



UMEÅ UNIVERSITY

Young mothers' identity work

Life course, Risk, & Good motherhood

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To Greta, I love you to the moon and back, and then some.

To my mother, thank you for being you.

To my father, the best I could ever wish for. I miss you.

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Abstract

Background. Most studies about young motherhood have focused on identifying how young mothers can be supported or on how notions of young motherhood are produced. However, there is still limited knowledge about the maternal identity work of young mothers. The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the maternal identity work of young mothers and, as part of this, to study young motherhood in relation to different forms of parenting support.

Method. For the first three papers, 17 young Swedish mothers aged 13–25 were interviewed 1 or 2 times each (in total 31 interviews). The interview conversations were analysed from the perspective of discursive psychology. For the fourth paper, three Facebook groups that offered parenting support online to young mothers were studied. Data from the three Facebook groups were analysed through network analysis, online ethnography, and telephone interviews with two administrators. The ethnographical data and interviews in this particular substudy were analysed through thematic content analysis.

Theoretical perspectives. The identity work of the interviewed young mothers was analysed in relation to theories and debates about parenting and the life course, the risk society, and the notion of “good motherhood”.

Findings. The findings of the thesis suggest (Papers 1, 2, and 3) that whether the interviewed young mothers followed or deviated from their expected life course seemed to have an impact on the degree to which their mothering was seen as “risky”. Furthermore (Paper 2), the mothers appeared to be discursively divided into three different levels of riskiness in their social contexts: *less risky* mothers, *high risk* mothers, and mothers seen as *too risky* for mothering. The mothers’ level of presumed riskiness seemed in turn to have meanings for which dominant and/or alternative motherhood discourses they could access and draw upon in a trustworthy way (or which motherhood discourses they lacked access to) when presenting their maternal positions and making sense of their maternal identity in relation to the world around them. Two emerging motherhood discourses were identified: *youthful motherhood* (Paper 1) and *common-sense motherhood* (Paper 2). Support from the young mothers’ own mothers (Paper 3) had contradictory meanings for their identities and functioned as a form of guidance into motherhood while at the same time limiting the young mothers’ possibilities to take on the position as the “main-mother” of her child. Young mothers seemed to prefer peer-parenting support online (Paper 4) in closed Facebook groups above participating in governmental expert-guided face-to-face support groups.

Keywords

young motherhood, life course, risk, good motherhood, youthful motherhood,
common sense motherhood

List of original papers in the thesis

1. Magdalena Sjöberg & Hanna Bertilsdotter-Rosqvist, “Youthful mothering? Exploring the meaning of adulthood and youthfulness within the maternal identity work of young Swedish mothers”. Published in *Feminism & Psychology*, 2018, 28(3).
2. Magdalena Sjöberg, “Too risky for mothering? Exploring the maternal identity work of young Swedish mothers in relation to discourses of risk and good motherhood”. Re-submitted to journal, July 2017.
3. Magdalena Sjöberg & Hanna Bertilsdotter-Rosqvist, “Who is the mother? Exploring the meaning of grandparental support in young Swedish mothers’ narratives”. Published in *Feminism & Psychology*, 2017, 27(3).
4. Magdalena Sjöberg & Simon Lindgren, “Challenging the roles of ‘skilled’ professionals and ‘risky’ young mothers. Peer-support, expertise and relational patterns in Facebook groups”. Published in *Journal of Technology in Human Services*, 2017, 35(3)

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Magdalena Sjöberg

Introduction

Before I introduce the aim of this thesis, I will give a brief background to young motherhood in the Swedish context.

With only 2.4% of Swedish mothers being under the age of 19, Sweden has a relatively low rate of young motherhood, which probably can be explained, at least in part, by the existence of a well-organised welfare system that provides young women with free and easy access to contraceptives and extensive sexual education (Tryggvason, Sorbring, & Samuelsons, 2012). Most young women in Sweden who become pregnant choose to have an abortion (Ekstrand, 2008; Statens folkhälsoinstitut, 2011), and the choice of abortion relates to Sweden's strong feminist movement with liberal legislation and a culture that supports women's right to abortion. Thus, compared to other countries, young motherhood is not seen as a pressing public issue.

As a possible consequence of its low prevalence, the issue of young motherhood is barely mentioned in Swedish political debates or policy documents. The few times young motherhood is mentioned in policy documents is in the context of safe sex and preventive work against STDs (Folkhälsoinstitutet, 2010; SOU, 2003:92). Young motherhood is also mentioned in discussions about vulnerable youths' difficulties in the labour market, among whom young mothers are highlighted as a particularly vulnerable group. In such discussions, the vulnerability of young mothers is assumed to lie in their difficulties in quickly returning to education or work after their child is born and their difficulties in finding a stable position in the labour market (Darroch, Frost, & Singh, 2001; Folkhälsoinstitutet, 2010; SOU 2003:92; Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2012). Within Swedish policy documents, young mothers are either viewed as a problem belonging to another, long-gone era, and thus as a problem that already has been solved, or are viewed as a vulnerable social group that should be offered targeted support aiming at a fast return to school and work alongside specific parenting support to strengthen their maternal skills (Socialdepartementet, 2009; SOU 2008:131; Ungdomsstyrelsen, 2012).

Although news media articles about the young mother and her heroic "against the odds" life story figure now and then in Swedish media (see for example Gustavsson, 2016), young motherhood is seldom otherwise mentioned in Swedish media. Also, the tone in reporting about young mothers in the Swedish media is generally less harsh than the media coverage in other Western countries such as the US and the UK, which is an interesting observation because young motherhood is a well-debated subject in these two countries and the two countries stand for the main bulk of the research produced within the field of young

motherhood. The following is an illustration of how young motherhood can be portrayed and debated in the US. The two pictures below were featured at bus stops and subway stations across New York City as part of an ad campaign by the New York City Human Resources Administration in 2013. The aim of the campaign was to prevent young motherhood.



Figure 1. Anti-teen-pregnancy ads from the NYC Human Rights Administration (Stamper, 2013).

The campaign was met with strong opinions. *The New York Daily News* called it a "shame campaign", and Haydee Morales, Vice President of Education and Training at Planned Parenthood of New York City, argued that the ads stigmatised young mothers, while *The Village Voice* noted that "it was likely to 'scare the living daylights' out of its intended audience"—which, perhaps, was the point" (NBC News, 2013). Expressions such as those described above make you wonder what it is like to become a young mother under such circumstances and how young mothers carry out their maternal identity work under these stigmatising conditions.

As I will illustrate further on in this thesis, young motherhood as a phenomenon has already been heavily studied but very seldom with the focus on these mothers' maternal identity work. Following Taylor's (2007) notion of "identity work", I understand young mothers' identity as constant and on-going work that both relies on what available linguistic resources the woman has in a certain context and relates to which identity positions she had in her past, has in the present, and will have in the future.

Although motherhood has always played an important part in the building of societies, the idea of good motherhood has in the last decade, according to critical parenting studies (Lee, Bristow, Faircloth, & Macvarish, 2014; Lupton, 2011; Furedi, 2001, 2008), become an important part in raising good and optimised future citizens, which in turn aims to build a strong and successful society (Moss, 2014). This idea is called parenting determinism (Lee, 2014). With this idea, parenting has been professionalised and the tasks of motherhood have been broken down into ever-greater levels of detail. Today, the good mother needs to keep herself updated with an abundance of guidelines, books, and baby equipment, all with the aim of keeping her child safe and sound from potential risks (Lee, Macvarish, & Bristow, 2010; Lee, et al., 2014; Lupton, 2011). This phenomenon is called the new parenting culture (Macvarish, & Bristow, 2010; Lee, et al., 2014). Researchers within critical parenting studies argue that the new parenting culture has been brought forward from new meanings of risks (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003) and a culture of fear (Furedi, 2002) in which good mothering is no longer a matter of keeping your child safe from war and starvation but from avoiding anything that might endanger the optimal cognitive and physical development of the child (Lowe, Lee, & Macvarish, 2015; Macvarish, 2016) and thereby “secure” its possibility for an optimised life course (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Moss, 2014).

In a world of new parenting culture where motherhood is increasingly seen as risky business, the pressure on women’s maternal identity work has become even more intensified and stressful. In addition to the maternal task of reproduction and providing society with citizens, the new parenting culture has also given mothers a central part in raising good *optimised* citizens (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003; Lupton, 2011; Moss, 2014; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Because the pressure on maternal identity work has intensified for women positioned within a normative idea of motherhood, the maternal identity work of less normative mothers, such as young mothers, would presumably be even more stressful. This is because young mothers, due to their poor socioeconomic situation and age, are seen as less equipped to handle the task of motherhood even before their child is born (Macvarish, 2010; Phoenix, 1991).

As part of the new parenting culture and the professionalisation of maternal practice, the Swedish government invests a considerable amount of money into face-to-face parenting support groups led by trained experts (Sandin, 2011). Special investments are made in supporting targeted parents, such as young mothers, who from the policy makers’ point of view are seen as being in need of specific expert-guided parenting support in order to strengthen their maternal skills. However, young parents have a conspicuously low degree of participation

in the government-run face-to-face forms of parenting support (Fabian, Rådestad, & Waldenström, 2006; Petersson, Håkansson, & Petersson, 1997).

Aim and research questions

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the maternal identity work of young mothers and, as part of this, to study young motherhood in relation to different forms of parenting support. The aim was specified with the help of the following research questions:

- How do young mothers position themselves in relation to dominant and alternative ideas of motherhood?
- How do young mothers position themselves in relation to parental support from family and peers?

The first research question was mainly explored through the first two papers, in which the contradictory complexity of young mothers' maternal identity work was studied in relation to notions of life course, risk, adulthood, and motherhood. The second research question was explored in relation to grandparental support and through a study of parenting support online (the two final papers).

I used discursive psychology (Billig, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) to analyse and understand how the 17 interviewed young mothers, aged 13–25, were affected by and drew upon different discourses and interpretative repertoires when positioning themselves and when making sense of their own identities as mothers. The digital data from the three Facebook groups, along with two phone interviews, were analysed through content analysis of the ethnographic data and through social network analysis.

Structure of the thesis

Aside from a brief background, as well as a presentation of the aim and research questions, this introductory section also includes a presentation of previous research about young motherhood and the maternal identity work of young mothers. The section on *Theoretical perspectives* describes the central conceptual framework for the thesis in the form of three theoretical perspectives: expected life course, risk society, and dominant discourses within the idea of good motherhood. The following section, *Data and methods*, begins with a brief presentation of the thesis project design, followed by information about how the data were gathered and analysed. The key methodological approach of discursive psychology is then elaborated upon. Thereafter follows the *Results* section in which summaries of the four papers in this thesis are presented as well as an elaborating discussion of the two emerging motherhood discourses: *youthful*

motherhood and common-sense motherhood. In the final section, *Concluding findings*, I summarise the central results.

Previous research about young motherhood

Research carried out within the fields of medicine, psychology, and public health have been influential in shaping understandings of young motherhood. The underlying purpose of these studies has often been to figure out if and how young mothers, as a social group, can be supported by the welfare system. Thus, the focus of these studies has often been in identifying what potential adverse social outcomes and maternal problems young mothers experience and if possible to suggest medical or political solutions for how to overcome such inequalities. For example, Ensor and Huges (2009) found that young mothers lacked the maternal skills to raise well-functioning and healthy children. In line with this, other studies have found that young mothers tend to have lower self-esteem regarding mothering (Letourneau, Stewart, & Barnfather, 2004; Sadler et al., 2007) as well as problematic attachment to their children (Flaherty & Sadler, 2011) and inadequate knowledge about child rearing and child development in comparison to older mothers (Emery, Paquette, & Bigras, 2008; Crugnola, Jerardi, Gazzotti, & Albizzati, 2014). Studies with a focus on political and social outcomes found that young motherhood, or rather the poverty that often comes with young motherhood, often leads to higher risks for the mother and her child (Dhayanandhan, Bohr, & Connolly, 2015; Botchway, Quigley, & Gray, 2014; Hertfeldt Wahn, 2007). For example, children to young mothers who grow up in poverty have been problematised for not having the same opportunities to build a prosperous (or at least a good enough) future (Lipman, Georgiades, & Boyle, 2011; Coyne, Långström, Lichtenstein, & D'Onofrio, 2013).

Probably as a result of these negative social outcomes, studies within this perspective have often emphasised the importance for young women avoiding early motherhood in favour of having the opportunity to graduate from school before entering motherhood (Manlove, Mariner, & Papillo, 2000; Sadler et al., 2007). Thus, some studies within the disciplines mentioned above have taken a preventive approach, while others have focused on how to avoid and prevent unwanted young motherhood (Frisco, 2005; Darroch et al., 2001) or how young mothers' presumable lack of maternal skills can be strengthened through parenting support (Hjelte, Sjöberg, Westerberg, & Hyvönen, 2015). The common ground for all of these studies is that they all lean on the democratic and philanthropic idea of offering support to those in society who need it the most and to identify how social groups such as young mothers can be supported. The production of this knowledge probably aims to increase the chances that all children (and parents) within the welfare system will be offered at least relatively equal preconditions regardless of their parental and family situations.

Over the last two decades, a social-critical perspective on young motherhood has evolved within sociology and in youth and girlhood studies. From this perspective, researchers have focused on how young mothers as a social group are constructed as a particular type and what potential implications this might have for the young mothers in terms of stigmatisation. For example, Duncan, Edwards, and Alexander (2010), representing “parenting culture studies”, presented a number of studies that all questioned the assumption that young motherhood *per se* is understood and labelled as a social problem and asked the rhetorical question: “What’s the problem?” Another researcher that can be placed within this field is Ann Phoenix (1991), who emphasised the importance of redirecting any blame about negative social outcomes and stigmatisation from the individual young mothers to poverty and raised the question, “Are poor mothers bad mothers?” The rhetorical questions of Duncan and colleagues (2010) and Phoenix (1991) need to be understood in relation to political debates in which young motherhood has been made an important political issue both in the US and UK. For example, speeches made by different heads of state, including US president Bill Clinton in 1996 and UK prime minister Tony Blair in 1997, presented young motherhood as a public health epidemic that needed to be stopped (Macvarish, 2010; Furstenberg, 2007). Findings from parenting culture studies have led these researchers to point out and problematise the process in which politicians and researchers produce young mothers as a social group and single them out as the cause of numerous social problems.

Similar discussions have been carried out within youth and girlhood studies, for example, Brown, Brady, Wilson and Letherby (2009, also see Sniekers & van den Brink, 2019) challenge discourses in which young motherhood is constructed as a social problem. Youth and girlhood studies also interrogates the construction of young mothers as social problems as part of the broader practice of characterising young people as problems (Hamilton et al. 2018) and argue that teenagers have always been viewed as having unpredictable, out-of-control, and irresponsible behaviour. Also, young mothers through their teen position are automatically understood as not yet fully formed adults and thus as irresponsible beings (Lesko, 2001).

Additionally, Phoenix (1991; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991) questions the idea that maternal skills *per se* can be defined and understood as being related to a mother’s age. In her studies, Phoenix (1991; Phoenix et al., 1991) illustrates how mothers, both those seen as too young and those seen as too old, are seen as less skilled for mothering. Other studies with a critical perspective on parenting have illustrated how the construction of young mothers as “less skilled” for mothering has played an important part in stigmatising young mothers. An example of this is Kirkman, Harrison, and Priscilla’s (2001; see also Duncan et al., 2010) studies of young mothers’ experiences of stigmatisation. Kirkman and

her colleagues (2001) showed that while young mothers were usually well aware of the general negative opinions of young motherhood and had to manage stigmatisations on an everyday basis, they still regarded themselves as good and competent mothers.

Youth and girlhood studies have found that stigmatisation of young mothers often takes place in public spaces (Hamilton, 2018; Brown et al. 2009) and argue that this is because the public space is by default an adult space, which means that adults have the power to decide what is and is not appropriate for youth to do in this space (Harris, 2004) – whereby young motherhood is often seen as inappropriate. In line with Kirkman and colleagues' (2010) findings, Nayak and Kehily (2014) – representing youth and girlhood studies – write about the importance of viewing young mothers as actors who not only are slaves to the structures, but who can take control over their identity work even if their position as a working-class young mother regulates their social identity. They also point out that young mothers do not necessarily self-identify with the labelling and construction of them as irresponsible, but might actually in their identity work speak back to these representations. Nayak and Kehily (2014) suggested – similar to Kirkman and colleagues (2010) – that young mothers might be aware of the deeply affective nature of how people view young motherhood and might attempt to displace such representations by reimagining themselves in alternative ways, for example, as competent carers, friendly folk, or active citizens.

The common ground between parenting culture studies and youth studies is a social-critical perspective that attempts to deconstruct the idea of young motherhood as a “homogenous” social group that by definition lacks maternal skills. Furthermore, these critical perspectives advocate the importance of (re)directing any shame, blame, and stigmatisations from the individual mother to the social structure. Once again, these socio-critical perspectives and the matter of re-directing blame and shame needs to be understood from the political and medical context in the US and UK where young motherhood, as displayed in Figure 1 above, is covered with quite a harsh tone. This thesis follows the above-outlined socio-critical perspectives with special emphasis on the parenting culture perspective.

Most studies within the research field of young motherhood focus on teen motherhood, but in this thesis I have chosen to focus on a more broadly defined group of young mothers. Young motherhood as a term was coined by Phoenix (1991) in her thesis *Young mothers?* as a way to indicate that young motherhood can be understood as a social construction. Because this thesis follows a parenting culture perspective, the notion of “young motherhood” is more suitable than “teen mother” because the latter in itself signals an understanding of these

mothers as “children having children” or as “child-mothers” and thus already with the name implying that this group of mothers would be less skilled in mothering than other mothers. Following parenting culture studies on young motherhood, this thesis studied how young mothers in their identity work relate to how they are constructed as more or less fit for motherhood because of their age as first-time mothers.

As illustrated above, previous studies of young motherhood have focused on how young motherhood can be supported or is produced, while few have had the same focus as this thesis – to explore the maternal identity work of young mothers. Among the few studies addressing young mothers’ identity work, Phoenix (1991) has studied young mothers’ feelings about motherhood. In her study she found that young mothers, similar to “older” mothers, felt both a satisfaction and dissatisfaction with becoming a mother. Their new role as a mother gave them a sense of meaning and purpose. At the same time, they were dissatisfied with maternal tasks such as attending to the child at nights and the lack of freedom to go out whenever they felt like it. Patricia and colleagues (2018) as well as Levy and Weber (2010) both take a girlhood perspective and, similar to Macvarish (2010) who represents a critical-parenting perspective, have found that young mothers’ experiences of parenting should be understood as balancing between two worlds – that of “motherhood” and that of “teen girl”. Hamilton and colleagues (2018) found that young women’s positions are caught between constraining notions of the can-do girl and the good mother and argue that the young women in their study attempted to make a space where they could assert some control of their maternal identity while still acquiescing to the demands of self-regulation and re-invention. These authors also argue that young mothers’ identity work must be understood in relation to the collision between idealised images of youth (as something positive and future-oriented) on the one hand and their “poor” choice-making (in becoming mothers too early) on the other.

In Sweden there have only been a few studies with a focus on the identity of young mothers. Tryggvason and colleagues (2012) have explored young mothers’ identity work from a theoretical framework influenced by developmental psychology. In their study, identity is understood as something that needs to be developed and that changes through several more or less fixed identity types that appear at different stages in a woman’s life. In their analysis, the identity processes of young mothers are represented as problematic because young mothers – from the perspective of development psychology – have skipped the essential period of “exploration and testing”. By skipping this essential period, young mothers are seen as persons jumping into adulthood “too fast” and without spending the time needed to integrate adulthood into their personas. From this perspective, the identities of young mothers are more or less understood as fixed and troubled identities rather than as on-going and changeable identity

work. Brembeck (1992, 1998, 1999), similar to this thesis, took a parenting culture perspective and studied young motherhood in relation to different ideas of motherhood, including “the modern mother”, the “good mother”, and “the post-modern mother”. In her studies, she has illustrated how most of the mothers in her empirical data positioned themselves within the idea of a post-modern motherhood as a way of rebelling against the idea of good motherhood. The post-modern young mothers incorporated their children and family life into their existing lifestyles and identity positions as musicians instead of changing their lives in accordance with the idea of good motherhood.

This thesis contributes to an understanding of young mothers’ identity work in the 21st century influenced by the new parenting culture. Tryggvason and colleagues (2012) and Brembeck (1992, 1998, 1999) have studied young motherhood as it was understood in Sweden 20–30 years ago. Since then, the emergence of a new parenting culture has, as elaborated above, intensified the ideas of good motherhood and increased the pressure on women’s identity work in general and young mothers in particular (Lee et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2014; Macvarish, 2010). Specifically, this thesis sheds lights on the contradictory complexities within the identity work of young mothers, for example, by illustrating how young mothers’ identity work can be both troubled and untroubled depending on the context. In this thesis, the maternal identity work of young mothers is, similar to Brembeck’s (1999) study, understood as a constantly negotiated position and as “active work” in relation to the social structures instead of as a fixed and troubled position.

Theoretical perspectives

Three theoretical discussions and societal perspectives on young motherhood have been important as a theoretical background and broader conceptual framework for the analyses presented in this thesis, namely the life course perspective, the risk perspective, and the notion of “good motherhood”. These theoretical perspectives are in line with the socio-critical research perspectives discussed above.

The life course perspective

Sheriff and Weatherall’s (2009) feminist perspective on women’s expected life course and Jones’s (2005) contextual perspective on a life course were important influences in analysing how normative understandings of the expected life course affected the maternal identity work of the interviewed young mothers, particularly in the first three papers of this thesis.

According to Sheriff and Weatherall (2009), a woman’s expected life course moves between different projects, starting with the womanhood project, moving forward to the motherhood project, and ending in the post-maternity project. In my analysis of how normative understandings of expected life course affected the maternal identity work of the interviewed young mothers, I expanded Sheriff and Weatherall’s (2009) life course theory with an additional girlhood project to better fit the life courses that the interviewed young mothers talked about.

Within the girlhood project, a girl is supposed to have a happy childhood with youthful experiences. A happy childhood is, according to Lupton (2011), seen as an essential foundation for growing up to become a healthy and well-functioning mother. Further on, Lupton (2011) argues that the idea of a happy girlhood means that every child has the right to be a child and that a girl should not be put in a position of having too much responsibility for her family or herself at this early stage in her life. Too much “nursing” responsibility at an early age is understood as potentially harmful for the girl and as a scar that will “stick with her” through her whole life (Socialstyrelsen, 2013). From this normative perspective, young women who enter motherhood at an early age can be understood as girls who have not yet fulfilled their girlhood project and therefore will be deprived of “a happy girlhood”, which is seen as the basic foundation and preparation both for becoming a mother and for living an optimised life course (Trygvason et al., 2012).

Within the womanhood project, the woman is supposed to build up a foundation of material and spiritual preconditions (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009; Bergnéhr, 2008). From a normative perspective, the material prerequisites often consist of graduating from higher education, entering the labour market, and starting to climb up the career ladder or having a stable working position (Bergnéhr, 2008). A stable living arrangement and a romantic relationship are other examples of critical materialistic preconditions within the idea of fulfilling a womanhood project. Once a woman has gathered the material preconditions she will be seen as a responsible and self-supportive adult person (Blatterer, 2007), two essential features within the idea of good motherhood. The spiritual precondition consists of exploring the world through travelling around the globe, indulging in parties and other youthful escapades, exploring hobbies, and moving through a number of romantic and sexual relationships (Bergnéhr, 2008). Through spiritual experiences, the young woman will acquire the preconditions of “finding herself” and becoming a mature person (Bergnéhr, 2008; Romagnoli & Wall, 2012). Once a woman fulfils her womanhood project – gaining both the material and spiritual preconditions – she can be positioned as a person in possession of responsibility, maturity, and adulthood. It is only through achieving these that the woman is seen as “ready” to enter her motherhood project (Blatterer, 2005; Bergnéhr, 2008).

Within the motherhood project, a woman can draw upon different motherhood discourses, which will be elaborated below. During her motherhood project, a woman can either put all her time and energy into her motherhood project or can choose to continue working on her womanhood project by balancing the two projects of motherhood and womanhood (Hays, 1996). The post-maternity project occurs when the children move out of the home. During this project, the woman is supposed to realise herself and to fully indulge in her womanhood project, for example, through fulfilling her dreams of travelling or explore hobbies, though still being ready to step in and offer her maternal care whenever her grown children might call out for it (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009). Mothers of young mothers are from a normative perspective supposed to begin their post-maternity project – in which living with and raising their grandchild while guiding their child into motherhood would not be included (Hayslip & Goldberg-Glen, 2000; Arber & Timonen, 2012).

The second theoretical perspective used to explore how normative understandings of the expected life course affected the maternal identity work of young mothers was Jones’s (2005) contextual perspective on a life course. According to Jones (2005), people can either follow a “fast-track” life course or a “slow-track” life course. Which life course they follow depends on their class and socioeconomic background. People living in cities generally follow a “slow-track” life course and are expected to have children after completing higher edu-

cation and entering the labour market. Meanwhile, people in smaller communities tend to follow a “fast-track” life course and are assumed to have children after completing secondary school (Jones, 2005). This means that the normative assumption for which chronological age is seen as appropriate for entering motherhood will likely differ depending on where the young mother lives and whether she is expected to follow a slow-track or a fast-track life course. Depending on which of the two life courses a woman is expected to follow, the womanhood project contains different things. A woman following a fast-tracked life course would in accordance to Jones’s (2005) theoretical argumentation thus be expected to fulfil fewer material and spiritual preconditions before she herself and her surrounding local context would consider her to be “ready” to enter her motherhood project.

As will be further discussed in the section *Data and methods*, I chose to interview mothers from different geographical locations due to an interest in exploring whether or not the construction of young motherhood might differ depending on the local context in which they lived. Jones’s (2005) notion of a slow-track and a fast-track life course was helpful in understanding how some of the interviewed mothers with the same chronological ages of for example, 20 years, could either be seen as a “young mother” or simply as a “mother” depending on where they lived and which life course trajectory they were expected to follow. Sheriff and Weatherall’s (2009) theory about different projects within a normative life course was helpful in understanding and analysing the different meanings of being seen as a “younger young mother” – not fulfilling her girlhood project before becoming a mother – or as a “young mother” who had fulfilled her girlhood project but had barely started her womanhood project when entering motherhood and thus lacked most of the material and spiritual preconditions for being seen as properly equipped for the task of motherhood.

The risk perspective

The theoretical notion of risk was used in this thesis to explore the identity work of the interviewed young mothers. I mainly used what Lupton (1999) defines as the “Foucauldian risk theory” and Beck and Beck-Gernsheim’s (1995; see also Beck, 1992; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2013) idea about human strivings towards an “optimized life course”. I also related to theories about a culture of fear (Furedi, 2002), a new parenting culture (Lee et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2010; Faircloth & Murray, 2015), paranoid parenting (Furedi, 2001, 2008), and parenting determinism (Lee, 2014), most of which have been referred to in previous parenting culture studies and are seen as central notions within the discourse of risk (Macvarish 2010; Phoenix 1991; Phoenix et al., 1991; Duncan et al., 2010).

Risk and maternal identity work

In contemporary risk society, the notion of risk has, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; Beck, 1992), transformed from a life-threatening danger to a risk of not living an optimised life course. Similarly, Lupton (2011) means that humans prior to the contemporary risk society understood a risk as a life-threatening event, such as a flood, earthquake, epidemic, or starvation. From the perspective of Foucauldian risk discourses, a risk is no longer a matter of life or death, and instead it is a matter of the risk of not living the best possible life that one can. Lupton (1999) also argues that risks prior to the contemporary risk society consisted of mysterious phenomena that were out of people's control, while people in contemporary risk society look to the latest science and evidence-based knowledge for life-guidance because scientific knowledge has given people the possibility to conquer and control the forces of nature; for example, floods can now in many cases be predicted and prevented. Through the increased faith in science, the concept of risk has transformed to something that humans not only can control, but as something that humans should at least try to control (Lupton, 1999).

According to Furedi (2002), children in Western society have never been safer from life-threatening risk than today, but still the life of a human is portrayed as vulnerable and nearly apocalyptic in contemporary society. Furedi (2002) defines this fear of risk as a culture of fear. The culture of fear generates a feeling in contemporary mothers that danger and crisis can turn up anytime, which makes them more afraid of putting their children at risk of harm than ever before. Lee and colleagues (2014; Lee et al., 2010; Faircloth & Murray, 2015) argue that changed meanings of risk and a culture of fear have brought forward what they define as a new parenting culture where mothering has been taken to a detailed level of micro management. Instead of keeping her child safe from starvation and natural catastrophes, the risk-managing mother in the contemporary risk society keeps herself updated on the latest evidence-based child rearing knowledge regarding the appropriate number of bed-time stories, sleep-routines, avoiding formula milk, and keeping her children safe from dangerous plastic in toys, pacifiers, and dishes, untested baby equipment, and too much screen-time (Tulloch & Lupton, 2003; Lee et al., 2014; 2010; Faircloth, 2010; Livingstone, Blum-Ross, & Zhang, 2018). All of this is to avoid endangering the wellbeing and cognitive brain development of their children (Lowe, Lee, & Macvarish, 2015; Macvarish, 2016) and thereby the children's possibilities to have as optimised a life as possible (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). According to Lee and colleagues (2014), "good" or "bad" mothering is now defined by parenting experts based on maternal practices that for decades have been seen as banalities. The professionalisation of mothering, as well as the increased focus on details in maternal practices, takes up a lot of time and energy in contemporary women's everyday mothering and identity work (Lupton, 2011). In line with

Furedi's (2001, 2008) argumentation, the new parenting culture and the culture of fear can create a culture of what he defines as paranoid parenting where the striving for good mothering firstly becomes a way to reduce mothers' own anxiety and to make them feel good about themselves and their maternal identity, and secondly to be of benefit for the child.

In accordance to the Foucauldian risk theory, mothers in contemporary risk society organise their maternal practice around countless numbers of risks in order to avoid putting their child in harmful situations and to avoid the risk of being seen as a "bad and risky mother". This is because the success of a woman's family project and her children still plays an important part in defining the woman's success in life (Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010). Risk-calculating mothering is thus important in a woman's identity work. From this perspective, contemporary mothers bear similarities with insurance agents (Lupton, 1999) because they ensure the positive outcome of their life project by following their expected life courses and practicing "good mothering" to optimise the life courses of her children. The greatest fear and risk for mothers would thus be to "only" be able to offer their children an ordinary or mediocre life course.

In this thesis, the risk perspective was, alongside the life course perspective, important as a way to understand how the interviewed mothers were able or unable to access different positions of risky mothering in their maternal identity work (paper 2). In papers 1 and 3, the risk perspective played an important part in understanding how the interviewees' mothering practices were constructed as more or less risky because all types of mothering are labelled as a potential risk in contemporary risk society according to Lee and colleagues (2014). With increased pressure on all mothers, the maternal identity work of mothers positioned outside the normative idea of good motherhood – such as young mothers – must reasonable be even more pressured. Young mothers are, already before giving birth to their child, from this perspective seen as risky and bad mothers with reduced capability to practice risk-effective good mothering (Macvarish, 2010; Duncan et al., 2010; Phoenix, 1991; Phoenix et al., 1991).

Risk and parenting support

The Swedish government invests a lot of money into parenting support (Sandin, 2011, Socialdepartementet, 2009; SOU 2008:131). As an example, they spent an extra 200 million Swedish crowns (21 million euro) during the years 2010–2013 on parenting support and on creating an entire system of parenting experts who produce guidelines in the name of different governmental institutions. From the Foucauldian risk perspective, these government investments would be seen as a contributing part to the phenomena of culture of fear, new parenting culture, and paranoid parenting, all of which induce mothers to become self-regulating

citizens who willingly take on the responsibility for their own welfare and that of their children (Lupton, 1999; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2013) and who are motivated to participate in parenting support initiatives.

The government's face-to-face parenting support offered to targeted parents such as young mothers is part of the idea of parenting determinism, a central concept in parenting culture studies (Furedi, 2008; Lee et al., 2014; Widding, 2018). This idea of parenting determinism rests upon a logic where trained experts educate parents in what is seen as good parenting, which in turn results in "good children" and optimised future citizens, which in turn leads to strong societies (Lee et al., 2014) that, as Moss (2014) argues, will stand a chance in the global race.

Motherhood has always filled the important societal function of reproducing and raising good children and future citizens. However with the increased responsibility on the individual family to provide welfare for individual citizens and women's increased efforts to present themselves as good mothers and to raise their children to be "good and optimised" future citizens, motherhood has become a key function in building a strong society (Lee et al., 2014; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2013). In risk societies influenced by this new parenting culture and a family policy influenced by the idea of parenting determinism, mothers who fail to live their life in an optimised way and who make risky life choices – such as having children too early – are therefore labelled as irresponsible citizens (Löfmark, 2014; Mik-Meyer & Villadsen, 2013). The idea that young parents need targeted parenting support from the government as well as the idea that young parents might need support from their own parents in taking care of and raising their children can be seen as a consequence of the risk society.

The idea of "good motherhood"

Drawing on previous research, three dominant discourses of motherhood can be identified, namely *intensive motherhood* (Hays, 1996), *modern-equal motherhood* (Magnusson, 2006; Bäck-Wiklund & Bergsten, 1997), and *risk-managing motherhood* (Lee et al., 2010; Kukla, 2010). Knowledge of these dominant discourses was useful in my discourse psychological analysis in the three first papers.

In studies about maternal identity work and motherhood, Hays's (1996) theory about *intensive motherhood* is perhaps the most commonly used. The intensive mother invests all of her time, energy, and money into raising her children (Hays, 1996). Women practicing intensive mothering are expected to present their mothering as calm, smiling, attentive, patient, sensitive, and sympathetic (Smythe, 2006; Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010). In that sense, the intensive mother

is not supposed to express any anger or negative feelings towards her children or her family duties because that would disrupt her self-representation as a happy and caregiving mother (Smythe, 2006; Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010). In line with this, the intensive mother seldom or never expresses the need for time alone or away from her children and family (Hays, 1996) because her full focus lies on her motherhood project. In line with Hays's (1996) theory about intensive motherhood, the child would be seen as a passive subject (or rather as an object) that is in need of an intensive and nurturing mother in order to function.

What I in this thesis call the discourse of *modern-equal motherhood* draws on critical feminist and modernist/postmodernist studies of motherhood (Magnusson 1998; Elvin-Nowak 1999; Bäck-Wiklund & Bergsten 1997; Brembeck 1992; 1998). Within the discourse of modern equal motherhood, mothers value their womanhood project, which consists of work, career, friends, and events outside their homes and family. Modern-equal mothering is represented by a juggling between the spheres of family and work. For the modern-equal mother, her maternal tasks are seen as one of several parts in her life, thus her maternal practices are shaped in relation to her partner, her child, her work, and her interests outside the home (Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Bäck-Wiklund & Bergsten, 1997; Goodwin & Huppertz, 2010). The father's involvement in the care of their children and equal sharing of household chores is of great importance because the modern-equal mother relies on the willingness and effort of the father to be involved (Bäck-Wiklund & Bergsten, 1997; Magnusson, 2006; Forsberg, 2009).

As part of the striving towards an equal sharing of parental tasks, the modern-equal mother deconstructs the biological ideas that emphasise "the magical bond" between the mother and her child as a way to enable space for herself to devote time to her womanhood project (Johansson 2014; Andersson, 2010; Elvin-Nowak, 1999; Brembeck, 1992, 1998). However, the modern-equal mother cannot have too much me-time and indulge too much in activities outside her family without risking being positioned as a cold and heartless mother (Sheriff & Weatherall, 2009). Within the discourse of modern-equal motherhood, the child is not seen as a passive object, as it is in the case of intensive motherhood, but rather the child is seen as an active subject, which thus leaves space and possibility for less intensive mothering.

Risk-managing motherhood (Lee et al., 2010; Kukla, 2010, see also Faircloth & Murray, 2015, see also Lupton, 1999, 2011) bears several similarities with intensive motherhood, but with the added dimension of risk. Mothers practicing risk-managing mothering present themselves as highly aware of risks and keep themselves informed about the latest evidence-based expert advice (Lupton, 2011) regarding food, sleep routines, and so on. The child is seen as a vulnerable

object in need of constant protection from potential risks from the outside world.

Risk-managing mothering begins even before the child is born, through good family planning – where young mothering is often seen as bad and careless family planning – as well as through strategies such as avoiding alcohol, taking phosphorous pills, and following the government’s list of which foods that are labelled as safe during pregnancy.

While the discourses of modern-equal motherhood and risk-managing motherhood mainly played a central role in paper 2, the discourse of intensive motherhood played a central part in papers 1–3. An orientation in these three discourses was helpful in the discourse psychological analysis of which linguistic resources – motherhood discourses and repertoires – the interviewed young mothers had access to or did not have access to in their maternal identity work.

Data and methods

The first three papers in this thesis are based on interviews with 17 young mothers who were interviewed 1 or 2 times each, rendering a total of 31 interviews. The interview transcripts were analysed with the help of discursive psychology. In these analyses, my orientation in previous research was helpful in identifying dominant discourses of motherhood while at the same time keeping an open mind as to whether the interviews might reveal any alternative discourses of motherhood. The fourth paper is based on online data regarding textual content and network relationships from three Facebook groups gathered through online ethnography and telephone interviews. These data were analysed through content analysis of the textual data and the telephone interviews and through social network analysis for the relational information.

Background to the thesis project

I began my thesis work as part of a research project at the Field Research and Development Unit (UFFE) in Social Services in the municipality of Umeå, Sweden. That project was part of a government programme aiming at developing different types of parenting support programmes to be offered within the Swedish welfare system. About 140–200 million Swedish crowns (21 million euro) were distributed to a number of Swedish municipalities, among them Umeå (Socialdepartementet, 2009; SOU 2008; Sandin, 2011). The UFFE project was based on the assumption made by both researchers and the government that young mothers have a particular lack of maternal skills and are in need of expert-guided support to strengthen their identities as mothers. In line with the other research projects in the programme, my thesis was originally planned to study the role and function of parenting support for young parents.

However, once I interviewed the young mothers I came to change the aim of my research. Although I asked about the young mothers' intentions to participate in the parenting support offered by the Swedish Child Health Care (BVC), our interview conversations had a strong tendency to end up as lengthy narratives and conversations about good motherhood and about how they tried to make sense of their own maternal positions in relation to the world around them. I saw a need to open up the research aim to capture these complexities, and the emergent design of qualitative research allowed me to shift directions.

Although I changed direction, our co-written paper "From Thought to Action: Young Parents' Reasons for Participation in Parenting Support Groups at Child Welfare Centers" (Hjelte et al., 2015) serves as an important background for

understanding why the focus of this thesis came to be on the maternal identity work of young mothers.

Towards the end of the thesis project I returned to the issue of parenting support, but this time ending up questioning the assumption that laid the very foundation for the UFFE project. Through collaborations with a nationwide network of professionals working with face-to-face parenting support for young parents, I learned that some professionals offered online parenting support to young mothers on Facebook. I quickly realised, however, that the main part of online parenting support on Facebook was offered by young mothers themselves rather than by professionals. Thus, my exploration of online peer support on Facebook groups began. In summary, I started my thesis project as part of the government's investments in face-to-face parenting support, moved on to explore the maternal identity work of young mothers, and in the last and fourth paper returned to parenting support – but now raising questions about the large government investments made in face-to-face parenting support for young mothers.

Procedure for conducting the interviews

In total, data for the first three papers consisted of 31 interviews with 17 young mothers.¹ Within the UFFE project, I conducted 16 pre-delivery interviews with young mothers and 13 follow-up post-delivery interviews with the same mothers. In addition to these, I also interviewed four fathers – including four pre-delivery interviews and three post-delivery interviews. Later on, I chose to conduct two complementary retrospective post-delivery interviews with the same young mother who was 13 years old at the birth of her first child in order to include more experiences of the youngest mothers in the data. Because the focus in this thesis was on motherhood, the interviews with the young fathers were not used other than as part of the analytical conclusions in paper 3 – “Who is the mother? Exploring the meaning of grandparental support in young Swedish mothers' narratives”. The interviewees were recruited with the help of midwives. For more information about the data collection process, see the paper 1 and paper 3.

The criteria when recruiting the young mothers were based on geographical location and age. With regards to geographical location, the aim was to get as equal a distribution as possible between young mothers living in the countryside and young mothers living in medium-sized cities. The choice of interviewing mothers from different geographical locations was related to my interests in

¹ I interviewed all mothers except the first mother, who was interviewed by my senior colleague Jan Hjelte at UFFE.

exploring whether or not the construction of young motherhood differed depending on which local context they lived in. Regarding the age criterion, all mothers up to 25 years old were included in the study. The inclusion of a generous age range served the purpose of exploring at what age a mother is seen as “a young mother” and at what age a mother is simply seen as “a mother” and how this is related to the mothers’ geographical location. Although previous research about young motherhood has often had a lower age criterion, varying between 19 and 22 years (Nilsen, Brannen, & Lewis, 2012), I felt quite uncertain about the age at which a woman in the Swedish context would be defined as a young mother, especially because the average age for first-time mothers was 29 in Sweden at the time of the interviews (Socialstyrelsen, 2015).

The interviews were conducted at a quiet place chosen by the participants, either in their homes or at the antenatal clinic, and the study was approved by the Ethics Committee of Umeå University (reference number: 2010-249-31Ö). Although the main purpose with UFFE’s project was to study parenting support, it also included the aim to understand young mothers’ maternal skills and how young mothers felt about their maternal identity. Keeping with ethical guidelines in research, the participants were informed before the interviews about the aim of study, what the results would be used for, and how their information would be handled and by whom. The participants were also informed that they should feel free to pass on any questions they did not wish to answer.

The interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes. Besides questions related to the UFFE project about parenting support, the interview guide for the pre-delivery interviews also contained background questions regarding the young mothers’ situation, including whether or not the pregnancy was planned, how it was received by the young mother herself, the father, and her family and friends. It also included questions about the mothers’ living conditions and how the pregnancy fit or did not fit into their life plans. When I asked the mothers about their intentions to participate in parenting support offered by BVC, I also asked about how they assessed their maternal skills and which types of maternal skills they would like to develop and learn more about. In these discussions, our conversations came to revolve around ideas of good motherhood and how they positioned themselves in relation to these ideas through their maternal identity work.

Further on, the pre-delivery interview guide contained open questions about young motherhood such as: “How do you think that people in the general society look upon young motherhood?” These types of questions often led to discussions about young motherhood in relation to ideas about good motherhood, and often brought up experiences of stigmatisation.

When I conducted the post-delivery interviews, I had already changed the direction of the thesis to studying the maternal identity work of young mothers rather than studying young mothers' participation in parenting support and thus had the possibility to extend the interview guide with additional questions regarding dominant societal and cultural ideas about good motherhood and the mothers' maternal identity work in relation to such ideas. Besides the background questions and questions about their participation in the parenting support at BVC, which were similar to the questions asked at the pre-delivery interviews, I also asked more detailed questions about their maternal identity work. For example, I asked about how it was to become a mother, what a "real mother" is, if their everyday life as a mother is anything like they pictured it, and if and how they had changed as a person since they had a child. I also posed more detailed questions regarding normative ideas about what a good mother is, what age a good mother is, and discussions about "the perfect mother". The interview guides used in both the pre-delivery interviews and the post-delivery interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

Detailed information about the interviewed women is given in Table 1 and Table 2 on next page.

A discursive psychological analysis

In my analysis of the maternal identity work of the interviewed young mothers, I have, as mentioned, used a discursive psychological approach (Billig, 1996; Wetherell & Potter, 1992, see also Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). *Discursive psychology* is one of many different perspectives within the wider field of discourse analysis (Winther, Jørgensen, & Philips, 2000). What distinguishes discursive psychology from other forms of discourse analysis is that the analysis focuses on the social-psychological level, and it is therefore suitable when exploring issues of identity. In discursive psychology, there is no clear distinction between theory and method because they are interwoven with each other. This part of the thesis begins with a presentation of discursive psychology as a theoretical and methodological frame along with the central notions within this frame. Thereafter follows a description of how the interview conversations with the young mothers were analysed with a discursive psychological approach and how the analysis resulted in the first three papers of this thesis.

Theoretical assumptions within discursive psychology

Argumentations

From a discursive psychological perspective, interactions and argumentations are central in understanding individuals' identity work, sense making, and positioning in the world (Billig, 1996). The individual mother uses argumentations to make sense of herself, either within an interaction with another person or in interaction with herself. Thus, argumentation is a vital part of human thinking and thus also of mothers' sense making and understanding of themselves as well as of their maternal identity positioning in relation to others (Billig, 1996). People use such argumentation in self-presentations when interacting with others – often with the purpose of making their self-presentation as favourable as possible. Self-presentation is an important part in women's processes of making sense of and understanding their maternal identities.

In their everyday argumentations, people commonly use the rhetorical tools of criticism, persuasion, and justification. An argumentation often begins with criticism, for example, a criticism of a non-normative act, such as having a child at what is seen as an inappropriate age. Criticism is an important part in understanding normative ideas about good motherhood within different contexts. A criticising argument would be pointless unless a person's action threatens a current norm. Thus, through analysing young mothers' narratives about how their mothering was met with daily criticism from others, I was able to map different normative understandings of motherhood. In turn, criticism is often

met with a counter-argument that aims to persuade the others (in the conversation) that one's self-presentation makes sense and to justify one's position, in this case a position of not fitting into the normative idea of motherhood (Billig, 1996). For example, young mothers might at times argue for and justify their positions as "good non-normative mothers".

Furthermore, within discursive psychology, all interactions and argumentations are understood as contradictory and as based on disagreement rather than on agreement (Billig, 1996; Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984). This means that the argumentations made by young mothers concerning, for example, ideas about good motherhood, will often come across as contradictory. Instead of being a one-sided argumentation with a clear and logical self-presentation – the mothers' argumentations about good motherhood will more likely move back and forth between different, sometimes contradictory, argumentations. The idea that all interactions and argumentations are based on disagreement is a consequence of what Billig calls "the dilemmas of common sense". By that, he means that our common sense is not a unitary store of folk wisdom; rather, it is dilemmatic and contradictory. Billig (1996) and Wetherell and Potter (1992) regard people's speech as building blocks of contradictory argumentations, but they explain the contradicting features within argumentations in different ways. Billig (1996) has a rather dichotomous understanding of argumentations and divides them into logos and anti-logos. The logos can be seen as the "norm" that always needs to be met with a counter-statement, namely an anti-logos in an argumentation. Wetherell and Potter (1992, see also Elvin-Nowak, 1999) have a more dynamic understanding of the contradictory features within argumentations. According to them, an argumentation about a phenomenon, such as good motherhood, consists of several different discourses. While some motherhood discourses are contradictory and function as each other's opposites, other maternal discourses can have complementary functions with argumentations that follow a similar (or even the same) logic.

In this thesis, *discourses* are understood as linguistic resources that a young mother can draw upon (or not) in her self-presentation as a mother. *Interpretative repertoires* are in this thesis understood as "mini-discourses" that constitute building blocks of common sense. A discourse is a social phenomenon that consists of several repertoires that sometimes are contradictory and thereby contribute to producing tensions and contradictions within a discourse.

The perspective of discursive psychology emphasises that people are both a *product* of society and *producers* of society. Thus, the individual is understood as an active contributor in creating their social context by invoking different discourses and repertoires in thought and action. At the same time, the social

context with its dominant discourses and repertoires affects and conditions the individual's actions (Gilbert & Mulkey, 1984; Wetherell & Potter, 1992).

The importance of language in identity work

Language and speech are very important “tools” for argumentations, and therefore in people's sense making and self-presentations (Billig, 1996). Within discursive psychology, however, language is not only seen as a mere tool for communication, but also as a formal system that is principally concerned with describing or representing the world (Wetherell & Potter, 1992). People use language to achieve favourable identity positions and as a way of making sense of the world and their own part in the world, while at the same time people's use of language when arguing and positioning themselves contributes to producing the world (Billig, 1996). The use of languages is a skill. For example, if a person wants to appear intelligent in an interaction, it would not work to simply say, “I am intelligent” – this would probably have the opposite effect. Instead, it would be more effective to slip in a word here and there and carefully use one's rhetorical skills to persuade the others about one's intelligence. However, any self-presentation, either as being intelligent, or as being a good mother, needs to be seen as trustworthy by the audience, which means that a self-presentation always must be understood in relation to the rhetorical context of the argumentation.

The rhetorical context of identity work

Within an interview conversation, the interviewer and the interviewee move around in different rhetorical contexts. A woman's argumentation about good motherhood and her own maternal identity could, for example, be argued in relation to both the rhetorical context of her own mother and grandmother and how good motherhood was interpreted by the older generation, as well as in relation to her assumptions about how “good motherhood” is interpreted by the interviewer. Thus, in my analysis it was important to study which functions the argumentation filled in a particular situation and to determine which maternal positions were possible or impossible for a mother to achieve in different rhetorical contexts (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Billig, 1996). One type of maternal position could be understood as logos (the norm) within a certain rhetorical context of an interview and would therefore be rather untroubled, while the same maternal position could be understood as anti-logos within another rhetorical context and would thereby instead be rather troubled (Billig, 1996; Wetherell, 1998).

All of the above-discussed notions within the methodological and theoretical framework of discursive psychology have been helpful in analysing the interview conversations with the young mothers. The discursive psychological understanding of an interview as providing the researcher with “building blocks” of

contradictory argumentations has been helpful in analysing how young mothers juggle between different available repertoires as a way to make trustworthy self-presentations, as well as a way to make sense of their own motherhood. The discursive psychological understanding of how social structure and agency interact was helpful in analysing how young mothers' identity work was affected and conditioned by societal discourses at the same time as the young mothers were actively using their rhetorical skills as agents in order to achieve the most favourable – though still trustworthy – maternal position possible. The notion of rhetorical context was helpful when studying young mothers as a heterogeneous group of individuals that could be positioned as troubled or untroubled depending on the rhetorical context.

Subject positions

Margaret Wetherell's (1998) notion of *subject positions* can be explained as different available positions within a conversation. Subject position has been analytically helpful in understanding young mothers' identities in terms of different positions that are available or unavailable to them depending on the rhetorical context (Edley, 2001; Wetherell, 1998). Furthermore, a subject position, and thus the identity work of a young mother, can be either troubled or untroubled depending on the rhetorical context. Within our interview conversation, a young mother could shift from a troubled maternal identity position to an untroubled identity position and back again (Wetherell, 1998). This was depending on which linguistic resources – discourses or interpretative repertoires – that they had access to (or did not have access to) in a certain rhetorical context and how they used these discourses or interpretative repertoires when presenting and positioning their maternal identities. The availability of discursive resources and maternal positions always depends on the woman's specific contexts, such as her class, regionality, and ethnicity.

Stephanie Taylor's (2007) notion of *identity work* combined with the notion of subject positions was analytically helpful in understanding the young mothers' identity in terms of it being a constant on-going work that depends on which available discursive resources they had in a certain rhetorical context, as well as in terms of putting the focus on how a woman's maternal identity work always occurs within specific rhetorical contexts in which she always relates to previous maternal positions in her past as well as to possible (or desirable) maternal positions in her future.

A discursive psychological analysis of the interviews

When I began my discursive psychological analysis, I was already familiar with the data because I had already analysed the data using content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) in a previous paper (Hjelte et al., 2015).

Becoming familiar with the data and conducting the preliminary analysis

I started my discursive psychological analysis by returning to the transcribed interviews and re-reading them repeatedly with a rather broad aim in mind, focusing on young motherhood in relation to the ideas about motherhood that I simultaneously had identified through findings in previous research.

Thereafter I conducted some preliminary discourse psychological analysis in an attempt to understand the meanings of the young mothers' speeches in our interview conversation and as a way to "sort through" the data. My preliminary analysis was conducted on the interviews with Emelie, Anna, and Johanna, which all had caught my interest because of their rich and contradictory speeches about "good motherhood" and because they illustrated narratives of young mothers from different geographical locations – the countryside and a medium-sized city. My preliminary analyses were inspired both by Michael Billig (1996) and by Eva Magnusson (1998).

Inspired by Billig, I began my preliminary analysis by reading the interviews word for word and studying each argumentation in search of ambiguity, inconsistency, dilemmas of common sense, and utterances where the young mothers referred to common sense or to "facts". I studied the argumentations with a focus on what form they had, what the mothers were arguing for and against, who it was in each specific rhetorical context of the interview that was positioned as the audience, what it was in these arguments that represented the *logos* (the taken-for-granted norms and values), and what in their argumentations represented the anti-*logos* (the non-normative ideas that challenged the *logos*). I marked different sentences of an extract with different colours and made a written analytical comment about each colour-marked sentence. For example, I noted what was regarded as "common sense" within a particular rhetorical context as well as within the interviewee's specific local context. I also described the rhetorical context and noted if and how a certain "common sense" was used by the interviewees to increase their trustworthiness and to make a favourable self-presentation.

At this stage, I had gathered about eight pages with extracts that contained interesting and contradictory speeches and self-presentations in relation to ideas about good motherhood. I continued my preliminary analysis, but now influenced by Magnusson's (1998) analysis. I began by carefully reading through the extracts and my comments, searching through each argumentation for different subjects such as the interviewee, the grandmother, the child, friends, partners, and others. When doing this type of analysis, a person can take on and/or be positioned as different subjects within one and the same argumentation. For example, I noted different types of "Me" that were associated with the different subject positions that the interviewees took on and/or were positioned as. For

example, there was “Me 1” that described a subject who did not care about what her parents or the rest of society thought about her motherhood. Then there was “Me 2”, who felt sad and did not want to participate in a parenting group due to experiences of negative comments from other parents. I then sorted all of the subject positions into different clusters as a way of analysing which subject positions were built on the same line of argumentation and which subjects did not agree with each other and were thus built on disagreeing argumentations.

From this I moved through the chosen extracts from the interviews and identified a number of interpretative repertoires. In this analysis, I also described what types of “common sense” and building blocks each repertoire contained, how the different repertoires were related to each other, and how the young mothers invoked them in order to achieve different subject positions and favourable self-presentations. I also focused on which repertoires the young mothers used when arguing for a certain maternal position and which repertoires they used when arguing for the opposite positions. I mapped up the “flow” of each interview conversation and how the interviewees and myself moved from arguing for one thing, to arguing for the total opposite, to returning to the first argument, and so on. When conducting this analysis, I constantly returned to the context of the interview and noted in which rhetorical contexts particular argumentations were made and which aspects in the individual woman’s context, such as class, age, or local context, as well as which aspect of the rhetorical contexts in the interview affected her line of argumentation and her access to repertoires and subject positions.

Formulation of themes and sub-themes

From this close analysis of the interviews, I had not only reached a familiarisation with the data, but also started to see different linguistic patterns. At this point, I returned to all of the interviews in order to identify broader themes through coding. With the help from the software program Atlas.ti, I was able to effectively work my way through all of the interviews and to sort similar utterances into themes. The aim with this sorting procedure was to make a broad categorisation of the data – which would facilitate a closer discursive analysis of a selected number of themes. Although the sorting had a broad focus, I also created sub-themes and preliminary interpretative repertoires. Through Atlas.ti, I was also able to sort information about each mother’s specific context in the function called “memo”, for example, information about their living and occupational situations; class; relationships to the father, their own parents, and the father’s parents; and so on. This information was very helpful when trying to understand the context for a young mother’s argumentations and in relation to what or to whom her self-presentation was made.

The following eight broader themes were identified: *young motherhood, stigmatisation, the child, good motherhood, life course, the experts, grandparents, and the father*. Within these, 36 sub-themes were identified, and a complete list of sub-themes and how they were related to the broader themes is given in Appendix 3a and 3b. The themes were mainly identified through the discourse psychological analysis, but also with influence of findings in previous research on motherhood. By identifying the themes, I was also able to gather utterances within each theme and sub-theme, and these collections were helpful later on when conducting a closer discursive psychological analysis of the data.

A close analysis of selected themes using the discursive psychological analytical tools

I started the close analysis by analysing the young mothers' identity work in relation to the following themes: "grandparents", "life course", and "stigmatisation". This analysis would later on result in the first paper in my thesis project (presented as the third paper in this thesis).

When analysing each collection of utterances about a certain theme using the discursive psychological framework, I applied the following questions as analytical guidance:

- Which repertoires can be identified in each part?
- How are the repertoires defined and described in terms of "common sense" and "content"?
- How are the repertoires described, explained, and organised in the different argumentations made by the interviewer and the interviewee?
- Does the interviewee seem to be troubled or untroubled with their subject positions?
- Did they need to use strong argumentation in order to enable a certain subject position, or could they access this position rather effortlessly?
- How were the repertoires invoked in order to achieve a certain subject position?
- Which subject positions was the interviewee able or unable to achieve in different rhetorical contexts, and were there any repertoires that one could have expected to appear within this type of speech but instead were noticeable by their absence?

When doing this analysis, I constantly took a step back and reflected upon how the interviewed young mothers would have looked upon my interpretations and conclusions about their maternal identity.

Writing as part of the analysis

Once the deeper analyses were formulated, I related my analysis to previous research. Although the reading of previous research had been conducted in parallel with the empirical analysis, it was only at this point that I was fully able to map up a disposition for the manuscript for my first paper (presented as the third in this thesis). Through this procedure, I was able to choose and narrow down which parts of my analysis were central and which parts could be excluded.

As Wetherell & Potter (1992) point out, mistakes and misinterpretations carried out in the analysis of the data often became clear in the actual writing process. When this happened, I returned to my original analysis and re-considered and updated my analysis, which sometimes changed the whole structure of the analysis, but sometimes only changed which words were the most suitable for an accurate description of the findings.

After I analysed the three themes and had written a draft for the first paper (presented as the third paper in the thesis), I began the analysis for the second paper in this thesis. This paper was based on an analysis of the themes of *good motherhood* (with special focus on the sub-themes of traditional motherhood, modern motherhood, equal motherhood, common-sense/laissez-faire, awareness/control, biological motherhood, and healthy mothering), *young motherhood* (with special focus on the sub-themes of changed identity and life situation and young mothers' assumed lack of good mothering skills), *stigmatisation*, and *life course*.

The third paper (presented as the first paper in the thesis) was based on an analysis of the themes of *good motherhood* (with a special focus on the sub-themes of biological motherhood and constructive motherhood), *young motherhood* (with a special focus on the sub-themes of adulthood and older mothers vs. younger mothers), *stigmatisation*, and *life course*.

Facebook group analysis

The process of gathering data for the fourth paper began by searching for Facebook groups² that had an explicit purpose of reaching young mothers or young parents. For this I used a variety of search words, including “young parents”, “young mothers”, “young fathers”, “young pregnant”, “young and proud”, “parent”, “mother”, “toddlers”, “children”, and so on. In total, 228 Facebook groups

² A Facebook group is a function within Facebook's platform in which anyone is free to create a page (similar to a discussion forum) with the purpose of gathering people with a joint interest or situation such as, in this case, being a young mother.

with the aim to offer parenting support to young mothers were identified.

The 228 identified groups showed a quite clear pattern. Almost all groups were administrated either by professionals who offered face-to-face parenting support to young mothers within a certain municipality, or by peers – that is, by young mothers themselves. The Facebook groups that were administrated by professionals generally had about 5–50 members, and these groups often had the aim of reaching young mothers within a specific municipality. The Facebook groups that were administrated by young mothers included two nationwide groups with a larger number of members (500–1000), some groups targeting certain regions or municipalities (with 100–200 members), and a few very minor Facebook groups. Out of the 228 Facebook groups, three groups were chosen for a case study (Simons, 2009).

Group 1, with 46 members, was administrated by professionals at a municipality that also organised face-to-face parenting support for young mothers. Group 2 was a nationwide group with 950 members and was administrated by young mothers themselves. Group 3, with 181 members, was chosen because it stood out from the other groups in the sense that the administrator was a mother of a young mother who also worked as a social worker with young people – she is therefore called a “semi-professional” in this thesis. The three cases were strategically selected because they represented different kinds of group administration types that could illuminate different kinds of parenting support and different kinds of expert roles.

Although Group 1 was open for anyone to join, I informed the administrators about my project and asked for, and received, their permission to study the conversations. Data from Group 2 and Group 3 were accessed by applying for and receiving memberships in the groups. Group 2 wanted me to present myself and my thesis project along with the aim of this particular study in the group conversation, while Group 3 wanted me to be a silent member and only be a member for a limited time. Once I accessed the three groups, data were gathered through an online ethnographic strategy over a period of 7 months (Hine 2015) and through telephone interviews with administrators of two of the three Facebook groups. Group 2, which was administered by young mothers, declined my online request to conduct an interview with one of the administrators with the motivation that they wanted to keep their group as private as possible.

Data for the three cases were first analysed through network analysis, which provided a broad picture of the social structure of the three groups. Connectivity was defined in terms of the number of comments written as a response to a post, meaning that when one member wrote a comment in reply to another member's post, they were defined as being connected. Density and average degree were

used as measurements of connectivity. The density of a network can vary between 0 and 1, where 1 means that all members are connected with all of the other members and 0 means that no one is connected. Average degree represents the average number of connections for each participant.

The data gathered through the online ethnography and telephone interviews were transcribed and analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The data were first read repeatedly, after which I conducted some initial coding and started to formulate tentative themes. From this, I continued the procedure of coding until the following central themes were identified: *advice about maternal practices, legislation, stigma, relations to the father, partner, grandparents, or others, the administrators' functions in terms of power, expertise and expert roles, and the tone and level of intimacy* in the communication.

While the network analysis provided a broad picture of social relations in the three Facebook groups, the ethnographic analysis provided an in-depth perspective on each group's support patterns, as well as a more nuanced picture of the communication flow and power relations between the administrators and the members. The interviews provided additional information about the supportive patterns that were invisible through purely studying the explicit communications between the members of the group. For example, information about the members' interactions via the private messenger function could to a certain degree be captured through interviews. Besides this, the interviews also provided basic information about how and why the administrators chose to start their Facebook groups, whether the group had fulfilled the supportive function they had hoped for when starting the group, their own thoughts about the group dynamic and power relations, and how they regarded online parenting support in relation to the face-to-face parenting support that is offered by the municipalities.

Summaries of the four papers

In this section, the aims, data, methods, and central findings from each paper will be summarised.

Paper 1: Youthful mothering? Exploring the meaning of adulthood and youthfulness within the maternal identity work of young Swedish mothers

Magdalena Sjöberg & Hanna Bertilsson-Rosqvist

Feminism & Psychology, 2018, 28(3)

The authors conceived the topics and design of the papers together. Magdalena Sjöberg performed the data collection and data analysis and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Both authors wrote the introduction and revised and approved the final manuscript.

This paper studied the maternal identity work of young Swedish mothers in relation to their access – or lack of access – to discursive resources of adulthood and youthfulness and how their access to such resources was related to assumptions of a normative life course.

The analysis showed that whether a woman's entry into motherhood was seen as following or deviating from what she herself and what her local context regarded as a normative life course conditioned her possibilities to achieve a maternal subject position as either an "adult" (woman) or a "non-adult" (girl). Her position as an adult woman or as a non-adult girl affected in turn her maternal identity work. Mothers seen as adults were automatically labelled as responsible and capable of maternal skills and could therefore give a rather untroubled self-representation as a good (or at least good enough) mother. In contrast, mothers positioned as non-adults needed to present a strong argumentation about their capability to fulfil the skills and responsibilities of motherhood. By reconstructing the concept of "adulthood" – from something that was achieved through chronological age to a social feature of a person's personality – the young mothers who would normally be seen as non-adults were able to open up the possibility of achieving a less troubled position as youthful, but responsible, mothers.

The identity work of all of the mothers – either seen as responsible adult mothers or as youthful non-adult mothers – was affected by their access to youthful resources. One of the mothers with a lack of adulthood resources incorporated

her youthful resources of being pretty and popular into her maternal identity work. The access – or lack of access – to youthful resources also turned out to be important in the identity work of mothers who had achieved a position as a responsible adult mother.

Paper 2: Too risky for mothering? Exploring the maternal identity work of young Swedish mothers in relation to discourses of risk and good motherhood

Magdalena Sjöberg

Re-submitted to *Health, Risk & Society*, July 2017

This paper explored young mothers' identity work in relation to different motherhood discourses within the idea of good motherhood, and it illustrates how their maternal identity work and access to – or lack of access to – different motherhood discourses are related to discourses of risk and assumptions of a normative life course.

In line with previous studies, the following three dominant motherhood interpretative repertoires were identified: *intensive motherhood*, *modern-equal motherhood*, and *risk-managing motherhood* – along with one emerging repertoire of *common-sense motherhood*. Whether the mother was seen as deviating from or following her expected life course defined the level of riskiness in her motherhood. Mothers in the study were seen as less-risky mothers, high-risk mothers, or as too risky for mothering by their local context. The mother's level of riskiness conditioned in turn which dominant motherhood repertoires she could access – or not access – in her maternal identity work.

Mothers seen as less risky were positioned within a relaxed and “good-enough” type of motherhood position, and these mothers mainly invoked the dominant repertoire of modern-equal motherhood and the “new” emerging repertoire of common-sense mothering. *Mothers seen as high risk* experienced a lot of stigmatisation in their everyday lives and therefore struggled to position themselves within a good-enough mothering. These mothers mainly invoked the repertoires of intensive and risk-managing motherhood as linguistic tools to make trustworthy self-presentations as “good enough mothers”. The youngest mothers – aged 13 to 16 – were seen as *too risky for mothering*, and they lacked access to the dominant motherhood repertoires when presenting and positioning their own motherhood. However, by invoking the emerging repertoire of common-sense mothering as an alternative counter repertoire, these mothers were able to position themselves within a rather free and rebellious motherhood.

Paper 3: Who is the mother? Exploring the meaning of grandparental support in young Swedish mothers' narratives

Magdalena Sjöberg & Hanna Bertilsson-Rosqvist

Feminism & Psychology, 2017, 27(3)

The authors conceived the topics and design of the paper together. Magdalena Sjöberg performed the data collection and data analysis and wrote the first drafts of the findings and method. Both authors wrote the introduction and revised and approved the final manuscript.

This paper explored young mothers' identity work in relation to their own mothers and how support from grandparents (primarily from grandmothers) affected young mothers' identity work. We also studied young mothers' identity work in relation to normative understandings of life course and discourses of extended family and nuclear family.

The analysis showed that whether the young mothers followed or deviated from their expected life course influenced the degree to which their own mothers (the grandmothers) saw the need to step in and support the young mothers in raising their babies. The extent of the grandmother's support affected and conditioned the young mother's identity work and her possibility to position herself as "a mother" to her child. If the young woman's entry into motherhood was seen as following her expected life course, the young woman was able to achieve an untroubled subject position as a "real mother". In these cases, the mothers were given the space and possibility to start up their own functional nuclear families with the father of the child (or by herself) while having their extended family (mainly their grandparents) as back-up resources that supported them on their own terms. However, if the woman's entry into motherhood deviated from her expected life course, the young woman achieved a troubled subject position as either a "mother in becoming" with a functional and supportive extended family (mostly through the grandmother) or a troubled subject position as a "real mother" with a dysfunctional and non-supportive or only selectively supportive extended family. One of the interviewed mothers who was positioned as a "mother in becoming" lived with her own mother and initially took on a position that more resembled an older sibling to her own child, while her own mother initially took on a role that more resembled that of the child's mother.

Paper 4: Challenging the roles of ‘skilled’ professionals and ‘risky’ young mothers. Peer-support, expertise and relational patterns in Facebook groups

Magdalena Sjöberg & Simon Lindgren

Journal of Technology in Human Services, 2017, 35(3)

The authors conceived the topics and design of the paper together. Magdalena Sjöberg wrote the introduction. Simon Lindgren performed the data collection and analysis and wrote the draft regarding the network analysis. Magdalena Sjöberg also performed the data collection and analysis and wrote the draft regarding the ethnography and telephone interviews. Both authors revised and approved the final manuscript.

This paper explored how young parents seek out support from Facebook groups and in which ways different Facebook groups can function as an alternative to the government-run face-to-face parenting support.

A total of 228 Facebook groups that seek to provide support to young mothers in Sweden were identified. Three of these groups were chosen for a case study and were analysed through social network analysis, online ethnography, and telephone interviews with administrators of Group 1 and Group 3. The groups represented three different types of support:

- Group 1 was administrated by professionals who worked in a Swedish municipality with face-to-face parenting support for young parents. This group had 46 members and functioned more as a digital billboard than as online parenting support.
- Group 2 was administrated by young mothers and had 950 members with a continuous stream of new members. This group was tightly connected and functioned as an online peer-parenting support.
- Group 3 was administrated by a “semi-professional”, namely the mother of a young mother and who was also a youth social worker. This group had 181 members who were mainly connected through different sub-groups, and it functioned as a form of online peer-parenting support.

Through the digital tools, in this case provided by Facebook, young mothers have the possibility to take control over their own support needs and thus create their own space for maternal identity work outside the context of professionals, their own parents, and their local context. The findings of this paper open up the question of what will happen with the expert-guided face-to-face parenting support if social groups such as young mothers, and perhaps other groups seen as

less capable of parenting, choose to go online and support each other. What will happen to the expert society and the idea of parenting determinism if "risky mothers" choose peer support instead of expert-guided parenting groups? Certainly, the phenomenon of online peer-parenting support can limit the government's possibility to govern and exercise paternalism. Furthermore, the findings raise questions about if and where young fathers seek out parenting support.

Key Results: Emerging motherhood discourses

From the combined papers above, my study found two emerging motherhood discourses: youthful motherhood and common-sense mothering. I will highlight and further elaborate these findings here.

Youthful motherhood

In my data, as well as in Brembeck's study (1999), some of the young mothers were able to use their discursive resources of youthfulness to position themselves as youthful yet responsible mothers. In analysing and understanding how the interviewed young mothers' access (or lack of access) to youthful discursive resources affected their maternal identity work, girlhood studies (Griffin, 2004; Aapola, 2005) and the discourse of "yummy mummy" were helpful. I also found that meanings of youthfulness and discourses of youthful motherhood were important both in the identity work of mothers labelled as too young for mothering as well as for mothers who fit into normative ideas of good (enough) motherhood. Some of the interviewed mothers had accessed a pretty and popular position (Peirce, 1990) before becoming a mother, while others had been positioned as "sad girls" (Brown, 2011) before they became mothers. My analysis showed that the young mothers' youthful positions before entering motherhood had important meanings for their maternal identity work.

The interviewed young mothers who had access to an untroubled "good girl" position as being pretty and popular (Peirce, 1990) before they entered their motherhood seemed to handle their new task of motherhood with strength, strong self-esteem, and a habit of being the one who sets the rules. These mothers seemed to incorporate their new task of motherhood into their youthful identity position as pretty and popular, and through that created for themselves a maternal position as youthful mothers. These youthful mothers seemed to have the possibility to set new rules among their friends, rules that worked well with their new maternal position and tasks. For example, one youthful mother changed the rules for "how to hang out" in her gang. Because this mother now had the responsibility of caring for a child and the tiredness associated with being a mother, the "new thing in her gang" became to hang out on her sofa watching TV and eating potato crisps instead of clubbing all night long.

In line with studies by Phoenix (1991) and Macvarish (2010), the analyses in this thesis showed that the youthfulness and lack of normative adult resources were the factors that made the youngest of the young mothers unable to access an identity position within the normative idea of good motherhood. The interview-

ees among the youngest of the young mothers who had access to the “pretty and popular” girlhood position did however require the resources of good self-esteem and linguistic abilities in order to resist the stigmatisations they encountered on a daily basis. These mothers did not incorporate and take on the comments from others about them being bad and less skilled mothers harming their children – as was the case with mothers seen as “too risky for motherhood” and who lacked powerful girlhood resources.

A similar process was identified in Brembeck’s (1999) study, but in that case it was not the “pretty and popular” girl who had the rhetorical power to rebel against the normative idea of good motherhood. In Brembeck’s case, it was mothers who accessed a position as “riot grrrls” (Aapola, 2005) and through their involvements in popular music cultures and feministic activism managed to position themselves within what I define here as youthful motherhood. Both types of youthful motherhood – “pretty and popular” and “riot grrrls” – have a twist of “do-it-yourself” power girl with the rhetorical possibility to present their youthful motherhood as resourceful, strong, and independent (Aapola, 2005).

Some of the young mothers, who in our interview conversations managed to position themselves as being simply “a mother” in relation to their context, lacked access to the favourable youthful resources when talking about their girlhood before becoming a mother. In talking about their lives as a girl before their pregnancies, these mothers positioned themselves as troubled sad girls (Brown, 2011) who did not fit into the demands of popularity and who struggled with self-esteem and anxieties in relation to their bodies. What was interesting with the maternal identity work of these mothers was that even though they had achieved a comfortable and untroubled maternal position within the idea of good motherhood, they continued to draw upon discourses of youth and girlhood in their maternal identity work. Through their newly achieved strong position within the idea of good motherhood, mothers with a prior troubled youth position were now able to access the discursive resources that enabled them to achieve a more favourable youthful position. Thanks to their strong maternal position, mothers with prior troubled youthful positions as sad girls were thus able to achieve a new youthful position as an untroubled popular good girl.

This thesis illustrates that discourses of youthfulness might be an important feature in contemporary ideas about good motherhood. Findings in this thesis suggest that we should not only look to Hay’s (1996) traditional *intensive motherhood* as the dominant maternal position when understanding young motherhood – as well as any other type of motherhood – but also acknowledge recent studies of “yummy mummy” as an emerging maternal ideal. The yummy mummy presents herself through stylish clothing and a decorated home and through being a funny person with a fit body, and she entails power and desirability

through her beauty and sexiness (Littler, 2013). Within the discourse of yummy mummy, the mother's age – or rather which age she looks like – is important. Here, a mother's worst fear is to be seen as “too old” or rather as “too old looking”. Thus, resources of youthfulness are idealised within the discourse of yummy mummy. Through the idealisation of youthfulness, the discourse of yummy mummy has brought a new aspect to the idea of good motherhood, an aspect in which it is important to avoid being seen as an “over-adult” because that would position you as an old and dull mother. The discourse of yummy mummy brings forward youthfulness as a feature within contemporary ideas about good motherhood, which in turn might provide young mothers with the discursive tools to present their own youthfulness in a favourable light and to create a responsible youthful motherhood position.

The empirical findings about meanings of youthful motherhood, similar to Brembeck's (1999) study, contribute to illustrating in which way young mothers relate to adulthood and youthfulness in their maternal identity work as well as point to the importance of also including discourses of girlhood when analysing and understanding young motherhood. Furthermore, findings from this thesis might be an example that strengthens Littler's (2013) argument that youthfulness is an emerging discourse within the idea of good motherhood.

Common-sense motherhood

All of the interviewed young mothers at some point invoked or related to what I in this thesis have chosen to define as the discourse of *common-sense motherhood*. This discourse can be related to Lexmond and Reeves' (2009) study about laissez-fair parenting and to the feminists' take on Winnicott's (1957, 1960) notion of “good enough” mothering (Almack, 2002; Silva, 1996).

In my empirical analysis of the interview conversations, it seemed that the emerging discourse of common-sense mothering played an important part in the young mothers' identity work. This discourse referred to a reasonable and sensible form of mothering. As opposed to mothers who mainly presented themselves as risk-managing mothers striving to predict and prevent potential dangers and problems in their everyday childcare, mothers who mainly practised a common-sense mothering handled problems only if and when they arose instead of worrying beforehand. Within the discourse of common-sense mothering there is no such thing as a “right” or “wrong” way to solve a problem related to childcare. As long as the problem is solved and the child seems to be fine, the mother can feel good about her maternity skills.

Common-sense mothering was used as a discursive tool to manage or resist the pressure to present oneself as a “super-mom”, which stems from contemporary

parenting culture. This laissez-faire attitude within the discourse of common-sense motherhood can be mistaken for ignorance, but a deeper analysis showed that this emerging motherhood discourse rather was used by the young mothers as a conscious tool to avoid the identity position of being a “paranoid” mother. Invoking the discourse of common-sense mothering actually aimed to present oneself as a mother who has the common sense of letting go of the need to control every step of her child’s upbringing and who has the “sanity” to recognise that the idea of good motherhood is a myth.

Within the discourse of common-sense mothering, motherhood and maternal practices were sometimes presented in “biological” terms as based in an intuitive type of knowledge. A maternal skill, such as responding to and communicating with the child, is understood as a matter of common sense and as something that is inherent in all human beings. In that sense, mothering is understood within the discourse of common-sense motherhood as something you *are* rather than as a skill that a person can be taught. By invoking this discourse, the interviewed young mothers were able to deconstruct the normative idea of good motherhood as a skill inherent through having the right age, socio-economic position, or simply through being well informed – and instead were able to reconstruct the whole idea of professionalised mothering as a rather hysterical phenomenon.

What I in this thesis have chosen to refer to as the discourse of common-sense motherhood might, together with Lexmond and Reeves’ (2009) notion of a “laissez-faire parenting style”, expand our knowledge about “good enough motherhood”, a notion first coined by Winnicott (1957, 1960) in the 1960s but thereafter re-constructed in feminist studies by, for example, Silva (1996) and Almack (2002). In these feminist studies, good enough mothering has been represented as an ideal type of mothering and as a discursive tool for women in negotiating new meanings of motherhood (Almack, 2002). The studies argue that good enough mothering is sufficient for raising well-functioning children (Silva, 1996).

In this thesis, the mothers’ possibility to draw upon the discourse of common-sense mothering seemed to reduce different types of anxieties and paranoid parenting (Furedi 2001; 2008) because this helped young mothers to understand their own maternal identities in relation to the idealised idea of good motherhood. Similar to Almack’s (2002) findings, common-sense motherhood also seemed to function as a rhetorical weapon for the interviewees against any comments that contained hints of blaming or shaming. The discourses of common-sense mothering and good enough mothering can probably help mothers of any age to handle their everyday life puzzle without – or at least with a reduced feeling of – guilt. In that sense, the discourse of common-sense mother-

ing could perhaps have a strengthening function when it comes to mothers' ability to resist the ways in which the new parenting culture (Lee et al., 2014) puts a tremendous pressure on mothers' identity work.

While Lexmond and Reeves' (2009) study of different parenting styles contributes with knowledge at a higher level of analytical abstraction, findings from this thesis can perhaps contribute to more detailed social-psychological knowledge about how young mothers – and perhaps also mothers in general – can use the discourse of common-sense mothering both to present their motherhood to others in different rhetorical contexts and to understand and make sense of their of maternal identity position. In sum, this thesis might contribute to expanding the theoretical knowledge about “laissez-fair mothering” (Lexmond & Reeves, 2009) and “good enough mothering” (Almack, 2002; Silva, 1996).

In this thesis, I have referred to the discourses of youthfulness and common-sense motherhood as “alternative” discourses within the idea of good motherhood because the youngest of the young mothers used these two discourses as alternative linguistic resources due to a lack of access to the other dominant motherhood discourses. This insight might indicate that these two maternal discourses perhaps could be labelled as emerging discourses that in the near future might come to fill an important function for the identity work of all mothers regardless of age.

Conclusions

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the maternal identity work of young mothers in Sweden and to study young motherhood in relation to parenting support. Three main conclusions from this thesis can be drawn in relation to previous studies about young motherhood, parenting culture studies, and studies on parenting support.

Firstly, as mentioned in the introduction, the exploration for this thesis took its starting point in the socio-critical perspective on young motherhood with special emphasis on parenting culture studies (see for example Lee et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2014) and expanded the exploration further, which contributed with deeper knowledge about how stigma affects the identity work of young mothers. Similar to findings from girlhood and youth studies (Nayak & Kehily, 2014; Kirkman et al., 2010), this thesis also shows how young mothers are highly aware of the negative opinions on their motherhood from other people, and it contributes with an illustration of how young mothers can resist the idea of them as bad mothers, even though the stigma affects them. This thesis furthers our knowledge about young mothers' discursive resistance against the stigma and how they in their identity work manage to build themselves maternal positions as "youthful yet responsible mothers" and "rebellious common-sense mothers" through using discourses of life course, risk, and motherhood. Furthermore, this thesis contributes with important detailed knowledge about the mechanism within young mothers' identity work and illustrates how discourses of life course, risk, and motherhood work together in a complex way when affecting young mothers' possibilities to position themselves as either a mother or as a high-risk mother or in the worst case as being seen as "too risky for mothering" her own child. These complex mechanisms within the identity work of young mothers also condition whether the young mother is able (or unable) to form a family within a normative nuclear family formation or within different alternative family formations. Findings from this thesis therefore emphasise the importance that future studies should take into account the complexity of young mothers' identity work and should include how a number of discourses – rather than how one specific discourse – affects the identity of young mothers.

I will here summarise the findings about how discourses of life course, adulthood, risk, and motherhood had intersectional meanings in the identity work of young mothers as well as meanings for their family formations. Findings from paper 1, paper 2, and paper 3 suggested that whether the interviewed young mothers followed or deviated from their expected life courses conditioned their possibilities to present themselves as "adults" (women) or as "non-adults" (girls), which in turn affected how risky their mothering was seen to be by them-

selves, their families, and their friends. The mothers' level of riskiness and positions as either adult women or as non-adult girls in turn had meanings for which dominant and/or alternative motherhood discourses they could access in a trustworthy way – or which motherhood discourses they lacked access to – when presenting their maternal positions and making sense of their maternal identity. The interviewed mothers who were seen as adults and thus as “less risky” had access to all of the motherhood discourses, while the mothers seen as non-adults and as “high risk” struggled to present themselves as good enough mothers and therefore mainly used the motherhood discourses of intensive motherhood and risk-managing motherhood. The youngest of the young mothers were seen as non-adults – as girls – and as “too risky for mothering” and therefore lacked access to the “normative” motherhood discourses in their maternal identity work and instead invoked discourses of youthful motherhood and common-sense motherhood.

Mothers seen as following their expected life course were both able and expected to become a mother within the normative form of a nuclear family (paper 3). In contrast, the responsible act for mothers who had deviated from their expected life course and therefore were seen as non-adult girls was to seek out grandparental support and to enter motherhood within their extended family rather than forming a nuclear family of their own. Thus, if a woman became a mother at an age that was seen as “too early”, she had difficulties accessing a position as a good mother – or even difficulties in being seen as “a mother” at all – and of starting her own nuclear family.

This thesis illustrates how important the discourse of life course is when understanding young motherhood, a finding that is a central and imperative contribution for further studies on young motherhood and young parenthood in general. Of similar importance are findings that illustrate that young motherhood needs to be understood within the two worlds of adulthood and youthfulness. Findings in paper 1 of this thesis contribute to girlhood and youth studies on young motherhood (see for example Nayak & Kehily, 2014; Kirkman et al., 2010) with deepened knowledge about the meanings that access (as well as lack of access) to rhetorical resources of youth and adulthood can have in enabling young mothers' resistance against the stigmatic one-sided idea of them as bad risky mothers and in making it possible to – in certain contexts – create a relatively stress less motherhood position as a youthful mother. This finding also sets the notion of adulthood at the centre and perhaps in a dream world forces us “adult” researchers to think about our own adult position in relation to those with a youth position whom we are studying.

Secondly, through focusing on the individual woman and how her identity work plays out in the 21st century with the emergence of the new parenting culture,

this thesis has contributed a social-psychological dimension to the field of cultural parenting studies. To be more precise, the thesis has contributed with knowledge about how the individual young mothers encounter the new parenting culture in their everyday life and how they manage this phenomenon by drawing on different available discursive resources when they present and make sense of their motherhood. This thesis contributes with mapping up and furthering the knowledge about which discourses within the new parenting culture – life course, risk, motherhood, family, and youthfulness – are central and need to be taken into account in future studies of the identity work of young mothers – as well as in future studies of other “non-normative” motherhood and of motherhood in general. The important contribution is not necessarily the discourses themselves, but the understanding that we truly benefit by considering all of them and looking at the intersectional meanings these discourses have in the lives of mothers when we set out to explore the mechanism of parenting culture.

As mentioned, an important finding in papers 1, 2, and 3 is the life course discourse and the central meanings this discourse has in the identity work of young mothers. The discourse of life course helps us understand under which premises the woman becomes a mother – that is, how risky her mothering is seen to be by others, what expectations she has in terms of work, education, and career, and which motherhood discourses she will have access to or lack access to. Discourses of risk are already deeply explored within parenting culture studies, and this thesis contributes with a social psychological aspect on risk and young motherhood, as well as with a focus on young mothers’ identity work in relation to risk. Although motherhood discourses are heavily studied within family research, this thesis has – in line with Elvin-Nowak’s work – contributed with mapping out the relationship between four motherhood discourses as follows. The discourses of *common-sense motherhood* and *modern-equal motherhood* had complementary functions and were invoked by mothers as a way to strengthen the same line of argumentation, and these two discourses were also used as opposites to the two discourses of *intensive mothering* and *risk-managing motherhood*, which both in turn had complementary functions.

Through mapping up and illustrating how a number of motherhood discourses are related to each other in this data with young Swedish mothers, the findings from this thesis contribute to deeper knowledge about the complexities within the maternal identity work of young mothers – knowledge that in turn can be helpful in understanding maternal identity work in broader settings. Through studying a group of young mothers who not necessarily fit into the normative ideas about good motherhood, I identified and contributed to a deeper understanding of two emerging motherhood discourses – *youthful motherhood* (paper 1) and *common-sense motherhood* (paper 2) – and illustrated how these

discourses can be used as linguistic tools by young mothers in their daily sense making and identity positioning. This thesis also contributes with methodological tools that can give inspiration and hopefully practical guidance in how to use discourse psychology to study the complex mechanisms within mothers' identity work.

Thirdly, this thesis has contributed with rather new perspectives on parenting support. Findings from paper 3 contribute with insights about the important material and social support that young mothers' own parents (mostly their mothers) offers them and how this support works as an important guidance into motherhood at the same time as it can limit the young mothers' space and possibility to independently take on a position as the "main-mother" of their own child. Findings from paper 4 show that young mothers prefer peer-support online in closed Facebook groups rather than professional support in face-to-face groups.

Parenting culture studies have taught us about the notion of parenting determinism and how parents – or rather the government – focuses on "the child" and how raising good optimised children is seen as central in social engineering efforts (Moss, 2014; Lee, 2014). Knowledge about parenting support from this thesis – both support from grandparents and from peers online – contributes with important insights into how governments' intention to fulfil the idea of parenting determinism and to control parents from a distance are limited due to the parents' own actions. The citizens, i.e. the parents, have sought out support from their own parents or from peers online rather than leaning on professionals, and this puts a damper on the idea of parenting determinism and means that the Swedish government and professionals no longer have a monopoly in offering parenting support.

For future research it would be interesting to study if other parent groups seen as risky or if parents in general prefer online peer support over professional face-to-face support. Furthermore, it would be interesting to explore young parenthood from the perspectives of the young mothers' own parents and professionals as well as the identity work of young fathers, all of which are limitations of this thesis.

Implications for policy makers and professionals

Investments into parenting support and governmental guidelines about good maternal practices are supposed to strengthen parents. However, we need to consider that these forms of advice combined can have a pressuring effect on mothers' identity work and can contribute to creating the phenomenon of paranoid parents, which in turn is rather ineffective in achieving the desired political goals of parenting determinism.

Therefore, policy makers and professionals who formulate parental advice in governmental institutions and who lead parenting groups are recommended to be careful in arguing for different "do's and don'ts" when it comes to teaching good parenting. Professionals would also be advised to argue for the importance of common-sense mothering and to emphasise the impossibility of following all pieces of parenting advice. It is particularly important that professionals and policy makers take the stigmatisation of young mothers into account and to make efforts not to reproduce this.

The findings from this thesis can be helpful for policy makers when formulating family policies involving young parenthood and parenting support, as well as can be supportive for professionals such as midwives, teachers at open pre-schools, and social workers responsible for parenting support groups in their daily work and interactions with young mothers.

Today young mothers and professionals are in different spaces – offline and online. Policy makers and professionals working with parenting support could benefit from updating their programmes and plans for parenting supporting offered to young parents and reconsidering if and how young parents can (and should) be reached online by professionals.

Policy makers and professionals working with parenting support could also benefit from reconsidering whether the younger young mothers' needs for material support such as housing, food, baby supplies, and so on should be a responsibility and task for the young mothers' parents or if the social services should step in. Governmental support regarding these material needs would decrease the younger young mothers' vulnerable positions in relation to their own mothers and would give them space to take on their new positions as mothers.

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Appendix 1: Interview guides

Interview guide - used at the pre-delivery interviews

Background questions

- What is your age?
 - If they have a child: Age at first child
- Family situation?
 - Married, Sambo – that is a typical family formation in Sweden
 - The age of the child (if you had one before this pregnancy)
- Living situation?
- Your occupation?
 - Your husband's/partner's/father of the child's occupation?
- What is your parents' occupation?
- Friends with children/without children
- How long have you been pregnant?

Questions regarding normative ideas about parenting

- What is a good parent/mother/father?
- What types of skills do you value as important in good parenting/mothering?
- If they have a child: How would you describe yourself as a parent/mother?
 - Your weaknesses and strengths?
- If they don't have a child: How do you see yourself as a future parent/mother?
 - What strengths and weaknesses do you think you will have?
- Is there anything about your parental/maternal skills that you would like to develop?
- Was the pregnancy planned?
 - What was the reaction once you got the news that you were expecting a child?
 - How did you, your partner/the father, your own parents and friends react?
 - How did you react when you found out that you were pregnant?
 - How did your partner/father of the child react to the news of your pregnancy?
 - How did your parents, friends, and kin and the father's parents, friends, and kin react to the news of your pregnancy?
- What type of support do you expect to receive from your own parents, kin, and friends as well from the father's parents, kin, and friends?

- What is your parents' opinion on young motherhood and about your mothering?

Questions about their intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC

- What is your intention in regard to participating in the parenting group offered by BVC? (Here you need to choose one of the following three options)
 1. Positive/my intention is to participate in the parenting group at BVC
 2. Neutral/I don't know
 3. Negative/my intention is to not participate in the parenting group at BVC
- Motivate your intention – how come you have this intention?
- Have you discussed your intention to participate or not with your husband/wife/sambo/the father of the child/other parental figure?
 - If so, how did you discuss this?
 - What is the motive for their intentions to participate or to not participate?
- What knowledge do you have about the parent group at BVC (content, goals, other participants)?
- What did you think about the information about the parent group at BVC?
 - In which ways did you receive the information?
- To what extent did the information about the parent group at BVC affect your intentions to participate in the group or to not participate?
- Can you tell me about how your experiences with the midwives at MVC and the parent group offered at MVC affected your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC?
 - Did you participate in the MVC group? Why/why not?
 - How are your experiences with your personal midwives?
- Have you participated in any parenting groups other than those offered at MVC and BVC?
- If the interviewee has a child: Did you participate in parent groups at MVC or BVC with your first child, and if so, how did you experience that?
 - Motivate
 - Did your experiences affect your intentions to participate or not participate in BVC's parent group with this child?
- What do you know about the Child Welfare Centers (CWC) and the type of social work they offer to parents (besides the parent groups at MVC and BVC)?

- Do you visit the Family Center (CWC) for any issues other than MVC?
 - Why? What is your experience of these visits?
 - Do you know anyone else who used to visit the Family Center or who participated in a parenting group at MVC or BVC (CWC)?
- To what extent has your experiences (yours or your friends'/families' experiences) of the Family Center (CWC) affected your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC?
- Do you know anyone who has participated in the parent group at BVC or any other type of parent group?
- To what extent has your friends'/families' opinions about BVC's parent group affected your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC?
- Are there any practical circumstances that affect your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC (what time the group is held, transportation, child-care for older child, etc.)?
- To what extent has your idea about peoples' view on young parenthood affected your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC?

Questions about what their everyday life as a parent/mother will look like

- In what way do you think that your friends and family will support you in your everyday life as a parent/mother?
 - If the interviewee has a child: How do your friends and family support you in your everyday life as a parent/mother?
- How do you think that people in general society look upon young parenthood?
 - Do you agree with people in general, or what do you think about young parenthood/motherhood?
 - Do you consider yourself a young parent/mother?
 - Who do you consider to be a young parent/mother?

Questions about their intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC

- I need to ask you, once again:
What is your intention in regard of participating in the parenting group offered by BVC? (Here you need to choose one of the following three options)
 1. Positive/my intention is to participate in the parenting group at BVC
 2. Neutral/I don't know

3. Negative/my intention is to not participate in the parenting group at BVC

- What are the key factors that affected your intentions to participate or not participate in the parent group at BVC?
- Is there anything we haven't mentioned during this interview conversation that affects your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC?

Interview guide - used at the post-delivery interviews

Background questions

- What is your age?
 - If they have a child: Age at the birth of the first child
- Family situation?
 - Married, Sambo – that is a typical family formation in Sweden
 - The age of the child (if you had one before this pregnancy)
- Living situation?
- Your occupation?
 - Your husband's/partner's/father of the child's occupation?
- What is your parents' occupation?
- Friends with children/without children

Questions about how they fulfilled or changed their intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC

- Do you remember your answer to the question: What is your intention in regard of participating in the parenting group offered by BVC?
(Here you need to choose one of the following three options)
 1. Positive/my intention is to participate in the parenting group at BVC
 2. Neutral/I don't know
 3. Negative/my intention is to not participate in the parenting group at BVC
- Did you stick to your intention – positive, neutral, or negative – when the group started, or did you change your mind?
 - What was it that made you stick to your intention to participate or not participate in the parent group at BVC?
 - What was it that changed your intention to participate or not participate in the parent group at BVC?

- Did you receive any more information about the parent group at BVC after our last interview?
 - What type of information was this?
 - From whom did you receive this information?
- Has this additional information had any affect on your choice to fulfil or change your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC?
- Since we met at the last interview, you have now become a mother. Is this something that has affected your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC?
- Is there anything else that has affected whether you fulfilled or changed your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC, something that I haven't asked about?
- Has the information and treatment from the midwife affected your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC, and if so, in what way?
- Do you visit the Family Center?
 - For what purpose?
 - How often?
 - What are your experiences from these visits?
- Have your experiences from visiting the Family Center affected your intention to participate in the parent group at BVC, and if so, in what way?
- How many meetings in total are there when participating in the parent group at BVC?
- How many meetings of the parent group at BVC have you participated in?
- What type of information and activities did these meeting contain?
- Were you/your partner unable to attending any meeting of the parent group at BVC?
 - If so, what was the content of the missed meetings?
 - Do you feel that you missed out on any important information or parental/maternal skill?
 - Why did you miss the meeting?
- How many parents and children participated in the same parent group as you?
- Were the information and activities aimed both towards fathers and mothers?
- How many fathers and mothers were in your BVC parent group?
- Was there anything that facilitated your participation in the parent group at BVC?
- Is there anything we haven't mentioned during this interview conversation that affected your choice to fulfil or change your intentions to participate in the parent group at BVC?

Questions regarding normative ideas about parenting

- Can you tell me about how it was to become a mother – all the way from receiving the news about your pregnancy until today?
 - When did you become a mother?
 - When did you feel like a real mother?
 - When did you feel safe in your position as a mother?
- As a child, did you ever imagine how it would be when you had children of your own, and how did you picture your life then?
 - How old would you be?
 - Where would you live?
 - What would your occupation be, and so on?
 - Were there any things you wanted to have done before you had a child?

The pregnancy

- Tell me about the time when you found out that you were pregnant?
 - Had you and the father to the child talked about having a child for some time, once you got pregnant, or how was it?
- What do you think that the general opinion in the society is regarding the matter of having an abortion or not when you get pregnant at an early age?
 - Have you considered an abortion?
- Has anyone asked you whether or not you are going to have an abortion?
 - Who asked, and why did they ask you about this?

Parental/maternal practice

- Can you tell me about the first month with your baby?
- What makes a good parent – how do you do good parenting?
- What makes a good mother?
- What makes a good father?
 - Are there any differences between good mothering and good fathering?
 - Are there any differences in real life, even if you don't want there to be any differences in theory?
- What constitutes a young mother?
 - At what age does one become a young mother?
 - What is an old mother – at what age?
- What do you think about your own mothering in relation to normative ideas about good mothering?
- Do you consider yourself a young mother?
- To what extent does a woman's age affect her maternal skills and capability?
- Did you feel ready for managing the task that comes with motherhood?

- How do you think that people in general society look upon young parenthood/motherhood?
 - Do you agree with people in general, or what do you think about young parenthood/motherhood?
 - Do you consider yourself a young parent/mother?
 - Who do you consider to be a young parent/mother?
- Are there any differences in how people look upon young parenthood depending on whether they live in a city or in the countryside?
- Has your life changed in any way since you became a parent/mother, and if so, how has it changed?
 - If not, why?
- Have you as a person changed since you became a parent/mother, if so, can you describe in what way?
- What meaning does parenthood/motherhood have in your identity work and in defining who you are?
- To what extent does your parenthood/motherhood affect the way you live your everyday life?
- Do young mothers encounter any additional obstacles in their parenting in comparison with other mothers, and if so, what obstacles?
 - Why?
- Are there any differences between young mothers and older mothers, and if so, what are these differences?
- At what age are you considered an older mother – and at what age are you just a normal mother?
- What is a normal mother (occupation, living situation, family formation, behaviour)?
- What is a perfect parent/mother?
 - Does that exist, and if so, what are the characteristics of a perfect parent/mother?

Division of household chores and child-care

- How stable would you say that your relationship to your partner/father of the child is?
- How involved would you say that the child's father is in taking care of the child?
- Who spends most time with the children and has the main responsibility for them?
- Do mothers and fathers have different chores when it comes to taking care of the children and the household?
- How did you divide your parental leave?
- How do you divide the household chores between you and your partner/father of the child?
- Are you satisfied with your division of household chores?
- Do you try to make your household chores more equal?

The future

- Have you thought about your future and what it will look like?
- What are your thoughts about your occupational situation?
 - What are your dreams and what are the odds for them to come true?

Support

- Do you have any support needs regarding your parenting, and if so, with what?
- Do you primarily need support regarding practical support such as with child-care or support to increase your knowledge about how to raise a child?
- From whom do you receive the most support?
 - What type of support do you receive?
 - Do you feel that the support is enough, or have you wished for more?
- Do you feel that you received enough support from Swedish society to manage life as a young mother?
 - Is the money from your parental leave enough?
 - Do you have the possibility to continue your studies at high school?
- How did you feel about this interview, was it ok?
- Do you have any questions you would like to ask me?
- Would it be possible for me to contact you again if I have any additional questions that come up when I start to analyse the text, and which would be a relatively short phone call?

Appendix 2a: Themes and sub-themes used in the thesis project

Grandparents

- Notification of pregnancy
- Support from grandparents
- Support from social network

Life course

- Deviating from expected life course
- Following expected life course

Stigmatisation

- Young mothers hide their parental difficulties
- Exclusion
- Young mother blames herself
- Inclusion
- Going my own way
- Stigmas inhibit doing good mothering
- Stigma triggers young mothers to position herself as a traditional mother
- Children cannot raise children
- Society's perspectives on young mothers

Good motherhood

- Traditional motherhood
- Modern motherhood
- Equal motherhood
- Common sense/laissez-faire
- Awareness/control
- Biological motherhood
- Healthy mothering
- Constructive motherhood
- Deviating from the idea of good motherhood

Young motherhood

- Young mothers as very fertile
- Young mothers - unproblematic healthy pregnancies
- Changed identity and life situation
- Adulthood
- Young motherhood – assumed lack of good mothering
- Older mothers vs. younger mothers

Appendix 2b: Themes and sub-themes not used in the thesis project

The experts

- Professionals
- Professionals and equality

The child

- What is best for the child collides with the idea of a good mother
- Doing it for the child

The father

- Grandfather overtakes
- The maternal position in relation to the father
- Absent
- Young fathers are inhibited by the idea of good motherhood
- Equality between the mother and father
- Paternal and maternal identity work are entangled