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Motherhood in Johannesburg

MAPPING THE EXPERIENCES
& MORAL GEOGRAPHIES
OF WOMEN & THEIR
CHILDREN IN THE CITY

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MOTHERHOOD IN JOHANNESBURG

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Motherhood in Johannesburg: Mapping the experiences and moral geographies of women and their children in the city

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Abstract

The urban landscape of post-apartheid Johannesburg is fragmented, highly unequal and carries the scars of the spatial injustices of the apartheid regime. South African cities were designed and legislated to enforce spatial marginalisation of black Africans and other 'non-white' groups¹ to the cities' peripheries, townships and informal settlements. In doing so, the apartheid state constructed an intentionally racially segregated space. Market forces around land costs, unintended consequences of state policy amongst other factors have reinforced the spatial legacy in the post-apartheid period and have overlaid these factors with issues of income and gender, constructing hostile conditions for the poor, for women and for families. Whilst there is a rich mine of literature on the spatial exclusions due to race, the impact of the migrant labour system and the enduring image of black urban residents as temporary sojourners with their 'homes' located in the rural areas, very little study has focused on the gendered spatial experiences of women and more particularly, mothers, in SA cities.

The literature on motherhood, globally, has not focused on the spatial footprints and mobility patterns of mothers in the city. Scholars of feminism have discussed the cultural construction of the role of mothers and spatial isolation within the domestic realm (Hay 1996). Other studies have examined changing dynamics in the workplace and how women (and men) negotiate both the home and the workplace (Maqubela 2013; Thobejane, and Khoza, 2014; Helman, and Ratele, 2016). There has also been exploration of the provision of pre-school care and education in different neighbourhoods (Holloway 1999). However, few studies have examined the range of activities and facilities that mothers engage in with their children such as school, work, recreation, medical needs, shopping and community commitments.

In order to begin to speak to this 'gap' our paper explores the spatial dynamics of mothers in Johannesburg: how women who are self-identified as

mothers, navigate their own and their families' daily lives in Johannesburg; the challenges and obstacles that they face; their routes, supports and efforts that typify their lives. Methodologically the research draws from a study of the everyday practices and experiences of 25 mothers in the city, who agreed to in-depth interviews and mapping exercises. The participants offered a diverse group in terms of geographic location, income, race, age, and family situation. The women narrated their daily lives and the places and spaces contained within their experiences of the city. They discussed their decision-making around the choice of home, work, school, shopping and recreation and detailed the social and spatial dynamics of their support networks.

Mothers, through their own multifaceted roles, and through the care and provision of their children, intersect and use the city in a variety of intensive and demanding ways. In some cases these activities are confined within a single neighbourhood but most often mothers are accessing these needs and resources across many areas of the city. Due to the nature of motherhood, as both a relationship of care and a role constructed in society, the burdens that mothers carry in unequal urban conditions are financial, temporal and emotional. Exploring the spatial geographies of motherhood provides valuable insights into a group of people who engage the city extensively (far more than the 'traditional' suburban construct) and understanding these spatial dynamics exposes the depth of spatial inequalities and poor urban management in new ways.

The post-apartheid period has seen important changes in legislation, constitutional rights and access to urban resources, social grants and greater provision for women in the workplace. However, much has stayed the same, particularly changes in attitude, referred to as the "stalled revolution" (Maqubela 2013). The research shows that the spatial injustices of the past as well as new inequalities in the city impact the everyday movements and practices of women as well as

1. The use of racial terms in this report reflects both a pervasive reality and a historical legacy of racial classification in South Africa, and is not intended to condone it. The term 'black African' refers to indigenous African people following census definitions, 'coloured' refers to people of mixed race, and 'black' to all groupings other than whites.



Photograph by Mark Lewis

the choice of home, work and school in the city. In addition, the spatial practices of mothers are influenced by a form of moral geography, which, when overlaid on current spatial inequalities in Johannesburg, lead to (in some cases dramatic) compromises and sacrifices for both mother and child. Thus, in many ways

constructing a hostile and difficult space, where mothers are forced to navigate and sometimes transgress, social, spatial and legal boundaries using a variety of spatial and social tactics in order to survive and ensure the best for their families.



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Introduction

Motherhood ideology certainly encompasses multiple contradictions. Mothers are romanticised as life-giving, self-sacrificing, and forgiving, and demonized as smothering, overly involved, and destructive. They are seen as all-powerful - holding the fate of their children and ultimately the future of society in their hands - and as powerless - subordinated to the dictates of nature, instinct and social forces beyond their ken. (Glenn 1994, 11)

The terms 'mother' and 'motherhood' are highly controversial, sparking enormous debate and sometimes even violent disputes between opposing groups. Whilst there is no question that mothers play an important role in society, that role is constantly contested. Motherhood is overlain with cultural beliefs around gender, child-rearing, the value of domestic work and the appropriate spaces for women. Given economic requirements for dual incomes, the breakdown of social and familial relations due to migration and mobility, and the increasing aspirations and professionalization of many women, now more than ever, women are engaged in multiple spheres of work, home, community and politics, straddling realms and heading households. As a consequence, women are arguably some of the most active users of cities, having to swiftly navigate and traverse spaces in order to fulfill their multiple roles. That is not to deny the

important role of fathers or that they too have a specific geography, but simply to argue that the spatial patterns of mothers in South Africa and Johannesburg is not well known or understood.

The shifts of the last century that have generated this change have been the subject of various studies of mothers. Sociologists have studied the gender constructs and cultures of motherhood that have defined the role of mothers in society (Glenn, Chang, and Rennie Forcey 1994; Hays 1996). Geographers have studied the patterns of mobility of women and mothers (Lilius 2015). Scholars have examined shifting practices and policies in the workplace that have accommodated working mothers (Smith et al. 2011; Maqubela 2013). Academics have examined the provision of child care facilities for working mothers at levels of policy and planning and in the spatial and neighbourhood dimension (Holloway 1999; Holloway 1998; Moser 1989). This is not to mention the numerous studies that have explored mothers within the domestic household and their access to healthcare and other services (Britto et al. 2016; Sharma 1986; Sunde and Bozalek 1995). All of these studies have been valuable contributions to the discourse on mothers.

Few studies have explored how these changes for women and mothers have shifted mothers' interactions with the city. This research aims to

“This research aims to explore the everyday experiences of mothers in the Greater Johannesburg area with a focus on their spatial footprints.”

explore the everyday experiences of mothers in the Greater Johannesburg area with a focus on their spatial footprints. It is the first step in attempting to understand how mothers are using the city, the engagements that they have and the challenges that they face. It also attempts to think theoretically about the spatial choices and motivations of mothers when faced with a city like Johannesburg. Why do mothers, live, work, and shop, in specific places? Why do they send their children to particular schools? Where do mothers avoid and why?

The research also starts to engage with the particularities of the City of Johannesburg, acknowledging that it has a fragmented spatial structure, a legacy of apartheid racial planning. But also, over the last twenty plus years of democracy, the divisions have shifted along lines of class. The unequal geography of the city forces mothers to adopt various strategies to access employment opportunities, childcare and quality education for their children (and sometimes for themselves).

The research has attempted to capture this diversity and range of experiences: just about the only things that mothers have in common are their gender and the care of children but they differ in age, race, income, sexuality, nationality, structure of household, generation, number of children, education level, other roles, and even the very definition of motherhood. Due to a small sample and a qualitative approach the research is limited in its ability to discuss spatial patterns of mothers in Johannesburg and should be seen as a first phase in a larger project. The study was experimental and exploratory and as such has limitations which are detailed in the next section of the report. Despite this, the breadth of the approach has revealed the complexity of intersections involved in understanding the everyday activities of mothers in Johannesburg. We theorise that these strategies are informed by a matrix of factors that reflect the diversity of mothers them-

selves but include: demographics and socio-economic status; household structure and age of children; the existing geography of Johannesburg; their concepts of motherhood; and policies such as those that determine the feeder zones for government schools. We suggest that the spatial footprints of mothers are informed by pragmatic considerations (time and money), external conditions (policies and urban geography) but also by value judgments (concerned with being a ‘good’ mother and raising children ‘well’) that combine to produce a set of ‘moral geographies’. In our understanding, we follow Holloway (1998: 38) arguing that moral geography “... is a localised discourse concerned with what is considered right and wrong in the raising of children...”. We also note that such moral geographies are “bound up with the social construction of different human groupings with deciding the character of these groups; with laying down the codes that groups live by, particularly in their dealings with others” (Philo, 1991: 16). Thus we acknowledge that moral geographies are particular to specific social groups, and change according to households and individuals positionality. We also link the urban landscape of mothers with their identities and ideologies of motherhood, which extends the definition of moral geography.

The following report has two intentions: first to try and pry open the opaque worlds of mothering in the City of Johannesburg in some of its diversity; and the second, is to begin to formulate some kind of conceptual framework that allows for a spatial analysis that goes beyond a purely descriptive enterprise. As such the report has a substantial literature review section, which is used to devise and construct a conceptual framework that is then used to understand the spatial findings. Some attention has also been paid to the methods that were used and the position, and positionality of the researchers, which has had some impact on the final report, as well as implications for how the project will go forward into the next phase.



Methodology

The following section has been divided in two to offer two slightly different accounts of what the team did. The first part offers a more technical account of the research, who was interviewed and how, the composition of the respondents and the nature of the instrument that was used. However, it must also be noted that the research had a very personal dimension for everyone who was involved in it: motivated by a specific life circumstance and evoking strong emotional responses for the researchers along the way. It is this second aspect that offers a set of reflections and engages with the positions and positionality of the researchers and writers and argues for the importance, power and usefulness of acknowledging and utilising this emotional energy in research.

The technical details

This research is a qualitative pilot study exploring the spatial footprints of mothers in the city. We conducted semi-structured interviews with 25 mothers about their experiences in Johannesburg. The interview examined mother's domestic situation (children, grandchildren, partners); their work situation (geography, hours, income); shopping and providing basic needs for children (food, clothes, stationery); schooling; medical care; resources to assist with childcare;

other responsibilities and roles (community, religious, extended family). The interviews were concluded with an exercise in which we asked the respondents to draw their own maps of the city. This was an open-ended exercise where mothers were told to draw a representation of their everyday lives in the city and they were encouraged to interpret that in any way they felt was appropriate to them. As a result these maps were not always spatial in nature but may have mapped daily routines, emotions or relationships.

The snowball method of sampling was used while also trying to achieve a variety of spatial, income, racial, and domestic situations. The interviews were conducted in two phases – Parker conducted the first 12 with the assistance of two students but unfortunately much-needed financial questions were missing from the questionnaire. The instrument was revised, a new set of questions were added and six of the initial interviews were then followed up with the relevant questions and a further 13 were conducted to try and achieve an even representation of locations across Johannesburg. Two recent urban planning graduates, who were incidentally new mothers, conducted these interviews and sourced participants through their own connections within the stipulated geographic locations and income groups.

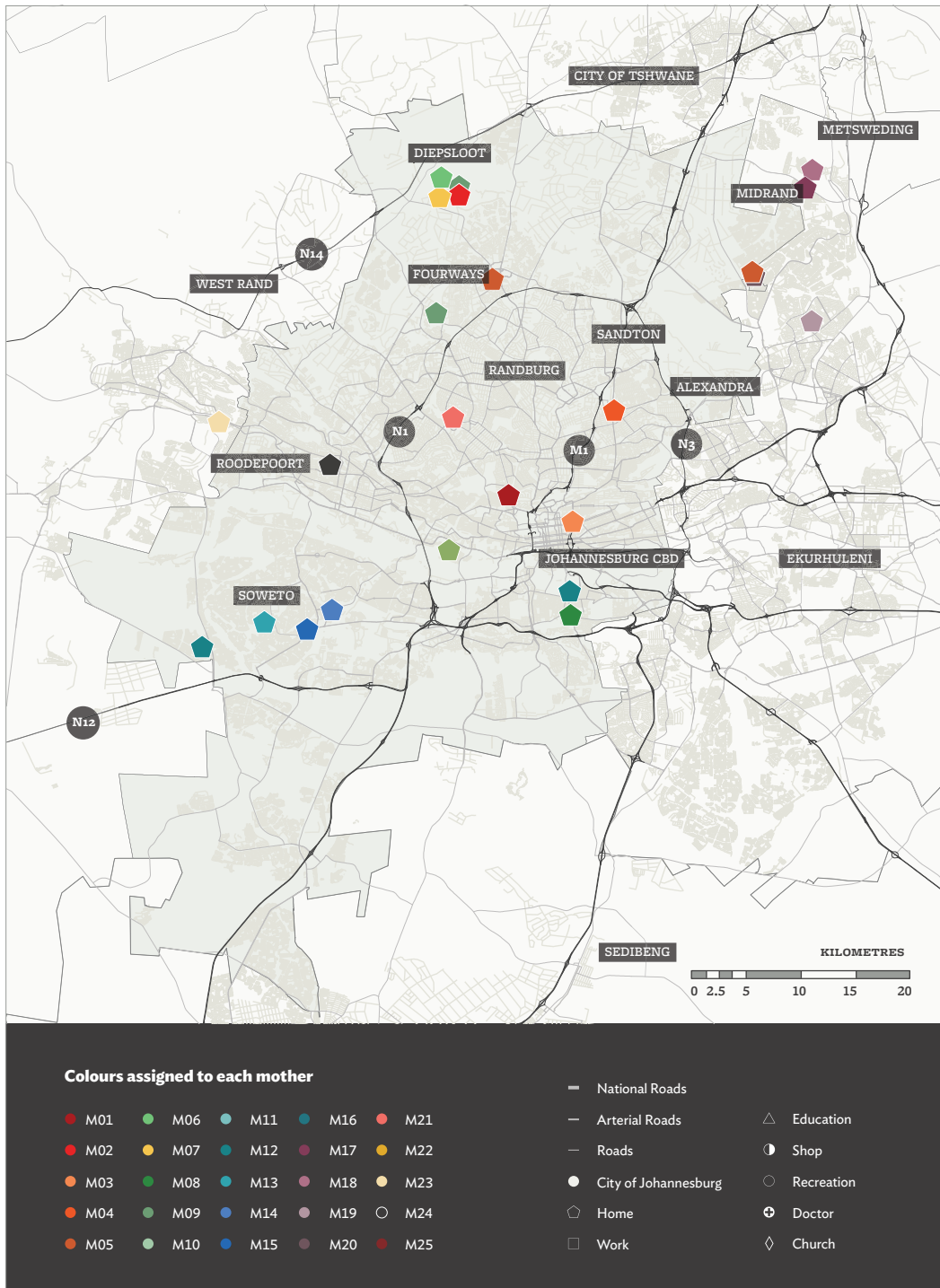


Figure 1: Distribution of mothers/respondents across Greater Johannesburg

In order to capture the diversity of mothers' experiences in the city we selected mothers across a multitude of variables. Mothers were selected for geographical spread and the map (Figure 1) illustrates that the mothers interviewed come from many different parts of Johannesburg. These different locations included variations in the type of housing so that mothers in the study include those living in formal and informal housing. The geographic spread also meant that mothers had differing levels of access to public transport, distances to work opportunities, schooling and other everyday amenities. The location of mothers had varying implications for their decisions and mobility in Johannesburg and the spatial footprints of mothers is discussed in detail later in the report.

The legacy of apartheid is such that including a geographic spread also enables a spread of income and class groups, however, we also actively attempted to sample women across a spectrum of income. This was less successful partly because 'middle income' is not easily defined and is similarly difficult to identify in participants without entering into a personal discussion immediately. As a result the low to low-middle income groups are underrepresented in the sample but we have included mothers who are unemployed or are receiving social grants. We also included mothers who are employed full time and earning a good middle income and mothers who are part of high income households. Employment varied from paid domestic work, managerial positions, nursing, office work, self-employment and professionals. A couple of mothers were students and a number of mothers were studying part-time via correspondence. We also interviewed one stay-at-home mother. The working hours of the majority of mothers conformed to the standard work day while a gym manager and an air steward worked irregular hours. There were also two mothers who spent most of their time at home but did work when short-term jobs were available.

The mothers also varied in terms of the family life cycle and household composition. The youngest mother was 19 and the oldest was 54. There was also much diversity in the ages of the children in the households: infants, school-going children, teenagers, students and adult children. The number of children also varied, with two mothers in situations where

children did not live with them on a permanent basis and were being raised outside of the city by grandparents, to circumstances in which there were three or more. Several mothers were also caring for younger siblings in the same household who were equated with their biological children. One of the respondents commented "I think she will always be my sister but now she's my daughter because everything I do for my kids I do for her. You know when you think about your kids... she will be there in those thoughts" (M13).

We also interviewed grandmothers who were mothering their grandchildren, sometimes in the same household as their adult children. There were some instances of multi-generational households where by respondents were adults living with their parents and at the other end of the spectrum were a couple of participants who were single mothers.

Position, positionality and emotions running high

This section is in many ways a reflection and meditation on the experiences of undertaking this research and is built out of numerous informal conversations between the team members, some field notes and a semi-structured focus group that was moderated by Ilaria Boniburini. Alexandra Parker, Yasmeen Dinath and Margot Rubin and two of the interviewers, Rirhandzu Khoza and Lesego Tshuwa attended the focus group, which was recorded and transcribed and forms the basis for much of this discussion.

The research was conceptualised and initiated by Yasmeen Dinath, when she was working at the South African Research Chair in Spatial Analysis and City Planning (SA&CP) and had a very personal beginning stemming from the fact that she had just become a mother and was attempting to balance and integrate her new identity into her working life:

I had just had my first child... and I thought to myself well, I'm trying to do so much. But I'm not the only one. And I'm sure I'm not the only person trying to do as much and balance. [I]n fact I probably come from a rather privileged environment where I [was] probably not even aware of other mothers having to do so much more. Certain things that I have at my disposal that other people can't take for granted...I was typing emails from my car, at a traffic light. It

“What also became clear from undertaking the research and managing it was that this was a hugely emotional enterprise. At first, getting the respondents to open up and breaking down the walls of expectation was enormously difficult.”

was a crazy lifestyle and I would work wherever I could. I [would] pull into a side street in Saxonwold and finish off a report... And it was so interesting how I need[ed] the city in a very different way... I need drive-throughs just to get my milk and veggies instead of getting out of the car. This is so hard... Then I thought, wow, if I'm feeling this way, how about people who don't have cars. And that time I started thinking how we navigate [the city]. And also my support system in terms of family is quite scattered. So to be able to get something done, I might have to drive to Lenasia which is 30-40kms away. Drop the kids off at my mother, look for an internet café nearby, get something off by email. Get to the shop. So the geography of mothering, the whole way I used the city changed. So I wanted to know what it was like for other people. For different spatial contexts, like people in informal settlements, people far away, people next door to me. So that's what I wanted to understand.

This desire to try and understand how one's positionality, changing circumstance and the specificity of the needs that motherhood brings, shaped the beginning of the project. However, soon after the project began Dinath took up a senior position at the Johannesburg Development Agency. At this point, Alexandra Parker took over the project and with two research assistants carried out the first swathe of interviews. Margot Rubin joined the team a bit later and after looking at the first set of findings, the team revised the research instrument, went back to the first set of mothers, with some of the new questions and also looked for new participants. Interestingly, when going back to the mothers who had first been interviewed, there was resistance from some of the mothers. Since no incentive, monetary or otherwise, was offered, some of the poorer participants did not prioritise the interviews and argued that they would rather use their time

looking for work or working. One of the researchers described the situation as people who are in “survival mode” and thus having little time or energy for anything outside of that.

What also became clear from undertaking the research and managing it was that this was a hugely emotional enterprise. At first, getting the respondents to open up and ‘breaking down the walls’ of expectation was enormously difficult. Tshuwa noted that this is true even outside of the space of research where “a lot of the time, even socially... if I come across mums whether it's family or friends, everyone is trying to keep it together. Or, even if you're complaining, you do so... you're still a bit guarded” After a while

It's amazing how in [the] course of the interview, that kind of falls away. Either that you find a common ground. Like I know how it feels like to have baby having high fevers, and you're up at night. So there's that common touch point. And then you can be more real. But I would have to go to dozens of birthday parties of my five year old. And then you see, it's like a theatre, because the way it plays out is that all the mums talking about their lives. They will complain about the things, or talk about the things they know we have in common. But when it goes beyond that... it's scary... (Tshuwa)

It was into these ‘scary’ spaces that the team ventured and in doing so they formed emotional connections with the participants, often through a shared experience of being mothers:

So it was like I was a daughter and she would be giving me advice on how to use space, how to treat, raise my own child and what to do in marriage. And that's when the connection began to form (Khoza).

The interviewers were able to connect or reconnect through the shared experience of motherhood. One of the interviewers who engaged with people from her

“The discussions between the interviewers and respondents seem to have been mutually beneficial, with a sense of connection, shared experience, catharsis and a free moment in which to express pent up feelings of rage, loneliness and anger. However, the engagement was not one way and the interviewers revealed much about themselves and their lives in these moments.”



Photograph by Mark Lewis

community mentioned that "...it felt like it helped me to rebuild those relationships [with people she had lost touch], and now we are mothers."

What the team also had not originally recognised, perhaps a little naively, is that the issue of mothering and motherhood touches on a variety of aspects of people's identities, lives and relationships and begins to intrude on the daily intimacies of people's lives. In addition, to enable mothers to participate in the study interviews were often conducted in the homes of participants.

*Tshuwa described that during an interview:
Her [the respondent's] husband was sleeping, the whole time. And I could see she was so depressed. You know, this guy is sleeping. And the kids are driving me crazy today, so we went into this whole topic around, these boyfriends [who] are failing us...*

As a consequence, the team were exposed to the emotional lives of the respondents in very raw ways: "She has told me something so personal. And I'm in her space. So I'm feeling it. I'm feeling her frustration, her depression."

The exposure also offered insights into the respondents' lives and meant that the team had to struggle with their own judgements and normative frames:

I found some moms to be ungrateful,... sort of. Where she's too comfortable... she's just dependent on other people. Like I felt... and I just felt like oh I want to shake this girl.

That's how he [the father of the child] sustains himself. But he's like a high, he's a criminal. But he supports his child. So, you're in the constant battle around, you know [with yourself].

Such intimate engagements raised questions for the role of the researcher, both in the moment and once the interview is over, as well as how such an emotional state impacts on the work. The researchers stated that:

*...in some cases yes, emotions were drawn. But I would have to constantly feel sjoooh. You can't *sighs* you can't always be like ja... *laughs* you can't cry. Even the... in the back of their head you are thinking. Yeeeah... 'cause I think the one interview that touched me the most, before I even got home and I was like, "mummy, do you know somebody actually experienced this kind of experience [referring to a mother who had been raped as a child]?" But in a way it made me feel so shocked and so surprised. But I was so impressed [with how she was able to deal with the experience].*

The discussions between the interviewers and respondents seem to have been mutually beneficial, with a sense of connection, shared experience, catharsis and a free moment in which to express pent up feelings of rage, loneliness and anger. However, the engagement was not one way and the interviewers revealed much about themselves and their lives in these moments.

Discussions of method have long cast doubt on the so-called neutrality and impartiality of researchers or the very possibility of its existence (Haraway 1988; Butler 1990; Butler 1991). Rather what this research seems to offer is an account in which conversations that for all parties were emotionally charged were also helpful and created a sense of shared experience and an offer of support. However, unlike traditional methods, the value of the work for everyone concerned relied on the team 'getting real', offering up their own life experiences, being highly empathic, acknowledging their own conflicts and moments of judgment. As such, we would propose that in future the interviews need to be seen as two-way conversations of mutual benefit and not moments of extraction and it is in this way that greater insights and more honest analysis will result, preparing the way for better the orisation and policy development.



Defining motherhood

Defining motherhood, mothers and mothering is a daunting prospect. Few ideas raise as much ire and as visceral a response as the idea of what a mother is and what she 'should' be. That said, an important theoretical beginning is to move away from the idea that motherhood is solely dependent on a biological function of reproduction. Such a notion is oversimplified and disguises much of how the notion of mothering is constructed and the lived experience of many women who have not undergone such a process. Thus, the framework in which this study is undertaken and the results analysed, steps away from the ideas that pregnancy and giving birth are necessary preconditions for mothering, or that mothering is constituted by the sole care and responsibility for the lives and development of children (Glenn 1994; Arendell 2000). Instead, motherhood can be seen as constituted by two interwoven concepts: ideology and identity.

Motherhood is an ideology: a socially constructed system of beliefs (Stryker 1980), or the "conceptual system by which a group makes sense of and thinks about the world" (Glenn 1994, 9). Ideologies thus underlie and organize daily practices and routine behaviours including around assumptions of gender and gender roles (Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson 2001).

How gender is understood, how the role of men and women is interpreted and the normative assumptions attached to these ideas is key to unpacking the underlying sense that people have of what a mother is and should be. Definitions of 'female' and 'mother' are in most contexts mutually constituting and are often synonymous (Chodorow 1989; Chodorow 1990; Glenn 1994) in a way that is certainly not true of terms such as 'male', 'masculine' and 'fatherhood' (Phoenix, Woollett, and Lloyd 1991).

As such, the ways that groups understand and interpret gender and motherhood, has direct bearing on forms of behaviour that are considered appropriate, desirous or in need of censure (Glenn 1994). Marshall (1991) using careful discourse analysis, points out that these ideas are transferred and internalised through a range of media, such as parenting books, social interaction, education, and the medical arena. As a consequence, certain types of ideologies are naturalised and made dominant: the idea that motherhood is the ultimate fulfilment of women's lives; that a mother's love is natural; that women have the most important impact on children's lives. Hays (1996) identifies a further dominant ideology, that of intensive mothering expectations, which "position mothers as the sole

“For black African mothers engaging in paid work is as important a contribution to children’s welfare as caring for them in the home. This is not borne out of choice but out of economic necessity and does not necessarily result in more equal gender dynamics within the home environment (Maqubela 2013).”

source of child guidance, nurturance, education, and physical and emotional sustenance” (Johnston and Swanson 2007, 448). These expectations are centred on the child, guided by experts and are “emotionally absorbing, labor intensive and financially expensive” (Hays 1996, 46). Despite the fact that these expectations are focused on the child, the ideology constructs the mother in the primary care giving role, differentiating parenting expectations and perpetuating a gendered ideology (Johnston and Swanson 2006).

Such a construct is damaging and limiting in a number of ways and is based on the trope of white, middle-class, full-time mothers and excludes the experiences of other mothers: working women, women of colour, those with queer identities, single-parent households, as well as households outside of the nuclear family to name a few (Johnston and Swanson 2006). However, despite the fact that only a very small percentage of the world’s population are white, middle-class non-working women, this construct is pervasive and creates a set of psycho-social challenges for many women who sit outside of such a construction and who are not able or willing to submit to such an ideology.

The dominant discourse has been challenged by a number of writers who offer up different constructions of gender and motherhood located squarely within their own social, racial, cultural and historical contexts (Collins 1994). For example, black African constructions of motherhood see co-providing as an equal component of motherhood to daily care (Maqubela 2013). For black African mothers engaging in paid work is as important a contribution to

children’s welfare as caring for them in the home. This is not borne out of choice but out of economic necessity and does not necessarily result in more equal gender dynamics within the home environment (Maqubela 2013). Although the characterization of ‘motherhood’ differs according to the culture or historical period an idealized vision of the ‘mother’ persists (Maqubela 2013).

Aside from an ideology, motherhood is also an identity: it is the set of personal beliefs about oneself (Stryker 1980) whereby “identity is a complex web of interconnections that integrate self, others and culture” (Johnston and Swanson 2007, 448) and at its centre is held through a set of core values and beliefs (Hecht, Jackson, and Ribeau 2003). Thus, in answer to the question, “who am I?”, would be the response, “I am a mother”. However, identity is complex and multi-faceted, so one can conceive of one’s identity as comprised of a number of parts, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, nationality and class to name a few. Thus a person could see their identity as a “black, heterosexual, Moslem working mother”, with each facet bringing with it a set of personal beliefs around ethics, behavior, codes of conduct, limits and aspirations. When social conventions and a pervasive ideology cohere, then there is a sense of ease. However, tensions creep in when the sense of self or identity is somehow in contradiction or contravenes the larger societal ideology constructing moments of psychic and personal dilemma.

Mothering sits at the intersection of ideology and all aspects of identity, it is the constant negotiation between societal and social expectation and personal belief, bringing moments of coherence and crisis

(Johnston and Swanson 2007). However, there are practical constraints “such as women’s education level, career opportunities, degree of flexibility at the workplace, and partners’ preferences and job status” (Christopher 2012, 77), which influence how women are able to perform their role as mothers. The need to constantly negotiate identity or identities, ideology

and the practicalities of daily lives requires a degree of fluidity as women constantly adjust and shift their various ‘mother identities’ (Johnston and Swanson 2007). This is necessary in order for women and mothers to survive the constant and contradictory messaging that they are receiving, internally and externally about their roles, value, and expectations.



Figure 2: Hand Drawn Map of emotional life of respondent (M22)

Given the above framework, it can be seen that motherhood, mothering and the very idea of being a mother is socially and culturally defined and is influenced by one's prevailing ideological influence as well as one's sense of self. "...[B]eing a mother was a constant social and emotional position. [...] As McCarthy and Edwards (2002) summarise, this involvement is a significant social experience centred on emotion, moral identity and a particularistic relationship with child(ren)" (Duncan 2005, 65–6).

To reiterate, it then goes beyond gestation, lactation and nurturing and may be seen as the relationship of care or responsibility of a female adult towards a child or children. Motherhood can involve caring and providing for one's own children, grandchildren or even younger siblings.

Mothering practices are informed by ideology and identity, as illustrated above, but they are also informed by gender relations within the family and household. Mothers are defined not just within the nuclear family but also within an extended one. Women within an extended family, such as aunts or grandmothers, may be called upon to function as mothers in a process that is called kin-scription (Stack and Burton 1994, 33) or "other-mothering" (Collins 2000, 178). Thus, 'mothers' may shift within the larger family structure according to who is in a position to be the primary carer. Other factors, such as urbanization or migration, may play a role in this process that certainly resonates with the South African case: "The timing and sequencing of reproduction and migration is such that young adults first have children and then migrate to the North [ern states of the US] to secure jobs and send money back home. Their young children are left behind in the South to be reared by grandparents and older aunts and uncles" (Stack and Burton 1994, 37). This kin-scription considers inter-generational dynamics and may be vital to the survival of the family. In other cases, the process of migration places women at the head of the household. When male partners migrate, emigrate or flee, women become the de facto head of household, although not always with legal status (Moser 1989).

Mothers must navigate three roles that straddle the private-public divide: reproductive work that includes childrearing responsibilities; productive work in the labour force as either primary or secondary

income earners; and community work managing local community relations (Moser 1989). Women within the home must navigate gendered value positions in the negotiation of household and child-caring tasks, where even in non-traditional or more 'progressive' households women may carry more of the workload (Duncan 2005).

Where women are autonomous individuals, particularly in marginalized racial or income groups, mothers have been empowered to improve their families and communities (Christopher 2012). The role of mothers in the low-income family is recognized and has been targeted by the state and NGOs for improving the welfare of children and the family (Moser 1989). Mothers are therefore a literal and figurative link between the family unit, the community, the city, and the state.

Pragmatic considerations

Adequately and successfully raising a child or children is dependent on access to a variety of people, services and amenities. In order to provide for themselves and for their children mothers need to access:

- Medical services
- Quality and reliable childcare and education
- Quality and affordable nutrition
- Secure work opportunities
- Safe and reliable transport
- Quality and safe recreational spaces
- Public facilities for breastfeeding and changing nappies
- Assistance with domestic work and/or care for the elderly or terminally ill
- Additional emotional support

Access to these services and amenities is most obviously linked to financial resources but less obviously it is also linked to spatial location, citizenship status, relationships with kin, feeling of belonging or dislocation in relation to the community. The cost of this dependence is sometimes financial but can also be social, emotional or psychological. Many of these services are essential in enabling mothers to work outside the home. This work provides mothers with financial and emotional independence which is also crucial to the wellbeing of mother and family. In this way the decisions that mothers make about their everyday lives in the city are informed by the practicalities



Photograph by Mark Momberg

“According to Duncan (2005), the decisions that women make about employment, for example, are not driven by rational economic behaviour but instead primarily on cultural ideologies and personal philosophies of childcare and self-identity (Duncan 2005). Duncan has termed these philosophies “gendered moral rationalities”.

of accessing services and amenities, but also informed by the emotional landscape of raising children that includes the feelings of exclusion, comfort, trust and dependence.

These emotions are implicitly connected to notions of mother identity, mothering ideology and ideas of childrearing. Often strong emotions arise out of the difficulty of negotiating between these contradictory ideas compounded by emotions that emerge from the endeavours of aspiration.

Gendered moral rationalities

What is clear from the preceding sections is that mothers vary in the way that they understand and navigate mothering ideologies and identities and their roles within and outside of the family. There is a further layer to the complexities that drives mothers' decision-making. According to Duncan (2005), the decisions that women make about employment, for example, are not driven by rational economic behaviour but instead primarily

on cultural ideologies and personal philosophies of childcare and self-identity (Duncan 2005). Duncan has termed these philosophies “gendered moral rationalities”. These rationalities inform mothers' decisions around employment, childcare and children's education. Gendered moral rationalities understands the primacy of childcare in mothers' lives and notes that decision-making is based on three considerations: 1) the needs of the children (as understood by the mothers); 2) the mother's needs; and 3) balancing the two, which is constantly shifting. In addition, children's needs were categorized according to emotional, developmental or group issues (Duncan 2005). “Emotional issues centred on the need for a child to have a secure emotional tie with a carer, while development issues included both formal education and child development as well as more general socialisation” and group issues included “avoiding racial discrimination towards children” (Duncan 2005, 57).



Photograph by Clive Hassall

Motherhood in Johannesburg and South Africa: Some facts and figures

The following section attempts to contextualise mothering practices in Johannesburg in South African urban history as well as within current regional patterns and trends. Both of which have had direct bearing on contemporary mothering practices and ideologies within the city that will become clear in the following sections.

Urbanisation, mothering and the apartheid state

In South Africa, Colonial policies, as well as the migrant labour system that came into effect on the mines, and later apartheid legislation, divided families through various policies including the Group Areas Act (1952), which had an enormous impact on the constitution of families and their perceptions. Some of this impact has given women greater independence and autonomy while in other cases it has emphasized the importance of family and more traditional roles.

For women left alone with child-rearing responsibilities, wage labour means both income and greater control over their lives. Given the extraordinary fluidity and insecurity of household structures affected by gendered migration many women say they prefer working to waiting. The links between work and autonomy are often explicit. A domestic worker with six children said she prefers to stay unmarried because 'I can be my own boss.' (Seidman 1993, 301)

In the first part of the twentieth century, women were well integrated into the industrial labour force, although mostly in low-skilled and low-paid work, and gained a degree of economic independence through this (Seidman 1993). However, the dependence on working meant that many women would send their children to be raised by relatives if their family responsibilities threatened their employment (Seidman 1993). In some cases, women became the breadwinners, supporting their families on wages from the poorest

“Women experience greater poverty and the burden of providing sustenance for their families (Adepoju, Otti, and Laski 2004). Working mothers gained autonomy and financial independence through employment but in some cases this forced them to relinquish direct care of their children or led to exploitation in the work force.”

sectors of the economy (White 1993). Women experience greater poverty and the burden of providing sustenance for their families (Adepoju, Otti, and Laski 2004). Working mothers gained autonomy and financial independence through employment but in some cases this forced them to relinquish direct care of their children or led to exploitation in the work force.

Mothers also found themselves working a double shift: working long hours for low pay and coming home to do household chores (Seidman 1993). As a result many women would prefer to stay at home and have their partners earn enough to support the whole family:

Given women's domestic responsibilities and limited options in a labour market shaped by class, race, and gender, many, perhaps most, women may aspire to an idealized nuclear family, in which family members live together, and the husband's wage supports them all. (Seidman 1993, 301)

It has been argued that in contemporary South Africa, many women aspire to the nuclear family because apartheid legislation prevented them from achieving this.

African women have been prevented from living with their husbands and children by the forced migration of men from the Homelands, by the Pass Laws which prevented women and children from living in towns or mine compounds, and the Group Areas Act which prevented men from living in suburban servants' quarters with their domestic worker wives. Thus what black women want is

not the abolition but the reconstitution and nurturing of family and marital structures. (White 1993, 149–50)

This positions the family as a central ideal for black African women in South Africa and is contrary to much western feminist literature, which views the family home as the site of oppression for women. This history plays an important role in the way that mothers define their identity and role within the family and in society. It illustrates the way that external forces and processes have shaped relationships within families and how pragmatic considerations impact directly the emotional landscape of family and motherhood.

This history is reflected in the attitudes of South Africans on the role of women. A minority of the respondents (in the Social Attitudes Survey - HSRC), 37%, believe “a woman should focus on her role as wife and mother”. However, some attitudes contrast with the country's history. “43% of Africans agree with the statement that “the only satisfying role for a woman is as a wife and mother’ compared to 24%, 25% and 15% of coloureds, Indians, and whites” (Amoateng 2006, 5). These attitudes will play a role in the mothering ideologies for South African women and may also impact planning policies.

Migration, poverty and women-headed households

Johannesburg historically has always had more men than women. Starting as a mining town, the numbers

of men far exceeded women (van Onselen 2001; Beavon 2004). However, since the end of apartheid, the city has begun to achieve greater gender parity and in 1996 had about 4700 more men than women. Since then the demographic profile has shifted, suggesting that most new entrants to the city were women. In 2001 there were slightly more women than men in the city (Van Donk 2004). However, the 2011 Census reveals that there are now more men in the city again but only by a small margin (50.2% male, 49.8% female).

In general, Johannesburg follows regional patterns: “Female migration [in Africa] is largely a new phenomenon” and has altered settlement patterns

and increased female-headed households (Adepoju, Otti, and Laski 2004). The proportion of young adults is higher in cities and the proportion of children is higher in rural areas (Franklin, Makiwane, and Makusha 2014, 48–9) reflecting how migration shapes families in South Africa. One in three households in Johannesburg is headed by a woman in the general population but more than three out of four for African women (78%) (Van Donk 2004). Black African households are, therefore, more likely to be headed by a woman. A further interesting fact is that Gauteng has the second lowest proportion of teen mothers [15–19 years of age] in the country (Van Donk 2004).

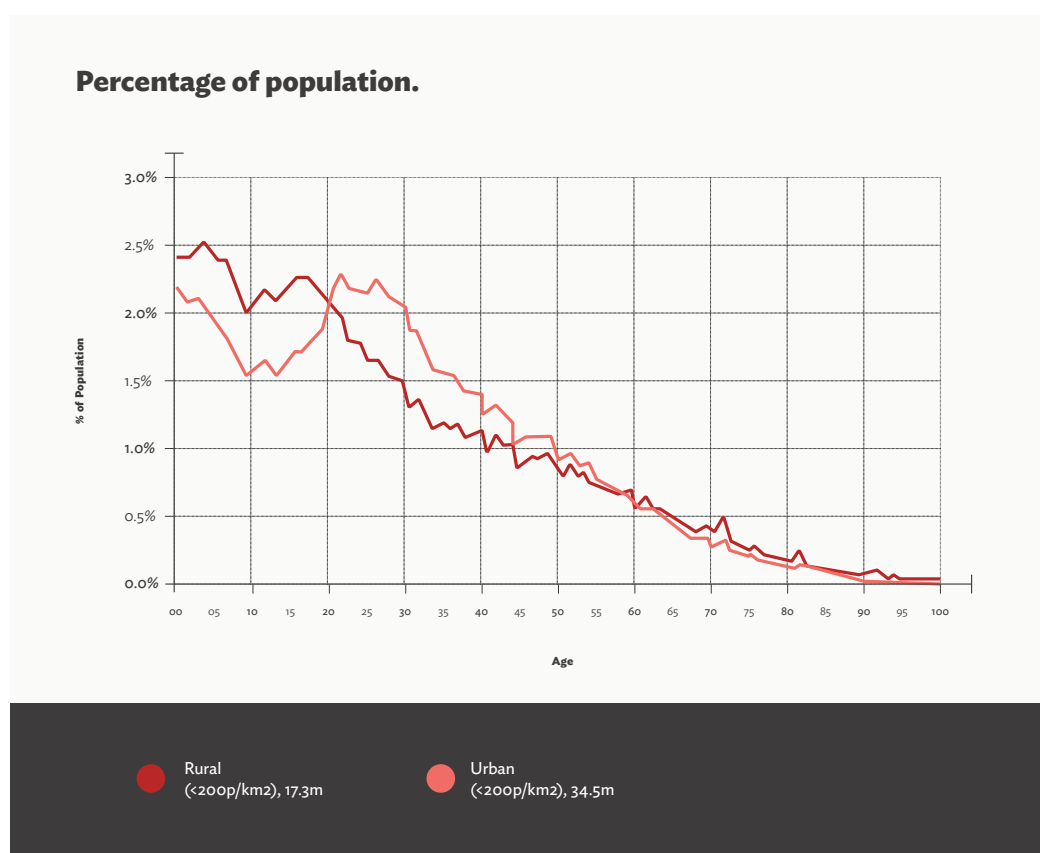


Figure 3: The age distribution: a legacy of migration in SA (After Bijker, 2013)

“Within households, income, benefits and responsibilities may follow gender patterns and not be equally distributed, this can thus entrench income disparities as girls have less time to focus on schoolwork and have disproportionate domestic responsibilities reinforcing societal expectations of roles, behaviour and potentially aspiration (Van Donk 2004).”

A further pattern in Sub-Saharan countries has been the impact of ill-health, which in the case of HIV and AIDS has disproportionately affected women of child-bearing age. The consequence is that when caregivers fall ill or dies, 12% of children are sent to live elsewhere (Dawes 2003: 30-1) resulting in “scatter families” i.e. families that are distributed in a number of households and locations (Adepoju, Otti, and Laski 2004, 11). In South Africa, there is a further gendered dimension to household structures as “the number of South African children living with both biological parents show[s] a continued decline each year from 38% in 2002 to 33% in 2011. However, approximately 90% of children live with co-resident adults, many with their mothers and other relatives which reflects a long trend of care by extended family members. Four percent live with fathers only and when added to the number of children living with both parents, only 36% of children live with their biological fathers. About 24% of children do not live with either biological parent (Franklin, Makiwane, and Makusha 2014, 48). Sending children to live with grandparents has been seen to be part of a socialization process and enabling mothers to focus on economically productive work but the consequences of HIV/AIDS has made this practice more prevalent and created ‘skip family households’ for households with missing generations (Adepoju, Otti, and Laski 2004, 11).

There is an unfortunate set of consequences associated with the current patterns of household structures:

The absence of fathers in the home has been linked to high male mortality, male labour migration, and births that occur outside stable relationships. In turn, family instability by no fathers in the home and rising single female heads of households have been related to poor academic performance and educational advancement of children and youth (Franklin, Makiwane, and Makusha 2014, 48).

Furthermore, these gender dynamics also have a direct impact on the financial wellbeing of families where “almost half of Gauteng children (48%) live in poor households” (Dawes 2003, xv). Female-headed households are disproportionately poorer than male-headed households in Johannesburg (Van Donk 2004), which is a result of a combination of poorer work opportunities as a result of gender and a higher dependency ratio within the household composition (Blackden and Wodon 2006, 3–4). “Where women heads of households have no other adult women to fulfill home production or domestic roles, they face greater time and mobility constraints than do male heads or other women, that in turn leads to lower paying jobs more compatible with childcare” (Blackden and Wodon 2006, 4). Within households, income, benefits and responsibilities may follow gender patterns and not be equally distributed, this can thus entrench income disparities as girls have less time to focus on schoolwork and have disproportionate domestic responsibilities reinforcing societal expectations of roles, behaviour and potentially aspiration (Van Donk 2004).



Photograph by Les Anderson

Mothers in the city

There are a few aspects that need to be considered when thinking about urban geography of mothering: the influence of children's needs on mother's spatial footprint; differences in men and women's use of the city and the morphology of the city in question.

To begin with, contrary to traditional notions of mothers bound to the domestic sphere: "Mothering often requires mediating private and public roles for example, coordinating family and school schedules; negotiating services from a variety of agencies and institutions; taking part in political organizing to gain resources needed to nurture children and others" (Glenn 1994, 16). The relationship that children most often have with their mothers means that the mother's experiences of a city include her children's experiences. The spaces of the child become the spaces of the mother even if it is only to consider safe transport to that space. The child's geography is part of the mother's and therefore, a mother with several children accessing different needs and spaces within the city is an extensive user of urban space – more so than the average individual and very often far more so than the average man.

Women's mobility and spatial footprints in the city differ from men's in that trips are less frequent and shorter in distance and with different modes of transport (Hanson and Pratt 1995). Although women tend to work closer to home this needs to be understood in a context of multiple roles and that different population groups have divergent access to housing and jobs (Hanson and Pratt 1995). A woman's place of residence can impact on her career trajectory after maternity leave and her choice of home and work locations is a time management strategy to meet the demands of paid and domestic labour (Hanson and Pratt 1995). Urban geography is an important factor in the lives of women and mother:

Our focus on geography draws attention to the many ways that space mediates labor market outcomes: familial responsibilities tie many women to an extremely localized labor market, gender identities and norms are developed in place, and labor market segmentation evolves differently in different places.

(Hanson and Pratt 1995, 217)

Suburbanisation divided the city into public and private realms, spaces of work and sites of domesticity

“Apartheid constructed a specific urban morphology in South African cities, including Johannesburg, a racially fragmented space, with the poorest and most marginalized urban residents relegated to the peripheries.”

that resulted in a gendered geography of the city. “The suburban environment in many ways facilitated a good environment to raise children in, but it has also been criticised for separating domestic and waged labour and thus isolating women from the public sphere and making it harder for them to take part in working life” (Lilius 2015, 2). In some European cities this is changing as parents reclaim inner city streets and neighbourhoods as spaces for families (Lilius 2015). The separation of work and home has placed particular burden on mothers and has influenced their decisions around childcare, employment and residence location. Apartheid constructed a specific urban morphology in South African cities, including Johannesburg, a racially fragmented space, with the poorest and most marginalized urban residents relegated to the peripheries. Post-apartheid cities are still haunted by this spatial legacy that has been reinforced by market forces and unintended outcomes of state policy.

In general terms, the spatial inequalities in Johannesburg and other cities have gradually shifted from the dimension of race to one of class. This has affected the spatial practices of mothers and families as black African families move into former ‘white’ middle-class suburbs:

This relocation on the part of ‘new African middle-class families’ implied separation from their networks of care, including their extended family relations, which in turn has led to an increase in ‘nuclear’ African families. To this effect, recent debates have brought forth the thesis of convergence of black and white towards a nuclear family form, with some authors claiming that black families are converging with white families and are becoming nuclear. However, it should be noted that the increase in nuclear families coexists with other types of family structures such as the extended

and/or multi generational households, teenage and single mothers, child-headed and the polygamous alongside the nuclear family within the African population. (Maqubela 2013, 40)

Motherhood is an identity and an ideology that affects that way that mothers make decisions about childcare and paid work. Gendered moral rationalities reveal the complex web of elements, emotional and ideological, that mothers consider in their daily practices. External factors such as labour markets, urbanisation and apartheid have influenced the locations of mothers, both within and outside of the city, and have affected the composition of households. Mothers’ experiences in their homes, workplaces and in the city are varied according to race and income and are further diversified by variations in household size and composition and the life stages of children. The constraints and needs of mothers and women in the city have yet to be adequately addressed in planning policies.

The Mothers of our study

As mentioned in the Methodology section, we attempted to ensure our respondents had a broad range of income, housing typology and geographical spread across the city. This was done in part to try and see what difference factors such as income and employment made in the geographies that we captured. However, what became clear soon into the research was the set of common issues facing all of the mothers. Despite the differences in their incomes and working hours, money and time were mentioned by nearly all mothers as the primary obstacles in raising their children in the way that they would like to. The impact of different income levels should not be under-estimated as income has many implications for the choices that mothers make. Income impacts on decisions of childcare and domestic assistance, as well as the

transport they and their children use, whether public or private, and very often the area in which they choose to reside. Many of these implications are also related to time: a mother who uses public transport, has no domestic assistance and who lives far from work opportunities will have less free time than a mother

who is able to afford a domestic helper and who travels to a workplace close to home, in a private vehicle. These factors will also inform the decisions that mothers make every day in their own lives and the lives of their children.



Figure 4: Hand Drawn map of life of a mother (M5)

Despite the different income groups and domestic situations, all of the mothers engaged in mother work i.e., the daily practices and activities of women who mother, and it is clear that these activities generally extend far beyond the hours of paid work, stretching women's days, with early starts and late ends (Baker, 2004). Given the multiple roles and responsibilities of women, the longer hours are necessary in order for women to fit everything into the day. Once again irrespective of other factors, all of the mothers reported long days, the length, however, did vary considering the number of activities that they had to fit in, the extent of their support and the age of their children. This was reinforced when the respondents revealed their daily schedules:

You know when they talk of a 9h00 to 17h00 [job] another would be 5h00 to 21h00 that is how I look at it [being a mother] because it is you probably up at 5h00 and your day finishes at 21h00, finish cleaning bottles or whatever so by 21h00 you say okay I am done so it is a five to nine job. (M1)

We are fairly the same every day. If I am getting up early at like 02h00 I stop my studying at about 05h00 then I start getting done for work. It gives me a lot more time while they are still sleeping to just tidy up, especially if there are toys just laying around and then I bath and get ready for work. My husband would make the lunch for my son. I would get Noah dressed and we would be out of the house by 06h40. (M11)

Household structure has a direct impact on the situations of mothers: single mothers are more likely to be time impoverished as are mothers engaged in caring for relatives such as aging parents or siblings in addition to their own children:

The grandmother always. Granny prepares everything. I've got Sihle that I must prepare for school, I've got grandpa that I must prepare clothes for and I've got to prepare food for them breakfast and lunch for Sihle. Then later fix things for myself. ...I wake up at 4h00 every morning. (M14)

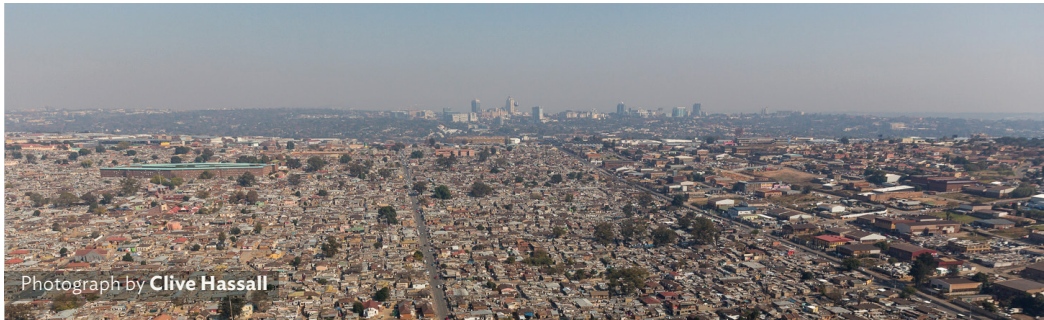
Well I have [been raising other children] because it's something that we have been working on, and I myself was raised by my sister before she got her kids. She took me in for years. I feel like it's my time to be the responsible one and take care of her kids. (M15)

Much of the research on mothers has focused on the period between birth and when the child or children start attending school. This is the period when child-care is most intense and when the resources of mothers are most strained. However, our study illustrates what is known colloquially and instinctively that motherhood does not end – some of our respondents continue to support their adult children and live in the same household while others are beginning again with the second generation, parenting grandchildren.



Photograph by **Mark Lewis**





Spatial footprints

The focus of this pilot study was the everyday geographies of women within the city. The research examined how mothers accessed six key activities in Johannesburg and discussed their decision-making around the choice of home, work, school, shopping, recreation, and medical needs (see Figure 5). Home, work and school are the three core areas and in many instances their locations in the city are interrelated. The other three activities are more variable in terms of how often they are required, the age of children and their value for families.

Two broad trends were identified when mapping the everyday activities of mothers in Johannesburg. Some mothers have very small footprints and conduct their activities within a single neighbourhood or within a small area of the city. As can be seen from the maps this is literally within a few kilometres of their

homes (see Figure 6). Others access activities across the city and travel long distances for work and school (Figure 7). This can be anywhere between 10-20 kilometres in straight line distances but what needs to be taken into account is the many hours in traffic or using dangerous and unreliable transport. This patterning occurs in different parts of the city and is not readily determined by areas that share similar demographic profiles or households with similar socio-economic profiles. It is also not directly related to the modes of transport available as some mothers with small footprints have access to private transport and have the highest household incomes. This map reveals that mothers are making different decisions about where they choose to live, work and educate their children. This information will be discussed in more detail later in this section.

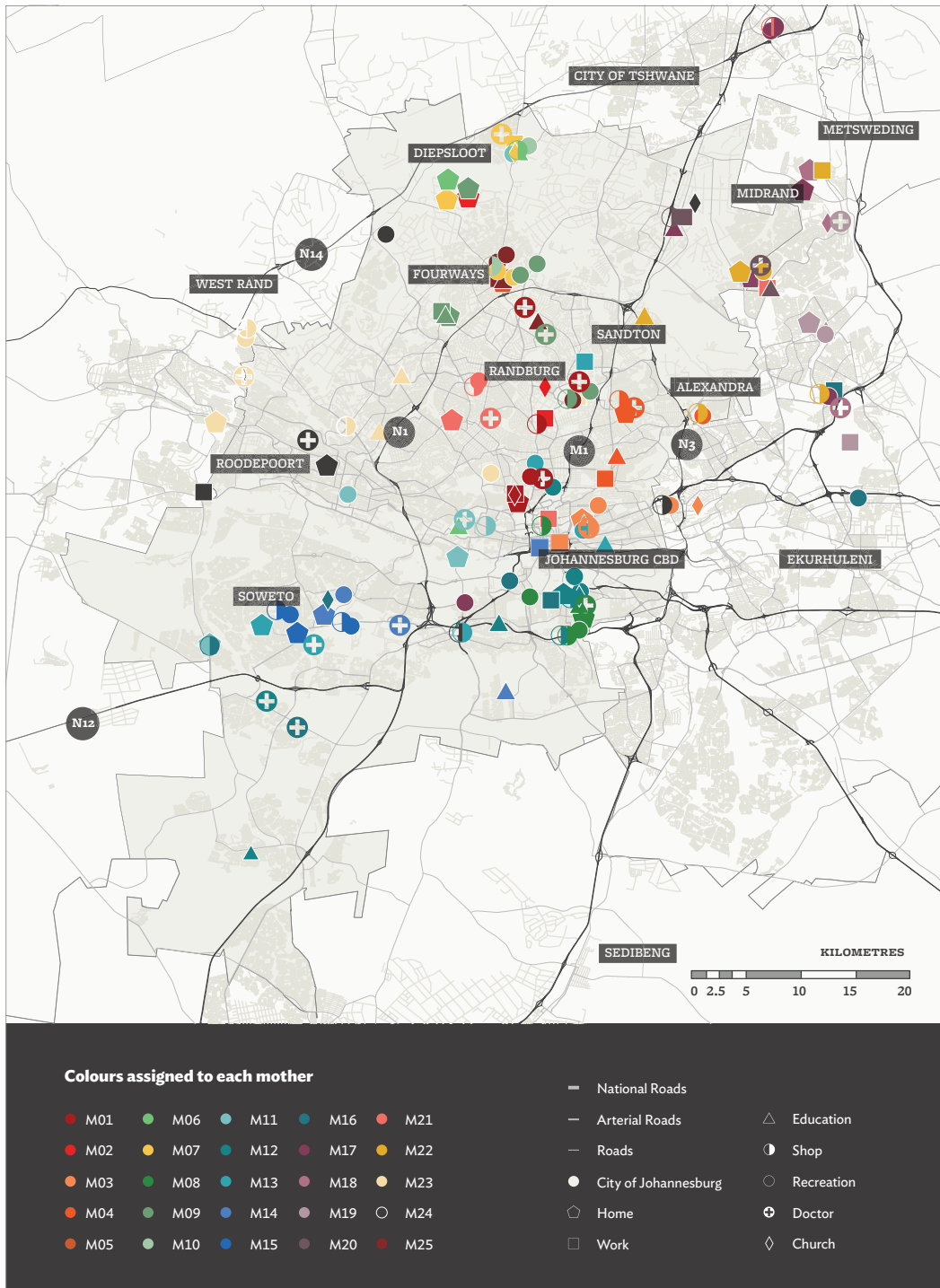


Figure 5: **Spatial footprints of all respondents and all activities**

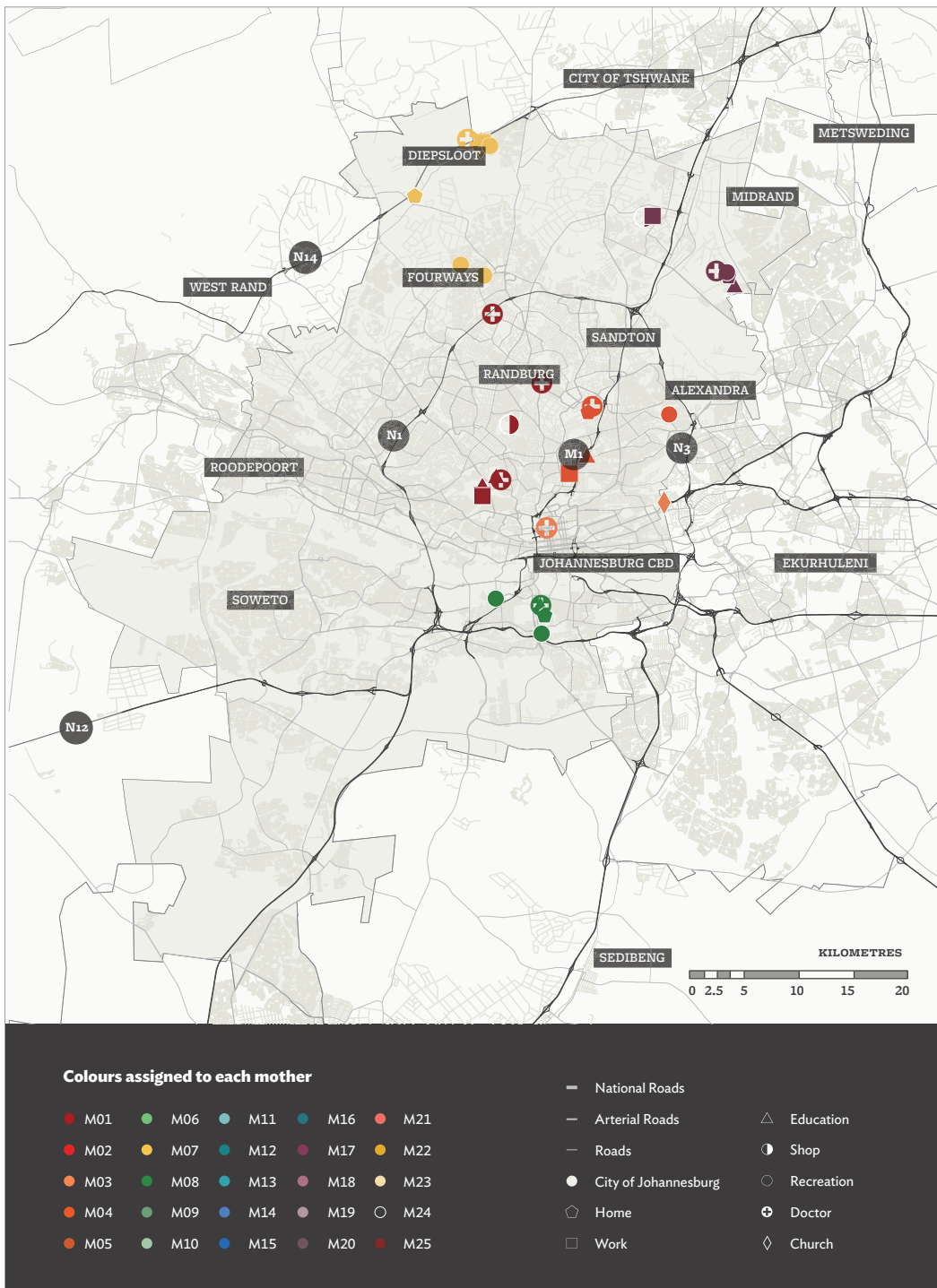


Figure 6: Clustering of activities and home



Figure 7: **Hand drawn map of mother's contained world (M16)**

Some of the reasons informing these footprints were mothers' attempts to make life comfortable for themselves and their families, and given the pressures of daily life this also meant finding ways of being more efficient around time and space. This could mean creating situations of convenience: "My decisions are based mostly on proximity. I am trying as much as possible to create a world that is quite close" (M1). For some mothers a neighbourhood footprint is convenient and comfortable and it is out of preference.

For others a small footprint may result from limited funds to access transport to travel outside of the neighbourhood. For these mothers it is essential to be able to access all amenities on foot and a small footprint becomes a means of survival. Small footprints within neighbourhoods can enable a sense of community, reduce time spent traveling and contribute to a smaller carbon footprint, however mothers and families should also be able to access other amenities and

opportunities that are present in other parts of the city without huge financial costs.

On the other side of the coin, mothers with large spatial footprints were very often accessing opportunities in the city that were not available to them in their neighbourhood. The domestic worker from Diepsloot does all that she can to remove herself from the location of Diepsloot by sending her daughter to school in Hyde Park, attending church in Rosebank and going to Zoo Lake for recreation despite the toll that these distances must be taking on her time and money. Some mothers sent their children to schools that they felt would provide their children with better education and hope for the future but as discussed this sometimes meant that the children had to take long trips on unsafe transport or mothers chose to go to places that required transport such as shopping centres or parks that were far away – with choices that were influenced by ideas of safety and quality (Figure 7 and Figure 9).

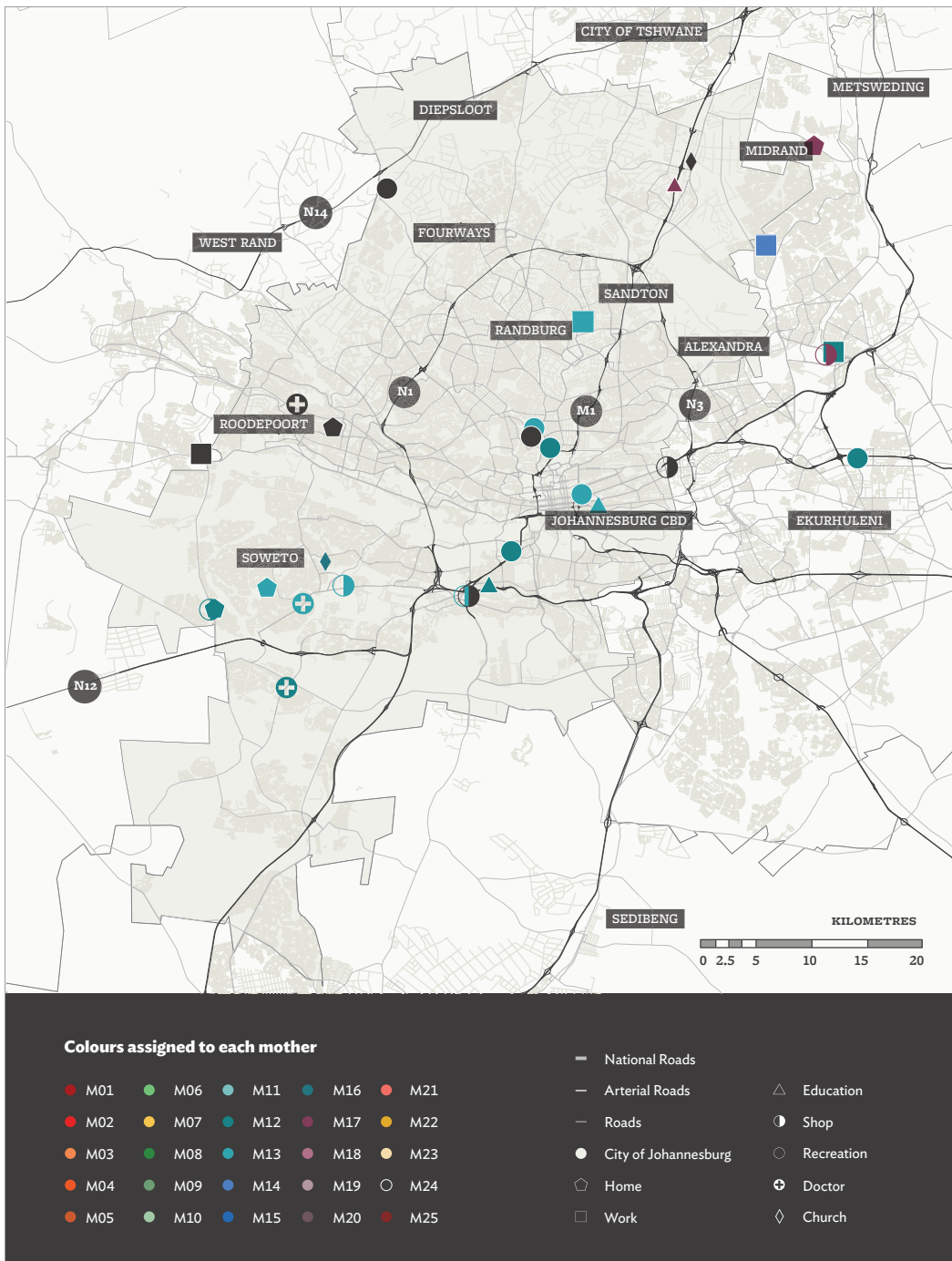


Figure 8: Dispersal of activities

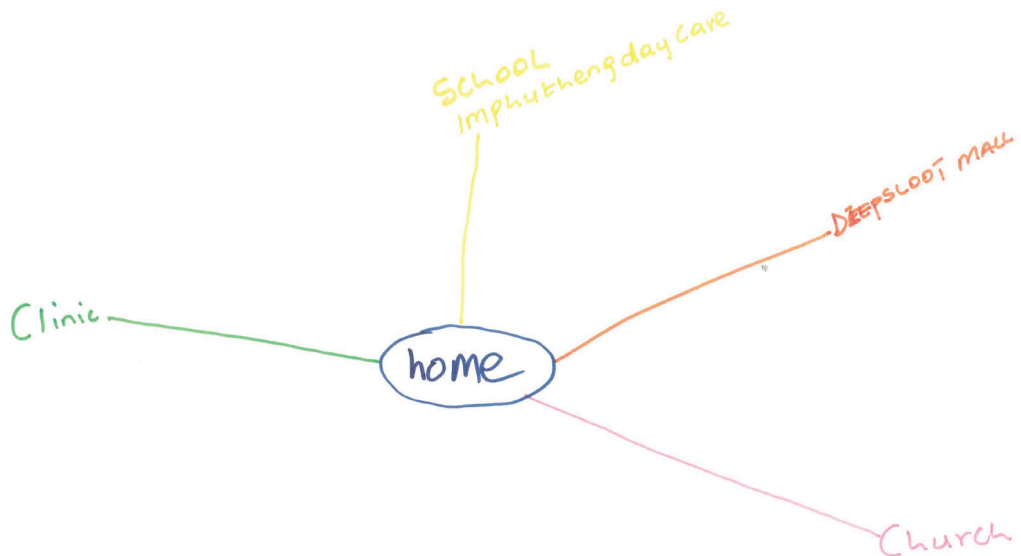


Figure 9: Hand Drawn map mother's dispersed activities (M6)

Home and household structure

In our research, we were confronted with the question of 'home' and whether children were living 'at home' or not. When asking this question, we realised that home had a variety of meanings for our respondents and for their choices around where their children should live.

In a pattern that is very familiar and has long historical roots, some women sent their children back 'home' to live with grandparents and relatives in areas outside of Johannesburg. Previously, the separation of mothers and children was due to apartheid legislation around who was considered an appropriate urban resident, but of late it is to protect children from the harsh realities of life in the city and poor living conditions that many low-income earners survive in. One mother sent her child to live in Limpopo with his grandparents after fearing for his safety in Diepsloot while she was working:

You worry about crime, you worry about your children you know when you leave them behind you worry about whether they are safe. When they go to

school, you worry about whether they are safe. You know as a mother you just worry even about small things. I really think that crime is just seriously a problem. (M14)

I was just thinking he was not safe, the child. Just because, you can hear almost every time they killed someone, like, so I'm... and thinking if uh, here maybe I can say there is a good education but the thing, the safeness when I'm going to work, somebody has to come and look after when he can do his school. So I decided ok, 'cause we, it's not a safe area. How, if I can just take him to my mom to stay with...her. (M7)

In other circumstances, the decision to send children to live with relatives is simply the lack of affordable and quality childcare available to the mother. This separation and the fragmentation of families is difficult for all family members but is still seen as better than the alternatives.



Photograph by **Alastair McLachlan**

“Many mothers spoke of the difficulties of accessing quality and reliable childcare for their children while they were at work or attending to other responsibilities. Some mothers who were able to access in-home care from non-family members for their children spoke of the difficulties of that care being safe and reliable...”

The ones [my children] in Limpopo, I left them there because I came to look for work here... Living here is difficult too much, it is not suited for children because there are criminals, they murder people, kidnap people, you see. Others get killed. ... but when they are back home in Limpopo with their elders, they can help with the cooking for the elders to keep them busy. The elders would shout “go read your books” and they would go read. Now here they would say “no mom I want to go dancing” and they are off, not knowing where they are. (M6)

Households who were sharing rooms or properties or living in informal settlements argued that although the city provides opportunities, these spaces are not ideal for raising children and there is a need for a family home: “Basically...I would love my own house, where I can sit and stay with my children, they can go to school, be responsible, and then our relationship will be alright” (M6).

The home environment is thus a very important consideration for mothers and, as the primary care space, is connected with childcare and a mother’s ability to access assistance in the care of her children.

Do your children live with you?

No, but this is temporary

Why not?

This is because I have to work and I do not know of any good day care centres in the area where I can put him in. He lives in Pretoria with his grandmother. (M21)

Many mothers spoke of the difficulties of accessing quality and reliable childcare for their children while they were at work or attending to other responsibilities. Some mothers who were able to access in-home care from non-family members for their children spoke of the difficulties of that care being safe and reliable for their children. In some instances even having someone to attend to other domestic work caused problems in the home:

I do not have a helper that assists me with house work. I do not have one because I have experienced a terrible thing: my last helper gave birth in the house. I could not tell if she was pregnant because she is fat. She gave birth to a still born in the house and she was alone. She called me and I could hear that this person is dying. I called the ambulance.

I was scared to cut the umbilical cord. (M18)

This tragic story illustrates both the difficulty for women accessing additional help in the home but also the plight of this domestic worker giving birth at her workplace – the circumstances of this incident are not clear but reinforce the point that very often the home as a child-care environment is also the workplace of another mother.

Given the costs and concerns around hiring help, many women are forced to look to their families for assistance. Where available, family and extended family support is important in the emotional and practical lives of women (See Figure 10), and making life and life choices better for all family members.

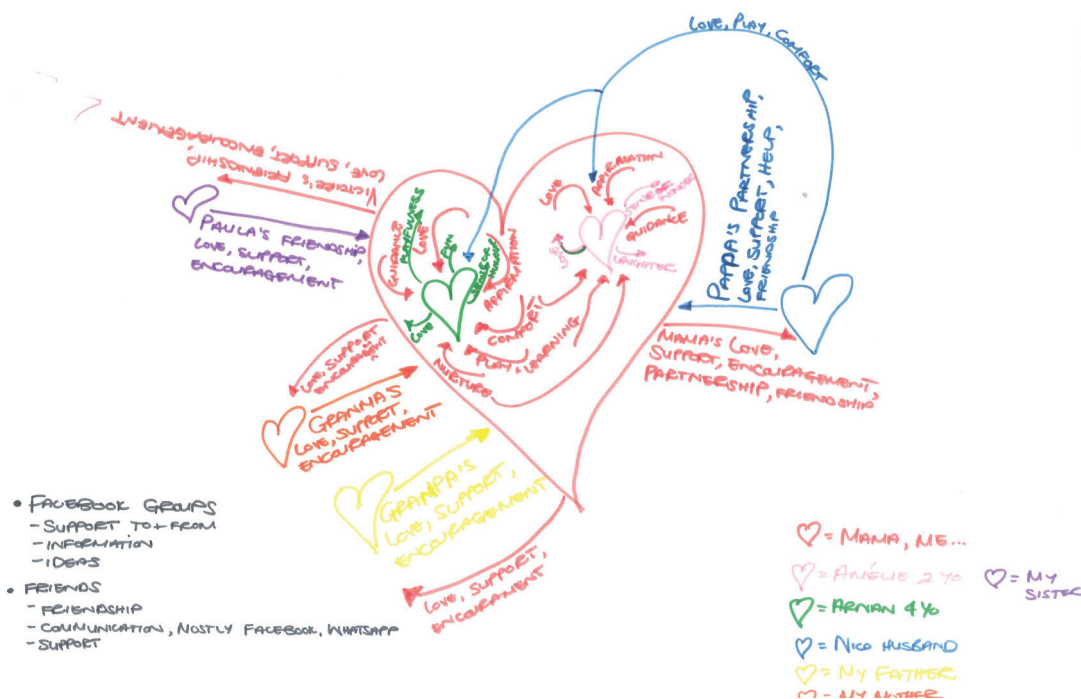


Figure 10: **Hand drawn map of a mother's support network (M9)**

However, family members who are not the best carers may be prevailed upon simply because of their proximity. Thus, just because these people are family or live close by does not automatically make them reliable or good carers and many women expressed concerns over family members taking care of their children: "I do [access childcare], my brothers but they are not that trustworthy. But because I have to go to work, then I leave him with them" (M4).

Feelings of trust or distrust impact the way that mothers source and rely on options of childcare. For some mothers family members are the only childcarers that they will entrust their children with. This might result in travel further within the city to leave their children with relatives or the choice of schools based on their proximity to family carers. For others family members may be the only carers they can afford (paid in kind or at very reduced rates), however these carers may be far from ideal and unreliable but remain the

only option where funds are limited.

The things I worry about is that the nanny will not take care of your child the way you will as a mother. I had this one nanny, I think my daughter was 4. I was working morning shift, my daughter woke up and she cried and begged me not to go to work. This makes you worry that sometimes they are not being taken care of. Sometimes they are being abused. Especially my daughter who is unable to speak. What are they doing to her? Are they abusing her? Sometimes when she is crying I wonder if it is signs of her being abused or is it signs of her being neglected. (M19)

The issue of trust has unforeseen spatial implications as family remains the most reliable (and often the most affordable) source of childcare but this can mean travelling long distances to access family members. In our reflection discussion, one of the mothers mentioned that "... my support system in terms of family is quite

scattered. So to be able to get something done, I might have to drive to Lenasia which is 30-40 kms away...". Some mothers chose day care facilities located closer to the support of extended family rather than near to their own home:

But I'll see, we'll just see. I wanted him closer. But also it's not about what I want, it's about what he needs. (M12) (talking about location of creche being closer to grandmother but more than 30 minutes away for the mother)

The geography of the city and land property prices are important contributors to this issue: in many cases it is not possible for mothers to choose the location of their home – mostly because of socio-economic conditions. If the home environment is not deemed suitable for raising a family then mothers employ different strategies to overcome the negative impacts of the home environment which may include the difficult decision to place children with grandparents or extended families. In other circumstances, home is chosen based on its proximity to affordable and reliable childcare providers whether they are paid for or whether they are provided by family members. Thus, the spatiality of the city forces mothers to confront choices between proximity, fragmentation and awkward and time-consuming commutes. These choices are influenced by Johannesburg's spatial inequalities and scale but also by the value judgements mothers make for their children.

Paid employment and aspiration: Tensions and conflicts in identity

The decision to work or not was based around two conjoined factors, the necessity of earning an income and assisting to support the household financially, and notions of identity and ideology, which prioritize either childcare or financial support. Some mothers chose not to work altogether in order to spend more time at home with their children. However, as previously mentioned, most of the respondents engaged in some form of paid work, with the decision to work largely based on economic necessity. For many women, working raised a set of tensions and personal conflicts, especially conflict between ideologies of what constitutes the most important role for mothers, care giving or providing an income:

So you are kind of stuck between having to earn

this income and wanting to give your children the best and thinking about how to get the two go together. (M5) Obviously it's a good job offer for one, if you are travelling there then it means the salary you can sustain yourself, so I would. Even though it's gonna meanspending less time with the family and maybe more time on the road or maybe more time at work but at the end of the day it's gonna pay out. (M12)

Of the respondents who chose not to work, they saw their decision as prioritising their families, and seeing their role as caregiver being more important and offering better lives for their children but this has had implications for their careers and prospects:

I had my business for 12 years... when [my son] arrived I was just stuck with this dilemma. I didn't know what was coming my way. I thought I could carry on with my job and I would take my baby and I would go meet with the designers and check how things are running, but you know when he arrived it was so overwhelming, I realised that it was all so consuming...It was difficult to try and spread time and your time wasn't your own. So then I brought everything home and I down-scaled and I eventually got rid of the staff and so I haven't actually gone back to having staff because it is such a commitment... with people waiting for you to approve them and for the next step to go ahead. (M5)

The preference to work or to stay at home raising the children also varied across the mothers' situations and incomes. Some mothers were very insistent that working outside of the home was very important to them, particularly for enabling them to earn their own income and have a level of independence:

A stay at home mother? And if I become a stay at home mother who works for me? And then what? Depend on daddy? No I'm too spoilt I won't depend on [someone else]. I'm too spoilt on working for myself. I would rather do it if I'm going to earn, staying at home otherwise it's not what I would go for. (M14)

Some mothers expressed the desire to stay at home if they were able to work from home and to continue to enjoy a career and personal development. For one mother "working on my laptop and mopping the floor are one and the same thing for me. I do not categorise those two because they are my responsibility at the end of the day" (M21). Another mother felt that although

she would like to be a stay at home mother, she felt it was important for her sons to see that she is an independent woman and that this would lead them to see her differently. One mother who had stopped working fulltime to be at home felt that the demands of her job were incompatible with being available for her children. Only a few women stated that they did not have a choice regarding paid employment and that economics dictated that they needed to earn an income. Instead many women expressed the value of a job for themselves as opposed to employment adding value to their children's lives. This contrasts with some of the findings in previous studies.

In some cases mothers are able to shift the framing of intensive mothering expectations to meet their needs or identity as worker or community member (Johnston and Swanson 2006). Johnston and Swanson (2006) found that mothers felt their employment decisions were informed by their mothering ideology but that mothers also shifted their ideology to conform to their employment circumstances. This enabled mothers with differing levels of employment to claim their employment status as part of their 'good mother' identity. This reveals how everyday practices of mothers are a negotiation of practical needs, ideological constructs and emotion.

Location was an important consideration for employment and many mothers expressed a preference for their work places to be located closer to home so that they could spend more time with their families or get home quickly in an emergency. The choice of work location is also dependent on mothers' access to modes of transport. This mother explains in detail her thought process and calculation around taking a job in Sandton (in northern Johannesburg), a fair distance from her current workplace in Braamfontein (close to the central business district):

It'll be difficult to travel to go there. I'm not saying I don't get paid much, but the amount which I do get already has its own uses currently. So if I were to get another job with this same salary, but a bit far. For instance, where could it be difficult for me to travel? Let's say Sandton. Buses go to Sandton every 2 hours minimum, that will mean that I will need to be, every now and then because the crèche

opens at 6h00. And already I know I've got a bus that goes from 6h45 from where I stay to Gandhi [square]. And then at Gandhi I can be able to catch another bus at 7h15, to get me to Braamfontein before 7h45 so I can start work at 8h00. So if I had to go to Sandton, if I can get a bus at Gandhi. Because Sandton buses leave Gandhi at 6h30. I won't be able to make it in time. And I'm going to need to pay extra fare. From Sandton it's another R12 – R15. And then coming back it's also going to be the same thing. And when I do get back from Sandton, it's only dropping me off halfway, I need to catch another local to go to Gandhi. (M8)

Questions of cost and time are not necessarily considerations that only mothers have to navigate in Johannesburg, but here mothers' choices are usually compounded by having to also consider the location of day care or schooling for their children. As the mother above illustrates, one reason that she would not be able to catch the earlier bus to Sandton is that her daughter's crèche only opens at 06h00 and she takes her daughter to school. Already this opening time illustrates that many parents need to start their journeys to work well before the average school start time of 07h45. The transport needs of children in relation to school locations are discussed below.

Aspiring for a better life for themselves and for their children often comes with hidden costs. Achieving life goals requires sacrifices of time and money on the part of children and mothers. Many of the respondents were studying part-time or had taken jobs with the intention of improving their and their families lives through higher incomes and the ability to afford better schools, and more material comforts. However, in many cases, these decisions mean that women have less time available to spend with their families, raising a sense of guilt and worry about their ability and competence as a mother. The situation can be compounded by the reality that having familial commitments restricts the amount of time that mothers can dedicate to studies or careers making success at either more difficult.

Accessing better work opportunities and higher quality education in distant parts of the city impacts the geographies of mothers and subsequently has

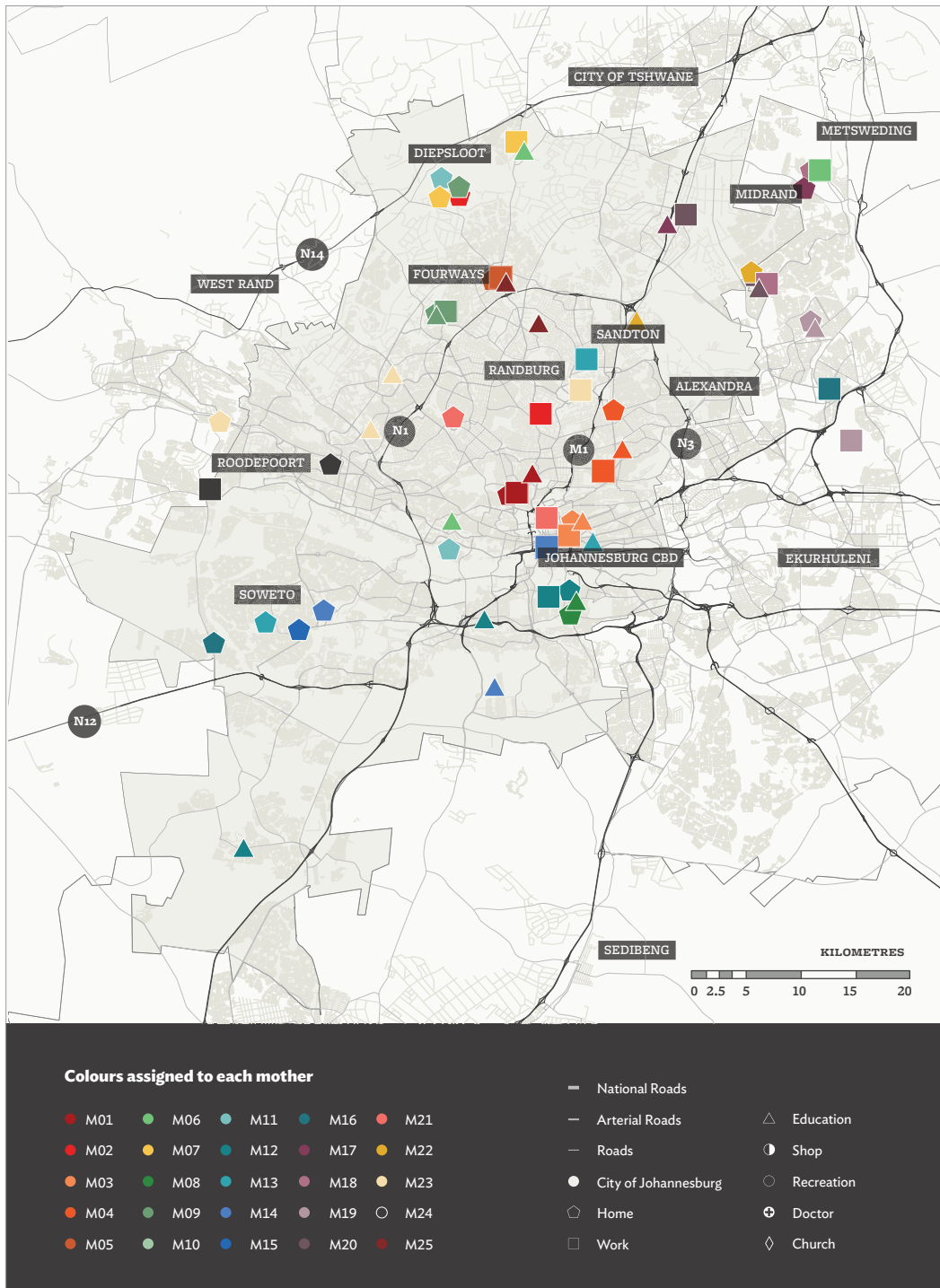


Figure 11: The distribution of work, home and schools/educational facilities

higher costs financially and in terms of time. The inequalities of work opportunities and education quality are related to the legacy of apartheid and segregated planning policies. This is one of the phenomena that this pilot study set out to understand but it is clear from above that mothers respond to these spatial inequalities in different ways and these differences appear to be grounded in emotion more than pragmatic considerations.

Accessing and choosing Schools: Travel, transport and safety

Accessing state education is frequently dependent on residing within a 5km radius that determines the feeder zone of the school. State schools reflect the spatial inequalities of the city at large: wealthier areas have schools with better resources and staff and poorer areas have schools with fewer resources and on average a lower standard of education (Yamauchi 2011). This inequality in the education provided by the state has given rise to substantial numbers of private schools across the city. Between 2010 and 2013, 123 private schools were established in Gauteng (Steyn 2016). These schools have different criteria of acceptance, affordability and are not determined by geography. Mothers who seek higher quality education for their children must either find a way to live or work in the feeder zone of a good state school or must have funds to send their children to private schools. This is exemplified by the response of one of the mothers after the interviewer enquired if she would move home to access a high school that she thought would be good for her son:

Most likely. I'm yet to enquire on whether they allow students to travel from certain distances and apply

and register. Failing which, we will most likely move. It's not out of the cards at the moment. I love Riverlea because it's where I was born and raised. It's where a lot of my family is. And it's practical. It's close to work for me and it's close to absolutely everything that we need. But in terms of schooling, I'd do that. I'd move if I needed to. (M11)

Accessing education is therefore a consideration in the choice of home location for mothers and many would exchange community support and long histories in certain sites in order to get their children into better schools.

The geographic feeder areas of state schools further complicates the spatial relationship between home and school. Some mothers sent their children to schools that they felt would provide their children with better education and hope for the future but this sometimes meant that the children had to take long trips (2.5 hours) a day using public transport (for example from Diepsloot to Hyde Park).

When looking at Figures 11 and 12, what also becomes clear is that almost all of the households in the south-west and west of the city, travelled elsewhere for schooling. Since these are old townships and there is a perception that education in these areas is not as good as elsewhere it is unsurprising that children are transported to schools in other parts of the city. One of the mothers described Soweto as “toxic” and wanted a good school for her children so sent them to a school in Jeppestown: where “they go on a micro-bus; when they leave here at 05h30am they get to school at 07h00am and school starts at 07h30am” (M13), thus subjecting her children to an hour and half journey each way, in the search of a better education.

“Mothers who seek higher quality education for their children must either find a way to live or work in the feeder zone of a good state school or must have funds to send their children to private schools.”

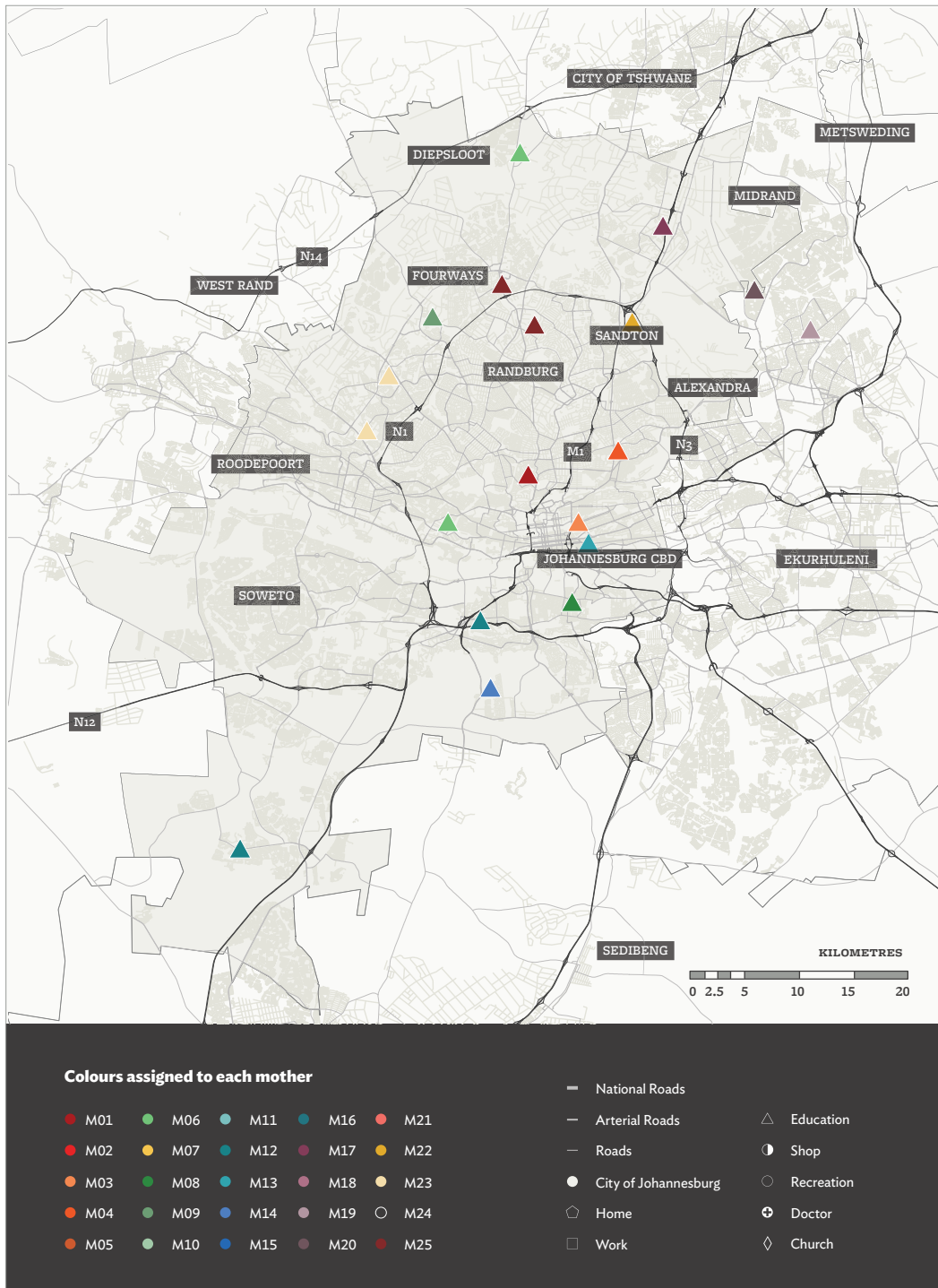


Figure 12: Location of educational facilities

“Since some respondents saw public transport as dangerous, they then made a different spatial choice to live in areas that gave access to better schools but here too was a compromise as these areas were not necessarily seen as safe.”

The lack of reliable and safe public transport ties children to their mothers – further welding together their respective geographies and limiting the independence of both mother and child.

Interviewer: And is there any reason that they don't take public transport to get to school? Interviewee: Yes, my husband. He refuses. I've said to him... there are taxis, transport, formal transport that can be arranged for children to get to school. I've suggested that to him as a means of saving on the wear and tear of our car. And also on petrol, and he's not of the feeling that he wants to go that route. But certainly before this [when her son was younger], I mean now that he's going to grade 3 I wouldn't have attempted it anyway. I'm too wary of the fact that, how they drive on the road. And we've seen it. With other transport companies or taxis and it's just scary. You look at that and it does kind of put you off. How the taxis drive even with children. A taxi full of children actually, probably loaded. How they just treat the rules, they don't even obey the rules. (M11)

Look, to walk, I don't think, they're still young to walk. But if they were confident enough to use public transport, I would do so. I would teach them to use the public transport. But also the uncertainty of this place. Like, you know, it's not safe. That is

preventing us from, you know, letting our children to be independent like the way us we were brought up, you know? Because these days you read the news, children are being kidnapped, raped, all those things. So you are just being paranoid because you never know so you need to protect your kids. (M3)

Interviewer: And do you go with the kids all the time? All the time, the one is my handbag, and the other one is my purse. (M3)

Lack of access to safe public transport decided the location of one of the mother's crèches:

I wanted it to be within walking distance of the house. Because I needed to be able to ask other people to go and pick him up and drop him off if I couldn't. And if those other people don't drive, then they need to be able to walk there, fetch him in a pram and walk back. So, uh, that was key. (M1)

Since some respondents saw public transport as dangerous, they then made a different spatial choice to live in areas that gave access to better schools but here too was a compromise as these areas were not necessarily seen as safe. One mother living in Yeoville, which provided access to Houghton Primary and King Edward's Primary School said that she was afraid of the area but put up with it so her children could attend these schools.

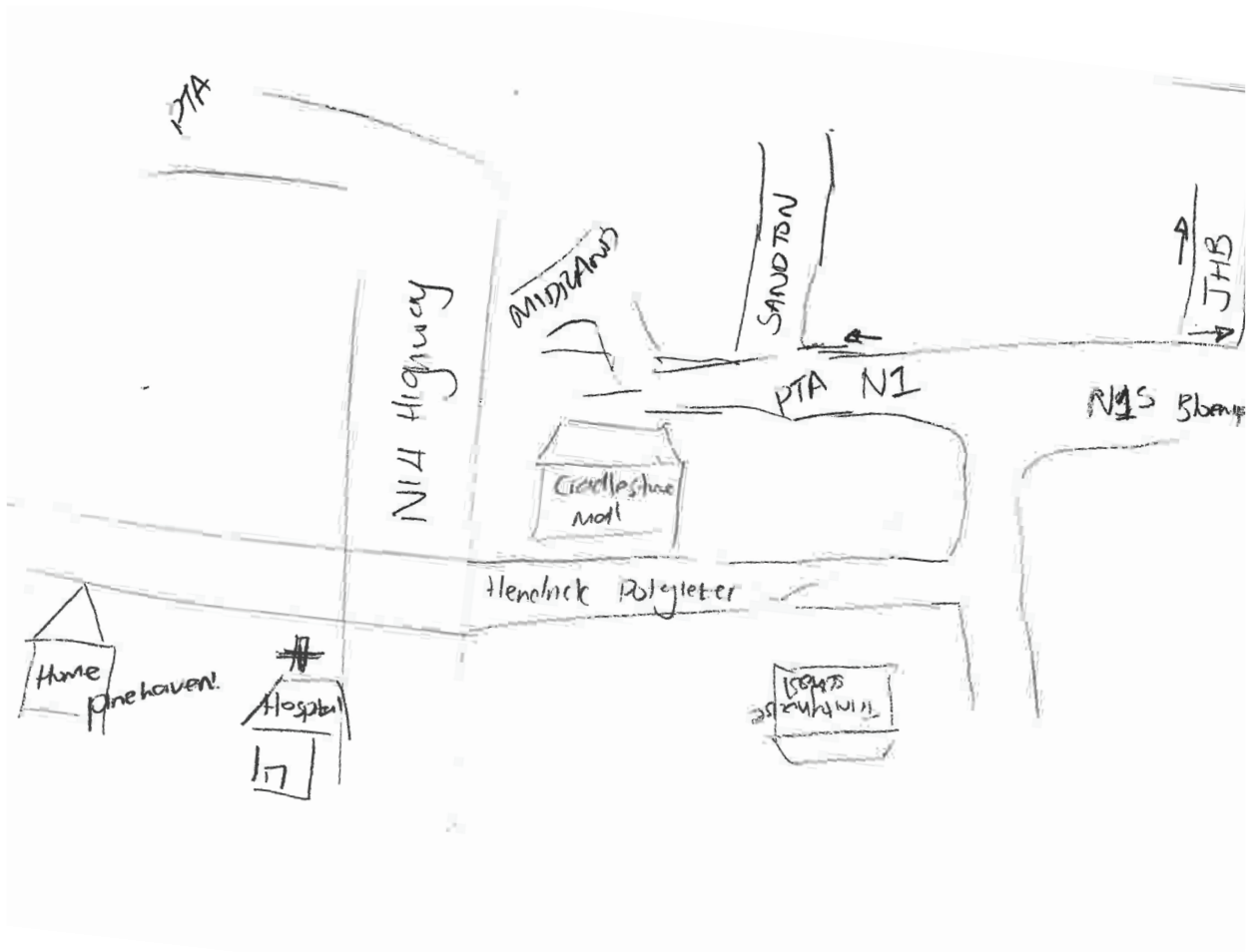


Figure 13: Hand Drawn map (M24)

In this way the lack of public transport affects the lives of both mothers and children and in ways that can influence not only the pragmatic aspects of everyday life but also the identities of mothers themselves. As the mother above illustrated her children are always with her and this is a factor of both the levels of safety and access to reliable public transport. In these circumstances mothers have limited capacity to assert independence and autonomy, even as their children grow up because the conditions in the city limit the children's levels of independence and thus the mothers' level of independence. It is not difficult to see that a mother's sense of self and autonomy would be affected by this sustained level of dependence of her children.

Where children go to school, influences and is influenced by the nexus of quality of education, affordability of educational institutions, affordability of transport, concerns around safety, both the home environment and of the lack of public transport, these factors influence mothers' choices around where they work. Thus there is the difficulty of balancing a career or income generation within an environment that is difficult to navigate, requires time and expense, where there are few 'safe' choices. There are two spatial implications: lower income mothers are left with difficult choices, either having to choose between poor transport and poor physical environments; women also then choose their jobs based on access to transport, and the ability to be able to get to their children if there is an emergency or drop them and pick them up in a timely manner. Thus women may turn down more lucrative jobs or jobs with better prospects simply because of the location and the difficulties that it would pose for access and navigation.

Beyond home and work: Play, public space and services

Home, work and school are the most important locations for mothers and children and the most time intensive. Caring for children also includes shopping for food, clothes, etc., accessing spaces of play and recreation, and medical needs. Frequency of use varies from family to family, with the age of children, the existence of medical conditions, and disposable income.

One of the findings indicates how hostile public space can be for mothers, especially mothers of small

children and babies, where the everyday necessities of mothering become extremely difficult in most public spaces. Mothers articulated the difficulties of pushing a pram down a pavement:

And it's not just "oh, the city of Jo'burg has not looked after their pavements", the people who live in the suburbs are not as neighbour friendly as they should be. So you get people who go, outside of my house, the sidewalk is going to be this design. And it's a design that makes it impossible, for not only me to push a pram through, but for pedestrians. So then why when everyone goes 'why is everyone always walking in the road?' you go 'well because, you haven't made – you have deliberately stuffed up the pavement for them to walk on.' So the pram, we basically push it on the road. (M1)

Breastfeeding in public continues to be a volatile subject of conversation. Some of our mothers felt very comfortable breastfeeding in public whereas others took steps to avoid it altogether either by switching to formula or using a breast pump at home. Some respondents reported that they avoided breastfeeding their children because they needed to return to work at some point after the birth of their child. Here workplace and public space conditions directly influence women's decisions regarding childcare.

One of the interesting points of consensus was the agreement between the twenty-five mothers of our sample on the difficulty of changing nappies while out in public. Although some of our mothers were at this stage with their children twenty years ago it seems that little has changed in the availability of clean and reliable facilities for changing nappies over the last few decades.

Yes, then I will change them [the children's nappies] in my car. But in town, ja, there's no facilities. I think it's just toilets and... it's only toilets and also they don't have that space where you can even, you know, like a baby change. Or not even ... an open area where you can just use it nicely. (M3)

A lot of restaurants don't have; they have toilets, but the toilets are not catered for changing children at all. Most places that have that are actually family orientated so they're happy to have the kids, and then they catered for the kids. So instead what

“One of the interesting points of consensus was the agreement between the twenty-five mothers of our sample on the difficulty of changing nappies while out in public.”

happens is you end up with “these are the eight places that we can go to in Johannesburg”, and you go there because you know the facilities are there. (M1) With small children, some of the mothers mentioned that they would try and avoid taking their children shopping: “You kind of hope and pray that your child doesn’t make a big mess while you’re out shopping, or you avoid taking them completely. Just because there’s not that many facilities around”. (M11)

The lack of appropriate facilities thus meant that families were constrained around where they could comfortably go with some children, curtailing some of their spatial choices. However, when looking at Figure 14 what becomes apparent is that once again choices of recreational spaces, notably parks, were influenced by a variety of factors, such as a sense of whether they were safe or not, their accessibility and their availability. What is striking is the spatial distribution, with a few respondents reporting that their relaxation time was spent in the south of the city and the map showing three clusters of recreational activities all within more affluent areas and sites that under apartheid were ‘white’ neighbourhoods. This arguably demonstrates the spatial history of the city affecting the everyday practices of contemporary residents and the lack of facilities or facilities that are trusted within old township areas.

Mothers also reported that recreation took place in shopping centres. This was because grocery shopping, the purchase of school supplies and as well as recreation, especially for slightly older children, in terms of visiting movies and restaurants, could all be accessed in the same place, and thus only needing one trip to one place rather than numerous, costly and sometimes difficult trips.

However, neither shops nor parks were ideal. In many cases, and particularly for younger children,

parks and shopping centres do not offer safe recreational spaces for mothers and children, often they are not fenced off, allowing children to run into roads and car parks: “...there are not a lot of places in Johannesburg where you can not worry about your child running out into moving traffic” (M1).

Parents consider many of the parks unsafe spaces for their children and are wary of allowing them to go to these spaces

Look, not often [go to the park]. Because, I don’t think... there is a park just around the corner. But I feel like it doesn’t have all the facilities for the children and it’s unsafe because most of the time, it’s only guys that smoke, that does bad things there so it’s pointless for you to be bringing your children in an exposed, in a place that is exposed to certain things. So, normally I don’t, I don’t take them there. (M3)

Like having a, a beautiful space. And that’s why I like Mushroom Farm Park because it’s secure, there’s a security guard by the boom. You can go there, you kind of feel safe. It’s fenced off. I can be there alone with the kids. Uhm, and we can go do something fun outside. You know, you don’t have to spend any money, nothing, you can kind of just go. And if there was more, more things like that. Especially on the safety side, because, I wouldn’t easily go, maybe that’s why we mostly stay here and play in our park, because going alone, you don’t always know how busy it’s going to be. Whereas on a weekend it’s busy, but usually [my husband] is with us. But uhm, on a weekday, you don’t want to go to a park and be the only people like, in the playground and you know, it’s a bit isolated, you know. So I think [what we need], just more secure parks and free activities. Ja. Open spaces. (M5)

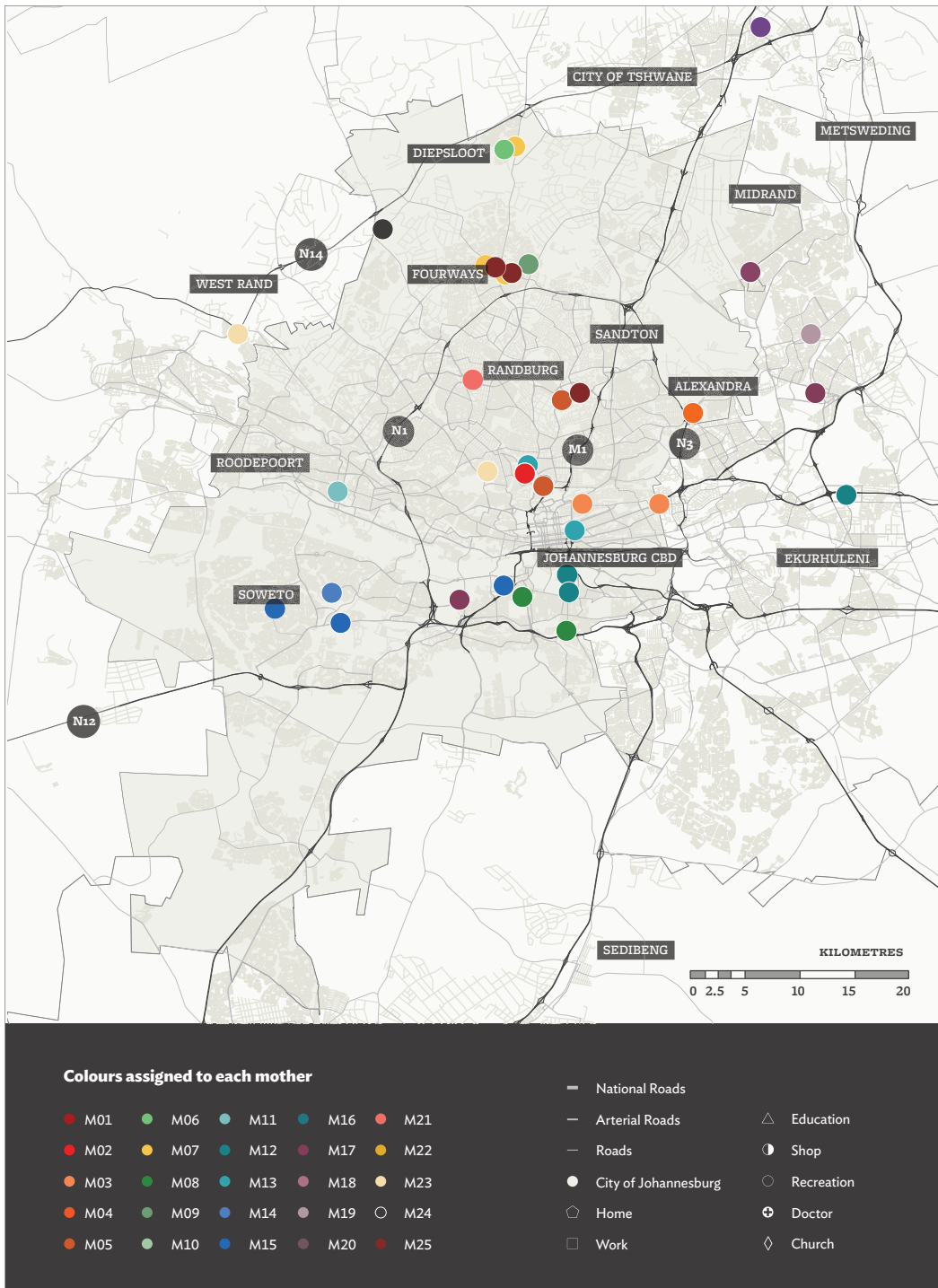


Figure 14: Map of distribution of recreational spaces used

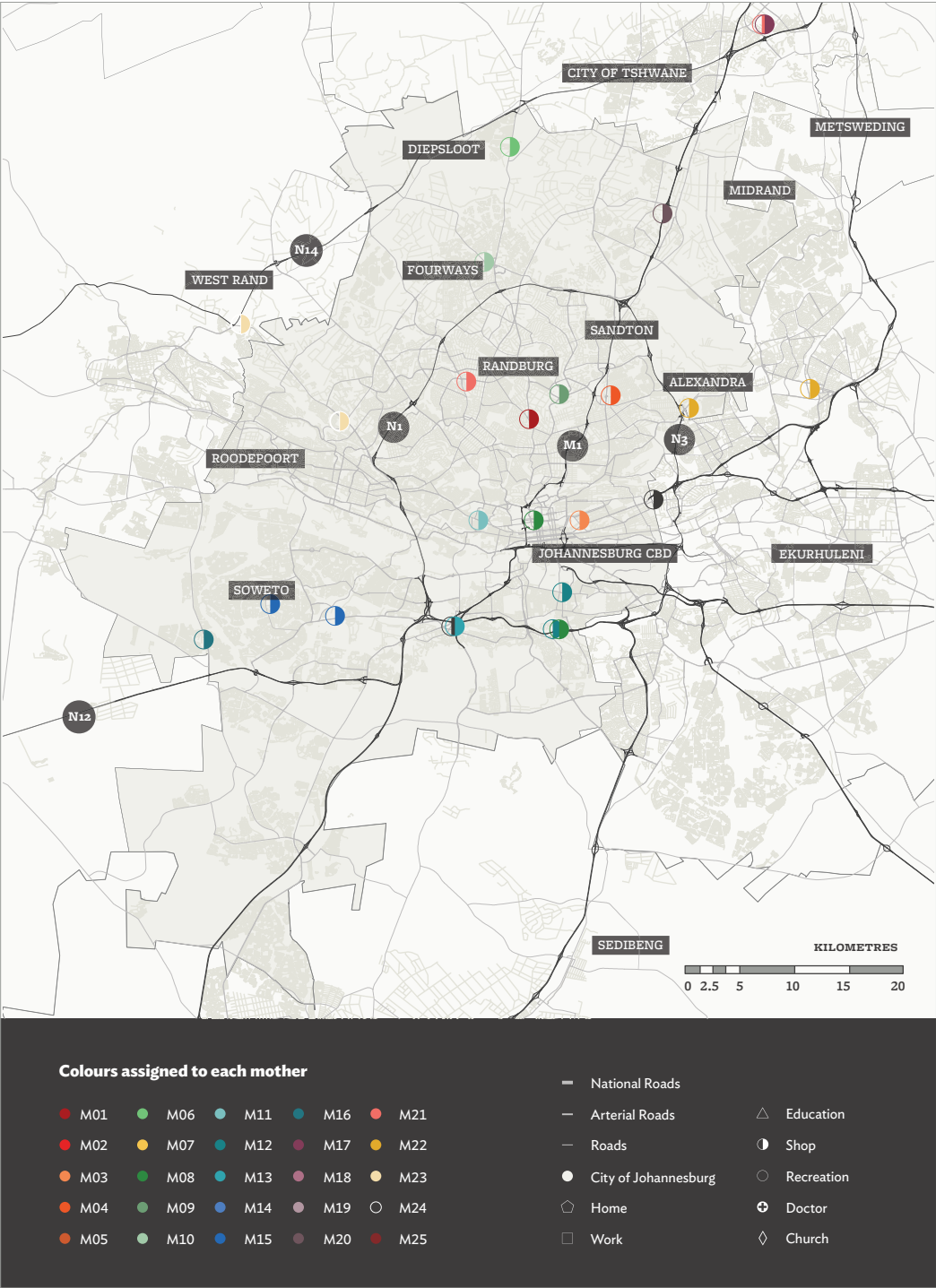


Figure 15: **Distribution of location of where households shop**



In other cases the public environment can feel like a hostile space when mothers feel vulnerable and unsafe:

Where she is currently there's a main street right next door to them [child's crèche]. So you often have people yelling when they're going out...Where she is now, they get locked up. So you can't even really go and play outside in the street. Those things which I did when I was a kid, which was great for me. But [s] he can't experience that. So you sort of have to play around certain areas. If you go to the area, there's trouble. Even now she knows "that park, I don't like that park, mommy there's a lot of people who do this". So it's sort of that environment. And when we walk out, you're like, "I don't want to go there". Sometimes people play loud music. (M8)

The sense of hostility and fear excludes mothers and children from fully participating in public space and life and can even lead to feelings of isolation and exclusion. Johannesburg is considered one of the most dangerous cities in the world as such crime affects all residents in the city but in the case of mothers it can

impact the kinds of activities mothers do with their children and as has been seen in extreme cases mothers are forced to make big decisions about where their children are raised or go to school.

Mothers may experience these fears and concerns more acutely because of their responsibility for children in their care. Sense of fear and isolation have a direct impact on the geographies of mothers in the city as women prefer to go to places where they feel safe and may travel further to reach that peace of mind or stay at home once again restricting women to the domestic zone.

Trying to cope with the daily pressures and having limited places to go can also add a temporal dimension of a routine existence to the lives of mothers and children (See Figure 16). On the one hand, routine is said to be good for children offering stability and predictability, however on the other, such routines can also become tedious and banal trapping people into patterns that are isolating and perhaps not always good for parental mental health.

“Trying to cope with the daily pressures and having limited places to go can also add a temporal dimension of a routine existence to the lives of mothers and children...”

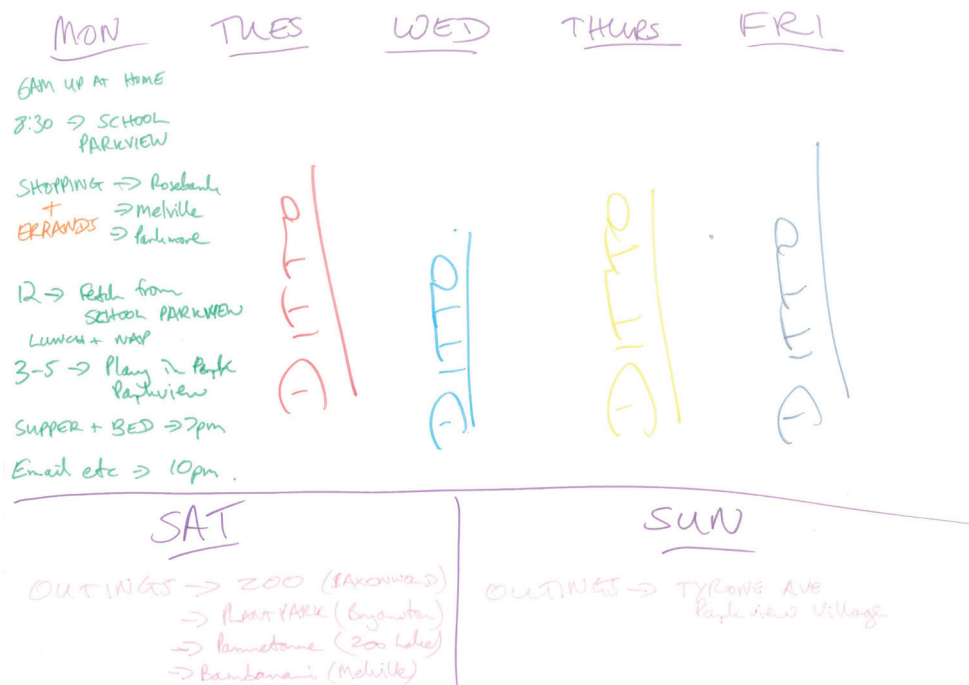


Figure 16: Hand Drawn map of everyday life (M1)

The choice around extra-mural activities was also highly influenced by the nature of the surrounding environments, with respondents detailing that they chose to limit their children's exposure to certain activities stating "I haven't introduced her to much of sports because we don't have anything around there" (M8). This was reiterated by a mother living in Riverlea, an older historically coloured area: "I bought [my son] a tennis racket a year ago for Christmas and he loves to play tennis but we've got nowhere to go. We'd have to drive all the way to Melville, go border Parktown to go play on a tennis court" (M11) - these are distances of about 10-12 kilometres.

Even choices around what sports or activities children could be exposed to was influenced by concerns around safety "I think I would like [my daughter] to play tennis. That would be nice. And also some karate. Because I know South Africa is not safe. You need to defend yourself at least" (M11).

Choices of healthcare were determined by income, with lower income households using local government clinics and facilities. Mothers who used these facilities described having to walk long distances with 'crabby', ill toddlers, or wait with sick children for taxis to fill up and sit in long queues in order to be seen by a doctor. Thus, those who could afford it attempted to access private care as much as possible: "Because I can't really bring her to Parktown [where the mother works] and I don't trust South Rand [hospital] because it's a government hospital and nothing really goes well there" (M8).

So, the response to many of the questions around where do mothers feel comfortable conducting the every-day activities of daily life often boiled down to 'at home', thus restricting most mother's activities and movements due to the difficulties of navigating many of the daily needs. The concern for safety becomes an integral part of mother's moral geography of the city.

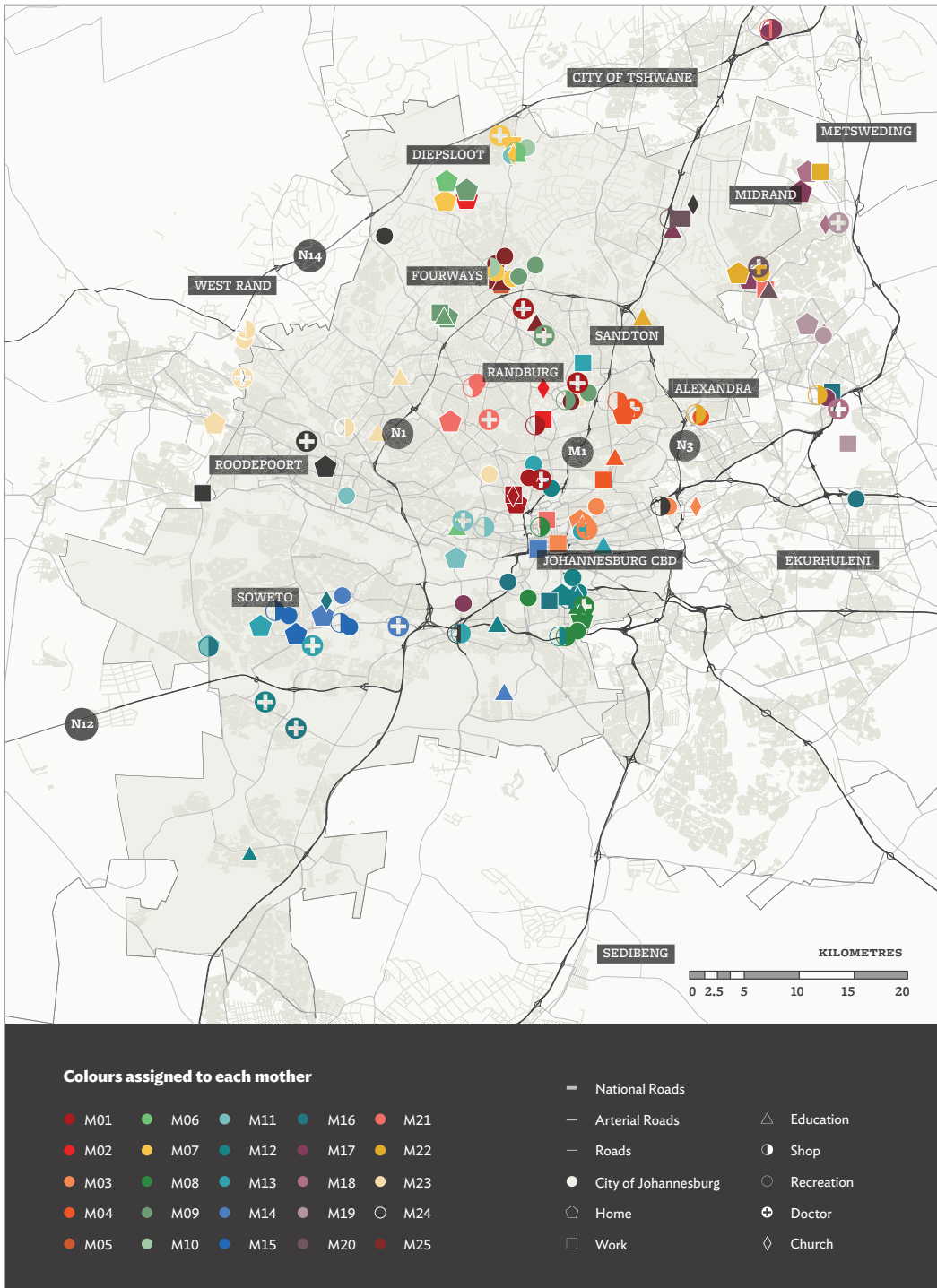


Figure 17: Map of home and all activities



Photograph by **Seth Doyle**

Conclusions

Many of the challenges that mothers mentioned in the interviews could be considered universal and have been noted in a range of other studies; time, money, affordability, concerns for their children's health and education and safety. However, the manner in which the participants responded to these challenges was highly individualistic and there seemed to be little commonality with women of similar income, class, race or location. The experiences of mothers in the city cannot only be understood through socio-economic status or through material conditions, but rather through insight into their identities, ideologies and moral geographies. This understanding is required in order to design adequate policies and interventions.

The methodology of this research has emphasised the role of the researcher as a subjective element of the process. To enable participants to share and reflect on their everyday lives required the researchers to share some of their experiences and to have high levels of empathy. This is contrary to the understanding that researchers are neutral and objective but in this project, being subjective had two positive outcomes. The first was that mothers felt comfortable to open up and share their stories, eliciting better quality data, and the second was that the interviews were more like conversations or shared experiences so that the participants experienced cathartic benefits in the process. This reflects the experiences of researchers in gender and health studies (Oakley 1981).

This report has explored some of the many ways that mothers, with and without their children, use the city. In providing for themselves and their families, women build homes, have paid employment, find quality care and education facilities, buy food, clothes, etc., take their children to play and relax, access clinics or doctors for check-ups or regular therapies and involvement in community organizations. Through

all these activities, mothers interact with and use the city intensively. The spatial footprints of mothers in Johannesburg are varied – some mothers have footprints that do not go beyond their immediate neighbourhoods, while other mothers travel across the city region to access their and their children's needs.

The factors that determine the spatial footprint are a complex concatenation or layering of considerations. A mother's socio-economic status in Johannesburg is going to play a major role in defining the choice of places to live and where work opportunities may be available. The spatial inequalities impact not only on the living conditions of the home and the immediate environment but will also reflect in the quality of services and amenities in the area. Thus, as a result some mothers make the heart-breaking decision to send their children to live with relatives elsewhere or to send their children to school at some distance away from home. The costs of these decisions are both time and money for both mother and children.

Inextricable from the factor of spatial inequality are the value judgements that mothers make for their children and themselves. 'What is best for the child' determines a moral geography that is not defined by concepts of efficiency or convenience but often through cultural definitions of motherhood. Thus, a mother might choose to work only within close proximity to home or not have paid employment at all in order to have more time to spend with her children. Although both parents and other primary care givers will exercise value judgements in their decisions for their children, the decisions of mothers are further complicated by the particular expectations placed on them by society at large. These might differ within different cultures, as Maqubela (2013) has shown, but are nevertheless considerations for mothers. The complex interaction between spatial inequalities and moral

geographies is only part of the decision-making of mothers in the city. The logic of the school feeder areas that determine access to state schools based on the location of the children's home is a bureaucratic factor in choosing a school. This may impact the choice of home location, or the decision to seek private education or the location of the workplace. Entangled with these considerations is the question of transport – access to affordable, reliable and safe transport for both mothers and children. In some cases, this consideration of transport extends to the support of relatives or paid carers that mothers rely on in raising their children. Recurring throughout the narratives of mothers is the factor of safety and the fear of crime. From the choice of places of play and relaxation to the choice of home and how to move between the everyday activities, nearly all mothers expressed a concern for the safety of their children and occasionally themselves. In some cases, this fear limited the geographies of mothers to the confines of their home, or gated community.

This pilot study has demonstrated that the spatial footprints of mothers in Johannesburg are the product of a web of complex decisions that weaves together the existing geography and urban conditions with cultural definitions of motherhood not to mention a myriad of other factors. The research has shown the relevance of understanding mothers' geographies because of their extensive interaction with and use of the city. However, given the complexity revealed in this study, further research is required. In particular, a greater understanding of each mother's sense of self and identity is needed and to relate this with more knowledge of their motivations and decision-making processes. As highlighted throughout, the research findings on mothers has the potential to reveal insights into many different urban issues playing out in Johannesburg and other similar cities around the world.

Recommendations for further research

This pilot study raised four key themes for further research to understand the experiences of mothers in the city. The first concerns the experiences of migrant women in the city, particularly around the decision to bring children to the city or to send them to stay with relatives in a rural homestead. The second is a much-needed focus on the detailed mobility of mothers within the city: the number and frequency of trips within the city, the time taken for the trips, their cost, including multiple destination trips, the choice of modes of transport that may include children, and the decision-making around availability of amenities and the geography of the city.

The third area to investigate is the definition, identity and roles of mothers – how these women understand their identity for themselves and their various roles within and outside of the household. What is the meaning of motherhood? How do they understand their roles and expectations? And how do they navigate these expectations? How is motherhood performed? I.e. what activities constitute the act of being a mother? What makes a 'good' mother? Why do women have children? Fourthly, further research is needed to understand how identity informs the decisions mothers make. Decision-making around education, work/income generation and home/location and housing typology for children and particularly, how this intersects with conceptions of motherhood and ideas of community and identity is poorly understood. Future research needs to recognise and include the diversity contained in motherhood including single mothers; women who are not heterosexual; various types of relationships; co-habitation; full and part time working mothers; full time mothers; mothers who care for younger siblings, or grandparents, transnational migrants etc. so that the full complexity of motherhood is understood.



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