Recommendations for the support of adoptive and foster mothers will be proposed. Reflexivity will be discussed in relation to the study as a whole. Finally, limitations of the current study and questions emerging for future research will be explored.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusion

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five presented the findings of the data analysis within a particular meaning frame. As discourses and constructs were identified within the data, through exploring the questions listed within Gee's (2005) and Parker's (1992, 2005) approach to discourse analysis, interpretation of the findings crystallised around three central arguments: the ideology of intensive mothering operates through the relationships between natural mothering and good mothering and it is within this system that adoptive and foster mothers construct meanings of mothering; ambivalence is a key feature of this construction process; and the construct of the good mother is held in place by discourses of gender, the normal family and child development. This closing chapter seeks, firstly, to distil from these preceding discussions a response to the research questions, secondly, to offer recommendations regarding the support of adoptive and foster mothers and, thirdly, to provide a reflexive account of the research process as a whole. Fourthly, limitations of the study and recommendations for further research will be discussed.

To embark upon this final leg of the journey, let us revisit the research questions for purposes of clarity and focus:

- (i) How do adoptive and foster mothers in South Africa construct mothering?
- (ii) How do these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering?

6.2 CONSTRUCTIONS OF ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER MOTHERS

The most concise answer to the research questions that can be formulated after the analysis of the interviews is that mothering is constructed by participants in terms of relationship with self and relationship with a child/children. These relationships take place within layers of social spaces, from intimate family environments, to institutional systems, to large social structures of race, class, gender and so on. This section will highlight the key aspects of these constructions firstly with reference to adoptive mothers and foster mothers separately (particularly in response to the first research question). Secondly, more of a bird's-eye-view of the data as a whole, relating to both adoptive and foster mothers, will be presented (largely in response to the second research question).

6.2.1 ADOPTIVE MOTHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF MOTHERING

As the broad framework of relationships mentioned above begins to formulate, the data speaks to the research question in the sense that adoptive mothers who participated in this study constructed mothering in terms of how they engage discursively with their self-construct and position as well as how they create meaning around their understanding of a mother's relationship with her adopted child. Important to bear in mind is that the idea of positioning relies on an 'other' and that 'woman' was constructed in the data as relational. Therefore, this division between relationship with self and relationship with other is necessarily a blurred one at times. As mentioned above, participants also situate these relationships within multiple social

settings and their construction of mothering is intrinsically informed by the symbiosis that takes place between these relationships and their social contexts.

6.2.1.1 CONSTRUCTING MOTHERING IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

As mentioned in chapter three, from a postmodern perspective, the individual has dissolved into a variety of possible subject positions that develop through socio-cultural practices and receive their meanings contextually and in relation to one another. Torronen (2001) speaks of an individual as “a collage of subject positions” (p. 314). This section presents the collage created by participants as they subjectively constructed their relationship with self as mothers. This refers less to exploring a resulting ‘identity’, but rather to the ongoing, dynamic activity of constructing a positioned self and discursively responding to being positioned by others.

This construction as evident in the data reveals, in part, the agency that Aston (2002) describes in her characterisation of women as possessing the ability to “reflect on their own thoughts, actions, and relationships to continually transform themselves in dynamic and active ways” (p. 287). This agency is, however, constituted not as a facet of independent free will, but is conferred within a particular social, cultural and institutional domain. Torronen (2001) explains that

as we identify with and use subjective positions we take part in (implicit) meaning struggle on what kinds of identity forms and world-views should be considered as natural and truthful in particular situations. The increase in knowledge, as attached to specific subject positions with which one identifies, does not mean solely that one becomes more enlightened but also that one becomes subordinate to the discourses’ expectations on what is normal, permitted and serviceable. The knowledge, arrived at through discourses, about the world and about oneself both subjugates and makes possible (p. 316).

Thus, agency does not take place outside of discourse and the agent is still largely constrained and enabled by constitutive discourses themselves. However, agency can still be understood as involving the calling into question of present understandings of the self within this discursive space. In this way agency can act as a form of deconstruction (Aston, 2002). According to Butler (1992), being positioned as a subject involves active participation in one’s own social construction as well as subjectivity. Subjectivity includes consciousness of self, a reflective response to the discourses within which the self is situated and a negotiation of one’s subject position. Participants in this study engaged in meaning struggles in ways that revealed an alignment of their subject position in subordination to dominant discursive expectations, as well as critically reflective responses leading to demonstration of transformative agency.

It is helpful to bear in mind Davies and Harre’s (1990) description of five processes involved in the development of a sense of self when exploring participants’ constructions in this regard. Firstly, how did participants talk of learning about categories of inclusion and exclusion (such as biological mother / adoptive mother, woman who is a mother / woman who is not a mother, woman / man)? Secondly, how do they speak of their participation in discursive practices which allocate meaning to these categories? In other words, what storylines do they evoke? For example, what is the story of mothering? (In this sense it is also useful to remember Davies and Harre’s description of the way in which psychological assumptions gather around subject positions.) The third process refers to the question: how do individuals position themselves in relation to these categories and storylines? Fourthly, how do they speak of their sense of belonging or not belonging

within certain categories and what moral system is associated with that sense of belonging? Fifthly, how do participants talk about this way of 'doing' being a person in relation to experiencing contradictory positions? For example, what attempts are made to resist or resolve this contradiction or to utilise this contradiction as a resource?

The storyline of the good mother emerged in the previous chapter. She is married, she is the primary caregiver, and she is the child's biological mother (and therefore carries and births the child, she is able to breastfeed, and she is typically the same race as this biological child). The good mother has a relationship with her child that can be characterised as being continuous and authorised. She also functions within the context of a supportive family, and she has a 'normal' child (i.e. who does not have special needs, who has not been abused and/or traumatised, and who is not HIV-positive).

Adoptive mothers who participated in this study constructed mothering through talking about how they find they are positioned and how they position themselves in relation to this storyline. They demonstrated alignment with and belonging within certain categories such as valuing mothering collaboratively with a spouse. Most also positioned themselves as primary caregivers, prioritising time with their children and striving for a flexible work schedule. Positioning in relation to the rest of the story becomes somewhat more complicated.

The notion that mothering an adopted child and mothering a biological child could be very similar did emerge as an available stance in the data (e.g. "I can't, I honestly can't think of too many major differences. Once you bring them into your home it's like it changes. They're now your child" (15:209)). However, on the whole, participants affirmed the dominant notion of biological mothering as natural and positioned themselves outside of this category. Their maternal self is not one who experiences nine months of pre-birth adjustment and bonding, does not birth a child (who is already known), may be faced with the task of 'choosing' a child, does not experience breastfeeding as coming easily (if at all), and she and her child may differ in their constructed race. In relation to these dynamics they, therefore, 'do' being a mother in ways that deviate from the normative storyline.

The good mother is positioned as a continuous and authorised presence in her child's life. To be a mother who has "missed out" (11:36) on seasons of her child's life was, on the whole, spoken of with regret. As mentioned in the previous chapter, legitimization of one's position as biological mother typically occurs automatically through genetic connection and birth. For adoptive mothers, legitimization of position needs to occur through assessment and authorization within social and legislative systems. This experience is constructed differently by different participants (through descriptions of powerlessness to ones of agency) depending on the degree of administrative difficulty encountered.

In the dominant storyline narrated by participants, the good mother nurtures her child as she and the child are supported in turn by the extended family. Some participants (for example, UC, OS and NU) could align themselves with this thread of the story. Others could not. Most participants who discussed strongly oppositional responses from extended family members to their decision to adopt (particularly transracially) explained how these attitudes softened over time (for example, NF, BD and DE). AN discussed how her decision to adopt a child, with biological family members who she describes as identifying with a different culture to the one she and her family identify with, resulted in consistently unsupportive responses from her extended family. This area is a clear example of where participants' constructions of mothering involved the negotiation of contradictory subject positions. In statements by NF and DE (quoted in section 5.6.1.6 of the

previous chapter) we see how they were faced with competing demands placed upon them as daughters-in-law and as potential mothers of adopted children as their in-laws pronounced: “you choose us or you choose him” (9:107). The positions as good daughter-in-law and good potential adoptive mother relate in a conflicting manner upon this stage. NF, DE as well as BD resolved this positional conflict by strongly committing to one position (that of adoptive mother) at the potential expense of the other.

We saw in the previous chapter (particularly in section 5.6.2.2) how participants negotiated the relationships between the position of ‘mother’ and the position of ‘woman’. Participants’ articulation of their positioning as ‘adoptive mother’, specifically, related in multifaceted ways with their positioning as ‘woman’. To be a woman is to be a mother. To be a woman is to align oneself with the discursive practice of mothering (Bueno-Alonso, 2006; Morell, 2000; Wager, 2000). When this mothering involves adoptive mothering there is the potential for harmony and also the potential for dissonance between the two discursively constructed positions.

To be a woman is to possess the ability to conceive and bear biological children (Ulrich & Weatherall, 2000). Participants who arrived at the doorstep of adoption through the passage of infertility spoke of having bodies that poisoned babies (21:50), of experiencing anger at not being able to conceive (20:121), and of not feeling like a “full woman” (7:75). DE spoke of adopting being the beginning of her “healing” (20:151) and described her adopted son as saving her from “absolute grief” (20:292). MB also described her adopted daughter as healing her. She continued to say “I mean obviously you get sad and upset and it’s still unfair, but she just brings the most incredible joy (laughs)” (21:86). The child brings healing, but the sense of injustice remains.

Chapter five explored the notions of bonding and loving within the context of adoptive mothering and discussed participants’ explorations of relating to an adoptive child in terms of how these experiences ‘should’ come ‘naturally’ to a woman mothering a child. We see how, when there are difficulties experienced in these areas, participants were left with questions such as “what’s wrong with *me*?” (18:117; 11:79). As we see especially in these examples, there is the acknowledgement that mothering is not taking place in a way that neatly ‘fits’ the picture of natural mothering, but it is still the self that is placed under scrutiny. Other participants spoke of bonding with their adopted child as not being a “problem” (4:110) or as related to a mother instinct “kicking in” (15:69). This allows for an alignment with a picture of a woman who is naturally able to bond with a child and a comfortable positioning of self within this discursive practice. Similarly, with the notion of loving, some participants spoke of their experience of loving their biological child as related to not being positioned as the child’s biological mother. For example: “I think naturally people love their offspring more than they love other people’s kids, because it’s well, you know, they are part of you and you sort of see yourself in them” (9:369); “I love my boys so much, as a mother loves her children, now I have this strange child...” (18:37). As discussed in the previous chapter, other participants spoke of loving their adopted child in a manner that allowed them to merge the position of ‘adoptive mother’ with what it means to be a woman (one who naturally loves her child unconditionally) and were thus able to assume the position of ‘good mother’.

The good mother is also constructed as achieving a range of tasks and as possessing numerous personal characteristics. Participants who mother within the context of adoption position themselves within the storyline of mothering in relation to the good mother and the good adoptive mother (who, in line with Winnicott’s ‘good-enough mother’ are not perfect (15:267; 18:400; 20:547) as this is constructed as being damaging for the child). Assessment of self in this regard occurs with (limited) acknowledgment of variation. Adoptive mothers hold themselves to the standard of good mothering of a biological child and add additional

factors in relation to achieving the standard of good adoptive mothering. The relationship between these two standards may at times position her as having contradictory tasks (for example, in the area of overcompensation).

In chapter two, a study by Meintjes and Bray (2005) was reviewed in which they discussed media representations of (particularly White) adoptive parents as moral heroes and how the construction of the poor, hungry, non-White child co-constructs the “would-be-rescuer” (p. 184) thereby reinforcing oppressive power relations. OS, a mother of a transracially adopted daughter, discussed how they explained adoption to their biological sons:

I mean if we ever saw kids on the streets, the one time that stands out for me, um, there were kids begging for food on the street and it really struck the boys. And we used that as an opportunity to say ‘you see, now we’re going to help someone that won’t have to do that kind of thing’ (5:88).

Participants spoke of encountering constructions of the adoptive mother as “noble” and “fabulous” (11:239), deserving gratitude (4:297), and as commendable (5:250). Some spoke of these responses as “sweet” (4:298); others affirmed all adoptive mothers as “wonderful” (14:204). UC’s family members responded with the view that their transracial adoption was “so exciting and so new South Africa” (4:387).

Other participants attempted to deconstruct the idea of adoptive mothers being special. For example, as mentioned in the previous chapter, BD commented

Well, in the day-to-day life it’s not that at all! We didn’t do it out of noble reasons at all! You know, we didn’t do it so people could look at us and see us as this fantastic family. I mean, you know, we’re not (laughs). We’ve all got our problems and issues and difficulties. That’s how they see me which I try very hard to discredit, you know (11:239).

MB spoke of the idea of ‘rescue’ not being in the child’s best interest. She said

I remember going to see this one social worker and she, we had to fill in a form, and she said ‘why do you want to adopt?’ And I was just so desperate I said ‘cause I want to have another child and it’s the only way’. And then I said to her, ‘oh, it’s so selfish’. She said ‘no, actually, that’s the right reason, you know. You can’t go into it, because otherwise the child will grow up thinking that they owe you or they’re not worthy or you’ve rescued them or whatever’ (21:263).

The line between what it means to rescue a child and to love one’s own child is guarded by MB when she describes a woman saying to her

‘Well done all you White people who’ve adopted all these poor orphans’ you know? ‘Pat yourself on the back, well done’. I was very upset. I thought ‘if you knew how much I love my little girl’. It’s not a, I’m doing this, she said ‘now you can call yourself a liberal’ or something. Mmm (21:484).

Although many participants did, to a degree, resist being constructed as ‘special’, the adoptive mother is still constructed in the data through a moral lens as one who gives somebody else a chance (4:12), who gives someone a home who does not have a home (9:5), who helps a child who is hurting (10:440), who makes a difference in a child’s life (11:482), who chooses to love a child “no matter what” (13:236), and who makes a child “whole again” (20:6). The adoptive mother is constructed as “doing something about the problem in this country” (5:46), as “helping in society” (4:13), and as engaging in addressing the “big problem in South Africa” (11:7). Adoption as a moral discourse was expressed further through participants’ descriptions of being

motivated to adopt as a response to a calling from God, or due to the belief that this was the 'right' thing to do. Transracial adoption, specifically, offers an opportunity to contribute towards "integrating the country" as it is a "healing expression" (17:460) and to demonstrate that "you can have a cross-racial family without it being a huge issue" (17:58).

Therefore, although the desire to fit the natural picture of mothering permeated the data, participants also did position as healer, rescuer, helper and problem-solver. In relation to transracial adoption, this is intertwined with participants' constructions of race. As mentioned in chapter five, contrary to Steyn's (2007) argument that Whiteness is increasingly visible in South Africa due to White people occupying the minority, the invisibility of Whiteness emerged strongly in the present study. Although two participants referred to Whiteness as related to privilege, the data demonstrated a lack of critique concerning the potential position of the transracial adoptive mother as reflecting or reinforcing oppressive power relations. Also, despite the persistence of stereotypical characterisations of 'Black people', only the position as anti-racist was available.

6.2.1.2 CONSTRUCTING MOTHERING IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH AN ADOPTED CHILD

What does it mean to mother an adopted child? Firstly, we see in the data the ways in which participants construct what it means to commit, for life (17:5), to a child who is constructed in a particular way: a "stranger" (1:259; 18:30) an "orphan" (13:100), an "AIDS orphan" (20:35), a "Black child" (5:309; 9:717), a child of a different culture (1:557; 12:391), a child with foreign genetic material (9:372; 20:266), a child with questions (6:567), a child with more "issues" (4:459; 5:230; 9:734; 21:98), a child who is "different" (3:709; 4:492; 5:305; 12:456); a child who has been dealt an injustice (10:113), a child with a "past" (6:732; 17:576), with "baggage" (21:98) or who had a "hard start in life" (4:314). Within the data, participants either uncritically took these constructions for granted and formed meanings of adoptive mothering on the basis of them; or they tried linguistically to resist these constructions and to see the child as 'just a child'; or they began with this construction as a starting point and illuminated through their speech the ways in which they try and turn this (orphaned / HIV-positive / Black / Zulu / abandoned) child into 'just a child'.

This is only the beginning, as the good mother's task is to produce good children. Her role is to produce an individual who is healthy, secure, educated, validated, emotionally mature, confident, independent, makes good choices, and has a sense of self-worth. The good mother achieves this by meeting her children's needs, being present and available, regarding her children as her priority, taking responsibility, investing in her child's development, assisting her child with social relationships, and participating in a wide range of activities. She also accomplishes this through her approach as flexible as well as positive. A biological mother begins this task of producing a good child with a newborn baby who is both an "open structure" (Ruddick, 1980, p. 352) and who she is already constructed as 'knowing' (Baraitser, 2009) through pregnancy, genetic similarities and maternal intuition. The adoptive mother begins this expedition with a child who is constructed through the features mentioned in the previous paragraph. This relates to the good adoptive mother being conceptualised as having a role that is more extensive than that of the good mother or as being required to accomplish certain tasks against a different backdrop (for example, comforting a child who is particularly unsettled, providing security to a child who was abandoned, or protecting a child from adoption-related stigma).

One of the key tasks of the good adoptive mother mentioned in the previous chapter is that of discursive gatekeeping. Participants constructed the meaning of mothering an adopted child in relation to this activity

frequently. Her role is understood as actively mediating the ideas that her child encounters and providing him/her with an interpretive toolkit to use in order to make sense of him/herself and the world.

The previous chapter also described (in section 5.7.1) how the adoptive mother's relationship with the child is constructed as involving some ambivalence in the area of legitimate belonging. This occurred particularly with reference to legitimacy conferred by institutions and systems, responses from others in social settings, interpretations of experiences of bonding, the concept of permanency, conceptualising the birthmother, the function of maternal activity in legitimation, and the role of race.

Further, on the subject of race, NF was quoted in the previous chapter as describing transracial adoption as "doing the mommy thing across racial things" (9:725). How is this space across which she engages with her child constructed? What does it mean to mother within this discursive space? To begin with, the space itself (the discursive realm of race) is not defined with any degree of certainty. DN responded to this issue by saying "I don't know how I would define race", (17:121) while EW said "I don't really understand the word race, um, I must be honest" (15:342). Some argued that the term should be "abolished, quite frankly" (8:355). DE explained, "we don't actually use that term at all in the family" (20:631), preferring to construct all family members under the category 'African'. A few participants reflected on what race 'does'. For example, CT explained race by saying, "it automatically assumes a subservient or lesser type of people" (8:359). There was acknowledgement that the meaning of race changes over time (5:453; 15:333). In a way this alludes to deconstructive possibilities, but in another sense it contributes to the slipperiness of the construct.

Where constructions of race did emerge more clearly there were, on the whole, two main thematic features, namely skin colour and difference. The ground becomes unsteady, however, when one begins to explore how participants construct these two aspects as being and/or not being related to one another. The previous chapter examined how this emerged in the data in terms of the ambiguous positions held by participants in this regard. This will be discussed further in this chapter from a more theoretical perspective in section 6.2.3.3.

Likewise, the concept of culture emerged from the data in a similarly inscrutable manner. It is equally difficult to define (2:458; 4:615; 12:391). When it is defined this is done so in relation to many other facets such as difference, attitudes, mindset, upbringing, values, behaviour, nationality, religious practice and language. Ambiguity is consistently displayed in terms of the relationships between culture and race.

To construct what it means to mother a child of a different race or of a different cultural background when race and culture are so obliquely constructed leaves one in murky territory. I am tempted to suggest, however, that within this data, the lack of cohesive form that constructs such as race and culture hold might suggest an opening up of meaning space. South Africa is still in the process of moving away from systematically defined notions of race and culture that were used to oppress (Alexander, 2007; Finchilescu, 2005; Robus & Macleod, 2006). To form new constructions requires the dismantling of the old through a transitional process. This may create a temporary season of both/and that is not always discursively recognised as such within that season. The participants' ambiguous constructions of race and culture hold traces that belong to the system our country is emerging from as well as holding seeds of an ideology that is hoped for (although this dual holding is typically not explicitly recognised by participants themselves).

6.2.1.3 RELATING WITHIN SOCIAL SPACES

In terms of conceptualising how participants constructed relationship with self and relationship with the adopted child within broader (intertwined) social spaces, many avenues could be explored. Adoptive mothering is performed within that which is constructed as 'family', it is mediated, more so at various points in the process than others, by regulatory institutions, and it finds its meaning in social spaces textured by discourses of gender, class, race, and culture (as eluded to above). Due to this chapter's task of pulling threads together (rather than splitting ends even further) I shall summarise the manner in which these dynamics emerged within this study by looking through the keyhole of 'the family'. 'Family' can also be considered to function as an institution and institutions such as the legislative system are involved in mediating the formation of families, for example, through adoption. Construction of the family is inextricably linked to discourses of gender (Blume & Blume, 2003; Thompson & Walker, 1995). In this study, families formed through transracial and cross-cultural adoptions unavoidably navigate discourses of race and culture (as do same-race families, often just in less explicitly noticeable ways).

In chapter two, reference was made to Holstein and Gubrium's (1999) description of family as an interpretive practice. In the current study, this practice was constructed normatively in relation to structure (father, mother, biological children, extended family), functioning (for example, parents are present, children are permitted to voice their opinions, members navigate normal developmental issues, families are structured around predictable patterns), functions (for example, the transmission of culture, bringing about the wholeness of its members, bringing joy to its members), characteristics (for example, members are all the same race and culture, members share a common language, children are genetically similar to their parents), and formation (for example, the idea that God designs families). The family is a bounded unit. There is a sense of 'inside' and 'outside'. The adopted child is brought 'into' the family unit. This 'bringing into' is constructed in complex ways related to how meaning is assigned to the boundary line, how the 'outside' is understood, what it means to be 'inside', what the process of 'bringing in' entails and how bringing the child into the family impacts upon the family system. Particularly, it was interesting to note how participants speak of a child being incorporated in their family (i.e. becoming part of 'us') in relation to features that may construct him/her as other. In this regard, participants mentioned a number of approaches. Differences are negated (15:212; 9:390; 11:391). There can be acknowledgment that the child is going to be 'different' because he/she is adopted (4:470) thus necessitating finding ways to parent differently at times and also having to explain this difference to the child (with sadness) (4:554; 9:390). Others spoke of seeking similar families also containing children who are adopted in order to normalise a family form that contains 'difference' (4:681). Some participants embraced 'difference' as enriching the family unit (21:365) whilst others foregrounded 'differences' that may occur naturally in a family (for example, gender) as a way of lessening the focus on adoption-related differences (5:16). Racial 'difference' was deconstructed as not bearing any relation to any other difference (15:405), but was also constructed as being associated with differences in other areas as well (for example, the child's personality) (4:558; 3:388). Participants actively affirmed the child's status through language as "part of ours" (18:360) to anyone who challenged the family on this matter. Participants spoke of choosing a child who is more similar in appearance to the adoptive family (21:400), recognising adoption-related issues as resulting in subgroups forming within the family (1:129), assimilating the child into the family culture (1:557; 2:457) and resisting the idea of the adopted child being the only family member who should learn an African language (20:814). One mentioned enduring the responses of others who defined the child as 'different' through HIV/AIDS-related stigma. The approach was mentioned of distancing from extended family members who

construct the child as other (19:225). Adopting a child with special needs was discussed as transforming the dynamics of the family system (10:11), and adopting a child who had spent a year in an orphanage and was “very unsettled” was discussed as requiring a “huge adjustment” from family members who used to function in an equilibrium and who all “knew their place in the family” (18:59). We see, therefore, that complexities related to how families assemble meaning around race, culture, genetic connection, behavioural patterns within the family system and relationships with extended family members, as well as what it means for a family to gather around a shared sense of ‘us’ informs how an adopted child is incorporated within a family unit.

As mentioned, the manner in which mothering is constructed within the context of the family is informed foundationally by discourses of gender. Blume and Blume (2003) argue that, in order to deconstruct gender, it is imperative to deconstruct the social contexts in which gender is assumed to be natural, including the family. Participants described the ‘doing’ of gender in their family systems through comparing both the behaviour and the characteristics of men and women, as well as boys and girls. Participants also distinguished between ‘doing’ being a woman in relation to their husbands and ‘doing’ being a woman in relation to their children. The discourse that women should be mothers emerged in the data. When resistance to this discourse emerged, it was done so rather insipidly. Through constructions of the good mother we see reinforcement of the woman as primary caregiver, who prioritises childrearing over paid-work and finds fulfilment in caring for children, whereas fathers “go to work” (9:394; 18:168). The mother in the family is required to accomplish a range of roles, although this can be experienced as challenging. For example, MB said “So you have the mother, the housewife, the lover, the cook, the driver, whatever else. And then you sometimes it’s just hard to get them all right, you know?” (21:210). Women are described as more nurturing and as bringing to the family “the softer side” (4:155) whereas men are described as more physical and engaging in “rough and tumble” (4:183) with children. In TN’s words, “moms have a connection with their children that fathers will never understand” (2:289). She argued that mothers have unconditional love for their children as opposed to men whose anger lasts longer (2:293). She also said, “The love of a mom is so sacrificial. So sacrificial. And I think that’s a woman thing, not a man thing” (2:302). Girls were described in the data as quieter in comparison to “busy” boys (6:283); and boys were described as “naughtier” than girls (19:59).

Wager (2000) describes how all women, those who are mothers and those who are not, are defined in relationship to maternity and that this will persist as long as childlessness is not considered to be a ‘real choice’ for women. She explains that, at the centre of mothering, there is an “ethic of caring” (p. 391). Women are expected to place the interests of others above their own. This should be expressed through how they think, feel and act, both in public spaces as well as private ones. To choose not to mother, therefore, positions one as inherently selfish (as well as, Wager argues, being secretly constructed by other women as independent and courageous). Although this study’s focus on mothering clearly infused participants’ constructions of ‘woman’ in the data, I did also ask questions such as how they understand what it means for a woman not to be a mother to invite a potential untangling of the two constructs. A self emerged in a limited manner in the data that was not constructed directly in relation to a husband or a child (for example, in terms of being a career person and having “other interests” (11:116)). However, on the whole, a ‘woman’ is viewed as possessing very particular attributes, for example, softness and nurture, and these attributes are ones that find their fullest expression in caring for children (and, also, a husband). One could thus be considered to be

a 'real woman' when one is a mother in that one finds the fullest expression of self within that relationship (according to how the 'self' of a woman is dominantly defined).

One of the discourses that emerged in the data was collaborative parenting. Mothering is constructed as part of a joint parenting effort. Participants spoke of decisions 'we make' as a family regarding the children (5:426; 9:931; 15:450; 17:9; 18:10). Women are therefore constructed as having agency within such family decision-making.

What is of concern to this study is how gender featured in participants' construction of mothering within adoptive families particularly. Adoptive mothers in this study engage with dominant notions of gender-based family practice in many similar ways to families of biological children (we see this in how, when talking about issues of gender, participants position as 'woman' and 'mother', drawing generalised conclusions, even more than they position as 'adoptive mother'). There were some instances, however, when particular characteristics of the adoption process were constructed through the lens of gender. In the data, in most cases, it was the women who initiated the adoption process. DL narrated how she sensed God speaking to her particularly and asking her to adopt (1:83). TN, experienced a similar 'calling' to adopt and then described how she spoke to her husband saying, "You must come and see this little girl I'm involved with" (2:43). OS spoke about her experience of volunteering at a children's home and deciding that she wanted to adopt a little girl: "Well I started there in the March or the April and I would say that by about the August I knew. Um, but my husband only started volunteering with me a while after that so he still had to get into it...I had to wait for him to catch up because I was already there, but I had to wait for him to catch up" (15:60). NU also spoke of wanting to adopt and waiting for her husband to 'catch up' with the idea: "And then he said 'you know what, we must adopt this child'. And I just wanted to cry, it was like...So I didn't make any decisions. It was like, you know what, he's the head of the house, I'm not going to push it" (10:480). LL said, in relation to her adopted son:

I actually fell in love with him at [the orphanage] when he was five months old. And, um, it was a month before our wedding and so we got married, I'd fallen in love with him but then my husband was like 'Let's get married' and I didn't really mention him. So we moved to Cape Town, I, um, just kept praying about it and just trusting that, you know he had said he wanted to give birth to children before we adopted, knowing that I wanted to adopt, um, strongly. So he was like 'Ok, well let's just have our own first' and this and that. So just praying for God to change his heart and it was just a few months later that he started talking, 'Maybe we should adopt' (16:53).

BD described difficulties that she experienced in her relationship with her first adopted child, especially in the area of bonding. She explained how the arrival of a child in a family can be interpreted in different ways by a man and woman. The experience of pregnancy and childbirth with her biological children was markedly different to how she encountered the arrival of her adopted children, whereas for her husband there was no difference, he "just sees it as normal" (11:246). She said, "for him, I mean he didn't go through the whole pregnancy and all the business, the baby just arrived. So with [our adopted children], they just arrived. It was exactly the same so for him he had no issues" (11:250). The early relationship with the child is defined along gender lines in terms of the unique experiences of how the two parents experience a child's 'arrival'. For this participant (and a number of others, such as CF and DC), the female, embodied, encounter with pregnancy and childbirth constructs the early nature of the mother-child relationship.

DD discussed the mother's role in the family as being one who is

the glue of the family, holds the family together, keeps the household running, you know, knows what's happening in everyone's life all the time. Ja, obviously fathers do but they've got, well in our family, more of a role at work and, um, I'm mostly with the kids so ja it's just sort of understanding where the kids are, trying to understand what's making them tick (18:168).

Although she does not refer specifically to adoptive mothering in this statement, in data as a whole we see how the task of understanding an adopted child is central. Whereas one is expected to 'know' one's biological child, one is tasked with 'getting to know' an adopted child (4:454; 15:69; 16:425). EW said with regard to her adopted daughter, A, "because you know the dad kind of leans more towards the authority, not only, but for me it's just protecting, loving, bringing out A, because A is going to be different to all our other children, we know that" (15:154). Her task as the mother is not only to get to know her adopted daughter, but to facilitate her daughter 'becoming' who she is. The presence and availability of the adoptive mother, and the nurturing, loving quality with which she parents is constructed as crucial in this regard and her gendered functioning within the home is seen as enabling this process.

We will now turn to examine how foster mothers interviewed within this study constructed mothering. This will be followed by an exploration of how the constructions of both adoptive and foster mothers intersect with dominant discourses of mothering.

6.2.2 FOSTER MOTHERS' CONSTRUCTIONS OF MOTHERING

This section will be structured in the same manner as the previous one according to foster mothers' constructions of mothering in terms of relationship with self, relationship with the child/children and how these relationships occur within broader social and discursive spaces.

6.2.2.1 CONSTRUCTING MOTHERING IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH SELF

The relationship with self as mother and non-mother emerged in the data as an area in which some foster mothers experienced ambivalence (either in terms of how they position themselves or how they experience being positioned by others). It is 'natural' for a woman to mother. Through expressing nurturing behaviour towards a child, even if this is not one's 'own' child, one can be considered to be 'mothering'. Two foster mothers made specific comments in this regard. KN said,

I don't think mothering is limited to um your relative or someone who's your child or...It might be that there's someone in the community that you mother or whatever the story is. So, I don't think single women can necessarily say that 'I'm not a mother'. You can't say that. I mean I can point to some single woman who helped mother me. Um, so, I think it's a very, very huge part of being a woman, that would just be dormant, like having a limb that doesn't work (3:602).

BH commented, "I think everyone can be a mother even when they don't have children. They can still express that part of their femininity in caring for other people...I don't think you have to have your own children to express that part" (13:487). In this sense, as one is caring for a child, in this case a foster child, one is positioned as a mother in that one is participating in the activity of 'mothering' him/her (7:370). This positioning as mother through the day-to-day activities of care, is held ambivalently, however, in relation to other dynamics that limit the legitimation of the foster mother as 'mother'. The previous chapter discussed how, legally and in relation to many administrative systems, fostering precludes women from assuming a position as being 'fully' the child's mother. The impermanency of the child's placement also impacts on the legitimacy of the position as mother. Also, when mothering in the context of a children's home with the

assistance of staff (therefore allowing for 'days off'), participants spoke of others regarding them as not being 'real' mothers. BH commented,

So that's how people view me is I'm not really a mother. So then, but the question is how do I look past that to sacrifice and be a mother for these children even when people don't see me really as a mother. 'Cause I'm not really their mother, I'm their foster mother which is totally different (13:474).

This positioning conflict (between simultaneously being a mother and not being a mother) causes questions to arise in relation to the availability of resources that foster mothers perceive they are able to draw upon. Foster mothers are also expected to transition between being positioned as the child's mother and relinquishing this position. LL describes this process as feeling similar to a "slow band aid being ripped" (16:216).

Participants in this study spoke of the role of the foster mother being a transformative one. She is positioned as one who has 'transformative powers' in a sense. KN described how her foster children viewed her as a "fairy godmother" (3:169). The foster mother develops a relationship with a child in order to equip that child to develop a relationship with others, potentially future adoptive parents (2:261; 13:262). When TN spoke of children she has fostered she referred to

that emptiness in their eyes, you've got to see it to understand. You will give...You just want them to feel God's love, you just want them to, to, be loved. I spent a lot of time praying for every one of those children, when they're babies, on you [demonstrates where baby would lie on her chest], just praying that these children will be special, that they will know they're loved, and they did. They did. Their parents, 'cause for two years afterwards I had connections with some of the parents and every feedback is: this child is just fine. There's never been a traumatic hand-over or a, nothing. They've just gone and they're fine (2:256).

She also said, "when you see the child arrive and when they leave they're different children" (2:234). BH commented, "so there's a joy, I enjoy, um, the part that I'm very passionate about is bringing children in and the recovery period for the first few months" (13:86). BH also mentioned, however, at numerous points during her interview, how she was confronted with her own limited ability to transform the children in her foster care. The good mother was constructed in the data as producing good children. There appears to be a pull between being able to position as a good mother and the resignation shown towards not always being able to 'transform' a child. As mentioned in the previous chapter, BH spoke of this by saying, "So I'm just surprised that it doesn't match up with my fantasy world. It's not that the children have done anything wrong, it's just my fantasy has crumbled" (13:93). KN spoke of her foster daughter having a "massive mother wound and it just felt like she wanted too much, you know, she just expected too much" (3:165). She recognised her limited capacity to meet this need and spoke of her foster children being required to learn that she has "short-comings" (3:172). We see how relinquishing this position as transformatively powerful is difficult. KN continued to say,

I thought maybe it was because I didn't do all the mother things. Well not that I didn't do them, I didn't do enough of them. So I thought: Ok, I'm gonna bake more cakes. I'm gonna go to more netball matches. I'm gonna...pick you up from school. I'm gonna...make you pretty things. When your friends come over I'm gonna do this...and that and that and that. But it was just, I realised that it was not enough. That it was actually, um, well, they're seeing a psychologist now. It was more or

less psychological. I wasn't gonna be able to...Between the psychologist and God, um, I figured that I'm not gonna be...And that was a big disappointment for me, that I wasn't enough or, um, as a mother, and that the problem was way bigger than me. And I couldn't...There wasn't much that I could do. I could...I could...I could basically do everything 'til I go blue in the face (3:215).

Foster mothering is constructed as being particularly sacrificial (3:385; 13:385; 13:477; 7:67). There is sacrifice in caring for a child knowing that the child's placement is temporary or, even in the case of long-term fostering, that the placement could be revoked. KM described fostering by saying, "you pour your life into the child, but knowing they're not totally yours" (6:225). There is sacrifice involved in loving a child so that the child is able to love their future adoptive parents. For example, BH said,

I built that bond with her that she could transfer to her next mother. See if she'd been in another home where there wasn't a mother, so there was no bonding or there was no care, then she would have missed out on that whole year of learning how to bond with another, with a care giver. So yes it's hard to rip her away but she's able to bond because she knows how (13:275).

Although the foster mother as woman is positioned off-centre in that she has not birthed the child, is not committed to the child for life, and has 'off-days', it may be that the self-sacrificial nurture that she offers the foster child serves to pull her back towards the dominant construction of woman defined by such gendered behaviour and character qualities.

A comment by KN was included earlier on in this section in which she said, "So, I don't think single women can necessarily say that 'I'm not a mother'" (3:603). Here she is talking about women who do not have their own children mothering other people's children. She refers to such a woman in this sentence as 'single', using the two positions synonymously. Two of the foster mothers interviewed are single. Although four of the adoptive mothers who participated in this study are either single or divorced, and gendered roles in a household were referred to as influencing their constructions of mothering, one foster mother made more notable reference to how her status as single influences how she is regarded in terms of her position as 'woman'. BH said,

I always wanted to be a mother so when I think of femininity it's hard to, and I fear that in the church especially sometimes people think you're still a girl until you're married. Do you know what I'm saying? So for me I know I have that typical mindset where I'm going 'but I'm not really a woman yet' and yet I'm a mother. So I think I'm twisted in the whole mother woman things. I mean sometimes in ministry, um, because I work for Americans it's common for some of those people to say 'oh girls', do you know what I'm saying? Speak to you like you're a child, a girl, because you're not married, you don't have a husband to say 'you're not treating me that way' or whatever. So I think it's kind of very twisted in my mind (13:463).

6.2.2.2 CONSTRUCTING MOTHERING IN TERMS OF RELATIONSHIP WITH A FOSTER CHILD

As adopted children were constructed in particular ways in the data, so too were fostered children. KN described her foster children as "awesome" (3:526) and her choice to foster them was because she "just liked them" (3:22). Mostly, children requiring foster care were described in the data as "different" (3:272) and as having a "strange" background (3:292). They were constructed as "rejected" (2:6; 3:145), "abandoned" (2:17), initially having faces that appeared "dead" (2:211) and "empty" (2:216) and as being "in need of care" (6:4). Upon arrival the children were described as "filthy" (2:214) and "malnourished" (2:216). The foster parent is

“all they’ve got” (2:264). Foster children are described as often having attachment difficulties (3:160). BH describes this as providing her foster children with “a bad emotional setup” (13:27). KN spoke of her foster children as having an insatiable hunger (3:197) for food, emotional nurture and for security as a result of deprivation. She also describes her children as having “massive left-out syndromes” (3:251). In addition to constructing the child in terms of his/her past, BH reflected on their potential futures. She refers to children entering foster care at an older age as being “too street like” to “mould” (13:38). She said,

we are so far behind, delayed, school-wise, because of lack of stimulation and poor prenatal care and learning disabilities and trauma that I’m, this is a key time for us where I’m trying to get us caught up so we can go to high school. Some of the children won’t matriculate, some will. Some will get jobs, you know I want the children all to have jobs, and happy, to be able to form relationships. Yeah, I see, it’s difficult to see long term. Um, it’s so difficult now...in the beginning they couldn’t really dream. Now they’ll say ‘oh, I want to be a mother’, ‘I want to be a race-car driver’ and ‘I want to be a teacher’. They have more vision for the future. Rather than where they came from...but right now it’s so, you kind of live day by day, just getting through. I don’t, it’s a scary thought thinking about, I personally, some of the children are so damaged I can’t really see them walking down the aisle to a husband or to a wife. So its not, we’re just trying to get them healed today so they can do that. But it’s not like a typical mother would envision her child, do you understand what I’m saying? (13:624)

Foster children who have experienced trauma (as in the example above) were constructed in the data as having been exposed to “horrible situations” (13:592), being “damaged because of neglect and abuse” (13:39) and as not having been in a “normal family” (13:4). Traumatized foster children were also constructed as being emotionally unhealthy (13:3), requiring recovery and rehabilitation (13:5), having a high degree of “difficulty” even when they are older, needing therapy (13:398), and as not responding to conventional parenting strategies (13:504). These constructions of foster children need to be considered in light of the previous section’s discussion of the expectations placed on foster mothers to possess transformative capabilities as well as the complexities involved in being required to be a good mother for a season to a child constructed in this manner.

When constructing how foster mothering is ‘different’, participants grouped biological and adoptive mothering together as similar and then compared foster mothering to that. For example, BH said “I think of the word mothering, see it’s different for me, I don’t have a, I have not adopted these children. And I’ve not birthed these children. They’ve just landed at my feet (laughs)” (13:142). BH distinguished the nature of mothering in relation to the criteria of lifelong commitment and presence. She said of foster mothering,

it’s not exactly the same, it’s not the same as a mother who’s committed to this child for life. ‘Cause I haven’t decided when I’m committed to these children for. So they call me mama and I am, and to be honest I’m the best mother they’ve ever had. Now even though I’m not committed to them for life and even though I take a day off, and even though I’m not always there and I have to go to the States once a year to raise support, I’m still the best they’ve ever had. Which is sick. But I’m stable and safe and trustworthy and, um, so that’s a strange form of mothering (13:146).

In relation to the ‘natural’ picture of mothering painted in the previous chapter, foster mothering appears ‘strange’. KM said, in relation to her foster children and S, her adopted son,

I do have a different bond with S than I have for the others. Um... You know people say to me 'Why did you pick that one?' and I said 'I fell in love with that one'. I mean I would say I love all of them but it is a different bond. I mean I haven't had my own natural children but I cannot imagine loving him any more (6:66).

Here again, loving a biological child and an adopted child is comparable whilst one's relationship with fostered children is described as 'different'.

Foster mothering was constructed as good mothering for a season. During this time, the foster mother is expected to fulfil the role of the good mother. Bonding with and loving a child have been repeatedly discussed as core components of good mothering. The good mother's relationship with her child is unquestioningly characterised by these features. Participants in this study spoke of these dynamics in relation to their foster children as being somewhat more complex. For some, the task is, at times, constructed as to love and bond unreservedly. For example, LL said

I consider each of them like my own. Um, it is short term, mentally, so, um, it's not, I try, you know you have to know that these children will go eventually. Your hope is that they'll get adopted eventually so you, but you don't reserve yourself, we don't reserve ourselves, we treat them like our own (16:12).

BH said, "I feel like that's important to love them like they're going to be there for a long period and give them everything you can, as far as schooling and therapy and homework and all that stuff" (13:283). However, we also see the ambivalence that is held in this regard when she described how, even during this season, foster mothering (in her case, fostering 12 children within the context of a children's home) is fundamentally different. BH's encounter with a play therapist was articulated in the previous chapter. Her comments included: "she had a lot of expectations of me that I couldn't meet, like I can't spend thirty minutes a day with a child one-on-one. It's just unrealistic" (13:156). Although she asserts that the criteria for the good foster mother are different she still explains how she responded to the play therapist's criticism of her in comparison to the dominant construction of 'good mother' by crying for days (13:352). KM said, "I felt guilty that I wasn't loving them 'cause I should be 'cause this child's been placed with me for a season and I'm supposed to be their foster mother yet I'm not, not bonding with them" (6:109). As the previous chapter discussed, participants such as KM explained that she does bond with her foster children but that with her adopted son "it's a very different, it's a real heart connection" (6:86). In addition to LL's comment mentioned earlier in this paragraph, she also said, "So, um, it's similar, just a different bond 'cause you know they probably won't be with you forever" (16:17). BH said, in relation to one of her foster children,

So when I say I love you, I do care for her deeply and I sit with her and I make sacrifices for her and we go places and all of that, it's just not like a, I know it's just not that kind of love that I would have if she came in at age six and I said 'I'm adopting you for life'. It's not that same, it's not the same (13:385).

BH also made statements like: "Now I have to guard my heart that I'm not envisioning that child as my flower girl, or whatever, at my wedding, when they're going to get adopted. Do you know what I'm saying?" (13:356); as well as explaining the process as "very hard, because they're not mine forever...and obviously there's a grieving period after you lose a child, so I do love like they're going to be with me forever, 'cause you have to, because they might be (laughs)" (13:262). We see in these shifting statements that the child might soon be

removed from one's care, but the child may also be with one 'forever'. The task is to love unreservedly and the task is also to 'guard one's heart'.

When we examine the manner in which bonding, particularly, is constructed in the data we see that it serves a multitude of purposes for the mother and for the child. It supports the child's safety through instilling in the parent a desire to protect the child (1:263; 8:69) and by enabling the child to feel safe and comfortable (2:89). It also provides the child with the ability to relate (13:304). For the mother, bonding assists her in coping with frustration and facilitates feelings of being able to care for the child (6:102); a bonded relationship constructs one as a good mother in the eyes of others (13:309) and constructs legitimacy (1:273). It gives the mother a sense that the relationship is significant to the child (13:313) and gives the mother a sense of purpose (13:342). Bonding is constructed as vital to the relationship between mother and child (1:205; 2:73). Love is also constructed as "key" (1:206) to the relationship between mother and child (2:294; 4:171; 5:4; 6:176; 8:325; 9:169; 16:300; 21:341). Therefore, when bonding and loving take on different meanings in the relationship between a foster mother and child this can play a critical role in how the mother constructs the meaning of mothering in this context. For example, KM said,

I think it takes longer to bond, um, because they can be very demanding. Because understandably so they've been in one set of circumstances, now they're placed here and they're old enough to know 'mm-mm, this is people I don't know, things I don't know, places...' and so they're very demanding and take a lot of your time. And sometimes it's hard to have the patience, especially when there're lots of other children around as well (6:124).

6.2.2.3 RELATING WITHIN SOCIAL SPACES

Participants constructed mothering in terms of relationship with self and relationship with a foster child or foster children within the context of 'family' in a number of ways. One of the ways in which families operate that emerged in the data was that one's parenting is informed by the way in which one was parented. KN, for example, explained that this was her expectation upon the placement of her three foster children in her home. She expected that it would be effective to discipline her foster children the way she was disciplined by her own parents, by talking to them about what was expected of them. However, she found that "sometimes you're dealing with a fifteen year-old who has the emotional intelligence of a six year old so you've got to pitch it at that level" (3:191). She expected that feeding her foster children would be a similar process to the one she experienced within the home in which she was raised. However, she explained that

we used to buy three trolleys of groceries at a time (laughs). Some of it was because they were teenagers, but some of it was because they were expecting, they had that mentality of 'this could come to an end so you'd better eat now while you still can, 'cause tomorrow it's not gonna be there' (3:197).

KN speaks of the family that she grew up in as being

very traditional. Very traditional. We have four o'clock tea. So you can...Now trying to get people to sit down at a table night after night after night to have dinner at the same time every single night and, you know, to have a sort of routine and a structure and whatever, it just didn't seem to...[puts her hands together]...They're just different, that's all. But of course to me it's like 'you don't love me!' (laughs). 'Otherwise you would have supper at seven o'clock! (laughs). But, you know, they're just different. It's just not important to them (3:264).

KN's foster children were placed in her home at the ages of 14, 12 and nine years old. The age at which foster (and adopted) children are placed within a family was constructed as influential in the data in relation to the child possessing a 'history' and being familiar with a different environment and different routines. The merging of this way of life with the new family system is constructed as holding more challenges for the family than the fostering (and adoption) of an infant.

Gender was constructed as a crucial component of the functioning of a family by BH. As mentioned in the previous section BH is mothering as a single person. She explains that she intentionally invites many families to visit her home as she wants her foster children

to see a mother and a father and a husband and a wife and see that they love each other and they're committed to their children. 'Cause I don't think I always set a great example of, um, because I'm single and, it's just not what I want them to see (13:434).

She explains that in the typical family a husband has certain roles and a wife has different roles to play, and this combines into a "team approach" (13:443). She then speaks of how she wants to teach the female foster children in her care to dress modestly. In her opinion, a female learns what dressing modestly means with reference to the perception and response of a man. Without a male partner or spouse BH questions whether "they're learning how to be proper girls" (13:444). We see clearly in this example how the binary of gender operates in such a way that 'female' and 'male' gain their meaning in relation to one another. Women are subjugated within this particular binary in the sense that the desired female attribute of 'modesty' is defined in terms of how it is constructed by men.

A comparison was established in the data between constructions of 'family' and 'children's home'. KM explained that she does not define the structure in which she is caring for her foster children as a family. She referred to another foster mother whom she knows and said "they're trying to be more a family" (6:648). When I asked her to elaborate she drew the distinction that this foster mother is married and they are running their home as a couple whereas she is single and has staff to assist her. This couple fosters a few children whilst she often has six children in her care. They "take them all with them everywhere" (6:656) whereas she does not. They do not have breaks from their children whilst she describes herself by saying "I guess I mother them for five days a week. I mean I'm overseeing their care. I'm overseeing their care, but I have two days break from them" (6:661). She positions herself in a managerial role. Dominant notions of the 'normal family' serve to exclude the structure within which she mothers from the definition of 'family'. When BH explicitly positions herself as a "children's home mother" (13:157) as opposed to a 'mother' she does this in relation to emphasising that different expectations should be placed upon her in terms of good mothering, especially in the light of the fact that she cares for 12 children. Her goal is still that of "keeping a family atmosphere" (13:176) amongst the children, staff and volunteers, however, she emphasises that the form of mothering which she is involved in is different to that which would occur in a 'normal' family.

In section 6.2.1.3 the ways in which families manage boundaries was touched upon. A further aspect of this process that emerged in the data related to cases where participants were engaged in both foster and adoptive mothering. This kind of family has both flexible and fixed boundaries. LL described her concern for how her adopted son would respond to foster children coming into the family and leaving again:

...fostering was, I mean we didn't know what to really expect. I was a little worried 'cause we had just done our adoption and I was a little worried about the fostering with our son bonding and, um, and

seeing children go. Just from the experience he had in [the orphanage] I was afraid that it would almost reactivate pain and, just seeing kids go and my fear was that he was going to think 'ok, now am I just in another foster home' you know? 'Are these children now being chosen above me?' You know, we would take kids, now he's our forever child but he doesn't know that and he's thinking this is just another home and now they're all leaving me again...He's accepted each child in as his brother and sister and treated them all like part of the family. I mean there's no difference for him. And when they go it's the easiest for him because he realises, I think in his heart he knows that we're his forever family whereas the other, like the foster son we had, the older one, he took it a little harder 'cause he like, he didn't, maybe he doesn't feel the same bond knowing that he's with us forever, um, that he, um, we don't try to portray that but I think he can pick up that, you know, which we have worked on making sure that they're both treated equally and that one's not favoured over the other or, um...But ja...I guess expectation that I wasn't sure what to expect, with how our son was going to handle the foster care, but he's done really well (16:139).

KM spoke about drawing boundaries within the system of her children's home and the mothering of her son S. She said,

For me working with babies, it's, um, it's kind of, and having adopted S, it's ok because yes, you take on foster children as your own, you know like on my days off they don't come anywhere with me, kind of thing. Babies don't notice that but I think if I had toddlers I would find it hard. In fact I looked after one of the toddlers from [another children's home] over Christmas and I found that really hard to then, how do you separate them? So on my days off I ended up taking him, you know, with me. I guess it's different if you're actually in a family situation but I found that really hard to separate. 'Cause sometimes I, even though you take them on as your own here we have staff that look after them, it's not a family. So but I felt bad leaving him home when I know I'm taking S to the park. But at the same time it's my day off and this is my one time that I can spend just with S 'cause he does have to do a lot of waiting and that's no bad thing but I try to keep my days off for me and him. And so, I'm not sure I could do it if it was toddlers 'cause where do you differentiate? (6:609)

Where foster mothering is constructed as 'different' this can become challenging to balance with adoptive mothering. Boundaries between meeting the needs (as the good mother should) of the children who are defined as 'foster children' and those defined as 'adopted children' - within the limitations of what is possible for one mother to provide - is not an easy task. KM also said in relation to her adopted son and the foster children that she cares for:

I feel like he can often get forgotten because this is what I'm doing here in [the home] and I'm actually having to now consciously ok, how do we manage, you know these two together? How do I meet his needs? How do I make sure he has time? How do I make sure they are, I'm really on top of their care and what's going on with them (6:693).

The section has attempted to draw, from the exploration of the findings presented in the previous chapter, a summarised response to the first research question enquiring how participants construct mothering. The following section will highlight how these constructions, of both adoptive and foster mothers, intersect with dominant discourses of mothering.

6.2.3 INTERSECTIONS WITH DOMINANT DISCOURSES

Galvin (2003) supports the call to “employ definitions of the family that depend on how families define themselves rather than definitions based on genetic and sociological criteria” (p. 238). This is a vital component of deconstructing essentialist, dominant notions of what ‘family’ means, notions that serve to marginalise those families who do not conform. However, the data within this study provides an example of how, even when families create their own definitions, these are formed in relation to dominant discourses that operate powerfully in both explicit and implicit ways. As Foucault (1972) articulated, knowledge and power are intrinsically entwined as power produces knowledge. The literature review in chapter two noted Smith, Surrey, and Watkins’ (1998) thesis that the experiences of adoptive mothers challenge the most fundamental assumptions concerning what is ‘normal’, ‘right’, ‘natural’, ‘real’ and ‘psychologically sound’ within family life. As the current research demonstrated, the same can be said of the experiences of foster mothers. However, this research *also* indicates how the manner in which participants, especially adoptive mothers, evoke and use constructions of family and mothering serves to reinforce dominant discourses. Participants traverse these two positions with ambivalence. Galvin (2003) also does acknowledge that a family’s self-definition is often “fraught with linguistic struggle” (p. 243).

Chapter two reviewed Rothman’s (1994, 2000, 2004) discussion of three chief ideologies shaping Western notions of mothering: patriarchy, technology and capitalism. As this study demonstrated, mothering also provides a site for the resistance of such ideologies. This section will summarise how the participants’ constructions of mothering intersected with dominant discourses within ideologies of patriarchy, technology and capitalism, particularly in terms of how these manifest as part of the ideology of intensive mothering. In addition, mothering is an arena of political contention in that it is supported by and helps to maintain ideologies of race, culture and class (Glenn, 1994). Within South African literature, however, investigation into how contemporary mothering is informed by race, class and culture has been almost entirely neglected (Kruger, 2006). According to Galvin (2003), transracial adoption places a family in a “vortex” (p. 238) of race, culture and class. Although constructions emerged in the data in relation to culture and class as well, chiefly discourses of race and racism will be focussed upon due to the limited length of this dissertation. This section will explore how constructions of mothering identified in the data collected from participants mothering with a context constructed as ‘transracial’ intersected particularly with such discourses.

6.2.3.1 THE IDEOLOGY OF PATRIARCHY

The previous chapter ended with a discussion of how, within the ideology of intensive mothering, the good mother is held in place by gender, the idea of the normative family and dominant notions of child development. Each of these is underpinned to various degrees by patriarchy.

By definition, to be an adoptive mother or a foster mother one does not need a man. When the adoptive mother is married or does have a partner with whom she co-parents the child, this child is no more ‘his’ child than he/she is ‘her’ child. Note Rich’s (1999) distinction (mentioned in chapter two) between the way in which ‘to father’ a child is denoted in the English language as providing sperm to fertilise an ovum, whilst ‘to mother’ a child refers to her continuing presence and caring activity. In the case of adoption and fostering, both mother and father require external legitimation through law (as opposed to automatic legitimation through biology) and ‘fathering’ is now brought ‘down’ (from a patriarchal perspective) to being defined according to active care as opposed to genetic rights of privilege.

This has the potential, in theory, to powerfully free adoptive and foster mothers from the constraints of patriarchy and for these forms of mothering to offer resistance to this particular ideology. Perhaps, however, the power of patriarchy secures its hold regardless. Bare in mind, once again, Foucault's theory (1978) that those who seek to oppose hegemonic forces are set up for failure and thus cultural hegemony is sustained. We see in the data that adoptive mothers and foster mothers are concerned with their relationship to the position of 'good mother'. Regardless of the role of a man in the arrival of the child or in the presence or functioning of the household, the very nature of the good mother is constructed according to a definition of gender that is nestled within a patriarchal system. The construction of the good mother relies on ingredients such as maternal instinct, maternal satisfaction, the mother as the primary care-giver, the crucial importance of maternal presence and so on.

Also, although similarities between adoptive, foster and biological mothering emerged in the data (in other words, participants were concerned with conforming to the position of 'good mother' as is the case in biological mothering) in addition there were unique differences. Some of these differences resulted in participants experiencing particular challenges relating to an alignment with the picture of natural mothering and with the notion that mothering comes naturally. In other instances, adoptive and foster mothers were constructed as possessing extraordinary qualities and mothering should therefore be engaged in with relative ease. How does one then begin to make sense of mothering when it seems difficult? In both of these scenarios suddenly 'freedom' begins to appear more like inadequacy. We see, therefore, how patriarchy continues to constrain even in a mothering context that bears characteristics that invite liberation.

Resistive agency was demonstrated by participants in a number of ways within the framework described above. The previous chapter explored how participants resisted constructions of the picture of natural mothering, of good mothering and of the relationship between the two. This resistance was, however, consistently imbued with ambivalence. For example, DN responds to the question "how do you understand the word mothering?" by saying,

(Laughs) ja, mothering...I laugh because it's such an un-, I'd like to say unnatural, it's such a, I don't get, let me start by what I don't understand about mothering. I don't get all these women who are dying to be pregnant and have little babies and, um, and live for that, give up everything else that they've got in their lives for that. I so take my hat off to them, I'm like 'God, I wish I could be more like that' but I'm not. I am, I mean I can absolutely feel that primal connection with a child and it makes me quiet claustrophobic. So I have it in doses and my children both know that they have part of me. They don't have...So for me mothering is different. It's the, it's providing the underlying security that you are there and you are, love them the most and you are the person in the world that is doing other things beyond taking care of the children. And then this is also why I beat myself up a bit 'cause then I'm like maybe this, maybe I should be home more, maybe I should be enjoying this more. Um, ja, the experience of little children was not my favourite. Both of them. I enjoyed H as a baby because he was, he was great. He didn't give me the stresses of sickness and he ate, he fed, he smiled, he burped, you know all of the things that baby's should do. So I could really enjoy the bonding with him you know. And also your first, you have the time to do that. And then A you know pretty much from the word go there were issues. You know, like, didn't want to take a bottle, and then got sick, and then this and then that. And then his competition for my affection was also really stressful. Um, so, those early baby years...I hold little babies now and there is a warm feeling, um, but it's not, I don't think that's the mother I'm meant to

be. I'm a, um, I think my journey in life is far more at a consciousness level with children, is to help them see the world in a way that they can really, uh, be free, be experimental, be who they want to be and, um, and to test the boundaries. Like I don't want it for myself and I certainly don't want my children to have a conventional life. So, um, so ja I think they both enjoy my company. I see they want to chat and play and that's the space I'm really starting to enjoy. So mothering is more of a relationship for me now, it's relationship building rather than a kind of primal nurturing. I know that's important and I wasn't very good at it. So I'll acknowledge my own limitation with that. I think I'm coming more into my own now (17:302).

DN says that she does not understand mothering in the sense that the construction of natural mothering that has been presented to her does not resonate with her own experience. Meanings of a 'primal connection' with and 'primal nurturing' of a child, of surrendering one's whole self to one's child, and of primarily being at home with one's children are, for her, not associated with enjoyment, contentment and ultimate fulfilment, but rather with often feeling 'claustrophobic'. She alludes to different 'kinds' of mothering, suggesting that it may be possible to alternatively construct one's role in a child's life at a 'consciousness level' (rather than the level of 'primary nurturing'), a level that views relationship with a child differently as holding possibilities for activities such as playful, free, unconventional exploration of the world. This can be mutually enjoyable and beneficial for both child and parent. Her description of mothering resists dominant discourses through drawing on alternative discourses of mother as career person, mother as possessing a separate identity outside of her maternal position, mothering as not always being satisfying and enjoyable, and as the role of mother being constructed in terms of a more mutual, experimental journey between mother and child in evolving consciousness about the world. She ends this quote by saying that she is now 'coming into her own' in terms of her children growing older and of finding this style of mothering that she constructs as being 'more natural' for her.

The resistive pursuit, as illustrated in this quote, only reaches a certain point. We see in the data that some participants expressed the discursive freedom to say that their experience of mothering did not fit the picture of natural mothering and that the attributes, thoughts, feelings and desires that are 'supposed' to come naturally did not. However, despite the alternative discourses that DN draws upon, despite her own experience of a different kind of mothering and the meanings which cluster around this experience for her, she still holds up the dominant construction of the good mother as the ideal. She says that she wishes she could fit that mould. She speaks of the mothering that this good mother delivers as being 'important' and assesses herself in this regard as not being 'very good at it'. She constructs this as her 'limitation'. Her resistance still takes place within persistent patriarchal scaffolding.

DC said "I had to work hard to be a mom" (14:58). When I asked her to elaborate further upon this statement she replied,

I don't have natural motherly...I absolutely adore and connect with teenagers and upwards but babies and small children give me the 'grills' actually. So, I mean I love my kids but I don't love, I'm not one that goes and picks up anybody's babies. So, you know, I probably tried way over hard with A, I did. Um, I was needing, trying to be the best mother in the world. I remember, I'm trying to think, who was that theorist? Winnicott I think? And he wrote, um, I can't even remember the statement, but I remember reading that when A was about three or four and it was 'the true measure of a parent is merely when the parent holds the child and the child sees itself reflected in the mother's eyes'. And it

was such a liberating thing for me because I really realised that it's not about *doing* the best mother but it was just about *being* a mother (14:82).

When I asked her to talk about how being a mother relates to being a woman, DC said,

You know maybe I'm hesitating to answer and I'm not connecting to your question because of the fact that I'm the main breadwinner in the house. Um, and I'm very career driven. I'm very um, I have a successful career. So I don't really see, I'm not really the nurturing, although when my kids are hurt I'm the one they want, when they've got an emotional thing I'm the one they talk to because I'm a woman but, um, you know I don't sit and play Barbies and do tea parties and stuff like that with them. So maybe I'm a different kind of mom. My daughter always says that I'm her role model, more because I'm so driven. Not because I'm the nurturing type as much (14:164).

DC challenges dominant discourses of patriarchy in that she positions herself as the 'breadwinner' and as having a 'successful career', as well as not identifying with characterisation as 'nurturing'. She constructs herself as driven and presents this trait as worthy of her daughter's imitation. Her initial quest to 'be the best mother in the world' involved attempting to 'do' the right things. She then discusses encountering the perspective of Winnicott on mothering as involving 'being' rather than 'doing'. It is interesting that she draws on a theorist who was crucially influential in forming the current notion of the good (enough) mother. She also describes herself as not being the 'nurturing type' (which she constructs as including the desire to pick up babies, play with Barbies and have tea parties with one's child), but then emphasises her conformance with a gendered picture of mothering that involves being the parent that her children seek when they are physically hurt or require emotional support. Although she confidently lays claim to a maternal position which is set up in opposition to the precepts of patriarchy, she still does not deconstruct patriarchy itself in a general sense, merely classifying herself as 'different kind of mom', involved in a different 'type' of mothering. In both of the examples cited here we see that the dominant patriarchal discourse of mothering is evoked and then a personal reflection on participants' own experiences of a different kind of mothering is presented. Although the dominant model is not directly confronted, some participants showed how they choose to mother differently in some regards and how different meaning possibilities are available. Although feminism has made great strides in this opening up of meaning space, the data from this study shows how these meanings are still assessed by women in relation to the 'standards' prescribed by dominant discourses of good mothering. Also, this duality of available spaces (traditional patriarchal constructions as well as alternative possibilities) can provide competing discursive options which create friction. For example, BH said

I think part of your femininity is expressed in enjoying children. I don't know, that sounds so ridiculous. That's part of my femininity, is expressed in caring for children. Now, I sought a way to care for children and fulfil that part of my femininity even when I wasn't married. That's why I came here to do that (13:479).

She maintains the dominant stance that caring for children is a reflection of femininity and yet she is also aware that a competing discourse exists which frames that position as 'ridiculous'.

6.2.3.2 THE IDEOLOGIES OF TECHNOLOGY AND CAPITALISM

Two main constructions of mothering were identified in the data as intersecting with discourses operating within the ideologies of technology and capitalism. These were the idea that good mothers produce good children and the discourse of legitimate belonging.

In TN's words, "the love of a mom is so sacrificial. So sacrificial" (2:301). KN spoke of her own godmother whom she aspires to be like. She describes this woman as "the most amazing mother...who's just so self-sacrificial" (3:400). The good, selfless mother places the needs of her children before her own. When IR chose to foster her son she explained: "I had to leave a lot of things, let go of a lot of things that I was doing. But it's fine, I don't mind. I'll do it for him" (7:67). CT also spoke of "not minding the sacrifices" (8:332). LL stated that mothering involves "sacrificing everything" (16:304) and MB emphasised that, as a good mother, "you put your kids before yourself" (21:339). Although the good mother is expected to find the activity of mothering her child enjoyable and fulfilling, her satisfaction is not the end goal. Her sacrificial devotion is towards the wellbeing of her child. In other words, the good mother's task is the production of the good child. Mothering is therefore the labour involved in this production. In chapter five, the implications of this ideological framework for mothering were described in relation to the value placed on mental labour as opposed to the lack of value placed on physical labour. Sullivan and Stevens (2010) describe the characterisation of women as emotionally available, relational and interdependent as one of the primary gendered constructions of modern society. They explain how "this discursive and socially constructed characterisation is problematic and has resulted in the consistent naturalisation and expectation of, for example, women's induction into forms of libidinal, affective or emotional labour in modern industrialised societies" (p. 417).

Mothering was constructed in the data as being "able to do a whole lot of things" (11:273). It is possible to view the manner in which this 'doing' of mothering was presented in the data largely as involving physical, emotional and relational tasks. Even the good mother's task of understanding her child could be seen as being constructed with more of an emotional flavour than a cognitive one. It is a pursuit rooted in care, nurture, the desire to attune and to enhance self worth of the other. It involves a personal, emotional 'knowing' of one's child (1:223; 4:130), a regard for the person of the child (1:450), and nurturing individuality and uniqueness (4:140; 11:327; 15:156). Through this lens, mothering as a physical, emotional and relational activity is reconstructed and, within an ideological realm where this form of labour is assigned lesser value than so called intellectual work, the activity of mothering remains an inferior occupation. On the one hand, the aim of deconstructing this logocentric binary in order to release care and nurture as the subjugated partner is a necessary one. On the other hand, it is relevant to notice how maternal care and nurture was also constructed in the data as involving intellectual problem solving.

Presenting certain maternal tasks as physical, emotional and relational is not a descriptive exercise, it is an exercise of social construction. The task mentioned above, that of understanding one's children, could be viewed differently. DD described mothering as "understanding where the kids are, trying to understand what's making them tick. What are the issues in their lives? Constantly figuring out what's the best way to deal with them" (18:173). Here we see that 'tuning in' to one's child can also be viewed as an intellectual, cognitive activity. NF speaks of disciplining her children by saying:

I think the biggest change is you change with the way they grow up. If you start parenting each one differently when you start realising who they are. I mean our punishment system for H and W is totally different just purely because, you know W you take something away and he'll repent, H you've got to threaten a smack and she's like 'aaah' you know? Whereas you smack him and it means nothing (9:498).

She is required to problem-solve in terms of thinking through how a particular method of discipline may have maximum effect on a child according to the individual nature of that child.

One of the ways in which being present and available to one's children was expressed in the data was through the good mother's ability to listen. This could be constructed as an emotional and relational activity, however, it was also discussed in the data in the following ways. DD said

I'd hope that I had a good relationship, with all the children, that if something's bothering them, especially when they're older and they're able to start verbalising, they can, they know that I'm approachable, um, confide in me (18:437).

LL said,

I've got to impart all those things into his life that he needs to carry through the rest of his life and, it's just, you almost get tired just thinking about like [breathes in deeply] everything, you know, that you sacrifice to just get them through those first eighteen years and then they're on their own. I mean even, you know, these years are so important 'cause then once they hit those teenage years they're kind of on their own like in their own minds and they've already got to know what to do if this situation happens, you know. Do we date? Do we sleep around? Do we drink? You know, they need to know all those things before that that they make the decision themselves that I'm not going to date until, you know, until I'm this age or until I find the woman I want to marry or this and that or whatever decision they've made" (16:308).

Here we see, in relation to her male son particularly, how her role is to teach him how to problem-solve and make wise decisions. Without the maternal role model, it is questioned, here, how the son will mentally (and morally) process such decisions. AN echoed this by saying that spending time with one's children is important "because I think you must be his friend, you know. It's very important because then, uh, when kids have problems they tend to get advice from their peers and it just becomes a nightmare" (19:339).

The good mother's role is to stimulate her children "in order, you know, for them to develop" (6:185). She plays a key role in facilitating their educational development and is required to think through what is best for them in this regard:

I think there're the normal worries of what school is she going to go to, um, should she go to a public school, should she go to a private school? I think those are quite big issues...The normal issues, you know, sex education, education about the biological workings of the female body, you know (8:293).

DN made the following comment relating to coming home from work at the end of the day and being required to then be present for her children:

You know you struggle to switch off when you get home from work and, or there's other stuff going on and then even though you're saying don't take it out on the kids, it's there, it's kind of like in the back of your mind. So your presence isn't uncensored, or, you know, whatever it should be. So, um, I think good motherhood is the ability to be completely present, you know (17:441).

Logically, if mothering was not a task that required cognitive and intellectual engagement, she would be able to remain mentally attuned to her tasks at the office. This is not the case. Her experience of being fully

present in an 'uncensored' manner with her children requires the full shifting of her attention, and the full shifting of her *mind*.

In chapter two, reference was made to Rothman's (1994) argument that capitalist ideology has informed views of mothering regarding rights of ownership of one's body and one's child. The construction of a child as being 'mine' emerged as a rather complex one in relation to adoptive and foster mothering. The previous chapter explored (in section 5.7.1) how the child's position can shift, and how construction as 'my child' takes place through systems and institutions, as well as through social verification. It was discussed by participants how a child becomes 'my child' through bonding and through the permanent nature of the relationship. There are instances where it is the activity of mothering that constructs the child legitimately as 'my own' and other instances where this is not the case. The previous chapter presented how, further, these meanings that assemble around the idea of the child being 'mine' are engaged with ambivalently, particularly by foster mothers. What might this mean, in terms of how the constructions of participants in this regard intersect with dominant discourses within a capitalist ideology?

If children can be viewed as commodities within a capitalist system (Rothman 2004; Taylor, 2004), relevant questions become, then, who owns that commodity? What does it mean to 'get' a child through adoption or fostering? What does it mean for a birthmother to relinquish a child and for an adoptive or foster mother, who is empowered to care for that child, to be able to claim that child as her 'own' (even for a season)? How does capitalism structure those power relations?

Within a capitalist framework, ownership confers rights. Ownership affords control and autonomous decision-making. Certain participants in this study who are foster mothers wrestled with constructing the child as their 'own' on the one hand, whilst being confronted with repeated challenges to this position on the other hand. KN referred to

the legal hassle that goes with it. I mean there're so many things that just highlight the fact that they're not your biological children, you know? Like the fact that there's only one medical aid that would cover us...It was at every point it reminded me that the documents aren't in and the process isn't finished. If you go to Home Affairs to get anything you've got to have a legal document to get it. If you go to, if I want to do anything on what grounds do I do it without legal documents? I mean, we're effectively in no-man's land at the moment when it comes to the older two...Cause we went about three years without documents, any documents and it was really difficult. [School name] accepted them because they knew the home and they knew the situation at the home, but schools want something. They're not just going to place some random kid. How do they know you didn't just kidnap them somewhere or something? (3:90).

IR, a foster mother, also spoke of the frustrations associated with caring for a child who is not legally constructed as 'your own'. She said,

taking a foster child out of the country is such a mission. Even if it's done on paper you can't take him out...you get to your embassy or your consulate and they say it's fine, you can go, but go and get the stamp from South African government' and they say 'no'...That's why we never adopted 'cause that's the same problem, you can't take that child out. Not even to visit your family. That's our worst nightmare ever...The South African government is, for me, very narrow-minded. Even the permission of the social worker: it's no problem. She has no problem. Even her superior signs,

without a problem...We've done it two years in a row and I won't go through it again...It costs you a fortune 'cause you have to pay for everything like a child that goes with has to stay in a hotel there for one night, if you haven't booked you've got no proof. You have to book your flight, you have to book and pay everything and then you start the paperwork. Financially you lose the money. It's fine but the child thinks he's coming with. He sees you preparing, you take pictures, he must go for fingerprints, you must do this, that, and there is, that's, then he must stay here. And I worried with [his biological] mum and dad in the beginning to leave him on his own. No food. They were not looking after him. And then you come back to the cops. You're home for an hour and the cops are at your door. 'Whose child is this?' (7:303)

She is required to take responsibility for the child's care as if he is 'her own' yet she does not have the power to make certain, autonomous decisions regarding her activities of mothering him. Viewed through a capitalist lens, when a relationship characterised by the pairing of 'I am your mother-you are my child' is established through personal connection and legal sanction, there is cementing of a contractual-type commitment. This could be seen as providing security for the child and reassurance for the mother (for example, in relation to 'losing' the child to the birth-family; to enduring difficult days). This 'contract' means that the child is regarded as "an equal to any other family member or biological child" (17:3). NF said,

I mean now I just feel the same sense of responsibility that I have towards my other kids. I mean my daughter's gone horse riding this morning and I'm thinking 'please Lord, don't let her fall off that horse' you know? And I think well, you sort of worry about all of them the same (9:820).

BH explained, "when you adopt you choose to bring that child into your family. You choose to love that child no matter what, to see that child through their entire life" (13:263). Ownership is therefore not only associated with control. To call a child 'my own' is to step into a relational commitment that is defined by an emotional bond and the assuming of responsibility.

Although the ideology of intensive mothering claims that to mother is to find satisfaction and enjoyment, the data in this study showed that to enter into a relationship within which one can call a child 'my own' comes at a cost to the mother as well. For example, in section 5.6.2.1.1 in the previous chapter, the emotional risk involved in bonding with a foster child, and even bonding with a child in the early stages of adoption was highlighted. Participants spoke of the 'costs' of mothering in general. KN said,

sometimes it's tiring, sometimes it's huge amount of responsibility and sometimes it's just the, you just realise how much favour's been placed upon you, and sometimes you just think God must really trust me and that's scary sometimes because, you don't, ja...Ja, it's got some scary bits, to be responsible for somebody else's life, to constantly be responsible (3:639).

A final note on the intersection between participants' constructions of mothering and capitalism relates to the following statement by IR:

We also don't do it for the money. What do we get? R98 a month. What do you buy for that? Really, what do you get for R98? They said when he was smaller it pays for the nappies. Ja, for sure. But that's what they think. If you're in it for the money I think you think differently. If you have ten, ok, it's R1000 a month, but what do you do for the children with it? I don't know, I haven't met many other, but I know another lady, she does it for the money (7:372).

Taylor (2004) discussed foster mothers' resistance to the commodification of their labour of child care. Here IR does the same in relation to her own mothering, but reports that there are instances where this is the case.

6.2.3.3 IDEOLOGIES OF RACE

Note the following excerpt from the interview with IR:

IR: He asked why he was Brown and we are White.

ADS: And how did you respond to him?

IR: That he comes from a Black mommy and daddy and not from us. That our mommy and daddy are White and that's how we explained it. And he accepts it (7:252).

This is one of many examples from the data where it is very clear to see how mothers construct discursive worlds for their children to inhabit. The process of this construction has powerful implications for the ideological perpetuation or reconstitution of concepts such as race. The majority of participants in this study (17 out of 21) are White adoptive or foster mothers of non-White children (16 have a Black child/children and one has a Coloured child). Exploring adoption and fostering that is constructed as 'transracial' afforded a fertile ground for investigating how these women construct race and racism within a South African context.

In section 5.7.2 of the previous chapter, it was noted how every one of the 17 White participants mothering transracially assumed an explicit non-racist and anti-racist stance (1:345; 2:224; 4:306; 5:448; 6:424; 7:235; 8:355; 9:550; 11:232; 12:372; 13:552; 15:329; 16:522; 17:133; 18:310; 20:608; 21:370). A colour-blind discourse was utilised as a strategy by many participants in order to enact this anti-racist philosophy. For example, NF said, "I don't see him as a little Black child, I really don't" (9:432) and BD said, "I don't even see their colour anymore in a way, you know what I mean? 'Cause they're mine" (11:369). Other participants assumed a colour-conscious approach to articulate their non-racist and anti-racist position. DN explained, "Some people are like 'we don't want to deal with race', but it comes up, it just comes up in everything and it's just under, what do you call it? It's a fault line" (17:123); "I can't say it's like 'oh, we're all the same, I don't see her colour'. I see her colour everyday" (17:206). DE spoke of wanting to instil racial pride in her adopted son:

Um, and there's only one other time that that's come up when, um, only once when he said 'mommy, I think I wish I was White' and it was helpful because Michael Jackson had just died and you know those photos of how he changed colour in the newspaper. I took them out and said 'here's a little boy that really really wanted to be White too. Look how beautiful he was there, look at this, look at this, look what he looked like in the end. And you know, he died, he never got to watch his children grow up, but he got to be White. But he was in a lot of pain and he was falling apart and he died and he never got to watch his children grow up. Just because he wanted to be someone God never intended him to be'. And he was like 'he should have stayed Black'. I'm like 'yeah, he should have stayed Black because God doesn't make mistakes. If God wanted him to White He would have made him White, but He didn't'. So we don't know what God's reasoning is for what God does but He does it His way (20:731).

The previous chapter described how these non-racist and anti-racist constructions were in fact, on the whole, mixed with a range of contradictory perspectives on race. This ambivalence emerges mainly in the following three areas and in the relationships between these areas: (1) their discursive position on race and racism; (2) the way they construct their relationship with their transracially adopted child; and (3) the way they talk about

the 'race lessons' (Smith, Juarez, & Jacobson, 2011) they provide their transracially adopted child in order to assist him/her in developing identity and coping with racism. The task at hand is to ask what might underlie these ambivalent constructions of race and relationships with racism. What theoretical perspectives may assist us in understanding the discursive processes at play? A number of theoretical frameworks presented in chapter two provide useful conceptual insights in this regard. Data in this study demonstrates how transracial adoptive mothers can participate in aversive racism, operate from within the White racial frame, and perpetuate systemic racism. Data from the current study also show how transracial adoptive mothers employ agency in discursively resisting dominant notions of race and racism.

In light of exploring race at the interface of maternal care, the theoretical stance of Sullivan and Stevens (2010) within their investigation into relational references in Black women's narratives of Apartheid is worth mentioning. They refer to the construction of women in contemporary society as emotionally available, expressive, relational and interdependent (which relates to the earlier discussion in this chapter concerning the ideology of technology). They then suggest that, although these constructions are clearly problematic, embedded within them may be implicit subversive potential. A relational and emotional discourse "that seemingly has greater purchase power for women" (p. 417) may assist in exposing relational and emotional racial encounters in everyday life. I suggest that the current study holds similar potential. Here, constructions of mothering rooted in dominant, gendered discourses of care, intersect with meanings of race in a context that is also characterised as intimate, relational and emotional. As this thesis has attempted to participate in the deconstruction of this gendered definition of women it is also worth bearing in mind the perspective offered by Sullivan and Stevens and to ask how this may enable the exposure of particular mechanisms of race and racism. The construction of mothering provided by the ideology of intensive mothering does provide a particular vocabulary of care, emotions and intimate relationship which offers a certain window into examining how race and racism may be performed in such a discursive space. Although recognising that this space requires deconstruction itself, discourses currently in operation within it allow for an investigation into related manifestations of race.

Aversive racism was described in chapter two as a subtle form of racial bias exhibited by those who explicitly align themselves with egalitarian principles and are invested in maintaining the self image of one who is non-prejudiced, but who express discriminatory attitudes and behaviours, especially in ambiguous situations and also through showing ingroup preferences (Hodson et al., 2010). Bonilla-Silva (2006) explains that this new racism is no longer overt but operates in a "now you see it, now you don't" (p. 3) fashion. If we explore further the findings from the data analysis, aversive racism does appear to account for some of the ambiguity at play. The three examples mentioned in the previous chapter (in section 5.7.2) from the interviews with KM, UC and TN could be explored further in this regard. It could be argued, however, that the majority of interviews in this study expressed aversive racism to varying degrees and so two different examples will be presented here in order to demonstrate the manner in which this phenomenon manifested repeatedly.

As mentioned, all participants overtly positioned themselves as non-racist and anti-racist. MB said, in relation to the tone of her adopted Coloured daughter's skin, "I just love her colour. It's like we lie in the sun for hours trying to get that colour. And, um and there's, and then I look at little White babies and I think 'they're so pale! It looks terrible'" (21:370). She discusses reading a "devastating" (21:445) article about a Black adopted woman whose race was not recognised within her White adoptive family, demonstrating her colour-conscious position within the non-racist discourse. She also said the following:

I was talking to, um, another girl about it, she teaches high school kids and, um, there're obviously different races in the class and she said 'but where we grew up, um, that in a way saying 'oh that's a Black person' it did have negative connotations in a way'. And maybe that's why I don't want to describe someone as that because I don't want them to feel I'm insulting them in some way. But actually that's my stuff, you know. And she was saying that in her class they talk about it all the time. And it's not a good thing, bad thing, or, it's just how it is. It's like you've got dark eyes and I've got, you've got brown eyes, I've got blue eyes. It's not one's better or worse it's just how it is, you know? So then I think with G I shouldn't not say that she's, cause when I say 'oh she's Coloured' then I kind of feel I shouldn't have said that. But she is. Hey? It's like so what? I mean she is (21:468).

However, her discursive position on race and racism is also constructed through other statements such as: "...we also went the Coloured route just because I just wasn't ready for a little Black baby, you know, as much as I wish that I was and I wanted to and all the other things. I thought let's start with, you know, (laughs), gradual transgression" (21:80); and "So I had this thing about hair, that I couldn't get used to this hard hair" (21:178).

MB continued to say,

I also wanted a Coloured baby for a lot of other reasons. Um, and that was that I didn't want to deal, at that time, because of all the other stuff, I didn't want to deal with additional issues. So for example, if we get a little Xhosa boy and he's not circumcised, if we get another, you know I discussed all these things with lots of people. And the language and the, and in a way it's like the soft option. So I feel like we've gone with the easy route, that actually we don't need to, like a lot of the cross-cultural stuff is not really applicable. Besides her skin colour it's not, you know, and she's, she could be, people have said to me 'is she Brazilian?' You know, I mean, she's just, you know what I mean, she could be Italian. So, um, so I think, you know if we got a Black boy, we might, then it'll be a whole different set of stuff we'd have to think about and deal with and work out how we're gonna do it. So like language, you know, do you teach them a Black language or don't you and maybe we should all in South Africa know a Black language anyway. And, ja, that whole circumcision thing and the whole, kind of there's lots of stuff that you think, anyway (21:400).

Although she speaks of the rich colour of her child's skin and how she prefers this to the skin tone of White babies, she then reframes the colour of her Coloured daughter's skin as holding the potential to be absorbed into her own ingroup. She could be regarded as Brazilian or Italian and so the 'transgression' into mothering a child from the 'outgroup' is minimised. Also, although, on the one hand, comparing races is constructed as being the same as comparing a person with brown eyes and a person with blue eyes, on the other hand, she constructs mothering a Black child as involving 'other stuff', 'cross-cultural stuff', 'additional issues', 'a whole different set of stuff'.

In terms of the 'race lessons' that she imparts to her child, she presents an ambivalent picture of acknowledging racial difference as well as minimising racial difference. She also said,

because like even though G's culture will be...English Anglo-Saxon I guess, or whatever we are, her colour is still, she's still Coloured so we can't change that, you know? So her race in a way is still, is

never gonna change. Ja...So she's Coloured in terms of her race but her culture's not a Coloured culture at all. Ja. But then that's also, what is a Coloured culture? I don't know (21:350).

Her child's culture will be the culture of the 'English Anglo-Saxon' family. Whiteness is the norm and the point of reference and in this way White dominance is perpetuated.

This occurs in a relational context in which MB deeply loves her child. She makes comments such as "we got G at three weeks and I was just completely and utterly besotted and I still am. She's just the most lovely little thing in the whole world" (21:85); "I promise you, she's, from the minute, I should show you pictures of the first day we brought her home and the family's (laughs) like passing her, like, we were all just completely smitten with her" (21:288).

The second example I would like to focus on draws from the interview with DD. DD, like the other White participants mothering transracially, positioned herself as non-racist in that she says: "it's no judgement passed it's just people are different, and it's ok, we are different and that's fine. We've all got our place in the world" (18:280); "...it doesn't make me a racist, I don't think anything about Black people. You know, I treat, I try and treat every person as an individual" (18:310). When asked whether she would describe her family as 'mixed-race' she said

Probably not. Not as a first, like 'oh we're...' No I would use other descriptors rather than the colour of our skin. More what we believe in, what we stand for, um, that sort of thing rather than, ja, what we look like, I guess. I think that's more important to who we are. Ja, what we believe in is very important to us, what we want our children, the kind of people we want them to become is more important than what they look like. It's be the same of one of our children was disabled or disfigured or whatever. You know, that's not the most important part of who they are, you know, themselves, their personalities, that's more important (18:347).

This colour-blind stance embodies an individualistic value system in which beliefs concerning who one is and who one can become take precedence over discourses of race as community experience and a site of communal struggle. DD compares having a family including a child of a different race to having a family including a child with a disability or disfigurement. This metaphor sets up Whiteness comparatively as 'natural', 'normal' and even 'healthy' and 'functional'. This presents a 'race lesson' to the child that who you are and who you become is not associated with the colour of your skin. In some regard this deconstructs the construct of race but in another regard we see how this approach itself is rooted within the White racial frame (Feagin, 2006, 2010).

In DD's interview we see an example that indicates the kind of ambiguous context that Hodson et al. (2010) describe as facilitating displays of aversive racism, particularly in terms of how she constructs her relationship with her child. This area is also a good example of Sullivan and Stevens' (2010) approach mentioned earlier in that it is within the constructed nature of how a woman 'should' bond with a child that a window opens into exploring how issues of race manifest relationally and emotionally. DD experienced difficulties bonding with and loving her adopted child, to the extent that she said "If I'd known now, well, ok now it's different, but if I'd known after we had adopted what it would be like (laughs) I think that would have made me, it was hard, it was very very hard" (18:24). DD's articulation of meaning related to this difficulty included many facets. She speaks of "having to treat a complete strange child as your own"; "no warming up period...no pregnancy", "when she came she was malnourished"; "she was quite sick, she had a terrible gastric bug and she was

developmentally delayed and emotionally blunted”; “she was very weak”; “being in a home for so long realising that if she cried no-one did anything. So she didn’t do anything. She didn’t smile, she didn’t cry, she just kind of looked at you with these blank eyes”; “I loved my boys so much, as a mother loves her children, now I have this strange child, who wasn’t even physically cute at the time”; “massive tantrums”; “she would scream like you were pulling out her fingernails” (18:24-81). DD also said

I went through huge issues and a deep depression actually over this period because it was, I love my boys but I wasn’t able to love her. And it made me feel like: what’s wrong with me? Why can’t I accept this child and love her? Why can’t I feel the same about her as I feel about these boys? What’s wrong with me? (18:116).

In the midst of answering these questions through discussing the factors mentioned above, DD also said, in response to what it means to be an adoptive mother,

All the same things are required of you...A few extra issues thrown in, I think. Um, like...the whole racial aspect, I suppose I didn’t mention that earlier, but I did find that hard. As much as I knew we were going to get a Black baby and, as much as you think it’s not going to be an issue, changing a Black bum is different to changing a White bum when you’re a White person. It’s just other things, I mean Black skin is different, Black hair is different to White hair and White skin and, completely out of my realm and having to ask advice, ‘How do I deal with this? What do I do with that?’, you know, ‘What’s the best thing? This cream isn’t working, what should I try now?’ Wondering when is she going to start noticing that she looks different to the family (18:243).

She reflects on the fact that she ‘didn’t mention earlier’ - when discussing the other range of issues that impacted on the process of bonding with her child - that race was also a factor. The adoption of a transracial child presented such a host of challenges to her, including the ‘strangeness’, ‘illness’, ‘weakness’, ‘blankness’, that difficulties concerning race could take cover within this ambiguous field. DD proceeded, however, to say the following:

And I suppose the day will come when she realises she doesn’t look the same as us but she feels like one of us. So then, you know, where does that leave her? Um, I think, ja, a lot of my thoughts have been about race and, so does this make me a racist because I don’t like her Black skin? You know, am I a terrible person to even admit that, to think that, to feel that? Where does that leave me? And, and it doesn’t, we all like the known. We like the same. And it doesn’t mean I’m passing judgement on Black skin, it’s just that I know what I know and I know what’s familiar to me and, ja, so White skin is familiar to me, it’s known. Um, and it doesn’t make me a racist, I don’t think anything about Black people. You know, I treat, I try and treat every person as an individual and...But it’s very uncomfortable, especially in this country, you know, where we’re so conscious of skin colour and how we interact, because of our past, you know we’re all try and be so PC and, you know, ‘I’m not racist’, ‘I’m not racist’. I think we were all brought up, our parents and we’ve been brought up inherently racist so to try and slough off those layers is hard (18:300).

Here we see one of the few examples in the data where the invisibility cloak that is draped over the covert, subtle form of aversive racism is pulled off...halfway. She acknowledges that she was ‘brought up’ with racist thinking. She shows her awareness of societal pressures to align with egalitarian principles and assume the ‘non-racist’ position and she speaks of knowing that she must engage in a process of ‘sloughing off’ the

layers of racism. However, in the same quote she *still* holds a non-racist stance, assigning 'not liking Black skin' to preferring the familiar as opposed to being a manifestation of racism. She concludes that this does not make her a racist". Here we see an example of the second feature of aversive racism explored by Hodson et al. (2010). She shows a preference for the ingroup as opposed to overtly discriminating against the outgroup: there is nothing inherently 'dislikable' about Black skin, she just prefers what she is familiar with.

As we explore examples such as this, and there are many more from this study that could be used as well, we see also how transracial mothering can both deconstruct racism as it manifests at an interpersonal interface whilst simultaneously reinforcing systemic racism. TN said the following:

I'd said to God 'I don't want to be involved with a Black child or one with AIDS, none of that'. So C showed me this little girl and she had AIDS and she was Black. I never thought I could love a Black child. I was raped by a Black man. So I thought I could never love a Black. And when A crept into my heart she crept deep. And honestly having my own child and an adopted child I can honestly tell you: there's no difference. In fact I think my daughter and I have a better connection sometimes than my son and I. She's my daughter. She really is my daughter...I would lay down my life for both of them (2:23).

TN presents an unquestioned love for her Black adopted daughter. Within the intimate context of their relationship her love for her Black adopted daughter is equivalent to the love she feels for her White biological son, and their connection is constructed as 'even better'. However, in the same quote perspectives of 'the Black man' are presented that have assembled around her traumatic experience in relation to an individual person who is Black. She does this in a manner that perpetuates discriminatory stereotypes that structure social relations. The previous chapter included a quote by TN in which she first stated that, through adopting a Black child she has realised that there are no differences between people of different races and she wishes that "they'd get rid of that word" (2:384). Immediately following this comment she then explained her 'whiteness' by referring to her daughter's blackness and evoking particular behavioural characteristics of Black people (and she noted that these are "funny" (2:394). Whiteness is upheld once again as the norm. In the first quote, she deconstructs race at a personal level through constructing the loving, committed relationship that she has with her daughter whilst simultaneously upholding systemic racial structures. In some ways engagement with race at a personal and a broader systemic level are switched in the second quote. Here she provides an example of the explanation by Hodson et al. (2010) of the roots of aversive racism lying in the tension between aligning with an egalitarian social position (they should get rid of that word 'race') whilst succumbing to the human tendency to categorise (Black people do things differently to White people) which she does in terms of her individual daughter.

LL speaks of falling in love (16:53) with her Black adoptive son when she met him. She explains,

when I saw him he was five months old and he was born with HIV and so he was sick when he was, when I had known him he was a little, he wasn't on ARVs yet and so he was a little, you know like out of all the other kids there he was the quiet one and just, really reserved. Families would come in and they would see him and 'Oh, yeah, da da da, we'd love him, da da da' and then 'Oh, but he's HIV' and then they'd say 'never mind' and take another child. And so I think I could really pick up the sense that he realised that he wasn't the chosen one of, you know he saw the babies come in and out and he kind of picked up a lot of, you know, that, um, just that sense that there was

something different, that he wasn't the one that was picked every time. You know he'd gotten used to seeing kids coming and going...ja, just touched my heart and I think just my compassion and everything was just so strong for him and just with the HIV and everything (16:89).

Her desire to adopt was motivated by affection and goodwill. She also speaks of being "able to give equal amount of love to four foster kids" (16:466). She argues that "a child is a blessing from God in any way that you get him" (16:475). This construction of love between a White mother and her Black adopted and fostered children dismantles racism at an intimate and fundamental level of human relating. However, the social structure that enables a White woman to express her compassion for Black orphaned children by adopting and fostering them through utilising her available resources still does perpetuate an unequal social system. LL also makes the same pairing of statements that we saw occurring in TN's interview. She emphasises that skin colour does not translate into any other inherent differences between people of different races by defining race as the

colour of your skin. But it, it's...it's not separating or defining who you are...I don't think this is his culture, this, you know, Black people are this way or that way. He's gonna be, like I said, I mean he grows up in our home. If we raise him in this way this is how he's going to be. He's not gonna, it's not like, you know, you can generalise: Black people are like this and White people are like this (16:513).

She then, also in response to being asked to construct her own whiteness, states:

I mean our foster son I think we notice 'cause he's naturally like the dancer, you know, like he's got rhythm. That's like a traditional African trait. They just naturally have rhythm and I think it'll, he's just very athletic and stuff and I think the African culture is very Athletic and fast so we see that with our foster son (16:559).

The abilities of her son are constructed through a racial frame that assigns certain skills to particular racial groups. This perpetuates racial classification.

This section has explored examples from the data indicating the manifestations of aversive racism as well as how transracial mothering can oppose racism at an interpersonal level whilst perpetuating racism at a systemic level. Two participants, DL and DN assumed a more conscious, reflexive racial stance. DL has adopted four Black girls, two of whom are biological sisters. She speaks of there being

strength in numbers. There's definitely, you know, the fact that they've got each other, uh, and, there's definitely that kind of sense of more belonging I think...I do see that they like that they're all Black, that they all have the same hair issues [laughs] you know?...they've got each other, you know, to bash things off. Even our neighbour, you know she's also adopted and I know A loves being with us, she loves, because it's a sense of belonging, in some crazy, 'cause she's...I don't want to talk about their life too much, but you know she's uh, she's, they've got one of their own, well it's also a kind of blended family, but S's got one of their own and then they adopted A...Ja, she's the only Black child in that house. So, I don't know. And she feels, I don't think it's that she feels 'out' in her home, it's just nice to be with people that are similar, you know, where she doesn't have to explain herself, she comes and she's relaxed (1:129).

DL, a single parent, has intentionally created an environment in which, although she has a powerful influential position as the (White) parent, her daughters also have norm-creating powers. For example, they share 'hair

issues'. In this sense DL is the 'odd one out'. She discusses how the transracially adopted Black child who lives next door finds a sense of belonging in her home.

DL also discusses particular strategies that she uses in terms of how she constructs race, how she engages in discursive gatekeeping, and the 'race lessons' that she teaches her daughters. For example, she says,

I can see with my kids, they just don't care, talk about it all the time. We talk about them being Black, me White, their friends will talk about it, they'll talk about their White mother. It just, because it's, that's how we've always been, so there's no other way to react (1:321).

When I asked her to reflect on her Whiteness, she said

Um, I think it's...they've had to process that, definitely, they've had to, because their friends will ask them. And, you know, the kids do say to me, they have, they don't say it often, and it's a very rare thing, but ja, they'd like to be White like me but I mean I always just go 'agh, please, do you want Nelson, do you think Nelson Mandela wants to be White? Or Oprah? I mean I don't think so, so like why on earth would you, you know, want to be White?' And I said, 'sometimes I'd like to be Black like you, so now we've got a problem and this is the way it is. So let's just suck it up'. You know, I don't want to feed the, the stuff, because you can make it into a big thing, you can hang all your stuff off it for the rest of your life if you want to. So I really really try not to allow them to sit on it. And I show them the dilemma from my side too so it's not just all about them wanting to be White. Hey it might be easier for me to be Black, so, let's just, rock on and live with it. So I try not make it into too much of a...hmm...we don't have a party around it. But we'll joke about it (1:480).

I mean we'll just, we'll joke about our different features, like they'll point to, laugh at my pointy nose and, you know, those kind of things, it's more just a, it's the shallow things, race things, it's shallow. Our basic values that are the same (1:498).

She actively deconstructs race for her children through inverting the logocentric binary, through exploring multiple perspectives on racial interactions, through attempting to balance acknowledging the role of race, but not using race as a defining structural feature, through utilising humour, and through emphasising the role of shared values.

DN explicitly attempts to engage with aversive racism. She makes statements in relation to racism such as "You know, you are dealing with, um, all sorts of unaware stereotypes that exist in society that you've got to deal with, in your family, they're everywhere" (17:83); "we are unaware of it, for the most part" (17:123); "But what annoys me is that people don't see it. And it's hard work showing it up for people because they get defensive" (17:152). She also said "of course I have my own racial issues, I mean you're White, you have your own racial issues in this country" (17:453). She recognises that her biological son actively constructs according to race:

He's five and everything is about who's Black? Who's White? Who's brown? And we've tried to get him to brown and cream and you know, we've tried to diffuse it. Whereas all the teachers and everybody says 'oh, children are completely blind to race'. Uh, and that kids, so that makes it our problem. Like 'what are you doing that your child is so race conscious?' Because somewhere down the line when he was really little, somebody pointed it out that him and A were different and it was reinforced. And so now he sees everything, like any South African and now it really, I realise my own, like, you always preface, um, a definition of somebody with race. That Black woman that did

this, that White guy that did that, that Coloured lady that did that. And it's just how we're conditioned. And then you realise that this is their language, so he speaks like that, at five. 'You know that brown baby mommy' or 'that brown this' or 'that lady' or 'why is it that all brown people work, sweep the floor?' And then you're 'well that's not...' Oh and another question was like, I'm just showing you the realities of what's going on here is in our home a lot, so he's like 'why's it that Black people don't work?'. So I was like 'what do you mean?' You don't want to heighten the anxiety. So I said 'what do you mean by work?' He says 'no, they don't sit on front of a computer'. So I said 'that's not work. Work is what you're seeing all around you all the time' you know? (17:96)

DN recognises that categorisation according to race is prevalent in South Africa, even amongst children, that her own son participates in this activity and that part of her role is to deconstruct this through her use of language. She speaks of White people referring to a Black domestic worker as 'the girl' and says "People can see I get annoyed by it. I'd like to deal with it better. I'd like to, without too much emotion, bring it up and say 'that's not on'" (17:147). DN also said

I realised that my world's very White. Um, I work with lots of Black people, lots of my colleagues are Black. I have a few Black friends. But in the family context and in the close friendship context it's completely White. And, uh, and it bothers me...it's gotta change' you know? So, I'm always striving for a more integrated life, racially. Um, but not at the expense of being fake, or, you know? (17:163).

It would have been useful to explore further with DN how she would construct meanings of an authentically racially integrated life.

She also voiced the following opinion:

I think you've got to take on dealing with the South African issues at hand, if you, and it doesn't mean you need a degree or, to be any more aware of reading the papers, but you, you can't close your eyes to these things. I think it's damaging to your children, ultimately, by trying to protect them. Well, so this is my view of what damaging is, for some people checking out of the country and prioritising your life is fine. For me I think it's damaging (17:470).

DN made a decision in relation to her children's schooling that demonstrated particular agency in terms of resisting dominant systemic racial mechanisms. DN White biological son and Black adopted daughter were both attending a play-school in which there were predominantly White children. Her son was thriving, but her daughter was not. Her son loved the school; her daughter did not. She described this school as a "good school, expensive, all the bells and whistles...Lots of toys, lots of great teachers, lots of help, lots of play ground, lots of stuff in the play ground" (17:475). She articulated both the fact that her daughter was unhappy and that the school was not racially integrated as problematic. She and her husband made the decision to take their children out of this school and move them to a more racially mixed school in the area. Her daughter is now very happy and thriving in the new school, but her son is "struggling" (17:469) in the new environment. This school has fewer resources (and half the number of toys). She reflects on this by asking, as much as she recognises that the transition has been difficult for her son, "what's the message to him if we take her out and keep him there?" (17:461). Would it be acceptable to leave her White son in a school of mainly White children, but move her Black daughter to a more racially integrated school? She concludes by saying

so maybe it's just me, but I think that this is, these are the things you have to start making decisions about living in this country, which are these trade-offs that you have to make. You choose to live in

a highly unequal society where you've had privilege your whole life. Something's got to give. And it's not sacrifice, it's, you know, calculated trade-offs. Or you can go lock yourself behind a fence and hope for the best (laughs) (17:498).

What emerged as DN's interview progressed, though, is that these continuous deconstructive and reconstructive efforts can also be experienced as growing tiresome. The contexts that she describes in which she is required to actively combat constructions of race include her home environment, work, her children's school, social settings and shopping centres. She describes the confrontations she engages in, experiences of being stared at and the "buttons" that are pushed in her which trigger emotional responses. She speaks of a journey towards making peace with the fact that race will always exist as a "fault line" (17:128). She describes how instead of getting herself "in a real knot if somebody treated her differently" now she has learned not to "take it so seriously" (17:129). At the outset of the interview DN described that her motivation to adopt related to "social justice issues" (17:60). In particular she was concerned with the "huge problem of orphans" (17:61) and she explained being driven by "a deep commitment to racial change in the country" (17:63). After describing experiencing personally the journey of transracial adoption she resolves,

So these things are important and they made me unhappy for a long time and it's not worth it. You've got to like do what you can and laugh at the other stuff, you know what I mean? Like it's just made me, um, so the gift that she's brought me, and particularly us, is the ability to say 'it is about the four of us' you know, that's the most important thing. Of course there's the world out there that you want to affect and family and whatever, but actually this is the most important thing. And if you're unhappy because of what's going on in here then something's not right, you know that doesn't make sense (17:173).

Although this participant demonstrated the most deconstructive reflexivity in her engagement with the workings of race and racism, she also speaks of turning her gaze from broader issues of social justice and utilising her energy to maintain the happiness of her family unit. This chapter will explore, momentarily, what the results of this study may offer in terms of proposing avenues for supporting adoptive and foster mothers. What DN's story indicates is how support may be crucial for mothers who are actively engaging in deconstructive pursuits in order to sustain this stance over time.

Deconstructing 'transracial adoption' and 'transracial fostering' are monumental endeavours. This requires the legitimization of adoption and fostering as 'real' and 'natural' family forms, the construction of adoptive and foster mothering as good mothering, the acknowledgment of good mothering as context dependent and negotiable, as well as the disentangling of good mothering from the gendered confines of parenting. It also centrally requires the deconstruction of race and racism. Although this task seems overwhelming, the dismantling of each of these discursive strongholds affords a furthering of justice, fairness and equality not only in homes where family members have skin of different colours and where children may have been welcomed in different ways, but in the varieties of worlds of all mothers, fathers and children.

6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT OF ADOPTIVE AND FOSTER MOTHERS

The majority of research in adoption and fostering literature has focussed on the outcomes of children and has neglected outcomes among parents. McKay, Ross, and Goldberg (2010) emphasise that studies on the transition to parenthood have concentrated almost exclusively on biological parenthood. Although there has

been criticism leveled at studies comparing the adjustment of adopted children and non-adopted children, these authors highlight the value of comparatively exploring adoptive parents and biological parents, particularly in relation to their needs. They argue that “research that directly compares the support needs of adoptive and biological parents may provide strong evidence for differential support services for these two groups of parents” (p. 139). The current study responds to and extends this argument in two ways. Firstly, although this research did not explicitly compare the manner in which adoptive parents versus biological parents construct mothering, information in this regard did emerge quite clearly through the fact that many participants were also biological parents and provided constructions of mothering on the basis of both of these positions, allowing for comparisons to be drawn. Secondly, the study also demonstrates the value of not only comparing the needs of adoptive and biological mothers, but including comparative explorations into the needs of foster mothers as well. Seeing as the vast majority of literature centres on the experiences of biological mothers, comparing both adoptive and foster mothering to the information provided in this canon allows for insight into how to use existing literature and where to pursue further relevant research.

As with all the central concepts in this study, the idea of support is also regarded as being socially constructed. Neither the need for support nor the nature that that support could assume emerged clearly or simplistically in the data. Both were contested. The meaning of the construct of support should not be taken for granted. Even though foster mothers in the study spoke of their perceived need for support more consistently than adoptive mothers did, the idea of support is spoken of across the data in a wide variety of ways. Support entails enjoying a shared discursive space (5:178; 11:446; 12:447; 16:786; 18:464; 21:323). Support is framed as being understood (13:676; 16:753; 18:474), and as experiencing acceptance (3:775). Support includes receiving guidance, in the form of advice (4:747; 5:212; 15:453; 17:576), guidance in relation to how to answer difficult questions posed by one’s child (6:742; 20:874); and information (9:881; 11:406; 17:568; 18:470). Support includes having someone to turn to when one is struggling (4:686), being encouraged (16:788); having an outlet to discuss “issues” (13:674). Support includes emotional support specifically (18:489). Having support is also constructed as assisting the family to achieve normalisation (for example, seeing other adoptive families means that one is not constructed as different) (4:683; 16:761). This variety of support constructions indicates both the need for a range of supportive practices and resources and also shows the multiple points at which support can be offered. Attempts to offer adoptive and foster mothers support should take this into consideration.

Adoptive mothers, in particular, appear to engage with the construct of support with some ambivalence. It can have value, but it can also serve to participate in accomplishing one of the key aspects that creates the need for support in the first place, namely the construction of adoptive mothers as deviant in relation to the picture prescribed by the ideology of intensive mothering. ‘Support’ can contribute to othering adoptive mothers. Perhaps it is the greater degree to which foster mothers are constructed as different in relation to the dominant discourse of mothering that allows for the need for support to be acknowledged more readily. Adoptive mothers may be constructed as slightly closer to the dominant construction in some regards and hence the dissonance between similarity and difference is louder, resulting in a relationship with the notion of support being characterised by more ambivalence.

This section will separate the findings from participants who are foster mothers and participants who are adoptive mothers in order to offer more specific recommendations regarding each group. Findings from adoptive mothers will be discussed first, followed by findings from foster mothers.

6.3.1 SUPPORT FOR ADOPTIVE MOTHERS

Participants (such as NF) who described support specifically designed for adoptive mothers in a manner that indicated perpetuation of the exclusion of this group of mothers from the dominant discursive sphere made comments such as

I think the support group just works the same way as it would work with a normal, I mean do you really want to feel different the whole time and I'm the adoptive mom so I must go to the adoptive support group as opposed to just my little group?...You also feel that your friends in the group know your whole story anyway so they sort of, you know, I mean you go to a moms and tots group and everybody very quickly susses out 'oh, you know, this is this child and they came from here and they belong to that person, let's get on with life'...So, I don't think you need a specific adoption support group, I really don't. I think I would steer away from it actually 'cause I, I don't want things to look like they're any different from the normal sort of, we're just a normal family (9:900).

On the other hand, areas were identified in the data in which particular support would be valued. DD spoke of her need for support by saying, "I know I reached out to people but it would have been nice to have more support specifically for people in my situation" (18:485). MB summarised the conundrum between needing specific support and not wanting specific adoption-related support by commenting

Um, I don't know. I've kind of got mixed feelings about it. 'Cause sometimes I think it isn't different and it shouldn't be different so why make it different? But then other times you do, you know, I know A goes to these things every now and then and she gets great information and insight into certain, like you can pre-empt certain things, you know? Ja, so maybe I should. I think I'm also, just with all the stuff we went through you just get kind of fed up with support, you know? In a way. You just want to get on with life (21:519).

Participants who are adoptive mothers positioned in the data both as adoptive mothers and as mothers. Although in many ways this form of mothering challenges and resists the dominant form of mothering presented by the ideology of intensive mothering, there is also much discursive space that is shared. For example, participants evoked the notion that mothering should be satisfying and pleasurable and yet their daily experiences include tiredness, frustration and sacrifice. LL said that as a mother "you're sacrificing everything" (16:304). Mothering is constructed as being "very demanding" (11:273). UC, a mother of a biological son and an adopted son spoke of "those days when they're both being monsters" and one asks oneself "why am I a mommy?" (4:426) and OS, also a mother of biological and adopted children spoke of the moments when she asks "remind me again why I wanted to be a mother? And to three? You know I must be mental!" (5:383). Participants spoke of the task of juggling many roles and of being required to flexibly navigate mothering and pursuing a career. They explained that mothering requires "endless, endless, endless patience" (4:524). In many regards, therefore, investigations into the provision of support to mothers in general hold relevance for adoptive mothers as well. The previous chapter also showed, however, how the construction of the 'good adoptive mother' included additional tasks and this needs to be taken into consideration when exploring support for adoptive mothers.

Participants emphasised the value of feeling understood as mothers (5:178) and as adoptive mothers (12:447; 16:753; 18:474). When this understanding was present it appeared to occur largely through friendships. OS explained that "very close friends of ours adopted and we spent time with them and

discussing and they kind of just, um, made the whole situation peaceful for us” (5:59). She also said “I’ve struggled to find information...What I have learned has been through talking to C [friend who is also an adoptive mother] and my friends” (5:487). DD said

If I had felt like I had to pretend that I was the perfect mom I think it would have killed me. It would have been awful. Um, ja, we’re in a very blessed situation where we’ve got *really* good friends around us who we can be real with and share that things aren’t going so well and they didn’t think an less of me or think any less of G or whatever and just let us be who we are (18:380).

Participants also spoke about the value of comparing the experiences of their friends who are biological mothers and their friends who are adoptive mothers in order to gain insight into the dynamics within their own families. For example, OS said that with her friends who have adopted transracially

we can talk about the feelings. ‘Cause now those friends of ours they’ve got two girls and they adopted a boy. And like she’s been struggling with a boy and it’s are you struggling with them being a boy ‘cause it’s a boy or are you struggling because it’s a Black, adopted boy? Like me with H, ‘cause she’s very strong willed, you know. Is it that she’s strong willed ‘cause she’s adopted? Is it strong willed ‘cause she’s a girl? Um, but then I chat to my friends who’ve got White kids and they say their three year old daughters were nightmares so then I think, ok, she’s a girl. You know? So it’s all these things, you do, it’s in the back of your mind constantly. Is it ‘cause of that? How much is genetic? How much is environmental? How much is that she is who she is ‘cause she’s been growing up in this family? What would she have been like had she been with her birth family? (5:338).

The role of support groups with regard to their potential for creating relationships that can offer understanding was presented in a mixed manner. BD said,

I don’t think there’s enough out there, I really don’t. Um, I do, there is one support group that meets in Midrand once a month. And there’re issues that come up just in terms of the whole adoption process or the fostering process or adopting an older child versus babies. I think that’s huge (11:406).

However, also in relation to support groups, UC explained,

you go to them and the people are so diverse that you have nothing in common with them anyway so that’s why a lot of them don’t work ‘cause you’ve got people from such a cross-section of society that unless you have a group within your circle of friends who’ve adopted I think it’s unlikely to work (4:701).

DD also reflected on this by saying “I know there’s lots of groups...we never really went to them...the one person I met with who’s only adopted children, she wasn’t able to have biological children, and I could just see she couldn’t understand the issues I had at all” (18:474). Simply because another woman is also an adoptive mother does not mean that a supportive relationship will evolve. Participants spoke of drawing support from friendships defined by a range of common factors. OS, EW and MB spoke of a church setting providing a social circle in which families who have adopted and who also share common perspectives on aspects such as faith can support one another (5:246; 15:495; 21:323).

There were instances in the data where a participant spoke of the value of support groups for the adopted child rather than for the mother. For example, BD said

I suppose you see people, you visit other adoptive families so that the kids can see that they're not the only ones. Um, you know. Um, and it is different for them, I think it is different for them. They're a different colour, and kids point that out (11:458).

UC said

Um, I think it would be nice in this country if there was more support groups. I don't *really* feel that I need one but what we do enjoy is the Rainbow Group, I don't know if you? Well, obviously you know M. Um, and I like that because I like S and J but S in particular to see that he's not the only one, that there are other families, that he's not so unique (4:679).

She does not want to construct herself as a mother as different and as needing specific support, but she constructs her child in that light. Although she does not venture near the possible value of engaging with other families who have adopted transracially for herself, she constructs this as valuable for her child. Perhaps this suggests that it is easier to hold a construction of one's child being different and requiring additional support than it is to engage with how dominant discursive structures position oneself in the margin. On the other hand she may be resisting the dominant discourse by dismissing a need for personal support, and she also may be engaging in resisting her child being constructed as 'different' by normalising his experience through exposure to other children in a similar situation.

In addition to the central role of friendships, participants identified particular needs regarding support: the need for more general information and advice; the need for specific support regarding bonding and attachment with an adopted child; the need for support in relation to responding to 'the tough questions'; navigating the adoption experience in relation to the opposition of extended family members; the need for information on adoption within the South African context specifically; support regarding mothering a child who is HIV-positive; and navigating race, racism, culture and language. Data collected from the participants in this particular study indicated that these are predominant areas in which support for adoptive mothers in South Africa needs to be enhanced. Each of these areas will be explored in the sections that follow.

6.3.1.1 GENERAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Many participants expressed the need for further information. BD explained that after her and her husband had been assessed by the social worker in terms of their fitness to parent they waited for information to come

and nothing came...In terms of just information about adoption and issues you might have and now you've got two White kids you're going to have another kid, what issues might come out of that? Bonding issues, um, just what to do with their hair, what to do with their skin said 'actually it's up to you to go find that stuff out and read about it or join a support group'. Well I think we were in a bit of, I think we felt a bit let down. We wanted more 'cause we didn't know quite what to look for. If she'd given us a list of things to go look up on the internet or, even that, if she wasn't prepared to actually give us the information. I don't know if it's different with private adoptions if you do get more information 'cause you're paying more money, but, um, we just kind of expected more in terms of getting information back. But it's obviously not in their, like, what they do (11:141).

DN said,

I think there are issues about adoption that are important to notify mothers about, things like, I mean if I didn't go to an adoptive parents workshop after we got A, I wouldn't have known things like from an early age mention adoption. Mention that she was chosen, even if she cannot comprehend it yet. I would have maybe been like one of those moms like 'oh when's the right time to break this to her, or to him?' (17:568).

BD also discussed how

there's no real website where you can go onto it and read...it would be nice to have, like, a little book to download or something where you can just read to the child about adoption and how, you know, its normal, in our family, it's normal, or whatever (11:413).

Participants in this study were motivated to adopt for a range of reasons. Infertility was only one of the reasons and was not the experience of most participants. OS said

one lady gave me a book but she was talking from the point of view of someone who couldn't have children. So she could use that analogy that she couldn't have children, whatever. I mean, we can. We chose to go this route. Um, so, you know, it would be nice just to have a little but more information freely available in that area (5:492).

We see in the data the role of social workers, workshops run by adoption agencies and child welfare organisations, online information and literature in terms of providing information to adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents. Although experiences reported by participants were varied in this regard, the data indicates that available information resources, in general, are insufficient.

6.3.1.2 SUPPORT REGARDING BONDING AND ATTACHMENT

As explored in this thesis, some participants constructed bonding with their adopted children as being a very difficult process. DD explained,

I went through huge issues and a deep depression actually over this period because it was, I love my boys but I wasn't able to love her. And it made me feel like: what's wrong with me? Why can't I accept this child and love her? Why can't I feel the same about her as I feel about these boys? What's wrong with me? (18:116).

She described this further by saying

I found that we were thrown into the whole thing completely without support. And I think because we had children already they figured that we didn't need support. We knew how to do the parenting thing. But the emotional support wasn't there and that's what I needed...And I think that was one of our fears with going to these groups, you know, we're supposed to be all grateful and absolutely in love with our children when I wasn't and...I don't know if people would completely understand me. And, ja, so I think, maybe, no, I know I reached out to people but it would have been nice to have more support specifically for people in my situation. Now I'm guessing there's more and more people like me, I don't know? It's not that uncommon anymore. Um, and I said to our social worker, 'cause she was caught a bit off-guard, um, on one of her follow up visits she kind of, like I sort of, I tried to not make it sound so terrible that she thought she would have to take the child away from me, but I think she was like 'oh, gosh, there're some issues here'...I think we were a bit angry with her like 'how could you just dump us in this situation?' I don't think, you know they're so

understaffed and over worked and out of time that they don't have time. You know for them it's all about the physical, placing the children and making sure everything's ok, whereas the emotional support of the mothers is not something they've got capacity for (18:460)

Similarly, BD said

You know no one warned me. I think that was the big thing, no one actually warned me that there would be any bonding problem. Everyone I spoke to it was wonderful and great and, you know, there's no problem and that was a bit of a shock. So people I speak to now, I say 'listen, there might be bonding issues, don't, you know, and if there're not, fantastic, if there are, don't worry, it'll come, you know' (11:79).

We see that there is both the need to offer prospective adoptive mothers the opportunity to explore the notion of bonding with fellow adoptive mothers and/or professionals prior to the child being placed as well a need for ongoing support for adoptive mothers who are struggling in this area. This dissertation has largely explored how adoptive mothering is constructed in relation to the norm of biological mothering. We see also that, within the realm of adoptive mothering, there are powerful norms in operation too that make voicing experiences such as difficulties in bonding challenging. As diversity needs to be recognised across the board with regard to alternate constructions of mothering, so too is there a need to highlight the range of experiences that are present within the accounts of adoptive mothers. It is vital that such needs have a platform to be voiced in order for effective support to be developed and offered. We also see in the above quote that relying on the support of social workers alone is insufficient and that alternative avenues for the delivery of support needs to be explored.

6.3.1.3 RESPONDING TO 'THE TOUGH QUESTIONS'

Apprehension emerged repeatedly in the data around being required to answer 'the difficult questions'. DE emphasised the importance of the adoptive parents' ability to do this through the following statement:

I think moms have different experiences and there's different questions that are asked and very often just by being together there's a way of, you know, my kid asked this, kind of 'oh, what did you answer?' to kind of prepare yourself 'cause the bottom line is we know with kids, very often, if they ask a question and they get brushed off they might never raise that question again. So you need to know that you can answer it calmly enough and well enough and, um, and so if you've been able to think through the different questions, you might never get them, but to be able to think through them (20:874).

'Difficult questions' related to a range of issues, including skin colour, questions about being adopted, and the child's adoption story. LL said, "he's going to ask me 'why am I a different colour than you mommy?' you know? It's, when you adopt a child you're gonna have to explain all those things and how are they gonna react?" (16:435). These 'difficult questions' also related to issues such as abandonment, rape and HIV/AIDS. The following three quotations, by OS, LL and KM, illustrate participants' concerns in this regard:

I think I'm scared that she's gonna have a negative reaction in whatever way. Um, she was abandoned so I think to accept or realise that your birth mother didn't want you, um, ja, how she's gonna react...Is she gonna reject me in the end, you know?...So, um, I think it's just how to handle when we do eventually, um, when she starts asking the difficult questions, how do I answer? You know? Do we tell her exactly what happened or not? (5:230).

I've wondered what he's going to think growing up, his mom was 21 when she gave birth to him but she was raped by two men and, just to have to explain to him how he was born and how he was conceived and why his mom didn't want him. And it's a difficult topic...how do I explain to him, you know, his natural father was a man that did something so hurtful to a woman and violated a woman in such a way? But to make him understand that's not who he is?... He's got a life threatening disease. How do we explain to him, you know, that God still loves...? (16:389).

...as S gets older and the questions start to come out. That might be a time when you do need support because you're gonna face issues there as an adoptive mum that you're not going to face if he were my own natural child. There's gonna be questions that, I mean, you know he is the product of rape. One day he is going to have to know that. I sometimes think, gosh, how will I know when, how will I know how to broach this with him. Somebody said to me 'just lie'. I said 'I'm not going to lie to him because that will wreck my relationship with him'. Obviously he's not going to know when he's four but at some point he's gonna ask (6:727).

Participants repeatedly expressed the need for guidance related to how to address these complex issues with their adoptive children. UC mentioned receiving "really good advice" (4:747) from the head of a support group and others spoke, once again, of receiving advice from friends who have had similar experiences. On the whole though, this area seems to be one in which access to information seems problematically insufficient.

6.3.1.4 SUPPORT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF OPPOSITION FROM EXTENDED FAMILY MEMBERS

A number of participants discussed the opposition that they received from extended family members and the difficulties of negotiating this. This related particularly both to transracial adoption as well as, in the case of AN - a Black mother who adopted a Black child - to the adopting of a child who is not known to the family (i.e. is not the child of a family member or close friend). Although in most cases family members softened over time and grew to be more supportive, participants spoke of the stark difficulties of this dynamic which impact upon the child, the parents and the family system as a whole.

NF, for example, said,

we didn't expect the sort of antagonism in the extent that we experienced it. You know we've just sort of stuck to our guns and just said 'this is really what we feel we need to do' so, and everybody's come around eventually. No, they have but it's been a long, long road for us. You know to the point that we almost gave D back 'cause it was like 'do we really want to put this child in this situation where the other kids get treated differently and they're favoured and he doesn't get what they've got from the grandparents 'cause they just can't accept it (9:88).

DE commented,

about a week before we got him, um, his, my husband's parents said that if we adopt him they'll have nothing more to do with us. And it was kind of a decision about do we lose him and them or just them? So we chose we'd lose them. So that was a bit stressful (20:126).

This is, therefore, another area in which additional information, further opportunities to engage with others who have encountered a similar process, and ongoing emotional support is important and appears to be currently insufficient. This also demonstrates that support is necessary for family systems, not only for adoptive parents.

6.3.1.5 INFORMATION ON ADOPTION WITHIN THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

An area of concern which emerged in the data relates to the lack of information on adoption within the South African context. BD said “The web, the internet’s not very helpful ‘cause the stuff on cross-racial, trans-racial whatever adoptions is very American, um, and it’s not applicable at all to South African context” (11:410). DD found that “there’re no books you could read, there was just nothing. Nothing written about, especially about our situation, you know, in South Africa, having biological children, then adopting. I felt very much at sea” (18:472). It is vital that more literature is published regarding adoption in South Africa.

6.3.1.6 SUPPORT REGARDING MOTHERING A CHILD WHO IS HIV-POSITIVE

LL described caring for an adopted son who is HIV-positive by saying

I think just emotionally it’s, it’s harder than I thought it would be. And I mean I would tell people ‘oh no, it’s fine adopting an HIV child. There’re life span is this, they’re on medicine and he’s healthy and this and that’. And then I started realising, no it’s actually, emotionally it’s quite a strain and I wouldn’t recommend it to everyone. You know, I’ve felt what it is to really take on that kind of pressure (16:693).

She spoke of difficulties related to explaining HIV/AIDS to him, of her concerns that others would assume that she is also HIV-positive, her fear of his possible death, her struggles in relation to her faith, and the pressure to ensure that he receives medication according to the exact time schedule. She said

with HIV I’ve wanted a group of people, you know, in that same situation that have maybe adopted an HIV child. ‘Cause there’ve been times that I’ve really been struggling and I’m down one week and I don’t know who to go to. I don’t know anyone else who’s adopted an HIV child and I can go to someone and they can encourage me. But it’s like you don’t, they don’t understand the burden that I’m feeling at that time. And so that would be nice and, you know, not a family where say the mom is HIV and has an HIV child but a family that they also don’t know anything about the disease, they don’t have it. It’s that their children do. So I think there’s understanding in the church but I don’t think like support like a group of ladies, like I’ve thought of doing something where it’s adoptive parents or foster parents that actually get together. Because we do go through the same, there are differences...so ja, I think it would be nice to have more, to know more people (16:786).

DN spoke of the value of providing education regarding HIV to prospective adoptive parents in order to facilitate their consideration of adopting a child with HIV. She said

I think if there was more awareness and good education about treating children, HIV positive children, um, and you know that’s a huge advocacy role that you take on, which is tough but secondly it’s much more manageable than you think it is...if your child is HIV positive what, um ‘cause the treatments are getting better and better and cheaper and cheaper. It’s like treating a child with diabetes. You know it’s not the same, but it is the daily medication, and it’s totally manageable (17:597).

Participants constructed mothering a child with HIV differently. As mentioned above, LL regards the experience as emotionally taxing. DN here constructs it as ‘more manageable than you think’ and BH (a foster mother) also constructed mothering a child who is HIV-positive as manageable. What is important is

that the range of experiences are presented to prospective adoptive parents in order for an informed decision to be reached regarding the adoption and care of a child who is HIV-positive.

6.3.1.7 NAVIGATING RACE AND RACISM, CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Within the data, an explicit need was stated by participants to develop in their ability to assist their transracially adopted children to think about matters of race. As this thesis has explored, many implicit issues relating to race and racism emerged as well. Apart from struggling to access meanings of race, participants repeatedly spoke of not knowing what it means to facilitate opportunities in which their adopted children could learn about or experience the culture of their birth families. For example, UC said,

...that's the really difficult thing. I don't know how to do it. 'Cause I don't know the culture. I mean S won't eat pap, not that pap is just really Black culture, but he doesn't, ja, I just don't know how to do it...Ja, I don't know how one goes about that, actually...A few sort of African paintings on the wall but I don't think it's about that. It's...I don't know (4:615).

Participants also expressed a lack of clarity regarding the role of language in relation to race and culture. These uncertainties emerged persistently throughout the data and indicate that opportunities need to be provided, perhaps in the form of workshops or online forums, for adoptive parents and prospective adoptive parents to explore meanings related to these constructs. In DN's words, this is a 'journey':

I think [transracial adoption is] such an opportunity to learn about the country and about who you are and what does Whiteness mean? What does Blackness mean? How do you deal with your own identity here? Especially obviously in mixed race but, so that wouldn't apply to same-race, what are they called? (laughs) White babies. Um, I, you know, I think the journey for both of us and still to come has been profound about living in South Africa (17:584).

6.3.2 SUPPORT FOR FOSTER MOTHERS

In the data a number of needs of foster mothers emerged and areas in which support could be offered. These included the need for support in the form of finding empathic understanding from others, as well as improved legal and administrative support, receiving adequate information on the foster child's history where possible, particular support relating to foster mothering within the context of a children's home, support in terms of making sense of bonding, attachment, trauma and neglect, and support in relation to making sense of transitions.

6.3.2.1 SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF FINDING UNDERSTANDING

In the previous section on support for adoptive mothers the need to feel understood was mentioned. This emerged within the data collected from foster mothers as well. In section 5.6.1.4.2 of the previous chapter, a list was provided of the number of times that BH, a foster mother of 12 traumatised children, asked questions such as "do you understand what I'm saying?" or "does that make sense?". BH mothers in a context that she experiences to be very different from 'normal' mothering and she states that "most mothers have no flippin' idea" (13:336) what she encounters in her mothering. She continues to say,

I think every foster mother needs to have an outlet where they go to either a support group or they hear other people having issues and they can talk through those. Um, I get a lot of support through other friends who are mothers but to be honest they can't always understand what I'm going

through because they don't live it...So, yeah. So I think that's an important element I need to find but, um, if I'm going to do it (13:674).

BH ends this quote by emphasising that finding this kind of understanding will be vital *if* she continues to foster. Engaging in a form of mothering that one perceives to be intrinsically different from the mothering that other women engage in, and hence feeling as if one cannot find understanding in others, is pivotal in being able to sustain caring for children in this manner. It is very important, therefore, that opportunities be created in South Africa for networking, sharing information, accessing relevant literature and building communities of foster mothers who are caring for children in a similar context.

6.3.2.2 LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT

Foster mothers discussed the difficulties they experience when dealing with the administrative and legal dimensions of fostering a child. KN spoke of "the legal hassle that goes with it" (3:90) including struggles she has encountered with medical aids, the Department of Home Affairs, gaining legal documents, and difficulties with school enrolment as a result. IR explained the difficulties she faces regarding travelling with her foster son:

taking a foster child out of the country is such a mission. Even if it's done on paper you can't take him out. The government in South Africa should be a bit more lenient...You get to your embassy or your consulate and they say it's fine, you can go, but go and get the stamp from South African government' and they say 'no' (7:303).

BH discussed the systemic difficulties that she faces related to the role of social workers:

the social workers are very, very, very behind on all our cases. We had another, we had an assistant foster mom that left two years ago and the children are still in her name, some of the children because they're so far behind. Social workers actually renewed the, they didn't come and visit, they didn't call, we had told them she had left and we had replaced her, and they didn't call and they didn't remember what we'd said and they went ahead and renewed her name even when she's not even here. So now we're way behind. So I'm just saying legally it's a big mess (13:468).

The lack of support experienced by foster mothers at the levels of government administration, legal procedures and social services requires attention. These structures are experienced as frustrating and cumbersome as opposed to supportive.

6.3.2.3. RECEIVING ADEQUATE INFORMATION ON THE CHILD'S HISTORY WHERE POSSIBLE

BH explained that she frequently does not have adequate information concerning the backgrounds of the children that are placed under her foster care. She said,

the social workers that we have dealt with in [this area] have given me so little history for each child, and the history that they give you is usually very optimistic. And then you take them and then it turns out they've been sexually abused and their parents have died and, do you understand what I'm saying?...I don't think they know the full story to be honest. I don't think they've spent any time doing any research, in my personal opinion (13:14).

She also explains how a child was placed in her care and, as the social workers drove away, they called out the car window and said "by the way, he's retarded" (13:64). Better information regarding the child and the

child's history would assist the foster mother in deciding on the suitability of the child's placement (in relation to the other children that she currently has in her home) and in optimising her care for the child.

6.3.2.4 SUPPORT IN THE CONTEXT OF FOSTERING WITHIN A CHILDREN'S HOME

In the data, distinctions arose between meanings of mothering within a context constructed as a 'family' and within a context constructed as a children's home. Foster mothering within a children's home was characterised by the presence of staff to assist in the care of the children and a structure which allows for mothers to have days 'off' (13:64). Although staff provide support to a foster mother caring for many children, managing the staff also burdens her with extra responsibilities (13:190). KM describes her role as "co-ordinating the whole show" (6:723). Typically, within the setting of a children's home in South Africa, foster mothers are caring for a significant number of children. BH said, "fostering 12 is a lot different. It's a different world" (13:682). She explained that in the United States "foster care is usually three or less children or four children or less" (13:167).

The relationship with other organisational members can create conflict for foster mothers. Both BH and KM run children's homes that are overseen by a larger church ministry. BH explained that

if I were to be honest I'm also under a director of a ministry, ok, so their standards of where children, what children should receive is different in my experience. I'm an occupational therapist from before when I went into ministry. And if I had this child adopted I would have this child in OT, I would have her in speech, I would have her in play therapy, do you understand? I would have her in every kind of intervention to try and get better. But they come from the standpoint where they don't really believe in those kinds of things strongly, or they haven't utilised those things for their children, the two that they've adopted. Do you understand? So I can't really go and spend all this money of the ministry's (13:395).

She also spoke of how the organisation's policy is to assign assistant staff only once the foster mother is caring for 11 children. Although BH believes that it is preferable to only care for a maximum of six children at a time she found this very difficult without assistance and therefore accepted more children. She explained that, "to be honest, having staff with more children is easier than not having staff and having seven or whatever" (13:132).

BH discussed the difficulties of not being constructed as a 'real' mother within the organisation because she is single and does not have children of her 'own'. She described how the perspective of the leader of the ministry under which she functions is that 'a real mother doesn't have a day off':

That's her big thing, a real mother doesn't have a day off. And I do have days off and, um, but to be honest I couldn't survive without a day off. I think I deserve a day off for heaven's sake (laughs) (13:488).

We see that conflictual approaches within an organisation in which a foster mother cares for her children can offer her additional challenges. In order to be supported more effectively these need to be negotiated if at all possible.

6.3.2.5. SUPPORT IN RELATION TO MAKING SENSE OF BONDING, ATTACHMENT, TRAUMA AND NEGLECT

The previous chapter explored the ambivalent nature with which foster mothers construct their experiences of bonding. Foster mothers are required to be a child's mother for a season, to love that child and to build a bond with him or her. That bond was constructed by some participants as the same as the bond that a mother should build with a biological or adopted child and by others as a bond that is different. This interfaces with ambivalent notions of the child being 'mine' and simultaneously being 'not mine'. This requires a combination of emotional involvement and 'guarding one's heart' (13:256).

In relation to bonding with an older child, BH said that

it's very difficult to love a child that can't love you back. And I don't think there's much education in this country especially, in America there's so many adoptions internationally, there're so many books, everyone has blogs, like everyone has support groups, conferences, there's like a whole lifestyle there that teaches you about attachment and bonding with your child. Here, not even the W's [leaders of the ministry she's involved with] know about it (laughs). Like, I feel like I'm always working with people that know nothing about, really, attachment and you have to know about it in order to foster and adopt. If you're adopting older children or children who've been through any kind of trauma before they get to you. But, um, anyway, so she is like a blob, she's like a, she's like a wall. She has nothing, she can't relate, she can't, it's extremely frustrating. So you're loving this child and you're trying to have a relationship with them and they're going 'la la la' off in their dream world and just dissociating all the time. So I can't blame her, it's just difficult dealing with attachment-disordered children that don't have the ability to bond with you and then you look like an idiot (laughs) (13:293).

BH highlighted the lack of information in South Africa for foster mothers caring for children who have difficulties with bonding and attachment. She explained how she has realised that "the children in this nation that are orphaned and abandoned have a lot of wounds" (13:100). KN also spoke of the difficulties involved in mothering a child who has experienced trauma and neglect. She said,

I thought maybe it was because I didn't do all the mother things. Well not that I didn't do them, I didn't do enough of them. So I thought: Ok, I'm gonna bake more cakes. I'm gonna go to more netball matches. I'm gonna...pick you up from school. I'm gonna...make you pretty things. When your friends come over I'm gonna do this...and that and that and that. But it was just, I realised that it was not enough. That it was actually, um, well, they're seeing a psychologist now. It was more or less psychological. I wasn't gonna be able to...Between the psychologist and God, um, I figured that I'm not gonna be...And that was a big disappointment for me, that I wasn't enough or, um, as a mother, and that the problem was way bigger than me (3:215).

BH also emphasised the value of utilising therapy in order to assist the child in processing his or her experiences (13:47). These mothers drew on professional services in order to gain support in mothering their children. This section has highlighted that there is both the need for increased access to useful information regarding bonding and attachment in fostered children as well as the assistance of professional intervention.

6.3.2.6 SUPPORT IN RELATION TO MAKING SENSE OF TRANSITIONS

Fostering involves the transition of a child into one's home and, often, the transition of a child out of one's home. KM speaks of the fact that her children's home only caters for children up to the age of two years and she is then required to participate in making decisions relating to the future placement of the child. She explains:

that's really hard 'cause this is gonna turn his little world upside down but at the same time he can't stay here 'til he's, 'til he's four. So it was hard trying to figure out what, what are we gonna do with him? Because this is all he's known for all his life and suddenly we might have to, you know, turn his whole world upside down (6:336).

LL discussed the transition of her foster daughter into her adoptive home:

I just had a real strong bond with her and when they, it was a week, they didn't visit much but they came, you know, then they started the process...it would just be so painful, just like, you know, 'oh my daughter, she's leaving soon' and I'd just be like 'OK, well you have to get this done too, you know, you can't have her until this is done' (laughs). And then M the social worker would say 'oh no, you can take her now' and I'm like 'no, no, no, they can't!' And then I just realised the sooner she leaves the sooner I can deal with it 'cause now I want to postpone it the whole time and actually once she leaves it's going to, 'cause I just thought, I was in denial, like it's not happening, its not happening...I just feel like this slow band aid being ripped or just like, every time they come and they just, you know, and you see these, all these, you know, or the day 'daddy' and I'm like 'No, no, you're not the daddy yet!' (laughs) We're still the parents! And just the responsibility shifting and it get's quite painful (16:197).

The data suggests that this is also an area in which foster mothers could benefit from additional support. This may take the form of increased access to literature providing guidance regarding this dynamic, increased networks within which relationships characterised by shared understanding could be nurtured, or even discussion forums.

6.3.3. SUPPORT FOR MOTHERS WHO SIMULTANEOUSLY ADOPT AND FOSTER

Three participants in this study are both adoptive and foster mothers. Within this dynamic there are particular areas where additional support may also be warranted. KM spoke of the difficulties she experiences in balancing the needs of both her foster children and her adopted child:

I find it quite hard trying to run the two. Being their mother and being his mother. I feel like he can often get forgotten because this is what I'm doing here in BH and I'm actually having to now consciously ok, how do we manage, you know these two together? How do I meet his needs? How do I make sure he has time? How do I make sure they are, I'm really on top of their care and what's going on with them? (6:692).

LL spoke of the challenges of deciding which child to foster and which to adopt. She said,

our three year-old now, sometimes I don't always feel like, that I'm supposed to adopt him. I feel like there's another family out there for him, but then when I think of him leaving our family, like he's a part of our family and I think of how we would have to adjust not having him there. I mean I'll cry if I think about having to say goodbye to him. It'll be a difficult day. I mean the babies it's also hard but

um, him being older and being so close to our son it's, it would be hard to ever let him go. So, it's that tear between 'Ok, are we supposed to adopt him and keep him forever or are we, are we supposed to let him go?' you know? (16:37).

She anticipates her foster children asking her why she did not choose to adopt them and questions how she will explain this (16:441). She also explains that it can be difficult for her adopted son to process the coming and going of foster children (16:831) and how she has to assist him in this regard. This is an area in which there is very little available information to assist foster mothers and adoptive mothers.

6.3.4 CONCLUDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUPPORT

This section has explored a range of needs and a variety of possible avenues for potential support for adoptive and foster mothers. The importance of creating and strengthening social networks in which adoptive and foster mothers can develop friendships with other adoptive or foster mothers who share a range of factors in common and who can also identify with particular aspects of the adoptive or foster mothering experience emerged as vital. Support groups could contribute in this regard, however, participants did not speak specifically of close friendships that were formed through this platform, largely because the support groups that they were aware of were comprised of adoptive or foster mothers who were not very similar in terms of other factors that participants deemed important in terms of fostering friendship. Church communities were cited as facilitating social groups where a shared adoptive or fostering experience was paralleled by other shared interests, attitudes, practices and belief systems as well. Here we see the role of developing a supportive group for adoptive or foster mothers within an existing community that already offers a basis of mutual understanding. This could be extended to contemplating how such groups could be developed within other such communities, for example other faith-based communities, school networks, community forums and so on.

Groups formed from individuals without other existing commonalities may offer limited support in terms of the potential to develop friendships. However, in light of the need identified in the data for further information to be made available, support groups could be conceived of as creating opportunities for the dissemination and exploration of such information. Online forums were also mentioned as sites for effective dissemination of information.

It appears that, within the South African context particularly, relevant information about adoptive and foster mothering is severely lacking. This demonstrates the urgent need for further research, the publication of adoptive and foster mothers' stories, and literature designed for both the mother and the adopted or fostered child. This information needs to be easily accessible. The current study has also highlighted the need for platforms in which adoptive and foster mothers can explore, question, co-construct, and deconstruct complex notions such as good mothering, bonding, race and culture. For support to be offered that prescriptively 'assists' adoptive and foster mothers in navigating such issues within their immediate family, in relationships with their extended family, and in social circles is inappropriate as the constructs themselves require exploration and contextual navigation.

6.4 REFLEXIVITY

In her book *Weaving a family*, Rothman (2005) writes "I am a white woman, I am raising a black kid, and I am encountering race and racism, and whatever it is I write, it's bound to be my own story" (p. 148). Davies (2000) argues that

It is in examining one's own subjective take-up of the tangled threads of life that the most convincing evidence can be found for the arguments that poststructuralist theories make against universal explanatory schemas and false unities (p. 10).

Writing this thesis has entailed a complex, subjective process from gathering and critiquing literature, recruiting participants, collecting data, transcribing the interviews, conducting discourse analysis and constructing an interpretation of findings. This process has been informed by my own theoretical, philosophical and political alliances, my own positionings (and re-positionings) within these alliances and the unfolding relationships with participants, from initial contact to the manner in which they continue to speak through the texts of the transcripts. As they speak I find my positions shifting and as my positions shift I hear differently.

As there are many approaches to reflexivity within qualitative research, chapter three identified the particular stance which the current study assumed through drawing on a definition by MacBeth (2001): reflexivity is "a deconstructive exercise for locating the intersections of author, other, text and world, and for penetrating the representational exercise itself" (p. 35). Gee's (2005) and Parker's (1992) perspectives were also highlighted, especially in light of the utilisation of their discourse analysis methods. For Gee, reflexivity relates to how meaning is "situated in actual contexts of use" (p. 97) and requires the researcher to reflect upon how particular language is used in a given situation as well as how the situation becomes what it is because of how that language is used. Parker describes reflexivity as the process of examining both ourselves and our language through which we signify our conscious awareness of our role and of our similarity and difference in relation to others. I have attempted to engage in both positional reflexivity and textual reflexivity, through continuously questioning my own positioning (as a shifting, multiple, contradictory self which too is an effect of discourse), as well as through reflexively analysing the text itself. These processes are related in that the text is constructed by the self, but the self is produced in the text. Although qualitative research emphasises the importance of paying attention to the social identity of the researcher, it is typically implicitly assumed that the researcher's gender, race and class, for example, are already formed prior to the research and that this then has an 'effect' on the practice of research. Best (2003) argues that these identity relations are rather "an emergent feature of the research process itself" (p. 908).

I shall structure this reflexive overview through exploring five prominent (intertwined) positions which fed my creation of this text and which were formed and challenged and reconstituted and re-challenged through the text itself. I am constructed and positioned in relation to this research (and the research is constructed and positioned in relation to me) in a number of salient ways, as psychology student/researcher, woman, mother, adoptive mother, and as White. I shall explore each of these in some detail.

6.4.1 PSYCHOLOGY STUDENT/RESEARCHER

Parker (2005) speaks of three layers within which a researcher needs to reflexively locate him/herself within an academic context. These involve historical assumptions relating to what research is and who should be conducting research, institutional limits on the kinds of questions that may be asked and who is entitled to answer them, and personal alliances that reveal particular issues and hide others. These layers relate to each of the five positions that I expound briefly upon here and reflexively refer to throughout this thesis.

I am discursively positioned as a psychology student/researcher through authoring this thesis which is constructed according to the academic norms of the University of Pretoria. The text reveals this position more

explicitly through the construction of the research questions, the review of literature, identification with theoretical paradigms, data collection and analysis and discussion of findings, and also more implicitly through the language used in participant information and consent forms and in the positioning that occurred within the interviews (which will be discussed further below). My alignment with the theoretical paradigms of postmodernism and poststructuralism were made clear in chapter four, along with my epistemological stances of social constructionism and feminism. This holds a certain tension in play. On the one hand this orientation values multiple realities, accepts numerous and even contradictory meanings, and seeks neither to judge nor to prescribe, but rather to explore *how* discourse is in operation to construct what we take for granted as reality. On the other hand there exists the intention to further social justice through deconstruction and the dismantling of dominant discursive patterns that disregard, constrain and oppress. I experienced a pull when exploring the social world from this vantage point between being positioned (through my theoretical alliance) as a critical, but non-judgemental observer and as an activist.

With an awareness of my academic positioning, I attempted to intentionally avoid language in the interview guide that drew overtly from a “psychological discourse” (for example, instead of asking “Have meanings around mothering changed as your child has progressed through various developmental stages?” I asked “Have meanings around mothering changed for you over time as your child has grown?”). However, as these interviews were semi-structured, when the participants raised topics I probed further, constructing subsequent questions and probes spontaneously. Some of these questions did use language that positioned me within an academic psychological discourse, however, I drew on this discourse in response to the participant’s use of related constructs, for example:

BH: ...She has that attachment skill, whereas so many of my others don’t have that attachment skill...

ADS: How do you find that bonding and attachment process?

BH: It’s very difficult. It depends on the child’s emotional makeup as well, how they respond to you (13:281).

I argue for the conflation of student and researcher in this context due to the similarity of my positions in this regard, however, I acknowledge that there exist differing nuances. Whilst the researcher may be positioned as one who already possesses certain, more authoritative, knowledge, the student’s position is more closely aligned to that of the novice who is ‘discovering’ information for the first time (Best, 2003). Within interviews particularly there were shifts in this regard, especially in relation to how the participants positioned me. Examples of positioning me as a researcher with a degree of familiarity with the subject, included instances where participants made a statement in the form of a question, as if they presumed that I, the interviewer, knew the ‘answer’. In the interview with DL, for example, she positioned me in this manner on a number of occasions. In response to the first question concerning constructing a dictionary definition of the word adoption her reply included asking, “how do you write a different definition to being a mother?...would it just say mother?” (1:5). She also ended certain statements by saying “If that makes sense?” (1:21; 1:276; 1:445). Regarding race, DL asked, “it’s more a physical thing isn’t it?” (1:477).

DC asked, when discussing how she realised that, in mothering ‘being’ is more important than ‘doing’: “who was that theorist? Winnicott I think?” (14:87). When asked about her journey towards becoming an adoptive mother, DL said, “I think mine is different in the sense that it was a choice” (1:26). Her language indicates that she presumes that I know the ‘standard’ route towards becoming an adoptive mother which she infers relates

to infertility. DC also made a similar inference through using the term 'unusual': "Uh, well we, I was aware that I had fertility problems, we actually did something quite unusual in that we took adoption almost as a first option" (14:8).

At other points in the interviews, participants spoke with authority, more clearly placing me in the position of novice student. EW, for example, said:

You know they say when you volunteer and you go to a place like that they say 'don't you just want to take them all home?' and you actually don't. You love them and you care for them but then you leave and that's it. But there's, just sometimes, not with everybody, but sometimes there's one baby and it's just absolutely unexplainable (15:16).

These positions often shifted. The following example indicates how, both through my own language as well as by the participant, my position changed from researcher to student/novice:

DL: Well, I think the first, obviously, she's the only one we had to wait the 60 days for. Um, when you adopt more than one you must take them only after 60 days.

ADS: Oh really?

DL: Ja, because you don't want it that the mother takes them back and then the first child thinks she can be taken away.

ADS: Ok.

DL: You've got to really be careful of the psychological impact on the first child (1:161).

DL first mentioned needing to wait 'the 60 days' only for the first child as being 'obvious', therefore assuming that I know about this procedure. She does then repeat this statement, suggesting that perhaps it is not quite so 'obvious'. By saying "oh really?" I indicated that I was not aware that when adopting subsequent children the child can only be placed in your care after these 60 days have lapsed. DL then informs me (the uninformed) of "the psychological impact on the first child".

There were times of positional ambivalence, as opposed to such a clear shift, as indicated in the following example:

ADS: How do you understand the word mothering?

DC: I think just for me personally as a mother what stands out is to be a role model, what's important is to be stable and reliable. Especially with adopted kids, I think you've got to be very, um, I don't mess them around. You know if I say something I do it, if I say I'm going to be on time I'm on time. Because I always believe that, uh, adopted kids are almost hypervigilant to their environment being a little unstable because they've already had, I get a sense that when they're born they're moved from one environment hearing these voices, sounds, connections, whatever, into a completely different environment. And I think there is that sense of abandonment. I don't know if it's just in my own head. So parenting, mothering for me and mothering adopted kids is very much about being very stable for them (14:139).

Although still framing what she says as being her personal opinion ("I think"; "I get a sense"; "for me"), DC speaks with a conviction ("I always believe"), then retreats a little ("I don't know if it's just in my head"), but concludes that she is very sure of her point ("very much about"). As she shifts her position with regards to

knowledge, a dance almost takes place with my positions of knowledge barer (as researcher or student) and novice changing accordingly.

My position as the mother of a transracially adopted child will be explored momentarily, however, I found that I was required to hold that position in tension with my position as student/researcher, particularly through the interview process as well as during the data analysis and construction of findings. Chapter five presented the workings of the dominant ideology of intensive mothering and illustrated how this constructs natural mothering, good mothering, and the relationships between the two. Although adoptive and foster mothering resonate with some aspects of this discourse we saw that, in many ways, they are marginalised or at least do not fit snugly into the entire picture. This dynamic, along with the fact that adoptive mothering is much less common than biological mothering, created in me (and in some participants) a desire to relate to fellow adoptive mothers, particularly, in an empathic manner through focussing on shared experiences and constructing (although often not intentionally) a space characterised by a shared, supportive 'knowing'. Although this influenced the development of rapport, and my own personal experiences of transracial adoptive mothering heightened my awareness of certain issues and prompted particular questions that I may otherwise not have thought to ask, I had to ensure that this position did not overshadow my position as student/researcher. This student/researcher position required a persistently questioning stance and a resolute commitment to critical thinking, not only of the data, but of my own interpretation of the data and also of my own personal experiences, positioning, assumptions and 'knowledge'. My own understandings of transracial adoptive mothering, particularly, could not become the lens through which I studied this phenomenon. My understanding was held alongside the understandings constructed by every one of the participants, which were then examined through lenses of literature, theory and discursive analysis. This will be discussed further as this section on reflexivity progresses.

6.4.2 WOMAN

Code (1991) explains how the traditional scientific assessment of the claim 'A knows that B' neglected to ask the question 'who is A?' However, if it does matter who A is, then it follows that there is something about the characteristics of A that could influence the validity of the knowledge claims that A makes. Throughout the history of Western thought, the tendency has existed that, when A is a woman, both a dismissal of knowledge and a dismissal of women's claims to be knowers has taken place (Nicolson, 1996; Olesen, 1998). Olesen explores, from a feminist perspective, this central question of who can be a knower. She relates this both to women as participants and women as researchers. The epistemological concepts of women as knowers (Clinchy, 2002), women being counted as knowers (Langton, 2000), who may be interested in the knowing of women (Hawkesworth, 1989), and whether women are better equipped than men to know other women (Hawkesworth, 1989) intersects, in this study, with the discourse of mothers as knowers as well as what it means to be a 'good researcher'.

I am positioned as a woman in this research and this is a gendered text. Let us examine how this occurred within some examples from the interviews. The following exchange occurred in NF's interview:

ADS: How does being a mother relate to being a woman?

NF: Do you want the feminist answer?

ADS: I want *your* answer (9:212).

NF positions me as a feminist, possibly because I am researching a subject that relates directly to how women construct meaning. She stated a little further on in the interview:

I almost feel that a lot of society's issues are because moms aren't moms anymore, they're just running around doing everything else and not looking after their kids. Um, that's a huge thing for me and sort of think, you know, half of society's problems would be gone if the mom was a mom. And if a woman felt comfortable with just being a mom (9:264).

Perhaps the fact that I am not "just being a mom" somehow positions me as a feminist (in relation to a discourse that constructs the binary of stay-at-home-mom/feminist (DiQuinzio, 1999)). NF's language indicates that she constructs my position as involving expectations of a 'correct' and an 'incorrect' answer according to a feminist frame.

Another example of how I and the text are positioned in a gendered manner can be drawn from responses to the first question posed during interviews, namely: "If you could imagine that you had to write a dictionary definition for the word adoption/fostering what would you write?" Five answers to this question are listed below as examples:

OS: "Shoo. Um...I suppose...It's a hard one, 'cause I've never really thought of it. Loving someone you didn't give birth to..." (5:3).

DL: "[Laughs]...Gee, whiskers, that's quite a tough one hey?... 'Cause for me it's just the most natural thing in the world so how do you write a different definition to being a mother?..." (1:3)

DC: "Um, shoo, that's a hard question. Um, adoption is, um, the care and nurturing and parenting of a child not biologically born of you" (14:3).

LL: That's hard (laughs). Um...to me, um, from what other people's opinions, they always tell me 'oh it's different when you have your own' and this and that. To me I would define it as not different to me, it's the same. Um, it's been a blessing and I think it's just a different way than, you know, having a child, conceiving and going through pregnancy and you birth a child in a different way through the process of adoption and bonding with the child and, uh, I don't know how to define it (16:3).

KM: Adoption is you take on that child, it's as if the child is born to you, basically. So, you know, you've got them forever. Once they're adopted you've got them forever. When the going gets tough you don't just, you know, say 'sorry, had enough'. So basically it's as if the child was born to you, as if you gave birth to them. So, yeah, and I feel very much with adoption they may not have grown in your tummy but they've grown in your heart. Very much so (6:8).

Although participants were fully aware from the outset that the research was exploring mothering, the first question asked for a definition of the word 'adoption' or 'fostering', not 'adoptive mothering' or 'foster mothering'. Some participants responded in a manner that constructed adoptive/foster parenting more generally, however, responses such as the ones listed above assumed a gendered position outright (referring to birth or mothering specifically). This evoked a gendered discursive space through constructing meaning relating to female experience. I suggest that this may have been informed by my position as a woman and also positioned me as a (fellow) woman.

Although these quotes present more micro-examples of how my own gender positioning (and the gender positioning of participants) took place, it could be argued that taking a broader view of the language used in

the interviews indicates a discursive space that could be characterised as being co-constructed between women. Consider the following examples:

DN: "...there is something quite primal about motherhood, that children need" (17:362).

DL: "I was never really broody" (1:192).

BD: Well when I, you see, ja, well when it comes to talking about how they were born, um, C is very much 'I was in your tummy mom' and I'm saying 'no, you weren't, but you and S were both grown by another mom, um, and then I got you (11:21).

ADS: "Did you feel that she didn't want you?; DN: Ja, I thought I was being an unworthy mother. I think that was part of my, I was like I'm not mothering this child right, you know?" (17:277).

On the one hand, constructs such as motherhood being 'primal', 'broodiness', pregnancy and birth and 'mother guilt' could be viewed as being associated with the discursive exchanges of women. However, constructing this discourse as 'gendered' also serves to reconstruct a male/female language binary and reinforces the belief that such topics serve the interests of women (only), thereby re-gendering the text.

6.4.3 MOTHER AND ADOPTIVE MOTHER

Inhabiting the position of mother within an academic space can be challenging. Leonard and Malina (1994) found that women academics with children often feel the need to disconnect from their role as mothers whilst at work. They explore how mothers find themselves "suspect in the academy, their seriousness questioned, [and] compelled to exclude reference to their personal lives in the workplace" (p. 30).

One of the binaries that exists in Western culture is between maternity and creativity. As Jeremiah (2003) phrases it words, authorhood and motherhood, books and babies are mutually exclusive. Mother-as-author and mother-as-researcher challenge the traditional construct of the mother as an instinctual being with concepts of autonomy and individuality. Jeremiah continues to say that "maternal writing therefore, as it interrupts and deconstructs the normative script of maternity as private and silent, also disturbs and counters the received narrative of creativity, specifically the liberal humanist view of subjectivity and authorship" (p. 12).

Raddon (2002) explored the positioning of mothers in the academy between 'successful academic' and 'good mother'. She describes how the academic mother is positioned between production/reproduction, independence/dependence, selfishness/selflessness and career-orientation/mother-instinct. Her feminist post-structural research revealed how these discourses can be both disempowering and empowering for mothers in the academy.

In terms of conducting research on adoptive and foster mothering as an adoptive mother, it is worth noting that a number of studies conducted on adoption have been undertaken by adoptive mothers. Smith, Surrey, and Watkins (1998), in their chapter *'Real' mothers: Adoptive mothers resisting marginalisation and re-creating motherhood* speak of "know[ing] the joys", of "frightening and worrisome thoughts", and of "cultural hesitation and apprehension about adoptive motherhood" (p. 195) because they themselves are adoptive mothers. They mention that although these thoughts are familiar to them, they are rarely discussed openly. They state: "we, the authors, are writing from our own experience, and we hope also to reflect the voices of many other adoptive mothers" (p. 196). Although acknowledging their stake in the debate, they do not remain actively critical of their *own* position as researchers. As a group, adoptive mothers may *and may not* share

similar experiences and this needs to be acknowledged. From a social constructionist perspective, sharing the identity of 'adoptive mother' may provide 'insider access' to certain discourses. It does not, however, offer insight into the 'real' experiences of adoptive mothers as many different, equally valid constructions exist and there is no deeper layer of 'true' or 'real' meaning (that collectively resists dominant cultural ideologies) waiting to be discovered. Therefore, sharing the identity of 'adoptive mother' does not in any way provide the researcher with the right to speak on behalf of participants.

In Park's (2006) article entitled *Adoptive maternal bodies: A queer paradigm for rethinking mothering?* she locates herself as an adoptive mother and states her aim as considering "the experience of adoptive mothering as a unique form of mothering that allows for the development of a critical maternal praxis" (p. 202). She reflects on her personal and political position and relationship to the subject matter. She highlights at the outset that "there is no singular adoptive experience" (p. 202). She does, however, argue that there are overlapping themes that appear to connect the variety of adoptive experiences. Her critique of discursively mediated and socially regulated maternal bodies intends to open up possibilities for "novel practices in which biological as well as adoptive mothers may engage" (p. 202). Park's argument for the value of researching mothering from the perspective of an adoptive mother and researching the experiences of adoptive mothers rests on the notion of a "dual consciousness" (p. 203). She argues that adoptive mothers have firsthand experience of mothering combined with "an ongoing and unavoidable awareness of how biological ('natural' or 'real') mothers—and others—perceive us" (p. 203). We can therefore use these perspectives of others to look back on and question ourselves.

Merriam et al. (2001) discuss the complexity of insider/outsider status and the lack of delineation between the two positions. This relates to the earlier comment regarding the relationships between my own positions as adoptive mother and also as student/researcher. These authors explain that "in the real world of data collection, there is a good bit of slippage and fluidity between these two states" (p. 405). They challenge researchers to examine assumptions about commonality of experience, access and power. Such assumptions include: being an insider grants easy access, the ability to ask more meaningful questions and derive a more 'authentic' understanding; or, on the other hand, being an insider implies inherent bias and a lack of curiosity. The outsider has been characterised as curious, non-aligned and therefore able to ask taboo questions and elicit more information. Merriam et al. argue that these distinctions are over-simplistic. Any group or sub-group is characterised by internal variation. The relevant question is "What is it that an insider is inside of?" (p. 411). These authors suggest that being an insider means that one is relatively inside "a multiplicity of social and cultural characteristics of homogenous populations" (p. 411). In practice, as researchers, "we can be insiders and outsiders to a particular community of research participants at many different levels and at different times" (p. 411). In a discourse analysis, being an 'insider' would imply being 'inside' discourses shared by participants, which cannot be assumed. Social constructionist critiques of the 'truth' that insiders or outsiders are able to uncover argue that there is no truth independent from the knower and claims to truth are acts of power. Reflecting on the power dynamics involved in insider/outsider positions is crucial in relation to the impact on knowledge construction and representation in research (Merriam, 2001). My own experience in this regard involved recognising the need to develop an awareness of the complex mix of my own assumptions of sharing a discursive meaning frame with participants, participants' assumptions of sharing a discursive space with me, recognising variation within a space constructed as shared as well as what it means to consciously utilise both positions constructed as 'insider' and 'outsider' and to continuously critique the distinction between the two.

Parker's (2005) reflexive questions relating to who should be conducting research and who is entitled to ask and to answer what kinds of questions require interrelated consideration in terms of my positions. The positions I occupy tended to pull me in different directions in relation to the asking and answering of questions (and in terms of the questions that participants asked me). For example, being a psychology student/researcher confers on one quite different 'rights' in terms of asking questions (broad research questions and specific interview questions) and producing psychological knowledge in comparison to the position of being a mother within an academic context (Kullasepp, 2008). Being an adoptive mother, however, confers 'rights' that being a psychology student/(researcher) does not when talking to other adoptive (and, to a degree, foster) mothers. The questions themselves can also be constructed differently. What is constructed by the participant as an 'academic' or 'research' question as opposed to a question derived from shared aspects of a life journey and a shared commitment to raising adopted children depends on how I position and am positioned in the moment of asking the question. In the jointly constructed interview conversation the nature of the questions therefore shifted according to the positions assumed by the participant and myself.

There was a general willingness on behalf of the adoptive and foster mothers I approached to participate in the study. In the email I sent and in the telephonic communication I stated that I was a psychology Master's student at the University of Pretoria and that I was researching adoptive and foster mothering. Their decision to participate was made in light of their knowledge of my position as psychology student/researcher. They were not aware, at that stage, that I was also a mother or an adoptive mother. However, when I asked one of the participants, LA, whether she knew of any other adoptive or foster mothers who may be willing to participate she suggested that I tell them during the telephonic conversation that I am also an adoptive mother:

I think maybe it's helpful, you didn't tell me that, it probably helps if you said that you had one as well 'cause then it's not like you're some kippy student, you know? 'Cause I was kind of expecting a twenty year-old (laughs). So it's quite nice...(21:(i)).

MB was willing to discuss adoptive mothering with a 'kippy student' (although the discursive construction of the interview may have been quite different), however, she explained that it was 'quite nice' to be engaging with a 'more mature' interviewer who 'had one as well'.

The following excerpt, from the interview with DN, demonstrates how a sense of shared 'knowing' is informed by the knowledge that I am also an adoptive mother:

DN: Well I think, I mean you've heard my bias, but I think in the South African reality there's a whole lot of other stuff you take on as an adoptive mother that you've got to be ready for. And, um, first of all I...on one level I think it's, I'm amazed when people, I don't know what your views are, is there a reason why you're...

ADS: Ja, we've adopted as well.

DN: So you know this stuff, ok. So, um, on the one level, I don't know if you feel like this, it's actually much easier than how it seems...(17:453).

Although DN knew that I was researching adoptive and foster mothering and that I had already interviewed 16 women (she had asked me how many women I had interviewed) she constructed me as a co-knower on the basis of my shared position as adoptive mother ('So you know this stuff, ok'). The 'ok' in the sentence

could be argued to indicate a sense of “ok, you will understand” or “ok, I can tell you how I feel and you will know what I mean”.

Due to the logistical characteristics of the outset of the interview with TN (an adoptive mother who has also fostered children in the past), she was not aware that I was an adoptive mother. I was therefore positioned largely as a psychology student/researcher. In the section of the interview in which we were discussing her family’s construction of their child’s adoption story and the child’s ‘fantasy world’ in which she constructs her biological and adoptive mother, she commented, “I’m oblivious to this, I don’t know the psychology behind this and I’m glad I don’t” (2:152). She distances herself from me as the psychology student/researcher who is assumed to have some psychological knowledge of the area (knowledge that presumably indicates how the matter ‘should’ and ‘should not’ be approached). However, she resists the notion that this knowledge is either necessary or superior to her own ‘non-psychologically informed’ knowledge as the child’s mother. She addressed the issue with her child in a manner that she viewed as appropriate and then stated that: “...That was the end of that. It’s never been an issue again” (2:164). The language of her statement quoted above acts to suggest: I’m not sure whether you (positioned as psychology student/researcher) view how I (positioned as this child’s mother) handled the matter as ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, but it worked. At the end of the interview with TN, (after I had ceased recording, unfortunately) I did disclose to her that I was an adoptive mother. I wrote the following notes after the interview on this point:

Immediately the energy changed. Her body language became more animated, her voice grew louder, her facial expressions became more pronounced. It was as if her view of me changed instantly. I was suddenly a ‘co-knower’. She took my interview schedule and said in a joking manner, “right, let’s start” as if she was now interested in my opinion on the topic as well. The conversation shifted to the sharing and comparing of meanings around mothering an adopted child, particularly cross-racially, as opposed to an agenda which (although still co-constructed) revolved around eliciting her constructions.

In the interview with MB, mentioned above, we had acknowledged my position as an adoptive mother (and we had also discussed my position as one who has been constructed as ‘infertile’ and requiring ‘infertility treatment’ in order to bare biological children) before embarking on exploring the questions in the interview guide. However, when I began the interview (at the point that was constructed as the ‘start’) I positioned myself chiefly as the psychology student/researcher. In my mind and through my language (as well as body language and behaviour) I attempted the shift from my position as mother and adoptive mother, within a mutual, more shared space of discursive construction (in which she appeared invested in asking me about my own experiences) to the position of psychology student/researcher with the intention of focussing on her constructions. Although recognising the interaction as co-constructed throughout, my focus still remained on exploring how this particular woman constructs adoptive mothering (as opposed to exploring equally my own constructions in the interview situation). Although semi-structured, I had not constructed the interviews as entirely mutual, free-flowing discussions. This was the 21st interview that I conducted. What I was not aware of at the time was that my position of psychology student/researcher had begun to include a nonchalance regarding data collection as opposed to the appropriate depth of respect for an inquiry into the matter of mothering. The following indicated this:

ADS: And your journey to adoption, what was that about for you?

MB: Do you want to hear it?

ADS: Yes.

MB: It's very sad...(21:5).

The tone with which I said 'yes' was lighthearted and almost matter-of-fact. I positioned myself as a psychology student/researcher, ready to 'collect' data from the participant for my research study. MB proceeded to narrate a story of infertility, the meaning of which she constructed as highly traumatic and tragic. As she spoke I was consciously aware of retreating from my psychology student/researcher position, humbled by my naïvety and disregard, and assuming positions of fellow-woman, fellow-mother, fellow (to a small degree) infertility-journeyer and fellow-adoptive mother, involving a greater degree of empathy (Mallozzi, 2009).

Later on in the interview MB clearly positions me as a fellow adoptive mother and I concurred with this, not only by agreeing, but through using the more colloquial—in an English-language context—word 'ja', as indicated in the following example:

MB: Do you get, um, a lot of questions? 'Cause I get *lots* of questions. They drive me mad.

ADS: Ja.

MB: Do you as well? (laughs) (21:188).

The following two examples also demonstrate instances in which the participant positioned me as a fellow mother and fellow adoptive mother:

OS: "Um, I mean when I get irritated with her I'm like, I think "ha, did we do the right thing?" But I remember thinking when M and D had their bad moments thinking "why did I want children?" You know? (laughs)" (5:104).

NU: "Don't you find as well that, it's because you're not her natural mother the world kind of owes her something?" (10:113).

The data analysis revealed a flavour of ambivalence that permeated many of the interviews. Adoptive and foster mothers fit the ideology of intensive mothering and are also 'misfits'; there takes place a navigation of a world in which women should be mothers, but women should also be 'more than' mothers; the child belongs to the adoptive and foster mother and yet the child is also not quite her 'own'; families can absorb 'difference' and families can have difficulty absorbing 'difference'; in transracial families (and this will be discussed further under the following heading) there is much ambivalence, for example, relating to the construction of race and racism. There were very few instances in the data where this ambivalence was explicitly reflected upon by the participant herself. In almost all cases ambivalence emerged with the participant being seemingly unaware of its existence. As I identified with participants as a fellow adoptive mother, this raised in me a heightened awareness of my own potential blindness to areas of ambivalence and prompted a relentless openness to contradiction within my own personal constructions of mothering and within the framework which I employed in order to attempt to understand the participants' constructions. As I analysed the interviews and organised the findings I embraced the occurrence of conflicting thoughts, questions, positions and ideas.

6.4.4 WHITE

Lastly I reflect upon my position as White. Merely stating my subjective position as a person socially constructed as White, has limitations in terms of reflexive usefulness. The task is to extend that

acknowledgement and to critically explore the ways in which this research process participates in the unfolding production of racial meanings, and how my own Whiteness, as constructed in the text, is involved in that process. Best (2003) explains that “as researchers do research, they also are actively engaging in doing race” (p. 895). Race is accomplished through each stage of the research process (design, collecting empirical material and the process of analysis). Interviews, in particular, provide a context within which the race of the participants and the race of the researcher are negotiated as emergent characteristics of language. Research can be understood as “a key interactional moment wherein racial identities and inequalities are actively managed, articulated, reproduced, and at times threatened” (Best, 2003, p. 898). Language maps boundaries between self and other and constructs us in racialised ways (Best, 2003).

Franchi (2003) emphasises that, in the field of psychology in South Africa, teaching, practicing and researching take place in a ‘racialised’ context. Also, psychology in South Africa has been implicated historically in the direct engagement in forms of knowledge production that supported stereotypical conceptions of race (Stevens, 2003). The vast inequalities that persist in South Africa still coincide largely with race (Hendricks, 2006). In a broad sense, “apartheid remains alive and well in racialised divisions which fracture the nation into opposing camps of white wealth and property on the one hand, and black poverty and dispossession on the other” (Hendricks, 2006, p. 113). This also impacts on the South African academy. Hendricks argues that, in virtually all social science disciplines, White scholars continue to enjoy “a monopoly over intellectual production” (p. 115). Marcus (2006) explains that

The general agreement in society that there is considerable inequality in South Africa draws on an extensive social scientific, legal, and humanities scholarship that describes and explains the skewed distribution of resources, and their impact on individual and general human well-being. This vast literature speaks to the materiality of wealth and poverty within and between societies. The consensus in this intellectual work is that inequality is socially constructed, and is time and space specific, thus requiring continuous investigation as well as specific intervention (p. 31).

The following provides an example of how race was performed in an interview with a Black participant (where my Whiteness could uncritically be seen as more visible). In the interview with KN, when asked about her motivation to foster and adopt, the conversation was constructed as follows:

KN: It was so normal when I was growing up that it wasn’t something that is super special or anything.

ADS: Normal in what way? That there were other family members who had done it?

KN: Not so much family members, ‘cause I don’t have that many family members in South Africa, but more the community...It’s just, it was just normal for us, it’s just normal...I think the only difference is that normally, um, it would be relatives if it’s Black people. With Black people it would ordinarily be, and it wouldn’t be so much a formal relationship...(3:43).

KN repeatedly uses the word ‘normal’ to demarcate and characterise what ‘Black people’ do in relation to caring for other people’s children (usually relatives). Her language separates ‘our normal’ (“just normal for us”) from ‘your normal’ (what would be ‘normal’ practice for me as the White interviewer).

In the interview with AN, also a Black participant, the following exchange took place:

ADS: In your culture, is looking after someone else’s child ‘normal’ when it’s a family member or a close friend? Must the child be from the same cultural group?

AN: It really depends, you know, you mean how this other kind of adoption happens?

ADS: Yes, I just want to understand a bit more about what makes yours less acceptable so to speak?

AN: It's that you don't know where the child actually comes from.

ADS: And what are the problems with that?

AN: We are very, strange sometimes, you know, we, I would like a Zulu person more than a Xhosa person purely because they're Zulu (laughs). It's like that. So we've got that thing, you know, I suppose we can thank your forefathers for that (laughs). Ok, I'm joking. Because we are like that, so you grew up knowing that the Sotho people are inferior to you, you know, and the Xhosa people, they are inferior to you. You know the Zulu people think they are the best thing since sliced bread (laughs). That's the thing (19:282).

In this excerpt, although my question refers to culture and her use of 'we' relates directly to Zulu people as a group, her mention of 'your forefathers' invokes my Whiteness and therefore a racial polarisation.

Best (2003) draws attention to how important it is to make problematic how one performs and uses White identity in the context of "White-on-White interviews" (p. 906). This is not an easy pursuit as Whiteness is taken for granted. Construction of Whiteness seems more apparent within discussions of Blackness. Haggis, Schech, and Fitzgerald (1999) explain that exploring Whiteness is similar to the development of a black and white photograph: "the white subject slowly emerges against the dark context" (p. 169).

The challenge for me has been to reflexively explore the invisibility of my own Whiteness in this research. I discussed Whiteness in relation to interviews with Black participants first in this section as my own Whiteness is more visible to me in this context as well. The following provides an example which constructs my position as White in a less visible and more of a taken-for-granted manner.

In section 6.2.3.3 DN's narrative concerning her decision to move her biological son and transracially adopted daughter from a more well-resourced school where most of the learners were White to a more racially integrated, but less well-resourced, school. What is of interest here is how I, the researcher, position myself and am positioned in relation to Whiteness. In an attempt to reflect what she has said in order to prompt her to construct a bit further I speak of the "price" that she has paid as I asked "So there's a price you have to pay in managing and negotiating these different issues?" (17:496). I construct that surrendering aspects of privilege comes as personal cost (as opposed to gain, balance, empowerment etc.). My position as White is constructed as entitled to privilege, the 'loss' of which I constructed as a 'price'.

The fact is that this study, too, is conducted by a White researcher and therefore contributes to the continuance of knowledge emerging from the perspective of White academics. This cannot simply mean, I suggest, that such research is irrelevant and harmful. There is no doubt that I have many blind-spots in terms of the rootedness of my own thinking within the White racial frame. If anything, conducting this research has demonstrated that to me. This text has produced me as a self who is shamefully aware of my subtle perpetuations of an oppressive racial system. However, to cease such knowledge production simply as an attempt to reduce a White monopoly over intellectual production would be to cease to attempt to pursue research that constructs spectacles for blind-spots and forces the researcher himself/herself to pull apart the White racial frame in order to see it for what it is.

This 'pulling apart' was particularly difficult for me personally in the analysis of the findings in relation to aversive racism. If I was one of the participants and I was asked, as all the participants who have adopted were, to talk about the path that led me to adopting my answer would have sounded something like this:

I have always wanted to adopt. South Africa has the highest number of orphaned children in the world. I can look at the financial situation of my family and say, 'well, two biological children is enough, three would be pushing it' or I can look at my relative situation in terms of privilege and resources and say 'how can I not adopt?'. How can I see children growing up in an orphanage when I could play my part and give at least one such child a home, parents, opportunities to thrive, a good education, the chance to explore her talents, and a nurturing, loving space in which to build her self-worth and self-esteem within a family context.

My conscious motivation to adopt was sincerely to offer care to a child who would otherwise grow up without experiencing belonging within a family. My intention was to offer myself as a mother to a child who would grow up without experiencing a relationship with a mother and to contribute to a social need in the country in relation to the numbers of orphaned children. At the outset of this research journey, if I were a participant responding to a question about what it means to mother a child adopted transracially, I would have said:

I don't intend to disregard her race, I want to celebrate all of who she is. I want her to be proud of being Black, to celebrate that identity. I want her to grow up delighting in the colour of her skin and the texture of her hair. I want her to learn an African language so that she can smoothly flow in between different social circles. I saw a group of young Black women at a wedding the other day chatting to one another in Zulu and it really struck me how much I want her to be able to blend in with such social groups and not feel isolated because she cannot speak the language. Her birthmother is from Zimbabwe so to learn Shona wouldn't really be very helpful in Johannesburg necessarily. We'll probably all learn Zulu together. I'd love for us as a family to travel to Zimbabwe and explore the country together. We have a lot of Black friends, are part of an extremely racially integrated church community and we also know quite a few families who have adopted transracially so she won't be growing up in a predominantly White social environment and she will also know other children whose families look similar to her own. I know that she may go through challenging stages developmentally relating to her identity development within a transracial family. I always want to talk freely about issues such as race and adoption so that there is always an open forum for her to express her feelings and ideas and struggles. We already talk a lot about it even though the children are still young.

I identify strongly with the 'I am not a racist' ('look at me I even have a Black child') position. I am conducting research into transracial mothering and may uncover how 'other people' (even women who mother Black children!) still hold racist perspectives, offering me even further enlightenment in this area. To be a White South African and to admit that the germ of racism is still alive inside one is difficult. The institutionalised egalitarian social structure powerfully constructs an acceptable world view that condemns racism and those who still hold racist views. To be a White adoptive mother of a Black child within a social structure built upon such an ideology and to even whisper that one may hold attitudes, beliefs and values and exhibit behaviour that reinforce racism brings into serious question one's ability to be a worthy mother to that child. Studying the manner in which aversive racism operates at a subtle, nuanced, covert and unconscious manner and the way in which this informs how we construct the world, our transracial mothering, our children and the manner in

which this permeates our discursive gatekeeping required of me to begin my own whispering, and for those whispers to grow into a clear, audible voice. I was forced to question my own constructions of race and racism. As I deconstructed the ways in which racism emerged subtly in the talk of participants, this shone light upon my own relationship with aversive racism. This was not an easy journey. In the section on aversive racism in this chapter I presented the concurrent fact that participants love their children deeply. The love I have for my own transracially adopted daughter, the desire for her wellbeing and the intense reflex to protect her from any kind of harm rise in fierce opposition to any acceptance of my own racial bias. I had to push through my own desire to deny in order to critically and openly examine aversive racism in the talk of the participants in this study. I could only embrace multiple layers of meaning in the data as I fought the resistance to own the multiple layers of meaning within myself.

6.4.5 A POSITION OF CURIOSITY

I began this research with the sincere desire to contribute to knowledge in the area of adoptive and foster mothering, as guided by my research questions. I realised, though, especially as I began to interview participants, that I was also quite eager to collect little nuggets of ‘wisdom’ from these women’s stories that I could apply (or avoid) in my own mothering or that could function as guidance for other adoptive and foster mothers. Very soon, however, I began to realise that each woman’s ‘take’ on mothering was quite different and that what appeared to ‘work’ in one household and what ‘worked’ in another were quite different. My approach very quickly changed to being one of respect for the diversity of mothers’ journeys. Also, many of the women I interviewed commented afterwards that they would like to see my dissertation once it had been completed. These two aspects, my own deepening sense of appreciation for the multiplicity of contrasting constructions and the knowledge that my own interpretive constructions of this data would be read by the women who’s stories I so deeply valued seemed to pull at my deconstructive aims. How does one hold participants’ constructions with care and at all times with the respect they deserve whilst approaching research data with critical, deconstructive intent for the ultimate goal of furthering social justice?

It was in this regard that I most acutely experienced my positions as contradictory. My position as psychology researcher/student did not nestle well with my positions as (fellow) woman, (fellow) mother and (fellow) adoptive mother. My position as being White also produced its own tension as discussed above. Whilst holding these contradictions as a rich source of meaning, I also found that the ‘taking on’ of a sixth, overarching position to be helpful: the position of curiosity. This position differs from the position of knower, the position of judge, or the position of critic. It requires an intentional stepping back from the phenomena in order to ask questions about that which may otherwise be taken for granted when immersed in shared discursive practices, but it still holds the empathic stance of a fellow traveller. Thus, whilst enabled and restricted by each of my subject positions throughout the process of this research, I have attempted to develop in my ability to take on and operate chiefly within this position of curiosity.

Davies et al. (2004) distinguish between “the judgemental eye/I and the reflexive eye/I” (p. 376). They articulate the judgemental eye/I as narrowing and containing possibilities whilst, in contrast, the reflexive eye/I, ideally, gazes with fascination rather than judgement in order to notice the surprising, the unexpected, and the contradictory.

6.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this research elicited rich data concerning the manner in which participants socially construct mothering within a South African context and how these constructions intersect with dominant discourses of mothering, the study was relatively small, with a sample size of only 21. Theoretical saturation was reached at this point. However, if the sample had included a wider representation of participants this would have opened up additional avenues of investigation and prompted a broader variety of questions. All participants fell within the socially constructed racial categories of Black and White, all identified as heterosexual, all could be classified as middle class and all resided within urban areas in Gauteng. Many explicitly identified with a Christian religious orientation. In some cases this may have been a result of the sampling strategy employed. Both purposive and snowball sampling was used. Where purposive sampling was used religious orientation of participants was more varied. Where snowball sampling was used, participants more frequently shared a common religious perspective. As mentioned in the section on support, participants who are adoptive mothers, particularly, appear to develop supportive relationships with other adoptive mothers within existing social networks where other factors, such as religious affiliation are shared. Although participants in this study who are Christian did not attend the same church, for example, they appeared to know one another through church networks. If only purposive sampling had been used and participants had been more varied (in relation to features such as race, sexual orientation, class, urban/rural location and religious orientation) a wider variety of available discursive positions could have been identified which would have further served the purpose of identifying multiple meaning constructions.

This study elected to investigate both the constructions of adoptive and foster mothers. This did provide a broader picture of the phenomenon of caring for non-biological children and, seeing as research in this area is so limited in South Africa, was valuable in being able to offer insight into two forms of care for orphaned and vulnerable children. Also, being able to examine constructions of adoptive and foster mothers simultaneously allowed for useful comparisons to be drawn that enriched understandings of each. However, in a relatively small study (with a sample size of only 21) it may have been more useful to focus on either adoptive or foster mothers. Both forms of mothering are complex and under-researched and investigation into one or the other would have allowed for an even deeper exploration. Similarly, this study included an exploration of both transracial and same-race adoptive mothering and transracial and same-race foster mothering. Race emerged in this study as a salient and distinguishing feature in the constructions of participants who mother transracially. As a result of the prominence of this aspect of meaning, it would also have been more helpful to study either adoptive/foster women who are caring for children of a different race or children of the same race. However, in cases where Black mothers are fostering or have adopted Black children cross-culturally some similar features emerge, such as experiencing opposition from extended family members. This is also a particularly under-researched area in South Africa. Therefore, the study is limited in its broad focus as each type of adoptive/foster mothering proved to be such a rich area of potential exploration with many complex dynamics. Focussing on either transracial adoption, transracial fostering, same-race adoption, same-race fostering, cross-cultural (same-race) adoption or cross-cultural (same race) fostering would have allowed for more in-depth exploration of each topic.

In qualitative research, findings are typically regarded as not generalisable beyond the context or cases studied as opposed to strong quantitative research designs where generalisation is possible (Willig, 2008). As discussed in chapter three, however, generalisation can be thought of not as a blanket concept, inapplicable

to qualitative research, but rather as a multifaceted concept directly associated with the aims and intentions of the study. Research may aim to offer findings that can be generalised in the sense of generating universal laws, statistical laws, rules (more general, theoretical statements, which can have exceptions), developing context specific statements (relationships or rules which are relevant under particular, similar circumstances), recording differences and similarities between a number of observations by systematic comparisons, offering description (through collecting observations in order to pave the way for the formulation of rules or similarities), exploring a particular area (in order to develop statements that can be tested for generality in further studies), or a study may intend to offer procedures that are generalisable, rather than generalisable results (Mayring, 2007). The current study intended to draw on aspects of the last three, through providing a descriptive account, offering explorative findings, and utilising generalisable procedures (namely, discourse analysis). The first two typically rely on seeking typical material (through purposive sampling) and examining variation of the phenomena (in this case, terms of variation in the social construction of meaning). Although this was achieved to a degree, the previous paragraph discussed the limitations of the study in relation to a lack of variation within the sample in terms of certain demographic features.

Despite the small sample size of this study and despite the limited variety in relation to certain features of the sample, discourse analysis offers particular potential for generalisability. According to Willig (2008),

if a given experience is possible, it is also subject to universalism. Thus, even though we do not know who or how many people share a particular experience, once we have identified it through qualitative research, we do know that it is available within a culture or society (p. 17).

Discourses can be understood as “generalisable linguistic resources” (Goodman, 2008, p. 267) in that they form a shared basis for social understanding. The very nature of discourse involves a shared pool of socially constructed meaning. Although participants also constructed individual meaning and engaged with discourses in individual ways, discourses uncovered are *social* discourses and are, therefore, generalisable. Also, discourse is social action. Generalisability can, therefore, be explored in relation to analysis of the social action that is being performed by the text. In this sense, discursive findings can reveal “generalisable actions performed by a rhetorical strategy” (Goodman, 2008, p. 268). In chapter three, reference was made to Goodman’s criteria for facilitating the generalisability of discourse analytic research. In the current study rhetorical accomplishments were sought related to how adoptive and foster mothers construct mothering. Multiple conversational settings were investigated, involving adoptive mothers and foster mothers caring for children in a range of contexts (including same-race and transracial relationships, short-term care and long-term care, in conjunction with biological mothering and in the absence of concurrent biological mothering). A number of rhetorical accomplishments were identified in the interview data, as explored in the preceding two chapters. For example, these included actions related to the creation of the good mother, rhetorical positioning in relation to this ideal mother, the ‘doing’ of gender, linguistic engagement with dominant notions of the ‘normal family’, and active, ambivalent constructions of race and culture. These were demonstrated as being accomplished in the multiple range of settings investigated within this study.

Therefore, although the qualitative nature of the study and the specific research design (including, for example, a small sample size of limited variability) constrains the generalisability of the findings, it is important to consider both the intention of the study and the potential of discourse analytic research to demonstrate rhetorical action that is socially available. Also, the intention of this research has been explicitly presented as not hoping to present ‘the Truth’ of this phenomenon, but as offering another layer of meaning.

Findings of this nature are accumulative. Observations made in one context can be compared to observations from other contexts and different findings can be reviewed in relation to each other and integrated (Willig, 2008). This contributes to emerging knowledge within the field.

Finally, limitations of the study will be discussed from the perspective of the ontological and epistemological foundations of this research. In chapter three (section 3.5.4) we read the example of a biologist and a layperson looking through a microscope. The first sees a Golgi body whilst the second sees a splotch. Both of these meanings could be argued to be appropriate, however, this does not mean that any meaning is equally valid. A postmodern, social constructionist researcher would not attempt to argue that looking through this particular microscope and concluding that one sees a three story mansion in Houghton is a valid finding. It was argued that we are not plunged into a swamp that is relativistic to the degree of being meaningless. In chapter four, a discussion of research quality was presented (section 4.9). Here criteria were explored that, when appropriately addressed, may lead to the assessment of the credibility of findings, even within a postmodern, social constructionist study emphasising the value of multiple layers of meaning and even contradictory layers of meaning. This study has also presented a particular perspective on the deconstruction of dominant discourses. Deconstruction is explained in chapter three as a political task (Lotter, 1995) that seeks to question ideas that are taken for granted and to disrupt familiar knowledge, to uncover hierarchies and binaries that privilege some at the expense of 'Others', and to open terms up to new possible uses (Butler, 1992; Grenz, 1996). This project is fueled by the desire to further social justice (Hacking, 1999).

Strong challenges have been leveled at postmodernism (Cole, Hill, & Rikowski, 1997; Ritzer & Goodman, 2004; Sim, 2002). Bauman (1992) makes the following comment regarding the ethical paradox of postmodernism:

In the cacophony of moral voices, none of which is likely to silence the others, the individuals are thrown back on their own subjectivity as the only ultimate ethical authority. At the same time, however, they are told repeatedly about the irreparable relativism of any moral code. No code claims foundations stronger than the conviction of its followers and their determination to abide by its rules. Once embraced, the rules tell what one must do; but nothing tells one, at least convincingly, why these rules (or any other rules for that matter) should be embraced in the first place...Behind the postmodern ethical paradox hides a genuine practical dilemma: acting on one's moral convictions is pregnant with a desire to win for such convictions an ever more universal acceptance; but every attempt to do just that smacks of the already discredited bid for domination (p. xxii).

Postmodernism asserts that no claim can be privileged, and even the claim to expose claims of privilege cannot be (Billig & Simons, 1994). Although the criteria for ensuring the quality of the research have been addressed throughout this study, and although the strengths of this theoretical paradigm (for example, its ability to demonstrate how signification relies on exclusion (Alcoff, 1997), its emphasis on giving a voice to those who have been disempowered and its capacity to embrace multiplicity and ambiguity (Atkinson, 2002)) are evident, these critiques will continue to be raised against the attempts of research such as this to play a definitive role in furthering social justice. Justice according to whom? Who does this deconstruction of good mothering (and family, and race, and gender) serve? As Bauman (1992) argues, moral claims in the service of furthering social justice inherently involve a bid for one perspective over others, a task that has already been denounced by postmodernism. Atkinson's (2002) rebuttal was mentioned in chapter three (in section

3.4) in which she proposes that it is within postmodernism that we are enabled to deconstruct the very nature of social justice itself and that the acknowledgment of multiple routes to social justice leads to greater possibilities for change. Although this thesis draws on these arguments as justification for the value of utilising a postmodern, social constructionist paradigm for the purposes of producing credible and useful findings, critique leveled at the limitation of postmodern knowledge claims is complex and these debates continue. It is acknowledged that research built upon these ontological and epistemological foundations offers rich meaning possibilities and can contribute towards activism (Hacking, 1999), however, these paradoxes remain.

6.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The topic of adoptive and foster mothering in South Africa is situated contextually in a wide range of fields (socially, psychologically, politically, and theoretically), from dynamics of adoption and fostering, understandings of mothering, gender, challenges of seeking effective care for orphaned and vulnerable children, the impact of HIV/AIDS, structures of the family, and constructions of race and culture, to mention a few. Clearly each of these complex areas remain fertile realms for research to improve quality of life and challenge injustice.

The literature reviewed within this thesis particularly demonstrated numerous knowledge ‘gaps’ within these areas, justifying the value of the current study as well as indicating the need for many further studies. Also, this study itself raised many additional questions. The data elicited from participants in this study revealed their own perceptions regarding lack of information and lack of access to information regarding aspects that they deem relevant to their adoptive and foster mothering. Therefore, this study highlighted a number of particular aspects in which further research is crucially necessary and also indicated areas in which the dissemination of information to adoptive and foster mothers and as well as to those who work within this area needs to be addressed.

Bonding and attachment between adoptive and foster mothers and their children requires further investigation and participants also spoke directly about their need for information in this regard, both in relation to assistance in this area and also in terms of valuing having access to the stories of women who have had similar experiences to themselves, particularly when bonding was constructed as difficult and challenging. There is a dearth of literature related to mothering adoptive and foster children simultaneously and the relational dynamics that are involved for both mothers and children. There is also a need to explore further the differing contexts of foster mothering within a context constructed as a ‘family’ and a context constructed as a ‘children’s home’. Support for foster mothers needs to be designed with a greater understanding of the differing needs and experiences within these two situations.

In the discussion of the study’s limitations, cross-cultural adoption and fostering of a Black child by a Black mother was mentioned. There were only two Black participants in this study, one a foster mother and the other an adoptive mother. Both discussed the implications of mothering a child from a background socially constructed as culturally different in terms of the oppositional responses received from extended family members. In literature, the area of transracial adoption has touched upon opposition faced by extended family members towards the inclusion in the family of a child of a different race. The current study makes a preliminary suggestion that equal attention needs to be paid to exploring similar responses received by Black adoptive and foster mothers of Black children belonging to different cultural groups. This resonates with

findings in the one existing study identified in the literature by Harber (1999) which includes exploration into this topic within a South African context and recommends further research in the area.

Participants' constructions of race and culture within the context of their mothering provided an extremely fertile ground for investigation and this study only began to scratch the surface. One area that could specifically benefit from further research in the South African context is what it means for parents of transracially adopted and fostered children to 'expose' their children to the culture of their birth family and to facilitate identity development in this regard. This is a complex issue in relation to the ambivalence demonstrated regarding the very construction of race and culture.

Only four participants adopted directly in relation to experiencing fertility, with a fifth speaking of the decision to adopt being informed by the fact that her pregnancies "hadn't been very easy" (11:7). The remaining 16 participants did not adopt in relation to experiencing infertility or difficult pregnancies. Participants constructed biological mothering as normal and natural, but, within this picture, expressed agency in making a choice to adopt. This appears to hold the potential to discursively place a woman in this situation in a more empowered position than one who 'had to' adopt due to infertility. This dynamic deserves further investigation.

Another area also requiring additional exploration is adoptive mothers' relationships with their embodied self. What might it mean, in relation to dominant constructions of 'mother', to mother a child whose point of entry into the world was not through one's own body, or for whom breastfeeding involves additional planning and intervention (if it takes place at all). From the vantage point of the constructions of race and transracial adoption, this research touched on meanings related to the interface between a maternal body constructed as White and the body of child constructed as Black, and the potential implications of this for participants' sense of self as mother. This engages theoretically with the debate mentioned in chapter three concerning the tension between a poststructural position that views all knowledge as discursive and the phenomenological valuing of experience. Psychology is obliged to produce knowledge and practice that not only reflects, but contributes towards challenging and overcoming inequality in society and the psychological issues associated with this (Macleod, 2004). Research situated in South Africa is particularly obliged to approach knowledge production reflexively in light of the country's history. Although postmodernism, social constructionism and discourse analysis are recognised as potentially enabling the deconstruction of oppressive systems that silence marginal voices, this stance cannot be assumed uncritically. Upholding the primacy of language carries Western values (Painter & Theron, 2001) and this position which can be emphasised at the expense of generating uniquely South African approaches has been criticised (de la Rey & Ipser, 2004). Acknowledging the embodied nature of human beings and the embodied patterning of behaviour, as well as exploring experience and activity may contribute towards the generation of indigenous knowledge production. Although the current study has been clearly located within a postmodern, social constructionist paradigm and has aimed to construct meaning through analysing discourse, I acknowledged within the laying of theoretical foundations that both discursive constructions and embodied experiences can constitute knowledge. I recognised that the assumption that only experiences that can be expressed through language justify, challenge or inform knowledge claims serves to uphold only declarative knowledge and dismisses all experiences that cannot be articulated. Mothering involves both discursive construction and lived, embodied experiences. Theoretically, mothering (and particular adoptive and foster mothering) offers a fascinating arena for exploring these ontological and epistemological tensions and possibilities.

The findings of this research indicate how the good mother is held in place within the ideology of intensive mothering by discourses of gender, the normal family and child development. This study supports continued deconstructive efforts in each of these areas in the service of dismantling the scaffolding that holds constructions of the good mother in place thereby marginalising those who mother outside of the dominant form.

The sample utilised in the current study included only participants engaged in closed adoptions and formal fostering. As mentioned earlier, this was not a sampling criteria, but this feature of the sample emerged as a characteristic of the adoption and fostering contexts of those who were identified as fulfilling the sampling criteria and who agreed to participate. Further research is necessary in order to explore constructions of mothering within open adoptions and informal fostering.

The focus of this study lay on adoptive and foster *mothering*. Even fewer studies have been conducted examining adoptive and foster fathering. It is vital that this area receives due attention as well.

In light of the limitations discussed in the previous section, methodologically, further research should be conducted utilising larger sample sizes and exploring the constructions of participants who are demographically more varied. Studies should be conducted that focus in greater depth on each of the forms of mothering included in this study (transracial adoption, transracial fostering, same-race adoption, same-race fostering, cross-cultural (same-race) adoption or cross-cultural (same race) fostering).

This study highlighted further research needs not only in the field of psychology, but also, particularly in the field of social work and social policy. Although some participants discussed the supportive role of social workers, the data demonstrated a range of areas in which support was insufficient and could be structured or delivered differently. The role of social workers in preparing parents for fostering and adoption, in the transition of the child into the home (and out of the home in cases of fostering) and in supporting parents as they care for the adopted and foster children in their home needs to be researched further in order to improve services. South African literature demonstrates a lack of research within these areas. At government and social policy level, processes relating to adoption and fostering can be experienced by parents as frustrating, unnecessarily administratively cumbersome and lengthy, and restrictive. Institutional processes were experienced by some participants as unpredictable, disorganised, and characterised by poor communication. The institution was, therefore, experienced by some as untrustworthy and as incompetent. This is an area that requires urgent research and intervention across a range of related fields as research is currently severely lacking in these areas as well.

Despite the limitations that have been discussed, such as the small sample size, demographic similarities of participants, and the wide range of adoptive and foster mothering forms that were included, this study, nevertheless, yielded highly rich data. The structural confines of a dissertation of this length constrained the extent of the analysis that could be conducted and limited the areas that could be focussed on for in-depth discussion and interpretation. Although the data was generated through an interview guide that was designed according to the specific foci articulated in the research questions, many areas of interest emerged in the conversations with participants and their talk contributes to addressing further research questions. Therefore, a secondary analysis of the data could be conducted in order to further 'mine' the richness and complexity of the discursive data that was generated, in relation to more in-depth analysis of areas mentioned in this dissertation, to exploring additional areas which were not covered within the bounds of this text and in relation to developing new theoretical contributions. This could include a number of additional investigation into

manifestations of aversive racism in the dynamics of parent-child relationships within a South African context; the complexity of relationships between constructions of race, culture and language, additional feminist analysis of the functioning of gender in the constructions of adoptive and foster mothers; how religious paradigms relate to constructions of adoptive and foster mothering, as well as constructions of race and culture; the institution of adoption and fostering; the moral discourse of adoption and fostering and how this contributes to constructions of racial relations in South Africa; and constructions of adopted and foster children. In terms of reflexivity, my own dual role as research and adoptive mother (specifically) can be further analysed. This could contribute to methodological understandings of how reflexivity functions within psychological research.

6.7 CONCLUSION

A question raised by Hacking (1999) was mentioned in chapter three of this thesis. He asked what the point of social constructionism is. His argument was that the primary aim of social constructionism has been to raise consciousness, in order to improve thinking and living within the worlds we inhabit. This raising of consciousness takes place firstly through the overarching argument that much of our experience of the world is socially constructed and secondly, concerning local claims about the social construction of something in particular. The point, then, of social constructionist research is to raise consciousness about the social construction of categories that are neither inevitable nor natural and, where possible, to unmask and deconstruct these classifications as activism in itself or in order to provide alternate ideas that lead to activism.

This study has embraced this task in the service of demonstrating afresh that mothering is indeed not a 'natural', 'inevitable' or contextually free activity, but it is a socially constructed one. This means that a particular design is offered to women that prescribes how mothering should look, what mothers should do, who mothers are, and what the goal of mothering is. This design is an exclusive one and at its pinnacle, it crowns the good mother and raises her as the standard. This discursive process serves to marginalise those who mother differently.

This research has attempted to pull apart this design, to explore the mechanisms of its production and to critique the powers of its reach. The constructions of adoptive and foster mothers have been explored in terms of how they resonate with this design, how they fail to match the template, and how they actively resist the need to match it at all.

Although this thesis has consistently approached the constructions of participants critically, with the intention of deconstructing binaries, toppling power relations and uncovering covert positions that maintain and re-inscribe oppressive discourses, the individual voices of participants have also been celebrated throughout. The reflexive journey has been a pivotal one within this study as the research questions grew out of my own experiences as a mother of a transracially adopted child. As this study, therefore, had an overtly subjective beginning, it is fitting to end in the same manner, and I will do so by personally honouring every one of the 21 women who so eagerly and bravely shared their stories with me, of joy, struggle, confusion, delight, heartache and always ultimately love.

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APPENDIX A: Participant information form



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Denkleiers • Leading Minds • Dikgopolo tša Dihlalefi
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

Participant Information

Title: *Constructions of adoptive and foster mothering: a discourse analysis*

Dear _____,

I am conducting a study exploring what mothering means to women who care for adopted and/or fostered children. This research hopes to inform strategies of care for orphaned children and offer insights into how to support women who mother in this context. This study is for my MA (Psychology) degree. I would highly value your participation in this research.

In order to conduct this research I will be facilitating focus groups which will last for about an hour and a half. One focus group will be conducted for adoptive mothers and another will be conducted for foster mothers. The date and time of the focus groups will be negotiated to best suit you. The focus groups will be recorded on video to facilitate ease of transcription. After the focus groups have been conducted I will then invite certain members of the focus groups to participate in individual in-depth interviews in order to explore matters that may have emerged in more detail. The individual interviews will be conducted on a different day, at the participant's convenience, and will last for approximately 45 minutes to an hour. The individual in-depth interviews will be recorded in audio format.

There are no personal risks involved for you with regards to participating in this study. In terms of personal gain I suggest that participating in this study holds the potential for you to meet other women who have had similar experiences to you and you may find this beneficial. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point without any negative consequences.

All information disclosed in this study will be treated as confidential. I ensure your anonymity and all names will be changed in all written material. Should you choose to withdraw from the study all data pertaining to you will be destroyed. Only I and my supervisor, Dr Claire Wagner, will

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have access to the data. The data will be securely stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. The study itself will be written up in the form of a Masters' dissertation, made available through the University of Pretoria's library and in a scientific article.

Please do not hesitate, at any point, to contact me with any comments or queries you may have. I would greatly appreciate your participation in this study. If you are willing to do so, please would you complete the attached consent form.

Many thanks,

Andeline Dos Santos

Researcher / Student

andeline@saol.com

083 289 8261

Dr Claire Wagner

Supervisor

claire.wagner@up.ac.za

APPENDIX B: Consent form



Faculty of Humanities
Department of Psychology

Participant Consent Form

STUDY TITLE:

Constructions of adoptive and foster mothering in Johannesburg: a discourse analysis

I, _____, hereby give / do not give my consent to participate in this research, through attending an in-depth interview, for the information disclosed in this interview to be used as data in this particular study and for the interview to be audio recorded.

With full acknowledgment of the above, I agree to participate / not participate in this study on this _____ (day) of this _____ (month) and this _____ (year).

PARTICIPANT DETAILS:

Participant name: _____ Signature: _____
Participant Contact No: _____ Date: _____

RESEARCHER & SUPERVISOR SIGNATURE:

Researcher Name: Mrs A. Dos Santos
Researcher Signature: _____ Date: _____

Supervisor Name: Dr Claire Wagner
Supervisor Signature: _____ Date: _____

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APPENDIX C: Interview guides

1. Interview guide for adoptive mothers

Interview number: _____

Date: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Participant name: _____

Child	Gender	Bio/Adoptive	Same race/Transracial	Current age	Age at adoption

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. I described the topic of the study in the participant information form that I gave you, however I would just like to remind you of the nature of this research and what I am intending to explore. I am interested in investigating what mothering means to women who have adopted children and who foster children. There are obviously no right or wrong answers to the questions, I am just interested in what you think and what mothering means for you.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any stage. If you do so, any data pertaining to you will be destroyed. I ensure that you will remain anonymous and that all names will be changed on any written documentation. Everything you say will remain confidential.

Even though this question was asked in your consent form I would just like to confirm once more that you're happy for me to record today's discussion. The recorded data will only be viewed by myself and my supervisor and once the study has been completed it will be stored securely at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. If anyone else wants to view the recordings for academic or research purposes they will only be able to do so with your permission.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. I'd like you to imagine that you've been asked to write a dictionary entry for the word 'adoption'. What do you think you would write?
2. Could you talk about your path towards becoming an adoptive mother?

Probes:

- (a) What prompted your decision to adopt?
- (b) What were your expectations around adopting?

- (c) Could you talk about different “stages” in the process: deciding to adopt, the home-study, “finding” the child, placement of the child, the legal process involved in finalizing the adoption, receiving confirmation that the child is legally “yours”...

3. How do you understand the word ‘mothering’?

Probes:

- (a) What does the activity of mothering mean for you?
(b) How does being a mother feature in your daily life and everyday activities?
(c) How does being a mother relate to being a woman?
(d) How do you view being a mother in the context of your other relationships?
(e) What does it mean for a woman to not be a mother?

4. What does it mean to be an adoptive mother?

Probes:

- (a) How is mothering an adopted child similar to and/or different from mothering a biological child?
(b) How do you find other people respond to you as an adoptive mother?

5. Have meanings around mothering changed for you over time as your child has grown?

Probes:

- (a) If your child is still young, do you anticipate that this will be the case?
(b) What does it mean to mother an adopted infant?
(c) What does it mean to mother an adopted primary school-going child?
(d) What does it mean to mother an adopted teenager?

6. What characterises a ‘good mother’?

7. What characterises a ‘good adoptive mother’?

If the participant has adopted transracially:

8. How do you understand the word ‘race’?

9. Could you talk about what it means to mother a child belonging to a different racial group from your own?

Probes:

- (a) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your whiteness/blackness/‘colouredness’/‘Indianness’ mean?
(b) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your child’s whiteness/blackness/‘colouredness’/‘Indianness’ mean?

10. What do you think of the term ‘mixed race family’?

Probes:

- (a) If this term resonates with how you view your family, could you talk about what it means to be a mixed race family?

For all participants:

11. When you think of the future in terms of being a mother to your child/children, what comes to mind?

Probes:

- (a) What are your hopes?
(b) What are your fears?

12. Could you talk a bit about the idea of support for adoptive mothers?

Probes:

- (a) Could adoptive mothers benefit from some kind of specific support?
(b) What might that support entail?

13. Has anything emerged in this discussion that you would like to talk about further?

Probes:

- (a) Do you have any additional comments or questions to ask me?
(b) Is there anything I didn't cover that you think is important for me to know?

CLOSING COMMENTS

I would like to thank you for sharing your understanding of being an adoptive mother with me. I am very grateful for your time which I know, as a mother, is very precious! Please feel free to contact me with any queries you may have. My number and email address are on the participant information sheet that you received.

CONTACTS OF ANY OTHER ADOPTIVE/FOSTER MOTHERS:

2. Interview guide for foster mothers

Interview number: _____

Date: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Participant name: _____

Child	Gender	Bio/Foster	Same race/Transracial	Current age	Age at adoption

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. I described the topic of the study in the participant information form that I gave you, however I would just like to remind you of the nature of this research and what I am intending to explore. I am interested in investigating what mothering means to women who have adopted children and who foster children. There are obviously no right or wrong answers to the questions, I am just interested in what you think and what mothering means for you.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any stage. If you do so, any data pertaining to you will be destroyed. I ensure that you will remain anonymous and that all names will be changed on any written documentation. Everything you say will remain confidential.

Even though this question was asked in your consent form I would just like to confirm once more that you're happy for me to record today's discussion. The recorded data will only be viewed by myself and my supervisor and once the study has been completed it will be stored securely at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. If anyone else wants to view the recordings for academic or research purposes they will only be able to do so with your permission.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. I'd like you to imagine that you've been asked to write a dictionary entry for the word 'fostering'. What do you think you would write?

2. Could you talk about your path towards becoming a foster mother?

Probes:

(a) What prompted your decision to foster?

(b) What were your expectations around fostering?

(c) Could you talk about the process from deciding to foster to having to having the child/ren placed in

your home?

3. How do you understand the word 'mothering'?

Probes:

- (a) What does the activity of mothering mean for you?
- (b) How does being a mother feature in your daily life and everyday activities?
- (c) How does being a mother relate to being a woman?
- (d) How do you view being a mother in the context of your other relationships?
- (e) What does it mean for a woman to not be a mother?

4. What does it mean to be a foster mother?

Probes:

- (a) How is mothering a fostered child similar to and/or different from mothering a biological child?
- (b) How do you find other people respond to you as a foster mother?

5. Have your understandings of mothering a foster child/children changed for you over time?

Probes:

- (a) Has your understanding of mothering a foster child/foster children changed as your child has grown?
- (b) If your child is still young, do you anticipate that this will be the case?
- (c) What does it mean to mother a fostered infant?
- (d) What does it mean to mother a fostered primary school-going child?
- (e) What does it mean to mother a fostered teenager?

6. What characterises a 'good mother'?

7. What characterises a 'good foster mother'?

If the participant fosters transracially:

8. How do you understand the word 'race'?

9. Could you talk about fostering a child belonging to a different racial group from your own?

Probes:

- (a) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your whiteness/blackness/"colouredness"/"Indianness" mean?
- (b) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your child's whiteness/blackness/"colouredness"/"Indianness" mean?

10. What do you think of the term 'mixed race family'?

Probes:

- (a) If this term resonates with how you view your family, could you talk about what it means to be a mixed race family?

For all participants:

11. When you think of the future in terms of being a mother to your child/children, what comes to mind?

Probes:

- (a) What are your hopes?
(b) What are your fears?

12. Could you talk a bit about the idea of support for foster mothers?

Probes:

- (a) Could foster mothers benefit from some kind of specific support?
(b) What might that support entail?

13. Has anything emerged in this discussion that you would like to talk about further?

Probes:

- (a) Do you have any additional comments or questions to ask me?
(b) Is there anything I didn't cover that you think is important for me to know?

CLOSING COMMENTS

I would like to thank you for sharing your understanding of being an adoptive mother with me. I am very grateful for your time which I know, as a mother, is very precious! Please feel free to contact me with any queries you may have. My number and email address are on the participant information sheet that you received.

CONTACTS OF ANY OTHER FOSTER/ADOPTIVE MOTHERS:

3. Interview guide for adoptive and foster mothers

Interview number: _____

Date: _____

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Participant name: _____

Child	Gender	Bio/Foster	Same race/Transracial	Current age	Age at adoption

INTRODUCTION

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thank you for volunteering to participate in this research study. I described the topic of the study in the participant information form that I gave you, however I would just like to remind you of the nature of this research and what I am intending to explore. I am interested in investigating what mothering means to women who have adopted children and who foster children. There are obviously no right or wrong answers to the questions, I am just interested in what you think and what mothering means for you.

I would like to remind you that your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw at any stage. If you do so, any data pertaining to you will be destroyed. I ensure that you will remain anonymous and that all names will be changed on any written documentation. Everything you say will remain confidential.

Even though this question was asked in your consent form I would just like to confirm once more that you're happy for me to record today's discussion. The recorded data will only be viewed by myself and my supervisor and once the study has been completed it will be stored securely at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. If anyone else wants to view the recordings for academic or research purposes they will only be able to do so with your permission.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. I'd like you to imagine that you've been asked to write dictionary entries for the two words 'adoption' and 'fostering'. What do you think you would write?

2. Could you talk about your path towards becoming a foster mother?

Probes:

(a) What prompted your decision to foster?

(b) What were your expectations around fostering?

(c) Could you talk about the process from deciding to foster to having to having the child/ren placed

in your home?

3. Could you talk about your path towards becoming an adoptive mother?

Probes:

- (a) What prompted your decision to adopt?
- (b) What were your expectations around adopting?
- (c) Could you talk about different “stages” in the process: deciding to adopt, the home-study, “finding” the child, placement of the child, the legal process involved in finalizing the adoption, receiving confirmation that the child is legally “yours”...

4. How do you understand the word ‘mothering’?

Probes:

- (a) What does the activity of mothering mean for you?
- (b) How does being a mother feature in your daily life and everyday activities?
- (c) How does being a mother relate to being a woman?
- (d) How do you view being a mother in the context of your other relationships?
- (e) What does it mean for a woman to not be a mother?

5. What does it mean to be an adoptive mother and a foster mother?

Probes:

- (a) How would you **compare** mothering a biological child, an adopted child and a foster child?
- (b) How do you find **other people respond** to you as an adoptive mother and a foster mother?

6. Have your understandings of mothering changed for you over time as your children have grown?

Probes:

- (a) If your child is still young, do you anticipate that this will be the case?
- (b) What does it mean to mother an adopted and/or fostered **infant**?
- (c) What does it mean to mother an adopted and/or fostered **primary** school-going child?

What does it mean to mother an adopted and/or fostered **teenager**?

7. What characterises a ‘good mother’?

8. What characterises a ‘good adoptive mother’?

9. What characterises a good foster mother?

If the participant has adopted/fosters transracially:

10. How do you understand the word ‘race’?

11. Could you talk about fostering a child belonging to a different racial group from your own?

Probes:

- (a) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your whiteness/blackness/"colouredness"/"Indianness" mean?
- (b) In the context of your relationship with your child, what does your child's whiteness/blackness/"colouredness"/"Indianness" mean?

12. What do you think of the term 'mixed race family'?

Probes:

- (a) If this term resonates with how you view your family, could you talk about what it means to be a mixed race family?

For all participants:

13. When you think of the future in terms of being a mother to your child/children, what comes to mind?

Probes:

- (a) What are your hopes?
- (b) What are your fears?

14. Could you talk a bit about the idea of support for adoptive and/or foster mothers?

Probes:

- (a) Could adoptive and/or foster mothers benefit from some kind of specific support?
- (b) What might that support entail?

15. Has anything emerged in this discussion that you would like to talk about further?

Probes:

- (a) Do you have any additional comments or questions to ask me?
- (b) Is there anything I didn't cover that you think is important for me to know?

CLOSING COMMENTS

I would like to thank you for sharing your understanding of being an adoptive mother with me. I am very grateful for your time which I know, as a mother, is very precious! Please feel free to contact me with any queries you may have. My number and email address are on the participant information sheet that you received.

CONTACTS OF ANY OTHER FOSTER/ADOPTIVE MOTHERS:

APPENDIX D: Excerpt from data analysis working document

DISCOURSE ANALYSIS WORKING DOCUMENT

PART A

THE PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION

A. Through talking with friends (non-adoption specific)

- "...most of my friends are mothers so that gives us that common link and we support each other and chat about our concerns and frustrations and things like that." (5:178)...image of women sitting around a lump of clay moulding it together...forming a joint construction....shaped by all of them....
- "What I have learned has been through talking to C and my friends." (5:491)
- Women with children 'pass on' advice to younger women without children: Giving advice to other women: Um, and then the people I am involved with who don't have kids often it's, um, they are quite younger than me so we'll talk about kids, I'll give them advice or whatever.
- "Whereas your whole support network thing I think it would work just the same as mom's having their normal kids and just getting together and saying 'so we're all in this boat'." (9:892)
- "'cause I couldn't tell my folks that it's actually not going so well. 'Cause I knew I'd get an 'I told you so', you know, that kind of thinking? I couldn't show that I was having any difficulty with any discipline stuff or anything, it was just all fine, you know? So we turned, I turned to other friends and things for that kind of help." (11:65)

B. Through talking with friends who have adopted

- "...And then we can talk about the feelings. 'Cause now those friends of ours they've got two girls and they adopted a boy. And like she's been struggling with a boy and it's are you struggling with them being a boy 'cause it's a boy or are you struggling because it's a Black, adopted boy?'"(5:338)
- Adoptive mothers constructing together: "a friend of mine, she's actually also responding, she's a play therapist and she's also adopted so I chat with her a lot" (5:215)
- "I've got a great circle of friends that have adopted and I spend hours and hours and hours with them going through every little thing in my head, you know, all the, and that's possibly something that is, would be useful for people to actually see people's families." (21:531)
- *When adoptive mothers talk to other adoptive mothers they don't just talk about "adoption stuff"...they talk about "normal kid stuff"* [constructing themselves as "normal" through constructing the talk as "normal talk" and through drawing on the discourse that is available to and constructed by 'normal mothers']
- "if I meet with, um, UC [an adoptive other] and the other mom, it's more just day to day kids stuff that you talk about. I think possibly later when they're, if they have identity issues or stuff about their actual adoption maybe that's the time I'll need different information or different support to the normal mothering type support." (11:452)

C. Through talking with other people who have had similar experiences

- "I'm very happy that there're other people that have got older kids that have gone through stuff that I might have to go through and I can always ask their advice. I rely a lot on asking other people's, not advice but just what they've been through and how they've dealt with it and stuff. You know?"
- "Because I think you see, like where you, where maybe there've been things that you've thought about or you hear other people's stories and you think oh, it's, you kind of feel ok, there are other people out there, you know, with maybe like the same things...I often maybe chat to people like K about things. And just like to hear ok that's how she's got on and kind of like it's the same thing for me" (12:447)
- "speaking to other adoptive parents is nice, people going through the same things." (14:227)
- "Ja, just to see their experiences and if somebody does say something really horrible to them how they reacted to it or, you know, maybe they made a mistake the first time and they thought about it and did it differently the second time and it worked or, ja, just to maybe cope with the family, families may reject you and the child and you may need to know 'what do I do now?' or things like that, ja." (15:471)
- "fortunately for us we do belong to a church were there are quite a few families that do adopt. So we could go to any of them and say 'this is what's been happening to me'." (15:495)
- "I sort of said to her [social worker] 'please, if you've got people going through a similar situation to us please tell then to phone me'. So, I don't want to, I'm not going to give them horror stories but at least so that, you know they can maybe have an idea of what to expect, that it's not all gonna be, you know, plain sailing. Just some stuff to be aware of. You know you don't want to give people horror stories but just open their eyes a little bit to some of the issues they might face. And that's where I just felt there was nothing. I'm not big on online forums and stuff, I don't know, maybe there's blogs out there, I don't know, but nothing that came easily." (18:454)

D. Through talking with their husbands

- "we'd been thinking about it" (4:18); deciding on parenting approaches together (4:135))

- “we had very different reasons for adoption, if you looked at the core of it, and very different, uh, I think parameters. Like what do you call it? Like risk profile. I was like, I’m happy, whatever baby. And he was a lot more cautious about it.” (17:54) “Um, subsequently my reasons have changed...Um, and, um, my reasons have changed in that I’ve probably moved a lot closer to him and I’m not sure that he’s moved closer....I’m sure he probably has realised because in having A and the social interactions that we have with her you realise that this is bigger than you” (17:66).

E. Talking as a family

- “Natural” as something that is easy to talk about, not taboo. Transracial adoption: my children “talk about it all the time..Talk about them being Black, me being White” (1:322).....using language to normalise, using language to deconstruct, using language to resist definitions of normal, using language as a way to “care” about things and not “care” about other things; using language to mediate what “affects us” and what doesn’t. [Through talking about it we’ve developed our construction of adoption (and trans-racial adoption specifically) as natural. “That’s how we’ve always been [open to talking about it], so there’s no other way to react” the language we use creates the frame for our reactions - permits certain thoughts/feelings/discussions/reactions/meanings and silences others.]

F. Through consulting people viewed to have expert knowledge / people you trust

- “you won’t just take advise from anyone off the street”. (4:739)
- “we’re thinking now of going to see a child psychologist to find out how do we deal with this?” (4:693);
- consulting head of a support group (4:747): “and she gave me really good advice, she really did. And I suppose for adoptive moms if you can find someone like that that you can actually approach and ask for help from time to time for specific issues.”
- “Um, at Y they had given me the number, the one, I’m not sure if she was the carer or whatever that was running it, and she said if you need anything. But also they’re so busy. They’ve got so many kids to look after and, kind of I hadn’t build up any relationship with her to like, feel like I, you know, so” (12:455)

J. Through narratives

- “I’ve been using stories and trying to relate it to her in that way and, um, bring it up like that.” (5:321)
- ‘She fits in with the family more than I imagined she would. Um, it’s easier. It’s so much easier than I ever imagined it would be. ‘Cause I’ve always heard horror stories about adoption, and you always see these horror movies, you know, and it’s always traumatic’ (2:117).
- ‘that’s where I just felt there was nothing. I’m not big on online forums and stuff, I don’t know, maybe there’s blogs out there, I don’t know, but nothing that came easily’ (18:462).

K. Drawing on discourses of religious communities / spiritual belief system

Decision to adopt and which child to adopt:

- baby home at church (5:41); we are Christians and we prayed about it (4:20); adopting was God’s idea (2:8).
- “So I just didn’t know how to choose so, I, by the way don’t even go to church, but then I said ‘can I just pray between now and Wednesday (laughs) and then on Wednesday can you choose one for me, then I’ll come and pick him up on Friday’. And C who was my social worker said ‘ok, I’ll do that’. And then she, she chose my son, that’s him (points to a photograph in her office), so she chose K for me, his name was C and, uh, so normally they would try and match you with a child that has the same complexion as you and, ja. And she said it just felt right to give me this one regardless of that he doesn’t look much like me. So I said ‘well that’s fine’.” (19:82) - Ideal: matching a child to the same complexion as you (normal families have members with similar colour skin) – this is “best” for all concerned. [Although this is “ideal”, after praying...the social worker decided that EVEN though the child had a different complexion shade this was the “right” shade for the child] (frame of ‘I prayed and this is the right child for you’ superseded ‘this child has the same shade of skin colour’).
- “religion’s a big thing for us so we prayed about it and prayed that the right child would be brought to us. So when we met her there was no overwhelming sense of ‘no, this is not the child for you’. So it was kind of ‘how can we say no?’” (18:151)

Meanings of adoption:

- “I was helping out with youth and M used their adoption certificate of D to illustrate adoption in Christianity and how we are adopted into the family through Christ. And it’s those words ‘as if of my blood’ and that has always been, that has stuck with me. And that is what shapes why I say just copy and paste because she, it’s as if I bore her anyway. That’s where it is for me. So, I think that’s one of the biggest things that shapes my view of adoption and my relationship to B.” (8:346)
- Uses a biblical metaphor to construct adoption: “Um, it’s like being adopted into God’s family, you can’t, you know, you can’t, He won’t ever let you go.” (11:477)
- “It’s like unbelievable because I think if she’d come first or second I wouldn’t have had any more. I, but I did, she came last. And I think the Lord knew that and he knew that if I’d, but the fact that we had C and they were ten months apart made it an ideal adoption process because we had a child, I mean they grew up as best buddies.” (10:66) - constructs meaning according to God being in control, God’s plan...

Relationship with extended family

- “you know you leave and cleave and I hadn’t actually “leaved and cleaved” properly so it actually made a

proper break for me in terms of not having their influence, their stuff influence me too much anymore.” (11:53)

- “Um, and you know our fight was more than that because their minister went round to them and said he agrees completely with oupa, that only the devil would cause family splits like that so obviously it’s from the devil. And we’re like going ‘well that’s really interesting. Imagine offering a child a home and being told that’s from the devil. *How*, if God is the Father of the fatherless? Where does that come from?” (20:371) - **different people interpreting the same religion and reaching different conclusions**

Constructions of womanhood

- “I don’t know. I want my children, I want them to have Godly, biblical womanhood, you know, where they dress modestly (laughs), do you know what I’m saying? Where they care for their bodies, where they, um, respect men and where they submit to man’s leadership, you know, all those Godly things.” (13:444)

Constructions of mothering

- “As my Christianity has developed, because I’ve been a Christian for ten years I’ve learned a lot, I’ve matured in that perspective as well and how to mother and how to parent so yes it has changed for me.” (15:270)

Constructions of meaning of race

- “It would depend on what she asks me and I would probably refer her to the Bible and to God about what does the Bible say? No-one’s any better or worse or anybody’s any different, God made us all different, there are different races in the Bible. I try and just speak to her about things like that. He made us all special and, you know, I, I’m actually starting to pray now that somehow it just bounces off her, that it doesn’t affect her whatsoever.” (15:426)
- “it’s never easy to let them go but it’s, you know, in my heart I know that that’s where God was placing them ‘cause He wasn’t placing them with us, you know” (16:28)
- race (Michael Jackson): “But he was in a lot of pain and he was falling apart and he died and he never got to watch his children grow up. Just because he wanted to be someone God never intended him to be” (20:739)

RESISTING a discourse from her religious community (in relation to resisting the view that you love a biological child more than an adopted child): “So it’s, you know, they had that worldly mindset that they thought was from God that they thought they were telling us, they thought God, and I’m like ‘God’s the one who shows us how to love’. It’s not, however we get our children we’re going to love them through God’s love not through our own. “ (16:491)

- (16) wonders how losing a child might impact on her belief system / relationship with God: “I mean I just think ‘Lord will I still be able to still, you know, come to you?’ How will I be able to deal with that?” (16:610)...**so this discourse informs how she makes sense of mothering....but then aspects of mothering inform how she engages with this discourse...**

Constructing meaning around her child’s HIV

- constructing meaning based on her spiritual belief system: “, ‘cause I don’t know how long his life is going to be. And I trust that it’ll be as long as anyone else’s and I really trust that he’ll die of something besides HIV, that here I am so scared that that’s what’s going to end his life but God actually knows and maybe God has another way for him to go, it’s not that disease. And so I think I’ve grown really strong with him in that. Just I think as a mother, anyone who’s got a child that’s got an illness that can shorten their life or, you don’t know when, you know, I think you just have a strong bond just, just, ja, just trusting God and I think we’re constantly trusting for God and I think it’s strengthened my relationship with God just to have to have faith for something so big. I mean if you hear a testimony of someone being cured of HIV it’s almost like ‘shoo, that’s huge!’ And then I think ‘oh but we’re waiting for that testimony!’ Like, so it;s like you’re waiting for something that most people are going to tell you is impossible. I mean people can come and tell us ‘he’s going to die before he’s thirty, he’s not going to love another twenty years’, and this and that. And I have to say ‘well, that’s not for us to decide.’” (16:614)
- Use a spiritual perspective in constructing meaning around managing the care of their child with HIV: “You just start, it’s like you just have to give it to God and we just pray over his life and we’re just like ‘Lord, I mean, you’re the one keeping this child alive. It’s not the medicine and you can intervene in any situation’.” (16:

L. Discussions with the birth-mother

- If there was an issue specifically about race we would go and speak to his mom and we would talk to him together. (7:278)

M. In relation to messages you received during socialisation and upbringing

- “But I don’t know if that was something that was socialised into me because, you know, you grow up with fairly strong messages of, you know, ‘until you’ve had a baby you haven’t lived’ kind of thing. So, or whether that’s just a real emotion, that you feel incomplete without a child.” (8:180)
- “a good mother takes her children to church, shows up on time with them dressed, well fed and they look good and, ‘cause that’s what my mother, she, that was important to her. Not the church part but, so we looked nice, that was really important to my mother. So I’m trying to struggle to get out of that whole

picture where that's not really what a good mother is because you can take your children to church with bad hair and you can still be a good mom. But I'm struggling to get out of what my mother's picture of what it was" (13:509) - reflecting on her attempts to resist that construct

N. Cultural / social / historical trends

- "Because I was really totally over the top with my first, you know? And yet I think the world is changing with that. They're talking about kangaroo mothering, I don't know if you saw that on TV the other day? Where, if you have twins those babies come and they lay on you and I'm a firm believer in that. Now when I had my first it was like 'no she's crying don't run, give her a chance to wake up and make a noise and...'. I mean I would have held that baby like all, 'no, that's spoiling'. I'm talking 26 years ago. And I think that's so vital. I think we've got a lot to learn with regard to bonding with our kids and, ja, I think a lot's changed. It needs to change, you know?" (10:280)

O. In relation to experience

- "It's become more meaningful to me being a mom" (16:298)
- "And the thing that I'm finding quite hard to accept, and this is my own journey, is the prominence that mom takes over dad in the early years, Um, and I guess it's my own assumption that the relationship M and I have always been sharing, and equal and, um, you know that's what we talk about, that's how we do things and, um, I get quite resentful when it's always I've got to be the one in the middle of the night, I've got to be the one tucking them in and, you know, that's what they want...especially baby. And once I could just, and you've got to kind of surrender to that a little bit, you know, once I could just let it go and say 'this is what it is for now' and in a way look back and say 'I hope I don't regret the fact that I didn't surrender to that then. So I'm trying to, because I know, like I can see it with H, he's like, when he's sick it's me but most of the time now it's got to the stage where we're interchangeable. Uh, but for A it's not there, but I think it's just age. So there is, so just to concede that there is something quite primal about motherhood, that children need" (17:344) - **she had constructed an idea around what mothers do and what fathers do and then her baby demanded from her in a way that did not match up to her construction...**
- How does being a mother relate to being a woman?: "What I want to say intellectually is different to what I've experienced." (17:507)

DISCURSIVE REFLECTION

A. Difficulties in talking about how mothering is constructed

- It's a difficult one.....I'd have to think about that. (7:59)
- How do you understand mothering? "That's a big question" (8:144) - mothering is a BIG CONSTRUCT

B. Awareness of the constructive powers of the language that one uses and does not use

- "I know the more we talk about it it becomes common lingo in the house and it's not a shock for her, that it's just, we've used the word "adoptive" for a long time. The social worker advised us to use it in our vocab. I mean even from a baby I'd go "agh, my gorgeous adopted daughter". Things like that. Now C, this friend of our says she's never really used that 'cause she doesn't want him to feel different. Um, so it's hard to know what the right thing to do is." (5:303)
- "Um, I've never thought of it [the term 'mixed race family']. I've never like said that's what we are. I wouldn't describe myself as, you know, mixed racial family, or...If I was talking to someone and said I adopted I'm going to say 'but it's a Black child'. You know, I don't think of his colour, I mean, um, ja. I don't, like, I would rather not even say he's adopted, you know, like separating like my first child, 'this is my first child, he's adopted'. But obviously you can look at him and be like 'oh, he's adopted'. So just, for me, I feel I, you don't even need to say, you know, to be...He's adopted and he's like, 'cause now I'm telling you there's nothing different with adoption, there's nothing different with my son and this one I'm going to birth, you know, it's the same to me. But then when I describe him I describe him as adopted. Like I box, ok, this one's adopted, this one's not adopted, and..." (16:572) - REFLECTS ON THE LANGUAGE THAT SHE USES. Explains that she does not use the term "mixed race" as she does not classify her family according to race as difference" (her family unit does not regard race as a site of difference); she does not speak of "my adopted child" as this invokes a difference between him and her "biological child" and she doesn't speak of her "Black child" as this would imply that the race of the child matters and she doesn't believe that it does. She is aware of how her language may fit / not fit with her meaning frame and she reflects on this...
- "now it really, I realise my own, like, you always preface, um, a definition of somebody with race. That Black woman that did this, that White guy that did that, that Coloured lady that did that. And it's just how we're conditioned. And then you realise that this is their language, so he speaks like that, at five. 'You know that brown baby mommy' or 'that brown this' or 'that lady' or 'why is it that all brown people work, sweep the floor?' And then you're 'well that's not...'" (17:105); "let's say we're in a social situation, a braai or something and somebody says 'Oh why don't you' like for the maid or domestic worker 'why don't you just get the girl to do it?' And I'm like, 'she's not a girl. She's a 50 year old woman and this is a three year-old girl listening to you talk about somebody that looks like her as a girl'. Like 'you've got to stop this'. You know, like, so trying to constantly filter what she sees as an image of herself. That was the big thing that I got myself really worked up

about. Like she is able to do anything any other, but hearing these kinds of things are going to make her feel different.” (17:133); “it’s in our language and it’s in how we see the world” (17:150)

- “I remember the early days of democracy obviously there was all this non-racialism being bantered about and it was quite controversial. It’s not a right or wrong thing, it’s just how you view it and what you choose to put into your little basket of definition, you know? Of who you are. Am I woman? Am I White, am I Black, am I...I’m a mixed-race family, that’s what important to me to mention. Um, ja.” (17:557) - identity construction; construction through language

C. Awareness of positioning of self in relation to discourses and the situating of constructs within discourse

- “[ADS] How does being a mother relate to being a woman? [NF] Do you want the feminist answer? [ADS] I want *your* answer.” (9:212)
- “if I were to be honest I’m also under a director of a ministry, ok, so their standards of where children, what children should receive is different in my experience. I’m an occupational therapist from before when I went into ministry. And if I had this child adopted I would have this child in OT, I would have her in speech, I would have her in play therapy, do you understand? I would have her in every kind of intervention to try and get better. But they come from the standpoint where they don’t really believe in those kinds of things strongly, or they haven’t utilised those things for their children, the two that they’ve adopted. Do you understand? So I can’t really go and spend all this money of the ministry’s. [ADS] Is that also where there’s a difference for you between being a mother and being a foster care mother of a home? [BH] Yes. I think so, especially the money part, because I can’t take them to, I mean I have taken them to play therapy and I have an OT that we saw that was free, and I took some of them to speech but that needs to be done more and more and more. And they just have very differing opinions. ‘Cause I’m coming from that therapy background and they’re not. They’re coming from a much more spiritual, they’re coming from a: this child will, it’ll just drop off and, after you’ve prayed for them for a few years. And I’m going ‘no, no, no.’” (13:394)

D. Deconstruction (although whenever women are resisting a certain discourse they are involved in the act of deconstruction, this heading refers to the times when women comment on the ACT of deconstruction or explicitly discuss the NEED for deconstruction)

- “But there’re just little kind of, on both sides of our family we’ve had, especially older men that just cannot cope. You know like, don’t say anything nasty but can’t look at the child, can’t pick up the child, can’t, you know? And you know they’re going through their own stuff. I think it’s kind of, I think anyone that’s born before the 70’s, that’s my, like growing up in South Africa I think it’s hard.” (17:87)
- “Like my son, he is so sensitive to race. He’s five and everything is about who’s Black? Who’s White? Who’s brown? And we’ve tried to get him to brown and cream and you know, we’ve tried to diffuse it.” (17:96)
- “now it really, I realise my own, like, you always preface, um, a definition of somebody with race. That Black woman that did this, that White guy that did that, that Coloured lady that did that. And it’s just how we’re conditioned. And then you realise that this is their language, so he speaks like that, at five. ‘You know that brown baby mommy’ or ‘that brown this’ or ‘that lady’ or ‘why is it that all brown people work, sweep the floor?’ And then you’re ‘well that’s not...’ “ (17:105)
- “let’s say we’re in a social situation, a braai or something and somebody says ‘Oh why don’t you’ like for the maid or domestic worker ‘why don’t you just get the girl to do it?’ And I’m like, ‘she’s not a girl. She’s a 50 year old woman and this is a three year-old girl listening to you talk about somebody that looks like her as a girl’. Like ‘you’ve got to stop this’. You know, like, so trying to constantly filter what she sees as an image of herself. That was the big thing that I got myself really worked up about. Like she is able to do anything any other, but hearing these kinds of things are going to make her feel different.” (17:133)
- “But what annoys me is that people don’t see it. And it’s hard work showing it up for people because they get defensive. You’re accusing people of being racist.” (17:152)
- “you know if you understand politics as well it helps you not to be a prisoner of some thing that was made to confuse you and sort of direct your thinking and way of life.” (19:302)
- “I kind of see race as being different colours. So we talk about all of us being African, all born in South Africa. That’s how we are and you can have White Africans and Black Africans depending on your skin colour. As opposed to race.” (20:610) - Deconstructing race as difference and division by evoking ‘being African’ as a point of commonality: we are all African but some are White and some are Black [discourse of what it means to be African]. “I was asked at a shop once, um, ‘is he yours?’ and I said ‘yes’ and they said ‘but he’s African?’ and I said ‘So am I’. And the person said to me ‘oh, and his dad?’, I said ‘he’s also African’. And they said ‘ja but, you don’t get what I’m saying. He’s African’. I said ‘I know what you’re saying, he was born in this country and I was born in this country and my husband was born in this country’. So he said ‘is your husband a Black African?’ I said ‘no, he’s a White African, but he’s African too’. He was like ‘but then how did you get?’ (laughs).” (20:638)
- “there was a little girl who said ‘how come you don’t look like your family?’ and I happened to be there so I said ‘do you look like your brother?’ She was like ‘oh, no, he’s a boy!’ I said ‘do you look like your mom?’ She says ‘no, I’ve got blonde hair’. So I said ‘exactly, you don’t look like your family either’. And she was like ‘huh’. And I know that’s not what she was getting at (laughs) but it, it sorted it for then.”

(20:841)

A. Resisting deconstruction

- “So when I say I love you, I do care for her deeply and I sit with her and I make sacrifices for her and we go places and all of that, it’s just not like a, I know it’s just not that kind of love that I would have if she came in at age six and I said ‘I’m adopting you for life’. It’s not that same, it’s not the same.” (13:385) - Foster mothering is different from ADOPTIVE mothering (where you commit to the child FOR LIFE). I’m being judged according to the “standard” but “IT’S NOT THE SAME, IT’S NOT THE SAME” – (use a different yardstick to assess me as a mother!)...”But that’s just me. So my view on mothering is different (laughs). It’s a weird thing. Does that make sense?” (13:424) **BUT SHE IS NOT TRYING TO DECONSTRUCT THIS DIFFERENCE - SHE IS RESISTING THE DECONSTRUCTION OF THIS DIFFERENCE.**

E. Lack of construction materials

(what is the relationship between information and discursive constructs? E.g. what is the difference / relationship between “we didn’t have information on what challenges might come up in transracial adoption” or in bonding with an adoptive child etc and “how do we gain access to discursive constructs that we can hold, use or resist confidently, in a way that strengthens our sense of positioning?”)

- “I think it would be nice if there was a little bit more information out there for adoptive mothers on how to handle things and, you know how to answer those tough questions. I’ve struggled to find information on that kind of thing you know”. (5:487)
- “Um, you know it’s all those questions and, um, you get given advise from different people so it’s quite hard ‘cause you don’t know who to listen to so I’ve just got to trust that we’ll do the right thing at the right time and say the right things” (5:292).
- “but I’m like, ‘wow, he’s gonna ask those questions, he’s gonna, the what if’s, the whys. How do I broach this difficult one with him that he’s actually the product of rape. And I’m, *that’s* when I think I would really need some support and some guidance from someone who’s gone there before me. How do you deal with the questions they’re gonna ask. He might not ask them when he’s, you know four or ten, but he’s gonna ask them at some point. I’m sure he is. So, ja, how do you deal with that?” (6:742)
- In the adoption process (family assessment phase): insufficient information received - “. In terms of just information about adoption and issues you might have and now you’ve got two White kids you’re going to have another kid, what issues might come out of that? Bonding issues, um, just what to do with their hair, what to do with their skin said ‘actually it’s up to you to go find that stuff out and read about it or join a support group’.” (11:151) ...how to think about making sense of issues such as transracial adoption, bonding, hair and skin. ...these things don’t just come naturally...these are not ‘normal’ issues that every parent goes through, these require additional information on / support for. (Adoptive parents don’t always have the “construction materials” for these issues)
- “‘cause we didn’t know quite what [information] to look for” (11:159)
- “I don’t think there’s enough out there, I really don’t. Um, I do, there is one support group that meets in Midrand once a month. And there’re issues that come up just in terms of the whole adoption process or the fostering process or adopting an older child versus babies. I think that’s huge. The web, the internet’s not very helpful ‘cause the stuff on cross-racial, trans-racial whatever adoptions is very American, um, and it’s not applicable at all to South African context. And there’s no real website where you can go onto it and read, and read. Like, you know, this is what you can do with the hair. This is the skin products you can use, you know, some books you can read to the child about adoption” (11:406)
- **lack of information about attachment difficulties in SA:** “And I don’t think there’s much education in this country especially, in America there’s so many adoptions internationally, there’re so many books, everyone has blogs, like everyone has support groups, conferences, there’s like a whole lifestyle there that teaches you about attachment and bonding with your child. Here, not even the W’s [leaders of the ministry she’s involved with] know about it (laughs). Like, I feel like I’m always working with people that know nothing about, really, attachment and you have to know about it in order to foster and adopt. If you’re adopting older children or children who’ve been through any kind of trauma before they get to you.” (13:294)
- “I sort of said to her ‘please, if you’ve got people going through a similar situation to us please tell them to phone me’. So, I don’t want to, I’m not going to give them horror stories but at least so that, you know they can maybe have an idea of what to expect, that it’s not all gonna be, you know, plain sailing. Just some stuff to be aware of. You know you don’t want to give people horror stories but just open their eyes a little bit to some of the issues they might face. And that’s where I just felt there was nothing. I’m not big on online forums and stuff, I don’t know, maybe there’s blogs out there, I don’t know, but nothing that came easily.” (18:454)

Need for literature

- “I’ve read books and they don’t, a lot of them are American so they don’t really, they’ve got limited application in this country” (4:766)
- “But it would be nice to have, like, a little book to download or something where you can just read to the

child about adoption and how, you know, its normal, in our family, it's normal, or whatever" (11:419)

PART B

1. NATURAL MOTHERING

OVERARCHING CONCEPTS

Being natural / unnatural depends on what space you're in

- You "become" unnatural in public spaces whereas at home you don't notice the difference (2:433).
"There's so many racial comments made, 24/7 when you're in public. People tell jokes against Blacks. And I'm very aware that my child is Black, *then*" (2:436).
- "When I get to Balito I feel like I'm on a different planet" (6:584)

People construct you in a variety of ways

- positive response / "negative" response (3:578 - 3:585)

Mothering is a "big construct"

- 'Mothering is such a big thing hey?' (1:211)
- "you almost get tired just thinking about like [breathes in deeply] everything, you know, that you sacrifice to just get them through those first eighteen years and then they're on their own." (16:310) (mothering is a substantial task)

1.1 NATURAL MOTHERING

A. WOMEN ARE NATURAL MOTHERS [LINK TO GENDER]

IT IS NATURAL TO HAVE CHILDREN

Women should have children

- The discourse of growing up / marriage / family etc is that you will have children. "Going with the flow" = having children. (9) resists that by saying that having children is a PERSONAL CHOICE (9:329) (vs social expectation)...BUT then she says in relation to people who have chosen not to have children: "Whether down the line when they're old they'll start thinking 'oh, maybe I should have' or, um, you know I didn't have kids 'cause I don't want to get old and I don't have kids, it's not the reason we had kids. **Um, in fact I don't know why we had kids (laughs). You sort of think 'what was I doing?' (laughs).**" (9:329) [going with the flow??] [ambivalence]
- Birthmother: "Because I mean, I think she got to forty and she realised that her life was passing her by and it was almost like she had to have a baby." (10:477)
- "she actually said to him '*please* won't you father a baby for me, I've really got to have a baby'. I think she just begged him and he said 'look...' - he was like sixty hey? - um, I think she said to him 'look, no ties. Just give me a baby and I will leave, I will go'. Which he did. Which horrified my ex-husband, he was absolutely horrified about it. But I'm glad for her she did it. I really am, you know?" (10:481) - the discourse that women should have children / are missing out by not bearing a child holds so much weight that here it supersedes this birth mother not being able to care for her child ("she dropped G when she was tiny. It was a very sad situation." (10:462); "There was no maternal instinct. She didn't say 'ah, come and sit on my lap, let me help you open the present'. It was like from a distance. Um, no, there was no motherly, nothing. Nothing at all." (10:464)
- "I do question if that woman is really fulfilled if she is not caring for children in some way. So what I'm saying is not everyone has to produce babies right away, or adopt or whatever. I'm just saying, but I'm sure there's a part of her that wants to care for children. **I guess I think that's all how we're made**, which sounds really, but I don't know." (13:492)
- "**It was always strange to me, even my sister-in-law, my brother's wife, you know, she's 39, they don't have kids yet**, kind of scared of child-birth and everything but I don't think they're too keen on having kids just yet and it just always seems strange to me, they don't think they're ready to raise a child and all the responsibilities of more, not, you know, being there to change nappies and this and that, but spiritually, you know, what you need to put in, you know, to raise a child." (16:363)
- "the difference between being a woman and a mom is just that you cannot imagine, for me, as a woman before you've had kids you cannot imagine that whole other aspect of your life that opens up once you become a mom. So I mean I had a friend the other day saying 'is it really worth having kids?' Oh my gosh, I would never ever not, however I have to get them (laughs) beg, borrow or steal, I will get them (laughs). Because for me it's such a, you cannot explain to them, it's a different love, it's not a love that you've felt before. It's a different kind of love when you've got children and nothing else will, nothing else is similar to that. **So in actual fact, you lose out on an entire aspect of your life if you don't have them, in my opinion.**" (20:422)

Women shouldn't be judged / feel guilty if they don't have children

- "I don't begrudge people if they *don't* have kids. Um, **but I do feel that they're missing out. ... I don't**

think people should feel guilt if they don't have kids and I don't think people should judge them either... Um, ja, so I don't think it...I don't think it's, I don't think people should be judged on not having kids, I really don't. It's personal choice actually." (9:318) [ambivalence]

- "don't have a kid because you feel like you have to make everybody happy by having a child now because it's not going to work" (9:325) - you shouldn't feel pressurized into having a child.
- "we like kids so we had kids" (9:344) vs something you're 'supposed' to do (9:344)
- "Um, ja, but I really don't think people should be judged for not having kids. I don't think, I think in the old days it was almost like a thing that you are here to reproduce and you are here to, I mean my mom's got this big thing that 'right you need to have these two kids to replace yourself and your husband'. Well that's a little bit weird." (9:334)
- "But so they're very much of the mindset still that you do, you get married and you have kids to carry on your name and your whatever and your, um, ja, Some funny ideas. Whereas I don't sort of see it as trying to make sure that I live on in everybody's minds and everybody's...we had kids and we like kids so we had kids." (9:340)

MOTHERING IS NATURAL FOR WOMEN

- God made woman as mothers (1:647)
- You have to cut yourself off from that part of yourself not to be a mother (1:648)
- Mothering is part of your self as a woman (1:649). Liking children is part of what it means to be a woman (1:656). Nurturing is part of what it means to be a woman (of the nature of a woman). Woman were created to have children (to mother) (1:657).
- "I think moms have a connection with their children that fathers will never understand" (2:289).
- Moms have "unconditional love" for their children (2:294) (as opposed to men who's anger lasts longer) (2:293). [Woman are able to forgive their children ("in the very next second that's all forgotten and you move on" (2:296)).]
- The mother (not the father) is the one who carries the child around all the time in the beginning until the child begins to cry when put down (1:272).
- A mother loves her child unconditionally because she is a woman and that's characteristic of being a woman (2:297).
- A woman who is not a mother: "so, I think it's a very, very huge part of being a woman, that would just be dormant, like having a limb that doesn't work. (3:602). [not having a limb that you're *choosing* not to use...there is something WRONG with that limb and so it doesn't work...something faulty, something flawed]
- "I think you are mother because you're a woman. You know, the two go hand-in-hand" (5:154)
- A woman should be able to bond with a child (even an adopted child) (5:491)
- Mothers as the MAIN CAREGIVER (6:178)
- "I think for most women it's something that's in them" (6:196)...and not being able to have children is something they struggle with (6:201)
- how does being a mother relate to being a woman?: "I think goes to together, for *me*, it's one." (7:72)
- women 'possess' / 'carry' love to give to a child (which would be a waste, then, not to give): "That love that you can give, that you have" (7:80) (couldn't have biological children and now she can give that love to her foster child)
- For (9) mothering appears to be the most natural (almost "default") position whereas being a woman (constructed as wearing nice clothes, going out with your husband, being "feminine" often takes more work / effort): "for me I have to guard against becoming this all-encompassing 'I am a mommy and that's it'. Um, you know and my husband must just wait on the side-lines until the kids have grown up." (9:277)
- Even with an adopted child you have the "nurturing instinct" (12:157) which is connected to being a woman and also connected to being feminine.
- "And to be honest, having staff with more children is easier than not having staff and having seven or whatever. I know that sounds sick, but, um, for me there's a lot less work, um, not work, that's a bad word, but, you know I have staff that can bath them and do all the, I don't know, clean their clothes and (laughs)." (13:134) - **mothering shouldn't be constructed as "work"**
- Nurturing comes naturally: "I just nurture. If I don't have anyone to nurture I start to doubt myself. So, I, you know, just to nurture and make sure everyone around me is ok and, um, ja." (15:165)
- "I think God did create us to be moms so I think, I think I mean, I've always felt like I was the mothering type. I know not every, I mean my sister didn't want to have kids until about a year ago, she finally was like 'I actually want to have kids now, I actually think they're cute'. Whereas me it was just natural like 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' 'A mom!'" (16:339) - Woman are mothers BUT you also get "mothering types" (so are there women who aren't "mothering types"...BUT her sister did "finally" 'come round'.
- "God created us to raise our children" (16:351) [not only to HAVE children but to RAISE children]
- "So, I think, um, a mother and a woman, I think it's just what we were designed as women to be mothers." (16:354)

- “And it’s always strange to me not to think, you know, ‘what do you mean? Why don’t you want to have kids yet?’ you know? And, ja, so it does seem strange if a woman doesn’t want to have, ja it is a strange thing for me, I just don’t get it so I don’t think they’re wrong I’m just the opposite so it just doesn’t make sense, like why wouldn’t they want kids? And, you know?” (16:374)
- **Man have not accessed that part of themselves:** “I think that there’s such a big void that men need to fulfil in this motherhood space and it’s about the consciousness of man, men, as well, in finding their own new identity in an equal world. Um, you know I, my path in life is to play with identity, it’s to kind of say ‘things don’t have to be so’. There are ways that of you just loosen up on some of that, a better solution is possible. So, take it with a pinch of salt.” (17:520)
- **It’s natural WHEN you’re a mother:** “I had brought my friend along with me ‘cause I just didn’t, you know, uh, think I could drive alone with a child. You know when you’ve never been a parent things look more important than, and more scary than they actually are.” (19:98) - Looking at mothering from the ‘outside’ seems more scary....it becomes “natural” / easier when you’re in it yourself.
- **It’s natural for people to raise children (that’s what people do):** “Like often times there’s a challenge that you kind of think “I don’t know if I could do that” but taking a child into your home and raising them is like kind of like a natural thing, I think.” (20: 49) - there’s such a need in the country so that’s a “natural” solution related to what people “naturally” do.

Mothering is not natural

- “(laughs). Ja...mothering...I laugh because it’s such an un...I’d like to say unnatural, it’s such a...I don’t get, let me start by what I don’t understand about mothering.” (17:302)

Mothering is not natural for every woman

- “I’m not a child person” (2:97)
- “I’ve never been a broody person” (1:192) - “broody” possibly = having biological children [dominant discourse of desiring to be a mother] - but she does speak of having children in general (just flag it).
- “I think I would have been fine if I didn’t have children. I do think so” (2:317).
- Her ideas about what is “normal” in a mother-child relationship is informed by her own relationship with her own (biological) mother (3:167) - “natural mothering” is a learned construct
- “I know there’s a few that are not, you know, I’d probably say they’re not natural mothers but I think it’s something that most women want” (6:197)...BUT even I’d say the one’s that are not natural, who would call themselves not natural mothers, when they have their children they often find ‘actually well yeah, I love my own children’. They’re not particularly bothered by other people’s” (6:211)
- “I mean I have a friend who’s very happy just with her dogs and she even says to me ‘I’m too selfish to have kids’. And I just said ‘well, you know, not everybody is, you know don’t have a kid because you feel like you have to make everybody happy by having a child now because it’s not going to work’.” (9:323)
- “I had to work hard to be a mom” (14:58)
- “I don’t have natural motherly...I mean I love my kids but I don’t love, I’m not one that goes and picks up anybody’s babies: (14:82)
- “I know there’re some women that don’t have that instinct” (15:193)
- “let me start by what I don’t understand about mothering. I don’t get all these women who are dying to be pregnant and have little babies and, um, and live for that, give up everything else that they’ve got in their lives for that. I so take my hat off to them, I’m like ‘God, I wish I could be more like that’ but I’m not” (17:303)

It comes more naturally for me to mother children at certain developmental stages rather than others

- “I think, I think that I relate better to little ones who can talk rather than babies. I’m not a baby baby person. Some woman are, they just love those tiny babies. I, I mean it’s not that I dislike them, but I don’t, I prefer the boys now that they’re a little bit older” (4:432)
- “I don’t have natural motherly...I absolutely adore and connect with teenagers and upwards but babies and small children give me the ‘grills’ actually” (14:
- “once a kid gets to about three and they start to communicate and they talk I can really connect with that.” (20:535)

I struggled in mothering my adopted child

- “I thought it, uh, I had a problem with bonding because S was a big baby at five months and already a personality and that whole thing. And I was expecting it just to be easy, just like with the first two.” (11:34); “‘cause I couldn’t tell my folks that it’s actually not going so well. ‘Cause I knew I’d get an ‘I told you so’, you know, that kind of thinking? I couldn’t show that I was having any difficulty with any discipline stuff or anything, it was just all fine, you know?” (11:65) “I thought ‘well, I can’t bond with the child so there’s obviously something wrong with me. And, um, ja, so it did, it, you know your self esteem and your self confidence as a mother does take a bit of a battering.” (11:72)
- I did not know **how** to mother her (because I did not know her): “When one of the boys woke up at night I knew what to do with them. I knew what would, generally what was wrong, what could be wrong and how to get them back to sleep. With her I was terrified. If I heard her crying I was like “ah, I don’t know what to do”. I would lie in bed thinking “I’m scared to go because if I go will it make it worse? If I leave

her will she just start..." It was, ja, it was just completely not knowing her. I think that was one of the big things, I didn't feel like I knew her, whereas with your own, or if you have children from babies I think you get to know their cries, you get to know them. I now obviously I know her, I've had her for two years. But then I didn't know what would work with her." (18:103)

WOMEN MOTHER EVEN IF THEY DON'T HAVE CHILDREN

- "I've got friends who...are single, round about my age and aren't mothers, but boy are they mothers. You know, they just are mothers, I mean they're amazing with my kids...it seems to me such an instinctual" (1:644)
- And I don't think mothering is limited to um your relative or someone who's your child or...It might be that there's someone in the community that you mother or whatever the story is. So, I don't think single women can necessarily say that "I'm not a mother". You can't say that. I mean I can point to some single woman who helped mother me. Um, so, I think it's a very, very huge part of being a woman, that would just be dormant, like having a limb that doesn't work. (3:602)
- "I think everyone can be a mother even when they don't have children. They can still express that part of their femininity in caring for other people...I don't think you have to have your own children to express that part." (13:487)

WOMEN HAVE MATERNAL INSTINCT

- "I've got friends who...are single, round about my age and aren't mothers, but boy are they mothers. You know, they just are mothers, I mean they're amazing with my kids...it seems to me such an instinctual" (1:644)
- For a woman (every woman) to mother is instinctual (1:647)
- instinctual vs cognitive / intellectual [link to women as instinctual beings] (1:5 / 1:32 / 1:194 / 1:249 / 1:276) - also links to mothering as activity
- in relation to mothering and love: 'Isn't it crazy how you just don't process these kinds of things?' (1:207)

Maternal instinct constructed as:

DESIRE FOR CLOSENESS

- drawing the child towards you; offering to help the child; openness / desire for closeness with the child (10:472) (birthmother constructed as lacking maternal instinct due to lacking these qualities)

NURTURING INSTINCT

- "even though you actually haven't physically given birth it's still, it's still that nurturing, it's still like a nurturing instinct. Um, which I think is, um, so ja it's still that connection with being feminine and having that nurturing feeling" (12:156)

PROTECTIVE / CARING INSTINCT

- maternal instinct constructed as: "it's that feeling of instinctively wanting to take care of somebody and like if anybody does anything to her you'll be absolutely enraged." (12:161)
- (12) speaks of a protective instinct towards her child: "It's like an instinctive thing I think. It's, I think it's almost like a, I mean I don't know, maybe it changes as kids get older, I'm not sure, I think when they're still young it's like a protection thing where you, you know, you don't want anything to ever happen to them. Um, I don't think you have that, I mean yes you don't want things to happen to your parents or your husband or whatever but I don't think it's quite that instinctive as like with a child, with your own child." (12:204)
- "So it's all just pure love and wanting to care for them, wanting to protect them and your mother instinct kicks in. With A it was just there. I just, you know, there could be a million babies running around me and my thought would go to A: where is she? So that kicked in and it's so important, that protective mothering, and it was just there." (15:72) Mother instinct constructed in relation to: love and care; "protective mothering"
- "it's a desire for the child to be protected, cared for, loved, not to be hurt by anyone. I know you can't, uh, stop that, but then you can handle it in a way that makes them more able to accept, you know, what's been said or, so it's just a protection instinct I think. And just to love them, just to want them to know that they're loved." (15:278)
- "That's the motherly instinct, you just want to create this, this safety zone for your children to come into and know that everything's gonna be ok no matter what they face in life they will be ok" (15:294)
- "It's like an instinctive thing I think. It's, I think it's almost like a, I mean I don't know, maybe it changes as kids get older, I'm not sure, I think when they're still young it's like a protection thing where you, you know, you don't want anything to ever happen to them. Um, I don't think you have that, I mean yes you don't want things to happen to your parents or your husband or whatever but I don't think it's quite that instinctive as like with a child, with your own child." (12:204)

LINKS WITH BONDING

- linked with bonding - you have maternal instinct when you've bonded with your adopted child (12:168)

INSTINCT IS CONSISTENT

- "my instinct has always been there as a mother" (15:262) - hasn't changed over time, relatively consistent; "the basic foundational instinct has not changed" (15:274)

TO SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

- “And just to let your children know they have an incredible destiny and an incredible purpose in God and not to focus on the bad things. You know so often they might be naughty, they might do bad things and you have to overlook them and say ‘but, you destiny’, ‘but your purpose’ and just, you know, make them focus on that and not what they’ve done, um, and just, ja, all that I think is just motherly instinct.” (15:298) - to see beyond the present, to see the bigger picture

It’s natural to be a bit unsure in your mothering at the beginning

- When they first brought their adopted son home: “A bit panicky, sort of like “Ooh! Now what do we do?”. And he’s crying, now what do we do? (laughs). That sort of thing.” (4:91) (laughter and “that sort of thing” is used to brush this off...implying it’s quite “normal”)

Mental illness can be related to lacking maternal instinct

- “My sister is schizophrenic and depressive and she never married the dad and she’s now a housekeeper for another elderly man. So she never got married, she never, she just wasn’t maternal, she dropped G when she was tiny. It was a very sad situation... (10:459); “[ADS]: So she doesn’t expect any maternal involvement with her now? [NU]: She doesn’t have that. When we went to go visit when they were both tiny, we’d go, we drove down for the first Christmas afterwards and we actually got a hotel room, I’ve got photographs of I’d taken gifts down, I took a gift down for each of them for my sister to give to them. Just a little present, like forty or fifty bucks, and we sat down in the lounge and I said ‘B, these are for you for them’ and I quietly gave them to her. There was no maternal instinct. She didn’t say ‘ah, come and sit on my lap, let me help you open the present’. It was like from a distance. Um, no, there was no motherly, nothing. Nothing at all.” (10:464) - she later says: “I think mental illness puts you in a place where you don’t connect properly with people, you know?” (10:491)

There are women who don’t have maternal instinct

- “I know there’re some women that don’t have that instinct” (15:193)

Maternal instinct is directed towards your biological children

Adoptive mothers have maternal instinct

- “it’s that feeling of instinctively wanting to take care of somebody and like if anybody does anything to her you’ll be absolutely enraged. So it’s like that kind of, um, that kind of thing. That is there. You know.” (12:161)
- “your mother instinct kicks in” (15:74)

You are taught to be a good mother by your own mother

- “My mom’s whole big mission in life was to prepare me to exit her house. To prepare me to be a good wife and mother...I washed nappies, I disciplines my younger siblings, so, you know, some of it came naturally, some of it was already there” (3:332).
- ***the oldest girl mothers her younger siblings*** (3:337) [her own mother over the years then became “less and less of a mother and I became more and more of a parent” (3:36)...transfer of the parenting role as the eldest girl grows up]....***She also resists that: Even though “that’s how my family’s worked” (3:355) I now have five children of my own I can’t be parenting five of my adult siblings as well.*** “I can’t do that stretch” (3:359). I had to say to my parents “look...you’ve got to take over your own kids” (3:367).

MOTHERING IS PART OF THE NATURAL PROGRESSION OF MARRIAGE -> PARENTHOOD

- You know, I mean, it’s the next step. You get married, you have kids and then you’re parents and that’s kind of what you do” (14:111)

MOTHERING IS NATURAL AT CERTAIN SEASONS OF YOUR LIFE

- It’s not just him, I think it’s whatever child it would have been at that time, I would have been able to do it. (7:175) - she had the capacity to do it at that particular time.
- “my mom is a, is fine, but I just know, my mom struggles even to love her own kids (laughs) so imagine. But also you can’t judge her much, I think she was like sixteen when she had her first child, got married, she, I don’t want to be too hard on her.” (19:273)

THE WOMAN INITIATES THE ADOPTION/FOSTERING

- Role of the woman in initiating and pursuing the adoption process (e.g. “receiver of the call” 1:84) [“So I said to my husband the one night ‘You must come and see this little girl I’m involved with’ (2:43)]
- She “liked” the children and took them home for Christmas (before she was married). Then husband “really like them” too and she hoped he would like them so much that he’d want to “keep them” (3:28).
- “Well I started there in the March or the April and I would say that by about the August I knew. Um, but my husband only started volunteering with me a while after that so he still had to get into it.” (15:45) ; “I had to wait for him to catch up because I was already there but I had to wait for him to catch up” (15:60)
- “I actually fell in love with him at BH a year, when he was five months old. And, um, it was a month before our wedding and so we got married, I’d fallen in love with him but then my husband was like ‘Let’s get married’ and I didn’t really mention him. So we moved to Cape Town, I, um, just kept praying about it

and just trusting that, you know he had said he wanted to give birth to children before we adopted, knowing that I wanted to adopt, um, strongly. So he was like 'Ok, well let's just have our own first' and this and that. So just praying for God to change his heart and it was just a few months later that he started talking, 'Maybe we should adopt' " (16:53)

Joint decision

- Joint decision between wife and husband: "So we looked at adoption and we decided to adopt." (11:10)

Husband makes the final decision

- "And then he said 'you know what, we must adopt this child'. And I just wanted to cry, it was like...So I didn't make any decisions. It was like, you know what, he's the head of the house, I'm not going to push it." (10:480)

"then my husband said 'I think we should adopt him'. So then a month later he came to live with us in foster care while we did the adoption and three months later it was done." (16:68)