

**AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF EXPERIENCES OF PARENTING AMONG  
FEMALE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE,  
SOUTH AFRICA**

**NGUM FUNIBA**

**2655761**



**A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Master of Philosophy in the Department of Women and Gender Studies,  
University of the Western Cape**

**September 2011**

**SUPERVISOR: PROF. T. SHEFER**

**Declaration**

I declare that **An exploratory study of experiences of parenting among female students at the University of the Western Cape** is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources have been acknowledged.

.....

**NGUM FUNIBA**

**Date**.....



## ABSTRACT

Advancement in education has ensured that there is parity in terms of enrolment for both females and males at tertiary institutions. However, women students continue to face challenges to advancing in education. Given that South African society remains highly gendered and that universities are historically male-dominated sites that do not necessarily cater for the particular needs of women (or children), one area of challenge may relate to having to balance parenting roles with the demands of being a student. For example, at the University of the Western Cape (UWC), students with children are prohibited from access to the residences, leaving them with no option but to seek alternative accommodation, where they can remain with their babies or look for childcare support from their relatives. While there is a growing body of work on the experiences of school-going pregnant and parenting learners, there is little work in the South African context of the experiences of women who are both parents and students at tertiary institutions. Since the national education system clearly supports and encourages life-long learning, an investigation into the conditions and experiences of learning for parenting students is important. The focus on women students was motivated by existing findings that show how normative gender roles persist and that women continue to be viewed as the primary nurturers with respect to the care of children.

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of motherhood among young female students at UWC. The study was situated within a feminist social constructionist framework and a feminist qualitative methodology was employed. Two or more interviews were conducted with a group of eight participants, selected by convenient sampling, and aged between 18 and 30 years, each with a child or children under the age of five years. Interviews were conducted at the participants' choice of location and at a time that was convenient to them. All interviews were audio-recorded and the tapes were kept safely in the researcher's home. All standard ethical procedures for research with human subjects were followed. Data was transcribed verbatim and a qualitative thematic analysis was conducted. Key themes

were elucidated and data presented thematically. The key challenges cited included time management, self motivation and the social demands of being a mother. These tend to have adverse repercussions on academic excellence.

The analysis revealed that though the young women are allowed to return to universities after becoming mothers, they face many challenges in trying to balance motherhood and the demands of schooling. Furthermore, the findings highlight the tension and ambivalence experienced by participants as they negotiate the social and cultural expectations of motherhood and their personal reality, in meeting the demands of motherhood as student mothers. In their struggle to meet the social and cultural expectations of motherhood, they placed tremendous emotional and physical stress upon themselves which manifested as guilt, physical exhaustion, psychological stress, physical illness and the desire to leave studies notwithstanding the value they attached to it. Although the participants challenged these expectations in various ways, the underlying nuances when they recounted their experiences, remain embedded in these societal and cultural expectations. However, in voicing their experiences, it was clear that they were not always simply accepting the status quo but at times challenging it, and thereby deconstructing the myths of motherhood that are so salient in current social and cultural contexts. The study also found that student mothers at UWC, at least on the basis of this small sample - do not appear to receive sufficient support on campus (physically, materially and emotionally). The study concludes that this group of student mothers face serious challenges as mothers and students and, further, that these challenges are exacerbated by the continued social expectations of women to be 'perfect' mothers which, together with the material gender inequalities in sharing parenting care, could impede effective academic studies.

The study recommends that universities play a stronger role in alleviating the challenges for such students. In addition, it recommends that more research be



conducted in the area, possibly longitudinal studies, as well as studies that may be more generalisable.



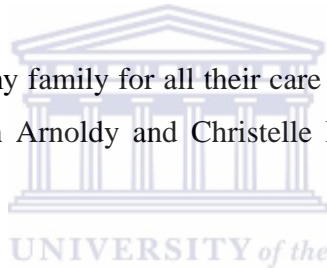
## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank God Almighty for giving me the strength, good health and all the blessings to enable me realise this dream.

In terms of this present work, my appreciation goes to my supervisor, Prof. Tammy Shefer, whose expression of leadership can I believe be attested by all who have met her. Her tips of advice, given despite her busy schedule, always sparkled like rare gems in a royal crown. I thank her for her patience, constant reminders and encouragement.

I am truly grateful to all the women who participated in this study who, without hesitation, shared their stories, experiences and thoughts with me.

My sincere thanks also go to my family for all their care and support, in particular to my children, Junior Khumalo Yan Arnoldy and Christelle Naima Arnoldy Khumalo, who inspired me to write this thesis.



A further special note of appreciation and acknowledgement goes to my dearest friend, Tony Jones, for his care, guidance and great support, and without whom this thesis would not have become a reality. I am also indebted to my friend, Mrs Sisa Ngabaza, for all her assistance and great encouragement, as well as to my friends Gaby Isaidoo and Deodat for their unending willingness to assist when called upon and for their constant support and motivation throughout the writing of this thesis. My special thanks are also due to Mr Sam Botha for his friendship and encouragement.

## **KEY WORDS**

Motherhood, mothering, parenting, gender, female students, University of the Western Cape (UWC), feminism.



## Contents

SUPERVISOR: PROF. T. SHEFER .....	1
Declaration .....	2
NGUM FUNIBA .....	2
Date.....	2
ABSTRACT .....	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	6
KEY WORDS .....	7
Contents.....	8
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	11
1.1 Background and rationale for the study.....	11
1.2 Problem Statement.....	18
1.3 The study area.....	19
1.4 Overview of the study .....	20
CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALISING MOTHERHOOD.....	22
2.1 Introduction .....	22
2.2 Theoretical framework .....	23
2.2.1 The theoretical approach of intersectionality .....	24
2.2.2 A gendered and socially constructed perspective.....	25
2.3 Ideologies of motherhood.....	28
2.4 Competing ideologies of motherhood .....	30
2.5 Motherhood in South Africa.....	31
2.6 Young motherhood and parenting .....	32
2.7 Young parenting and education.....	34

2.8 Gender and education .....	38
2.9 Mothering at South African educational institutions.....	39
2.10 Motherhood, social isolation and social support .....	41
2.11 Motherhood and negative health consequences .....	42
2.12 Conclusion.....	44
<b>CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY .....</b>	<b>46</b>
3.1 Introduction .....	46
3.2 Aims and objectives .....	46
3.3 Feminist research methodology.....	47
3.4 Qualitative approach.....	48
3.5 Participants .....	49
<b>Table 1: Demographic Details of Participants .....</b>	<b>51</b>
3.6 Data collection.....	52
<b>Interviews .....</b>	<b>52</b>
3.7 Research procedures .....	53
3.7 Approach to data analysis: thematic analysis .....	54
3.7.1 Becoming engrossed in the data .....	57
3.7.2 Recording rising and frequent themes .....	57
3.7.3 Exploring emerging themes.....	58
3.8 Validity and reliability of the study.....	58
3.9 Ethical considerations.....	60
3.10 Self reflexivity .....	61
3.11 Conclusion.....	63
<b>CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES: BALANCING MOTHERHOOD AND ACADEMIC WORK.....</b>	<b>64</b>



4.1. Introduction .....	64
4.2 Social constructions of motherhood .....	65
4.2.1 Motherhood as self-actualisation.....	66
4.2.2 Motherhood as identity.....	67
4.2.3 Mothers as nurturers .....	70
4.2.4 Motherhood as self-sacrificing .....	72
4.3 Subjective experiences of being a student and a mother .....	75
4.3.1 Balancing the load of parenting and studying .....	76
4.3.2 Experiences and support in relation to male partner .....	84
4.3.3 Experiences of single student mothers .....	88
4.3.4 Financial challenges faced by student mothers .....	90
4.4 Conclusion.....	91
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION.....	94
5.1 Introduction .....	94
5.2 Summary of research findings.....	94
5.3 Key challenges identified .....	97
5.4 Recommendations and limitations.....	100
5.4.1 <i>Recommendations related to research findings</i> .....	100
5.4.2 <i>Recommendations for further studies</i> .....	103
5.4.3 <i>Recommendations for knowledge production</i> .....	103
Bibliography .....	106
APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE.....	131
APPENDIX TWO: RESEARCH COVERING LETTER.....	132
CONTRACT OF INFORMED CONSENT .....	134

## **CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Background and rationale for the study**

Although opportunities for women to study have increased, their promotion at the workplace is still hampered by educational inequalities (Payne & Hoffman, 1990). Such a situation is evident in the university sector as well. For example, in higher educational institutions, studies have shown worldwide, including in South Africa, that it takes a longer time for female academics to get promotions than it does for their male colleagues and, further, that while there are more women at the undergraduate level of study, far fewer will go through to complete higher degrees (Hensel, 1991; Subotzky, 2001).

In an attempt to eliminate the glaring inequalities inherited from the apartheid regime, the new democratic government of South Africa implemented the Bill of Rights of the Constitution of South Africa in 1996 which promotes the rights of South African citizens (South African Bill Of Rights, 1996), irrespective of gender and race. It was from this Bill of Rights that the National Gender Policy Framework was born. Legislation such as the Gender Equity Act and the Skills Development Act has also been passed to ensure that equity is achieved in all sectors for women. The National Gender Policy Framework states that although women have access to more job opportunities, these prospects are accessed only by a small number of women who were privileged to further their education.

Besides, there are still many women who are in traditionally female jobs, many of whom remain in low-ranking positions. Despite the existence of legislation that advances the equality of women in the workplace, in practice this is not being adequately implemented. Given such challenges, it is imperative that women pursue education and that gender equality is achieved at all levels of the educational system, from preschool to higher education (South African Bill Of Rights, 1996; South African Labour Constitution, 1996).

Nevertheless, women globally and in South Africa in particular, continue to be confronted with numerous challenges in their quest to further their studies successfully. One such challenge for women students who are mothers is the extra burden of parenting, which implies juggling time between studies and parenting. This may impact negatively on both parenting and academic performance (Sawhill, 2006). Besides, the switch to parenthood is a key event in the lifetime of any human being. This transition has severe implications on education, work, citizenship and marriage, requiring special skills and resources.

It has been noted that since 1994 South Africa has made considerable advancement towards the attainment of gender parity in higher education. By 2000, the proportion of women in public universities was 53% and, in 2007, 59% of all student graduates were women. This illustrates the large participation and success rates of women, comparing favourably with many other countries where efforts to change the under-representation of women has had a much longer history (De la Rey, 2010). Thus, the achievement of the country goes further than gender equality, to the degree that females now make up the mainstream of enrolments in secondary schools and higher educational institutions (Human Science Research Council, 2009). Nevertheless, young female students are still faced with serious challenges that seem to erode the gains made in public schools and in places of tertiary education (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989; Drake, 2001; Macleod, 2003; 2006; Pillow, 2006 and Macleod, 2007).

Women's résumés often show late completion of studies and this situation consequently leads to delayed access into careers, with gaps related to their having young children while pursuing their studies (De la Rey, 2010). Women's studies and subsequently their vocations have historically, across most societies, been connected to their relationships to their husbands and children, facilitating the multiple roles that women play. Moreover, such demands frequently undermine women's ability to progress or participate fully in their careers, in professions which tend to remain guided by a masculinist notion that assumes a male breadwinner who has a wife at home to take care of the domestic needs.



Scientific careers, for instance, depend a great deal on status, which is built by participating in networks and attending symposiums. Financial support and publications depend on status. Patterns of prejudice are apparent in how that coordination works. Women are less able to travel because of their mothering responsibilities, as well as their roles in the family. This greatly affects how they position themselves (De la Rey, 2010). On the other hand, there is a clear commitment nationally to attempt to ensure that the role of parenting does not impact on young women's careers. This is evident even at the level of school, where the Department of Education has committed itself to encourage and maintain young mothers in schools by ensuring "a quality life for all, free of poverty" (Human Science Research Council, 2009: 1).

Researchers and community-based organizations that have raised the fact that gender concerns in quite a number of locations, including in places of education, have been mainly ignored during the South African transformational process (Gaganakis, 2003). The Policy Framework for the National Congress of Africa, on Training and Education (1994) and the National Summit of Gender (2001) indicate that there should be great determination to eradicate gender inequalities in women's organizations (Bhana et al., 2008).

Considerable research was carried out on the fight for equal access to education by boys and girls. In this regard, Meena (2001) holds responsible the governments of the entire Sub-Saharan regions for neglecting young mothers' rights to access secondary schools. When young girls fall pregnant or become mothers, they are deprived of access to education (Meena, 2001). Wolpe et al (1997), although writing some time ago and just after the attempt to impact on such practices, foregrounded how some institutions block pregnant girls and young mothers from attending classes. While legally schools may no longer prohibit young mothers from attending schools, there are also many examples in the popular press that highlight how, due to both community and school attitudes and practices, young mothers at school still find it difficult to continue their schooling. In some cases, they are forced to leave school in spite of the existence of the South African School Act (SASA) of 1996 that prohibits this. Recent studies have attested to the way in

which the attitudes of the school authorities, teachers and other learners may also impact on the ability of young mothers to continue their schooling successfully (for example, Bhana et al, 2008, 2010).

Ever since the dissemination of the South African Schools Act in 1996, it has become unlawful to prevent pregnant girls from attending educational institutions. In instances where young mothers proceed with their studies, they are often viewed as being incompetent students (Pillow, 2004). This often leads to a situation where these young women are regarded by their families and peers as failures in their studies, and their families and educators give up on them (Shultz, 2001).

Nonetheless, influenced by feminist research, it has been over a decade since SASA 1996 forbade discrimination in schools on the basis of pregnancy. The course of action has sought to support pregnant girls and young parents in continuing and completing their education, given the perception that having children often terminates the school-going life of the learner, restraining potential employment and work prospects. While the law is clear that student mothers cannot be turned away from their studies, it is less clear about how educational institutions deal with pregnant students and mothering students (Bhana et al., 2008).

Some studies highlight how the law has been unevenly implemented, sometimes because it is not properly understood and sometimes because educational institutions disagree with it. Scholars suggest that many schools are failing to comply with the Act, despite having had over a decade to develop responses to its provisions (Makiwane & Danie, 2008), or they interpret it in problematic ways that result in the exclusion of pregnant learners (Bhana et al, 2008; 2010).

This study was inspired by an understanding of the vulnerability of student mothers, where their life trajectories may be fashioned either in the direction of healthy development, steadiness and efficiency, or towards poverty and dependence. Many young mothers will continue to struggle with poverty and its consequences if no adequate

support is provided for them to complete their education (Mogotlane, 1993; Kunio & Sono, 1996; Stephens et al, 1999). Young mothers face a delicate emotional or psychological risk in their dual role (Brown & Gilligan, 1992). Even though alternative pathways to motherhood occur and are accepted to some extent, institutional support for parental responsibility is still geared towards a customary sequencing of transitions, in which parenting is assumed to happen after marriage in a nuclear family with a male breadwinner. Consequently, efforts are made to understand how such mothers cope with the challenges of being both mother and student, how the challenges emerge, as well as how they manage these challenges.

Childbearing is often associated with numerous disruptions for girls and young women when it comes to school attendance (Theron & Dunn, 2006). Young mothers need tremendous support to avoid any disruptions to their schooling and higher education. Denying young mothers the support they need to pursue education condemns them and their babies to the vicious circle of poverty and ignorance (Kunio & Sono, 1996). If society expects young mothers to succeed with schooling and higher education, provision should be made for meeting the special needs of these learner mothers and student mothers. I embarked on this project from this standpoint, examining the challenges which young student mothers experienced.

According to Hollway and Featherstone (1997), given the pressure of being a student, becoming a mother while studying may not only be common but also heroic. This is because motherhood is time-consuming and very challenging - as is being a student. It is also imperative to acknowledge that both universally and locally, it is still women who take primary responsibility for childcare, given the continued gender divisions of labour in families, and the way in which women are still considered to be primary caregivers in many societies.

In spite of the national intention in South Africa to challenge gender inequality, parenting remains highly gendered. Richter and Morrell (2006) have positioned the notion of

fatherhood in the South African context as influenced by the various changes that have occurred historically. The roles of fathers in the lives of their offspring have consequently altered. The majority of fathers in South Africa have been incapable of fulfilling their social and economic responsibilities to their children, and young fathers have tended to be distant and detached from family affairs involving their children. Moreover, escalating joblessness among some African fathers has been a handicap for many men, as they are unable to assume their fatherhood roles. Consequently, this has disempowered them by leading to a negative construction of fatherhood (Mott, 1997; Richter & Morrell, 2006).

Additionally, studies have shown that young mothers frequently opt to discontinue their studies, in order to offer support to young fathers who may struggle to provide financially for their children or are, on the whole, incapable of providing support (Sawhill, 2006). Mothers, even young school-going or university-going mothers, tend to play the primary role in childcare due to cultural expectations (Sawhill, 2006). This aside, however, being young and trying to raise children may be very difficult for adolescents and young parents. Consequently, it is not surprising that it is stressful for student mothers, who apart from studying and parenting, generally carry the load of childcare, which often times undermines both parenting and academic performance (Sawhill, 2006).

In line with these challenges, authors like Hollway and Featherstone (1997) and Miller (2005) further demonstrate that motherhood is extremely stressful, observing that unsupported motherhood may even be facilitative of mental illness. In addition, Milla (2005: 1) elaborates the experiences that come with motherhood, arguing that becoming a “mother changes lives in all sorts of ways”. While motherhood is often regarded as an important and pleasurable aspect of women’s lives, arguably for most women today it is no longer appropriate as a full time pursuit, given economic imperatives in most socio-economic situations globally (Hoffnung, 1998).

Within the South African context, Kruger (2006) contends that not many studies on motherhood have focused on the subjective and diverse experiences of mothers, and that researchers have tended to ignore the impact of class, race and culture. While there are a

number of studies in South Africa that look at the more subjective experiences of women as mothers for example, Brown (1999); Christerson (1997) and Jeannes (2002), these have focused on the experiences of white South African women. There is also a mass of literature on teenage pregnancy and motherhood in South Africa, mostly in black communities. However, this has tended to be pathologising and not focused on the experiences of women and girls themselves (Kruger, 2006; Macleod, 2006).

Furthermore, a fair amount of work has been done at schools but not at the universities and institutions of higher education. For example, a number of studies (including Preston-Whyte and Zondi, 1989; Mokgalabone, 1999; Drake, 2001; Kaufman, 2001 Wet, 2003 & Stadler, 2006; Pillow, 2006; Sawhill, 2006; Grant & Hallman, 2006; Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Macleod, 2007; Human Science Research Council, 2009; Bhana et al, 2008; 2010) have focused on the experiences of school-going mothers and fathers with only very few looking at the experiences of parents at tertiary institutions (for example, Human Science Research Council , 2009; De la Rey, 2010). There is clearly a gap in the literature with respect to documenting the experiences of parenting of both mothers and fathers at South African tertiary institutions. Consequently, this study reveals in a localised context not only how motherhood and mothering are currently socially constructed, but also the experiences of student mothers.

Likewise, this study of student mothers may act to subvert dominant motherhood ideologies, thus contributing to social change (Kruger, 2003) by suggesting the implementation of mechanisms that can facilitate an atmosphere within the campus environment that is friendly to parenting students, supportive of student mothers in their quest to further their studies and that informs them of their rights. Further, it is hoped that this study will contribute to calls for policy and educational interventions that allow for a shifting of the demands on women, as well as for the encouragement of fathers to play a more active and supportive role in parenting. The study may also raise issues that are particular to higher education, with respect to acknowledging students as parents and ensuring that they are not disadvantaged in their studies while attempting to parent as well. It is necessary for policy-makers to have an understanding of the experiences of

student mothers in the light of provisions in place, so that future decisions are accurately informed. The study will also hopefully contribute to the on-going debate on gender and parenting and constructions of motherhood globally.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The main point of concern in this study is the fact that most current studies on young motherhood in South African have focused on teenage pregnancy among young female learners at primary and high school levels. There has been little focus on the experiences of young mothers in tertiary institutions, a key place for women to advance their education and thus to improve the quality of their lives. This study fills the inherent gap in the previously related studies by focusing on motherhood experiences among female students in tertiary institutions. The study addresses the following research questions in order to achieve a widespread perspective of the experiences of student mothers: What are student mothers' experiences of balancing the load of pregnancy and parenting with their study demands? What is the reported impact of motherhood on student mothers' studies? What role does support or the lack of support from partners and others play in student mothers' experiences?

While literature about adolescent fertility and childbearing is commonly available, there is a dearth of research on the influence of young motherhood not only in South Africa, but also on the rest of the continent (Mensch, Clark, Lloyd & Erulkar, 2001; Eloundou-Enyégué, 2004). In response to this, this study documents the various experiences of young mothers in tertiary institutions, exploring in particular how much support they feel is available to them to facilitate their studies, and also to ensure that they complete their studies and can become self-reliant.

### 1.3 The study area

The University of the Western Cape is chosen as the study area as it is one example of a tertiary institution where there are probably substantial numbers of young mothers on campus. While it was not possible to get the exact statistics of how many UWC students are currently also parents, there is anecdotal evidence (including the presence of young children in classes) that points to the fact that being a parent is not uncommon among young university students. UWC represents many of the diversities of the South African context since it was a historically 'coloured' university, but has now roughly equal numbers of African and coloured students, as well as a growing number of international students, especially from other African countries. As such, it represents a diverse group of students, many of whom have come from within South Africa and abroad to study at UWC. Such students may already have families or may begin families while they are studying.

The Department of Life Long Learning (DLL) at UWC has a long-standing policy offering part-time studies. This means that there tend to be more mature students on campus, most of whom are part-time students who already have families. The 2009 DLL statistics reveal that the number of female students at UWC currently supersedes the number of male students. There are also a large number of part-time students at UWC. Notably, part-time students counted for 42% of all post-graduate students in 2009. Between 1998 and 2006 their proportion gradually increased from 36.2% to 49.3%, to decrease to 38.5% in 2008 (DLL, 2009). In 2009, the numbers picked up again, reaching 42%. Moreover, there are high numbers of women who are part-time students. Of the number of male students, 40% are studying full-time and 43% part-time; while 60% of female students are full-time and 57% are part-time (DLL, 2009). Statistics reveal that student mothers constitute one third of the students at UWC. The high number of mothers and mature women pursuing their studies at tertiary institutions like UWC demonstrates



their commitment to obtaining qualifications, not only to improve their status and self-esteem, but also to enhance their ability to compete for jobs thus closing the existing gender gaps at the work-place.

There are some services currently available for parents at UWC, though these are not clearly advertised as such. For example, there are counselling psychologists at UWC who assist pregnant and student mothers with professional counselling services. Students receive brief term counselling, usually six sessions during which their academic functioning may be restored. Ongoing medical monitoring and assessment for prenatal and postnatal care is also provided on campus. However, one of the obstacles faced by student mothers (and probably fathers) at UWC is the enforcement of the university's policy on students' accommodation which, since 2007, has refused residency for mothering students. It appears that there are few services that cater specifically for parenting students.

#### **1.4 Overview of the study**



Chapter One outlines the rationale for this thesis as primarily relating to research on motherhood in South Africa, and the need to provide better support for parenting students to ensure their success in tertiary education. The study explores the experiences of motherhood among a group of students at UWC, where it is not clear whether such students are adequately supported and little is known about their experiences and challenges.

Chapter Two provides a literature review, including theories about the construction of motherhood within feminist paradigms and an overview of international and local research on young mothers in educational settings.

Chapter Three provides the methodological approach and methods used for data collection and analysis in the study. An overview of the epistemology underpinning the



study is presented, as well as an elaboration of how the study is located within a feminist research framework. A qualitative methodological approach to research is outlined. Details regarding the research methods and procedures, including sampling, selection and recruitment of participants, data collection and data analysis are elaborated. Finally, self-reflexive issues are discussed and ethical issues are considered. Chapter Three provides an account of the research process, with an exposition of the methodology employed and personal reflections on the study.

Chapter Four presents and discusses the results of the research. The researcher adopted a qualitative thematic analysis informed by the theoretical lens of feminist social constructionism. Within the broad framework of qualitative research, the analysis was guided by the aims and the research questions of the study, and included a process of coding and generation of themes. Pattern matching and explanation building were used to identify relationships between the responses of the respondents, thus unpacking the meanings, perceptions and experiences of participants. The chapter includes two main areas of focus: participants' constructions of motherhood and mothering practices; and participants' experiences of being mothers, with particular focus on their reported experiences of balancing the load of being both parents and mothers and of social, partner and university-based support.

Chapter Five provides a summary of the main findings and the conclusions, which include recommendations for further research and for policy and social intervention. Recommendations made are directed particularly at policies and mechanisms for enhancing student mothers' wellbeing and support systems. To conclude, a number of limitations of the study are considered and future opportunities for research are recommended.

## **CHAPTER TWO: CONTEXTUALISING MOTHERHOOD**

### **2.1 Introduction**

Motherhood has traditionally been viewed as an inherently female trait, specifically as maternal nature. In the past, the perception is that motherhood is an ordinary effect of given gender differences based on biological grounds. Above all other women's duties, motherhood is generally regarded as women's compulsory and exclusive obligation. In other words, women are considered as mothers 'by nature' and, in many cultures worldwide, it is regarded as their duty to perform child-caring responsibilities. Hence for women, the pre-eminence of motherhood appears to be one of the values diverse cultures share (Christian, 1994). It is also important to acknowledge that motherhood has been historically revered in most communities throughout history. On the other hand, motherhood is also a contested category and many feminists have shown how societies both idealise and demonise motherhood in multiple ways. Motherhood, along with the constraints it imposes on women, has been a feminist issue in both first and second wave feminism. A number of modern feminists have criticised the notion of motherhood as being the sole measure of the distinctiveness of women. Perceptibly, according to feminists like Lorber (2001) and Kruger (2006), if women can affirm themselves outside motherhood and take control over their lives and bodies, they will attain equality with their male counterparts.

It is vital to acknowledge the bafflement and multiple experiences accompanying motherhood. A look at various strategies is necessary to assert and empower student mothers so that they can overcome existing obstacles. In this study, I am concerned to acknowledge the multiplicity of experiences that come with motherhood. I do not wish to impose a particular judgement on women who either choose or do not choose to mother (as has been the case with some feminist thinking historically). This study draws on a rationalist outlook, laying emphasis on the equality of male and female. However, it does not accept the embedded denial of motherhood which emerged to motivate a number of

feminism accounts since, for many women, motherhood and mothering is a powerful desire and intention. At a personal level, motherhood creates a bond between the infant(s) and the mother. The process of mothering, though a natural occurrence to the female gender, strengthens the woman and is a potential site of pleasure and enjoyment (Hoffnung, 1998). The strength may be said to arise from the alteration of experience. However, since motherhood entails interpersonal and socio-cultural identification, delving into the diverse alterations that accompany motherhood is not the aim of this research; rather it is to discover the reported motherhood experiences among a group of young mothers who are currently students in higher education institutions (Lorber, 2001).

This chapter introduces the focus of mothers in educational institutions, from senior school to tertiary educational institutions. It begins by presenting the theoretical framework underlying the research and continues by engaging with a literature review, including some of the vast literature on the construction of motherhood and young mothers within feminist and other paradigms. An overview of the critique of the traditional ideology of mothers as nurturers and the challenges posed by feminist literature is presented. The chapter further discusses work on the subjective experiences of parenting mothers who are engaged in studies from school contexts to tertiary education. It overviews the findings of previous research that examines how women experience motherhood while learning and studying in South Africa.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

This sub-section provides the theoretical frameworks employed in the study. The study rests on the intersectionality and social constructionist approaches of mothering that inform the overall conceptual framework of the study, serving as the lens for the analysis of the data.

### **2.2.1 The theoretical approach of intersectionality**

The theoretical approach of feminist intersectionality is used to highlight how women are located within unjust and multiple, intersecting power relations. Within this approach, attention is paid to the complexity of social identities -including race, class and gender in constructing the experience of being a woman or a mother. The emerging paradigm of intersectionality stresses the differences between individual and group as a unit of analysis. It emphasises the importance of acknowledging that gender never occurs on its own but is always qualified by its intersection with other forms of social difference and inequality (Hill Collins, 2004). In South Africa, emerging from a context of racial capitalism, race and class are primary differences that continue to intersect with gender to of social identity and difference are also important, and both age and sexual orientation have been shown to impact on women's experiences in their social lives.

In this regard, the theoretical approach of intersectionality will enable the researcher to capture the way in which the experiences of black student mothers at UWC for instance, in terms of power relations might be different from that of other racial and cultural groups. Moreover, within any group of black student mothers, there are significant differences in economic background, support systems, class, social settings and relations, which tend to impact on the extent of support and challenges faced by each as a student mother. There may be some commonalities since the majority of black and coloured South African student mothers face more economic challenges than other racial groups, given the history of apartheid. Nevertheless, I am concerned here to avoid providing a unitary account of participants' experiences, since while they may all be black women, class differences between them will impact on their experiences as mothers.

Long and Zietkiewicz (2006) argue that the post-apartheid South African context has been principally significant in the opportunities available for reformulation and

production of racial and gendered subjectivities. They note further that the university is one of the important institutional arenas where such renegotiations and productions occur for many young South Africans. The enrolment of many young black women, for instance, has occurred in relation to the increase of this population group in broader career and work domains. Through an ethnographic study, Dolby (2000) further illustrates the processes of renegotiation of racial and gender identities amongst the youth in contemporary South Africa. Through discursive constructs of 'taste' and popular cultural artefacts and icons, many young South Africans are engaging in varied processes of identity redefinition of previous social categories. These processes of renegotiation do not always occur in a simplistic or linear manner. Tensions may exist between social and/or familial expectations and individual aspirations.

Furthermore, in terms of the notion of the nuclear family, patriarchal practices are generally deeply embedded and continue to play a powerful role in providing care, organising and regulating practices of parenting. This study highlights the complexity of the intersection of different social identities and cultural norms on parenting practices and experiences. Young student parents experience a multitude of challenges and live in complex social and economic environments, with conflicting messages about what it means to parent. Within this setting, they are required to negotiate sometimes conflicting expectations about their roles as parents and students and indeed about their roles as women and men and even with respect to their historical cultural identities.

### **2.2.2 A gendered and socially constructed perspective**

This study views motherhood within a feminist social constructionist framework. Social Constructionism is a theoretical orientation that has its cultural setting in postmodernism and social psychology, among other areas (Burr, 1995). The social constructionist framework subscribes to the view that gender is socially constructed and that motherhood is framed within these constructed gendered social arrangements (Aveling, 2002; Brickell, 2002; O'Reilly, 2004; Deutsch, 2007; Teman, 2008). Social constructionists confront the positivist stance that views the world as based on objective and unbiased

facts. They deconstruct the notion of truth, arguing for cultural relativity. In addition, it is positioned as a result of a variety of settled meanings that are put up with social processes within particular social groups, hence disputing the single meaning of reality and truth (Hare-Martin & Marecek, 1990). Social constructionism has been used by feminists to challenge discourses of biological essentialism. From this perspective, feminists challenge the “fixity of the biological model of gender difference”, arguing that the position of women in society is socially produced and not biologically given. The assumption is that women’s position is determined through certain aspects of “social and cultural forces which can possibly be challenged” (Stacey, 1994, p. 68). Therefore, gendered actions are equally shaped by the social positioning of women. Thus, the social representation of the female body needs deconstruction (Grosz, 1994; Lorber, 1994).

Within social constructionist understandings, men and women are assumed to create their own social realities and understandings of self. This includes their notions of gender which is based on their social networks and interactions (Lorber, 2000). Investigating motherhood within a social constructionist framework therefore disputes the exploration of the social contexts in which motherhood occurs, including the historical and cultural underpinnings that are definite to the context (Burr, 1995). The purpose is to comprehend parenting among young female students from a feminist perspective. The study is consequently situated in a feminist paradigm, which will contribute toward the purpose of the study, namely, that women have a voice to express their opinions (Gordon, 1990).

Some feminists like Chodorow (1978) and Wager (2000) believe a feminist standpoint is required in order to provide a constructive approach to examining gender perceptions that are constructed by society, and to establish connotations to motherhood experiences. It is understood that other agents (like the family, media, medical professionals and strangers) greatly influence the way women experience motherhood. Hopefully, this study provided a positive and empowering experience for the participants who were investigated on their understanding and opinions about motherhood.

While a feminist approach is employed, early feminist studies relevant to motherhood generally tended to adopt a deterministic approach, creating very little space for motherhood or even marriage for 'liberated' women (Chodorow, 1978; Everingham, 1994; Hollway & Featherstone, 1997). Therefore, the theoretical structure for this study is feminist within a postmodern, social constructionist model (Burr, 1995). As noted, women have not been provided with a voice in accounting for their own experiences, as these have been narrated by hegemonic power within their political and social contexts. Thus, this study simultaneously views the construction of motherhood within a feminist epistemology which focuses on how gender constructs impact on women's lives, and it explores women's experiences from their own point of view (Lather, 1991).

Social constructionism contends that, as we engage with the world in our social interactions, meanings are created and modified which renders meaning-making a dynamic process. Deutsch (2007) points out that it is this dynamism that should be examined as a source of change. Therefore, this study will view the experiences of motherhood through the lens of feminist epistemology which focuses attention on bringing about a change in women's social reality and challenging boundaries. Feminism questions and challenges ways of understanding gender relationships and the effects of patriarchy on peoples' lives (Nicolson, 1993; Glenn, 1994; Hill Collins, 1994; Harding, 2001; White, Russo & Travis, 2001; Letherby, 2003; O' Reilly, 2004; Miller, 2005).

Moreover, feminism highlights how perceptions about gender, which are seen to reinforce women's subordination, can be challenged by women. Letherby (2003) notes that feminism is concerned with political devotion that may transform the lives of women through knowledge production and through individual and social transformation. Allowing women to reflect on and voice their experiences of motherhood could provide an opportunity for motherhood myths constructed within specific cultural, historical and social contexts to be exposed within the wider social structure. Harding (2001) draws attention to the importance of uncovering information about women's lives that was previously ignored. However, she cautions against the failure to scrutinize the embedded

gendered and socio-cultural forces which create and, in turn, maintain women's experiences.

Locating this study within a social constructionist framework highlights how women's perception of motherhood is shaped by the dominant belief system that is embedded in the societies in which they live. Allowing mothers to provide an account of their own motherhood experiences may expose and challenge the traditional frameworks which produce knowledge about themselves (White et al., 2000). Reviewing studies on the ideologies of motherhood is of vital importance in this study, which aims to better understand the experiences of student mothers.

### **2.3 Ideologies of motherhood**

Given that the biology of women enables them to give birth, motherhood is regarded as instinctive and women are regarded as destined to be mothers. Thus, motherhood is viewed as women's unique objective and origin of fulfilment. In this regard, women are generally loaded with all childbearing responsibilities and the most difficult tasks during the years of child development (Miller, 2005; Glenn, 2004; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004). Viewing a woman as someone who has a natural *a priori* knowledge of childcare and who finds happiness in the role of self-sacrifice, Choi et al. (2005) add to this image of natural motherhood. In the same vein, Hayes (cited in O'Reilly, 1994, p. 5) states that the concept of "intensive mothering" which obliges mothers to be the "central caregiver" views mothers as selfless beings who may use great amounts of "energy, time and material resources" on their children and, further, that this concept stipulates that the "mother regards mothering as more important than paid work".

In order to entrench the above concept, Nicolson (1993) points out that psychological theories have served to regulate motherhood. Nicolson (1993) also cites Bowlby's attachment theory and Winnicott's notion of the "good enough mother" as these two theories promote the mother and child relationship. Bowlby's attachment theories lay



emphasis on the bond or relationship between mother and child, as the absence of this bond is argued to lead to severe emotional and physical deficiencies in the child (Kaplan, 1992; Nicolson, 1993). However, these theories have been criticised for regarding all women as natural mothers. In the theories put forward by Bowlby and Winnicott, emphasis on the importance of the natural and intuitive features of mothers towards their children creates an unrealistic expectation for young mothers, who may in fact find it difficult to adapt to motherhood. The competencies of mothering are determined by society and institutions like psychology, as the theory of the 'good enough' mother is used as a yardstick which inevitably places key pressure on women as responsible for their children's well-being. Consequently, young mothers find it difficult to voice their feelings and experiences about motherhood, if they do not endorse the dominant view espoused by the 'good enough' mother, since any alternative views are frowned on (Ireland, 1993; Nicolson, 1993; Miller, 2005). Thus, the dream of the ideal mother is upheld by the hesitance of young mothers to express their feelings. For example, instances of frustration, resentment and negative feelings (like anger) are not regarded as maternal features. Nicolson (1993) criticises these theories as reinforcing patriarchy, instructing the daily functioning of women in such a way that accommodates and strengthens the notions of male domination.

Correspondingly, Kruger (2006) and Long (2009) challenge the notion of motherhood being situated against the background of a dominant ideology, as they contend that cultural views and beliefs make motherhood an extremely challenging experience. Moreover, other researchers such as Ruddick (cited in O'Reilly, 2004, p. 6) observe that most young mothers are policed by the "gaze of others". Thus, the oppressive nature of motherhood is reinforced by these ideologies of an 'all-encompassing mother', with young mothers often under the gaze of those who pathologise and marginalise those mothers like student/ working mothers who do not or cannot practise intensive motherhood. Such policing "gazes" prevent mothers from living their own lives outside motherhood, their own selfhood is denied and repressed, and they are also refused the

agency to determine their experience of mothering (Ireland, 1993; Glenn, 1994; O'Reilly, 2005).

Since the ideology of intensive mothering constructs motherhood as natural and universal, Glenn (1994) challenges this as oppressive in describing women based on their mothering roles. Furthermore, based on the notion that mothering roles emerge from socio-political and cultural contexts, and that these aspects shape and construct the meaning women attach to motherhood, it is evident that motherhood cannot be separated from the above-mentioned contexts. Besides, the notion of motherhood is fluid and never static, due to the fact that the understanding of motherhood is based within time and context, constantly reshaped in reaction to the fluctuation of socio-political, economic and cultural contexts.

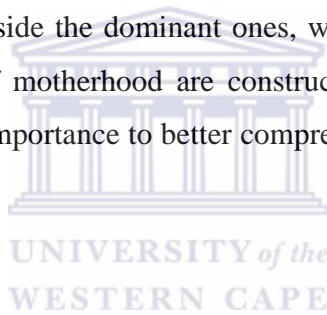
#### **2.4 Competing ideologies of motherhood**

Glenn (1994) challenges the ideology of intensive mothering as oppressive in that it constructs motherhood as a universal experience for women. This essentialist notion does not take into account the diversity of women's mothering experiences and the influence of the power structure within social contexts framing motherhood (Kaplan, 1992; Arendell, 2000; Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005).

In emphasising the diverse and subjective experiences of mothers, feminist writers have challenged motherhood theories that have essentialist leanings, arguing that the notion that accepts motherhood as biological and universal infringes on women's lives (Nicolson, 1993; Glenn, 1994; Hill Collins, 1994; White, Russo & Brown, 2001; Letherby, 2003; O'Reilly, 2004; Miller, 2005). The myths and assumptions around motherhood may be broken if mothers are given a chance to speak about their motherhood identities and experiences (Weaver & Ussher, 1997; Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005).

Miller (2005) focuses her attention on the diverse construction of motherhood, in her discussion of the various experiences of stay-at-home mothers who devote themselves to the upbringing of their children, as well as those of student/working mothers who experience guilt, as a result of simultaneously mothering while studying to prepare for a better career or holding down a job. Miller (2005) indicates that these motherhood ideologies are based on the experiences of white privileged women. Thus, when analysing the construct of motherhood, the notion of class, race and culture are considered.

Furthermore, Miller (2005) examines the situation of mothers living in the Third World context, where the construction of motherhood is determined by the mother's personal struggles on a daily basis. Therefore, there are alternative or competing ideologies of motherhood which exist alongside the dominant ones, which cannot be over considered when viewing how notions of motherhood are constructed. Reviewing motherhood in South Africa is of significant importance to better comprehend the experiences of student mothers at UWC.



## **2.5 Motherhood in South Africa**

Scholarship on motherhood in South Africa demonstrates the promotion of the ideology of the good and self-sacrificing mother who is regarded as static and unchangeable (Jeannes, 2002; Kruger, 2003; Long, 2009). In a critical review of research on young mothers in the South African context, Macleod (2001) notes a similarity in the use of the concept of good mothering in the literature emerging from Britain and the United States. Young mothers are generally viewed as the “pathologised other” if they do not conform to the ideology of the good and ideal mother (Macleod, 2001, p. 493). Similarly, other studies in the United States, New Zealand and the United Kingdom note that young mothers are still being stigmatized and marginalized through social exclusion and welfare dependency (Wilson & Huntington, 2005).

It is noted that much research in local context has focused on mothers and children who are considered to be at risk. For example, areas that appear to be well researched in South Africa are teenage pregnancies which are viewed in a negative light and considered to be assumed to be problematic and HIV positive mothers (Macleod, 2001; Kruger, 2006; Long, 2009;). Feminist critiques of the studies on 'problem motherhood' argue that much of the research on motherhood does not sufficiently take into cognisance the issues of race, class, culture and gender, apart from delving into the subjective and diverse experiences of mothers. The studies were based on Western motherhood ideologies in order to make their assumptions on what constitutes good mothering (Kruger, 2006; Long, 2009).

## **2.6 Young motherhood and parenting**

Being a young mother is considered to be a challenging experience that may have adverse repercussions on a student mother in particular. Sommer et al. (1993) maintain that young student mothers are less ready to assume the role of parenting and that many are not well informed or confident about child development and upbringing. Research reveals that some young mothers may contemplate committing suicide due to their being overwhelmed by the unexpected challenges and concomitant feelings of depression (Leadbeater et al., 1996). Moreover, young fathers in this situation have been shown to resist assisting such mothers by neglecting their fatherhood responsibilities. Many men (young and old) appear reluctant to assume a fatherhood role and marriage rates have fallen dramatically (Hunter, 2006), which means that many women are parenting on their own. In the early 1990s, of the 22 000 children born in Chris Hani Baragwanath Hospital in Johannesburg, half of the mothers were unable to name and call on the support of the father (Morrell and Richter, 2006). In a KwaZulu-Natal survey, it was found that half of all the province's fathers do not have contact with their children (Lund, 2006). Consequently, young mothers are abandoned to take on the load of mothering independently although some grandparents and parents assist them in this role while they struggle to earn a living or pursue their studies (De Villiers et al., 2004).

In another local study, in the province of Mpumalanga, it was found that half of all fathers in the study did not support their children, whereas a quarter of the children had no contact with their fathers at all (Madhavan, 2008). The patterns of young father involvement in the lives of their children and their birth mothers is strongly raced and classed and, since poverty is itself heavily concentrated amongst black African people, it is poverty that exacts a major toll on black African fatherhood. A comparative study was conducted between white and black South African parents. Posel and Devey (2006) reveal that the outcome of this study was that only 40% of black South African fathers live with their children compared to 90% of white South African fathers who live with their children. In this context, black African fathers rarely assume their responsibilities as fathers (Roy, 2008).

Where young men do accept paternity and its accompanying responsibilities, the impact may be very challenging for young fathers from poor communities. In a study of 27 young black fathers in the Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal who lived in contexts of poverty, Swartz and Bhana (2009) showed how their lives changed dramatically with fatherhood. Anxiety about being a provider was the major burden (along with attempts to earn money), although there were also consequences for studying (much less time) and socialising (less ability to 'party' and see friends). Additional difficulties were posed by pressures to commit time and energy to childcare (including hospital visits), as well as seeing the child's mother (who was never the young father's wife and generally unlikely to be his life partner). Combining this parenting commitment and pursuing studies at the same time was generally not possible. Such studies bring a more empathetic perspective on young fathers highlighting how it is not only lack of interest but economic contexts that undermine their fathering capacity.

## **2.7 Young parenting and education**

Research on young parents who are students or school-going is a growing area of knowledge production. The literature on early pregnancy and parenting in school contexts is far larger than that on parenting in tertiary educational settings and, while it does not speak directly to the situation of parents who are students at universities, it does bring some insight into the complex situation of being both a parent and engaged in education. The issue of young motherhood and education has been more accounted for internationally than in Africa (Helge, 1989; Van Vuuren, 1990; De Villiers, 1991; McGurk, 1993; Creatsas, 1993; Olivier, 1996; Ornstein & Levine, 1997; Chevalier & Viitanen, 2001; Pillow, 2004).

The study of Chevalier and Viitanen (2001) in the United Kingdom context reveals that the probability of post-compulsory education has been reduced by between 12 - 24% due to early motherhood. The results of this study reveal that early motherhood may cause long-term effects on the future of young mothers, leading to a situation where abject poverty passes from one generation to another. Furthermore, Chevalier and Viitanen (2001) also demonstrated that early motherhood may be detrimental to young mothers as it may lead to serious social problems, including school 'drop outs', poor parenting, and negative rapport with partners, friends and family, to name but a few.

However, if policy makers focus on assisting student mothers to succeed in their education, these negative consequences of early motherhood may be prevented. To this effect, South Africa has used diverse strategies to better understand the needs and situation of student mothers, as both The National Gender Summit (2001) and the African National Congress's Policy Framework for Education and Training (1994) have supported studies on understanding and challenging gender inequalities in education.

Thus, the concern for student mothers is evident in South Africa, and global attention has been accorded to student and school-going mothers (Khupiso, 2006). Research in this area is growing progressively and debates have risen among scholars (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989; Drake, 2001; Macleod, 2001; Pillow, 2003; 2006).

In South Africa, Grant and Hallman (2006) and Mokgalabone (1999) showed that situations relating to pregnancies may lead to studying disturbances. Pillow (2004) found that many teen mothers return to school following having their babies, determined to complete their studies for the sake of their babies. However, the student mothers' difficulties in coping with schooling is not only attributable to the burden of childcare, but also to the fact that their parents are too 'disappointed' to take any study plans seriously once the girls have children (Schultz, 2001: 598).

Quite similar to the case of South Africa is the United States as research by the United States Department of Education (1992) demonstrates and, as noted by Kaufman et al. (2001), the main reason for girls dropping out of school is early pregnancy and young parenting. It may sometimes prove to be a burden for young mothers to continue with their studies, especially for those living in unstable home environments. The study also reveals that there is lack of support for and an inadequate understanding of the condition of student mothers, while peer and parental pressures often cause depression in the young mothers (Arlington Public School, 2004). Even more pressing for these young mothers are the discourses that have been developed surrounding young mothering and the effects of mothering on their educational experiences (Pillow, 2004).

Pillow (2004) elaborates on the discourse of responsibility that she suggests is based on the argument that obtaining an education is no longer a right for young mothers but something that these young women 'owe' society, if they are not to be welfare dependent and a burden to the taxpayer (Pillow, 2004). In many situations, young mothers are subjected throughout their lives to greater risks of socio-economic disadvantage than those who delay childbearing until their twenties. These young mothers are generally less

educated and tend to have bigger families, with higher levels of extra-marital unwanted births (McDowell, 2003).

Consequently, policies aimed at encouraging young mothers to proceed with their studies in a career-oriented way may be a constructive strategy in helping to decrease the rate of early motherhood and its consequences on a long-term basis. According to the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights, Act 108/1996, Section 29, education is a human right of everybody. Therefore, it is unlawful to deny young mothers their right to continue with their education when they are ready to do so (UNESCO, 2003). In 2000, the Gender Equity Commission reported to the Ministry of Education in South Africa that it had received some complaints from young mothers regarding their treatment in schools. Their complaints indicated the denial of class attendance (Ministry of Education, 2000). Pillow (2004) describes the “discourse of contamination” which stipulates that young mothers are immoral and may not be a good example to their peers which appears to be a strong part of the experience of young mothers at South African schools (see for example, Bhana et al., 2008, 2010). On the same issue, Wolpe et al. (1997) reported that some school committees in South Africa were time and again reluctant to allow pregnant girls to attend classes, since they may set a ‘bad example’ to the other girls. However, the law stipulates that pregnant and mothering mothers should not be excluded from schools (Lee-Rife, 2002). The act of encouraging them to study is viewed by Bhana et al. (2008) as largely theoretical and not put into practice, as educational institutions tend to discourage student mothers from proceeding with their education.

The Forum for African Women Educationalists has endeavoured since 1992 to uphold ‘education for all’ by employing substantial actions, funding and restructuring policies. The change of policies excluding young mothers from resuming their education became effective after a round table conference (in 1992), where ministers of education in a number of countries were lobbied to alter the policies on young mothers and their education.



In Malawi, for instance, since 1995 young mothers have been allowed by the education department to continue their education after childbirth (Monsen, 1998). However, it has been reported that the processing of applications for readmission often takes more than a year. This delay constitutes a setback for these girls who are already battling with community pressure to marry rather than to continue with their education.

According to Bhana et al. (2008; 2010) the policy scheme of South Africa has been geared towards retaining young mothers in schools, as school-going mothers are today highly considered in the education system in South Africa (South African Schools Act, 1996). Besides retaining young mothers in mainstream schooling, a child support grant is available for single mothers. As a complementary measure to existing policies, the Department of Education has implemented compulsory life orientation classes in schools at all grade levels, and teachers work hand-in-hand with young mothers. These classes are meant to equip the students with broad life-skills, which include sexuality and reproductive health (Khupiso, 2006).

The Gauteng education department has also declared placing early pregnancy at the top of its agenda, after some schools recorded the highest rate of pregnancies in all the provinces (Khupiso, 2006). Meanwhile research has shown that despite the implementation of policies to retain young mothers in schools internationally, including in South Africa, schools have still fallen short of implementing the policy, with gaps and loopholes abounding in the provision of education to young mothers (Pillow, 2006; Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Bhana et al., 2008; Panday et al., 2010). As such, reviewing studies on gender and education is an important component in this study and will be dealt with in the following section.

## **2.8 Gender and education**

. Pressure from a school or campus environment, as well as from peers, negatively affects the academic performance of young mothers. As a result, early childbearing often disrupts the studies of many young mothers who drop out of universities /schools and are reluctant to return, even after giving birth (Theron & Dunn, 2006).

In the context of the United States, studies reveal that Arlington Public School (2004) exacerbates the dilemma of young mothers as they face overwhelming challenges. It is reported that pressure from parents and peers constitute an enormous challenge for young mothers to handle who are trying to manage their dual role of simultaneously taking care of their babies and also dedicating sufficient time to their academic work (Arlington Public School, 2004). Similarly, a survey in some South African schools reveals that young mothers are often stigmatised by their peers and teachers. This stressful situation usually plagues young mothers and may result in poor academic performance, since they are hurt psychologically (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Bhana et al., 2008). In this regard, in order to prepare student mothers psychologically before they resume studies, providing counselling on how they can deal with stigma and at the same time cope with their studies is vital. From the same study, it emerges that teachers do not handle student mothers adequately, tending to regard their situation as a private issue. It was also noted that teachers might need guidance and special training in order to be sensitive towards young mothers, to motivate and support them academically (Chigona & Chetty, 2007; Bhana et al., 2008).

Grant and Hallman's (2006) research, carried out in the South African context, demonstrates that early childbearing often marks the end of young mothers' education. However, a young mother's capability to manage the logistics and finances associated with concurrent mothering and studying may play a major role in determining whether or

not a student mother is able to continue with her studies successfully (Kaufman et al., 2001).

A policy structuring took place in 1996 in South Africa, when the policy formally gave logistic and financial space to pregnant girls and student mothers to continue with their studies (Grant & Hallman, 2006). It should be noted that socio-economic and cultural issues may also hinder young girls from pursuing their studies, besides pregnancy and early childbearing. Some parents are culturally trapped and find the education of their daughters, especially after they have become young mothers, to be needless for the family (Swainson et al., 1998).

It is unfortunate that, despite the legislation in this country stipulating that young mothers may return to school after giving birth, there are some schools that ignore this ruling. While the pregnant girls are excluded from these schools, the fathers of their children are allowed to continue their schooling.

Moreover, most educational institutions justify their failure to adhere to the law by designating the ethics behind gender inequalities as a societal norm. However, the law guarantees the rights of student mothers to an education, just as it does their peers. According to Pillow (2006), in order to resolve this issue that student mothers face and to give them the education to which they are entitled, their education needs to be depoliticised.

## **2.9 Mothers at South African educational institutions**

Intrinsically, being a student requires the acquisition of knowledge in any educational institution. Studies are generally viewed as unconnected to the errands of mothering, whereas the probability is that an educated young mother is more likely to provide a good upbringing for her child, with good prospects for the future (Bailey, 2000). Research on student mothers in South Africa depicts them as struggling to cope with their mothering

roles, within a stigmatised society of inadequate welfare provision (Bhana et al., 2008; Chigona & Chetty, 2007). In this context, the concerns are diverse and multifaceted. In addition, questions arise whether student mothers can adequately provide for themselves in their mothering or whether the state should provide them with sufficient support.

At some African universities, a study was conducted on gender dynamics and gender activists displayed issues centred on reproductive work and the academic world. This study disclosed that student mothers and female academics are negatively affected by their dual role of mothering/family responsibilities and academic work. Consequently, by engaging concurrently as mothers and students/ academics, they may not be effective in one of the roles or both (Tamale & Oloka-Onyango, 2000).

Notwithstanding the various demands of motherhood, a study carried out by Gordon (1992) reveals that an increased number of women are pursuing their studies to greater heights. In addition, it finds that access to education decreases women's feelings of failure and improves their self-esteem. This is one of the reasons why women worldwide tend to have fewer children, so that they may be economically proactive in spite of their motherhood obligations (Phoenix ; Woolett & Lloyd, 1991). In this respect, in most poor African countries, non-governmental and aid organisations have put great effort into young women's education, in order to improve their status and standard of living. Furthermore, these organisations have played a major role in sensitising young girls and women to prioritise their education and to develop careers, by avoiding early pregnancies and to bear fewer children at a later stage, when they are well prepared to assume mothering responsibilities adequately (Johnson-Hanks, 2006).

In the context of South Africa, the outcome of Pillow's (2006) study reveals that merely encouraging young mothers to proceed with their studies does not alone assist them in succeeding academically. Before young mothers resume their studies, it is vital that they have support to prepare them for their dual role. The study observes that, as young mothers are still developing psychologically, the demands of studying and mothering may lie very heavily on them; Theron & Dunn, 2006).

Cunningham and Boulton (1996) also emphasize in a study carried out in South Africa in 1991 that 50% of pregnant young girls did not return to school after delivering their babies. They argue that this was due to the lack of provision in schools to facilitate the resumption of the girls' education. Although this study was conducted in the context of the 1990s, it seems that some schools and some teachers are not as supportive of a return to school as they would be expected to be as a result of the policy (Bhana et al., 2008; 2010). Following the implementation of the new policies, the question arises as to how far measures have been put in place to ensure that young mothers reintegrate after delivery. Most young mothers may encounter problems of social isolation and lack of adequate social support.

### **2.10 Motherhood, social isolation and social support**

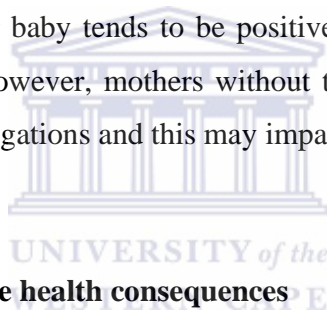
Family, friends and educational institutions constitute the network of social support for young mothers. This network has been described as one of the means through which young mothers can be supported as they adapt to the demands of the switch to motherhood (Passino et al., 1993). Further, the success and wellbeing of student mothers depends on their social support network (Prodomidis, et al., 1994).

Studies indicate that student mothers may feel lonely and isolated from their peers and family, and that they may experience lack of support since the work load of motherhood is time consuming, with any remaining time used for academic purposes (Hudson et al., 2000; Yampolskaya & Greenbaum, 2002; Cronin, 2003).

During the course of their pregnancy and while studying full-time, student mothers are often faced by issues of isolation. These issues may lead to their being isolated from their peers and consequently to their studies being disrupted (Bezuidenhout, 1998).

A study carried on unmarried young mothers demonstrates that they receive support from their peers and family (Tanga & Uys, 1996). Other studies reveal loneliness, depression and low self-esteem among a group of young mothers (Barnet et al., 1996). Young women from poor areas were reported to suffer from, amongst others, physical and mental health (Prodromis et al., 1994). Thus, emphasis is laid on family and peer support, the lack of which may lead to depression and social isolation, apart from any other severe negative consequences for young mothers (Van Cleve & Levisen, 1998).

In studies by Ruchala and James (1997) on mature mothers, it is noted that this group of mothers have self-assurance and greater knowledge in child upbringing and taking good care of children. According to a study carried by Nicols and Zwelling (1997), a social support network is very important for the young mothers, as the young mother's anxious anticipation of the birth of her baby tends to be positive when her support system also gladly anticipates the baby. However, mothers without this supportive network may be burdened with motherhood obligations and this may impact negatively on their health.



### **2.11 Motherhood and negative health consequences**

As mentioned earlier, student mothers encounter feelings of overload and depression as a consequence of trying to fulfil gendered role expectations and established motherhood ideologies (Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Wallis & Price, 2003). In a study on the responses of women to traditional gender roles, Vincent et al. (2004) reveal that mature mothers do not necessarily challenge either these gendered roles or the fixed understanding of the family. As their underlying ideology lays emphasis on motherhood being the sole and exclusive role of women, these mature mothers believe that men are excluded from childbearing activities.

Consequently, due to time constraints and the efforts of student mothers to accommodate their mothering and family roles, these women become depressed as they are not able to cope with or complete their studies. This situation may be noticeable, as student mothers

strain in working a double day academic work as well as domestic work involving the numerous challenges of childcare and household responsibilities (Wallis & Price, 2003).

In order to combine academic work with the demanding responsibilities of motherhood, women are forced to explore various coping strategies, some of which may result in negative health consequences for them. Though student mothers reported psychological benefits in the form of greater satisfaction from study and prospective careers, these benefits are offset against the double burden imposed by work and home responsibilities (Newell, 1996). This double burden can result in role conflict, role overload or lead to symptoms reflecting stressful daily routines which manifest in illness (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Newel, 1996). Role conflict refers to the situation where the execution of one role is frustrated by involvement in another role (Wallis & Price, 2003). Role overload refers to the inability to perform all role expectations in the time available, which necessitates a compromise in some roles (Naidoo & Jano, 2002).

Porter (2006, p. 56) notes that most women are hampered by career development because of the “maternal wall”, which affects mothers in various aspects of their academic work, with pregnancy, maternity leave and the constant demands of child-rearing inevitably causing them to be away from their studies and other professional pursuits (Porter, 2006). Aliko (2003) contends that this results in employed mothers being reproached on two fronts by gendered cultural and social expectations. They are labelled aberrant, firstly, as mothers for not performing the ideal mothering role and, secondly, as students for not being sufficiently committed to studentship. Thus, Hughes and Galisky (1994) note that women’s employment is too susceptible to the needs of the family and, consequently, often only partially realized.

According to a study in Hong Kong by Tang and Tang (2001), internalising gender roles may have a negative impact on the academic performance of student mothers, who are engaged in multiple roles which may lead them to be distressed psychologically. Although a choice is implied, there are negative consequences for each choice they make that does not conform to the gendered role. Stigmatisation can lead to social and

psychological consequences, as well as having negative health consequences. Student mothers may find their dual role very challenging and may be guilty of not being 'good enough' mothers or good students.

## **2.12 Conclusion**

On the whole, the dominant ideology of motherhood continues to posit that the roles of women essentially involve meeting the needs of others at the expense of their own needs outside of motherhood. The literature presents the various challenges faced by young mothers and the impact of these motherhood ideologies on them, creating feelings of guilt, role strain and depression. The demands of finding achievement and self satisfaction in their mothering roles, while at the same time investing themselves in their studies and careers may create interpersonal conflict within the family and depression for young mothers, hence affecting their health.

Nevertheless, women may have to make choices in relation to whether to be a mother or not, whether to remain a working mother and, then, how to balance study demands with motherhood responsibilities. Mothers are not passive recipients of these motherhood ideologies. Even though these choices are placed within their socio-cultural and political context, young mothers remain influenced by the dominant notions of motherhood within these contexts.

The background knowledge around the young parenting and student mother is captured in this section. Basing on the reviewed literature, it is imperative for young mothers to be provided with adequate support to enable them to complete their studies successfully. Furthermore, the need to provide young mothers with life skills also arose in the literature as a means to enable young mothers to manage their challenges in the course of pursuing their studies (Olivier, 2000).

The literature reviewed in this chapter also highlights the deplorable attitudes of teachers and peers towards students, including the issue of stigma experienced by both married and unmarried young mothers in the educational setting (Bloem, 2000 ; Olivier, 2000).



This chapter has interrogated the construct of the student mother and other notions around motherhood based on the theoretical and psychological explanations. The various frameworks that shape motherhood are not static, but change over time and differ from one setting and culture to another.

Further, the numerous and conflicting perceptions of student mothers impact on their lives, creating role strain and feelings of guilt. Student mothers want to find fulfilment and satisfaction in their roles as mothers and as students, but simultaneously have to invest all of themselves in the development of their children and meeting study demands. These demands can generate interpersonal conflict within families and cause great emotional distress for mothers. This affects their studies as well as their psychological and physical well-being. The next chapter will focus on the research methodology employed in this study.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This section presents the research methodology for this study. The aims and objectives of this study are presented, followed by a clarification of the feminist research methodological framework in which this research is located. Details of the participants who were selected are represented an account of the selection procedure. A description of the data collection technique and an explanation of the method used to analyze the data follow. A reflection on the researcher's role in the research process, an important consideration in feminist and qualitative research, is provided. A discussion of the role of the validity and reliability of qualitative research is presented, and the chapter then concludes with the ethical considerations for this study.

### **3.2 Aims and objectives**

Broadly, this study aims at exploring parenting experiences among a group of young women students at UWC, and to comprehend the experiences of student mothers as parents in the university context. Research questions focused on student mothers' experiences, in order to unpack their subjective and interpersonal experiences of being a mother and studying at the same time.

Questions that were addressed in the research include the following:

- What are participants' experiences of balancing the load of pregnancy and parenting with their study demands?
- What are the reported impacts of motherhood on participants' studies and other aspects of their social lives?
- What role does support or the lack of support from partners and others play in participants' experiences?

Since this study was aimed at exploring and understanding the subjective experiences of motherhood among female students, it has adopted a feminist qualitative approach. In order to situate this study within a particular methodological framework, the two methodologies, feminist and qualitative, are briefly unpacked, informed by both approaches. This framework is concerned with describing and understanding human behaviour in its natural setting, with an emphasis on understanding and interpreting from the participants' perspective.

### **3.3 Feminist research methodology**

Feminism can be defined as a commitment to explore and comprehend the reasons for the perpetuation of women's oppression, in all its forms; and devotion to work individually and collectively in everyday life in order to end all forms of oppression (Maguire, 1987). Feminist research therefore stands on the premises of addressing these threefold issues, namely, the exploitation or oppression of women; a dedication to work as individuals and as a team on a day-to-day basis to bring to an end all kinds of oppression; and a commitment to unveil and comprehend what causes and perpetuates oppression. Shefer and Boonzaier (2006) join the school of thought which argues that there is no one feminist research methodology, but acknowledge that some recurrent principles underlie most forms of feminist research. Feminist research has developed from the reaction of women to the absence of their voices in traditional science, and it has argued the importance of research based on women's own knowledge and experience. The present researcher adopted this approach to redress patriarchy in research by highlighting women's voice and experiences. This approach falls into the feminist standpoint.

This study enabled student mothers to tell their stories in their own voice, and allowed the researcher to open up a dialogue with the participants. This approach opposes using the participants as objects of study. Despite the fact that mothering contexts differ, the researcher utilised an approach that enabled her own motherhood experiences to play a role, in creating a relationship with participants, considering the fact that the present researcher is also a young student mother. As such, it was expected in this study that there would be an overlap of experiences between the present researcher and those of some participants.

Feminist research is often considered to be a useful tool in order to eliminate the silences, invisibility and oppression that occur as a result of women's unequal social position. Through feminist methodology, women's experiences are situated at the core of the study, as it prioritises women and reaffirms their subjective experiences and perspectives (Klein, 1983; Mackinnon, 1994; Reinhartz, 1994; Maynard, 1994). The use of in-depth interviews in the study enabled women to vocalise on their own behalf. The present researcher argues that by exploring the individual stories of the young women interviewed, the various challenges of motherhood among those who are also actively engaged in tertiary studies may emerge. This methodology also called for the researcher's reflexivity, a key component of feminist research methodology.

### **3.4 Qualitative approach**

According to Stake (1994), a qualitative research design enables a detailed analysis of a small group of participants, as in the case of this study with UWC student mothers, where individual nuances and common subject matter relating to young mothers' experiences were presented by young women living in the context of South Africa. The reason for opting for a qualitative instead of a quantitative design is clearly articulated by Johnson (1999), who argues that the quantitative design does not present an explicit feedback of the respondents as is the case in a qualitative design.

Feminist researchers have tended to prefer qualitative research methods because they allow for an in-depth and rich examination of women's lives and experiences (Eagle, 1999). Thus, a qualitative approach informed by feminist research principles will be adopted, specifically employing semi-structured interviews in the collection and analysis of the narratives of participants.

The qualitative paradigm is suitable because it endeavours to investigate meaning and experience. The strength of qualitative research lies in its ability to access subjectivity and so convey a sense of individual experience, whilst also highlighting social, political and cultural contexts (Parker, 1994). An attempt shall be made here to present subjective accounts of motherhood towards the goal of identifying the challenges that mothers who are also students of higher education may face.

Qualitative research also pays particular attention to the social world within which the study focuses, considering what happens before and after the action in focus (Neuman, 1997). The study draws on this perspective in the process of exploring the social world of the student mothers at UWC, and in the construction of the meaning from their gendered subjective experiences. The experiences are explored within the contexts of student mothers' university and social lives.

### **3.5 Participants**

The study was carried out at UWC, Bellville South, and Cape Town. Eight young female students (aged between 18-30 years), who are parenting while studying, were identified from the larger population of undergraduate and postgraduate students. Participants were drawn using a snowball method and participants were all South African citizens – predominantly coloureds and blacks, given the student population at UWC.<sup>1</sup> Participants were isiZulu-, isiXhosa- and Afrikaans-speaking. As mentioned earlier, the participants'

---

<sup>1</sup> According to South African labour legislation, whites, coloureds, blacks and Asians were and still are the various races in South Africa referred to as such for purposes of redressing and fighting against racial discrimination. Section 3 of the current labour legislation stipulates equality in employment.

ages ranged from eighteen to thirty years. The participants include both married and single student mothers (five single student mothers and three married student mothers). All are full-time students, comprising both undergraduates and post graduates from various faculties at UWC including health sciences, social sciences, Arts, Education and Economics and management sciences. They are all first time mothers with children under the age of five years. Seven out of eight participants breastfed their babies and seven out of eight participants had unplanned pregnancies.



**Table 1: Demographic Details of Participants**

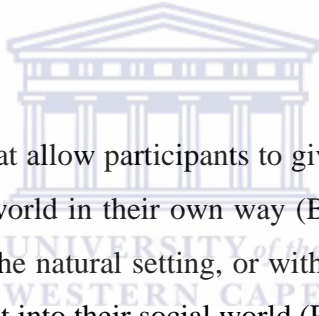
Initial information	1 Nicole <sup>2</sup>	2 Doris	3 Lynnsha	4 Nina	5 Gladys	6 Nadia	7 Marie	8 Sylvia
Mother's age	25	18	28	22	27	20	26	25
Race	Black	Black	Coloured	Coloured	Coloured	Coloured	Black	Black
Home language	Xhosa	Zulu	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Afrikaans	Xhosa	Xhosa
Marital status	wedded	Single	Wedded	single	wedded	single	single	single
Level of study	Postgrad	Undergrad	Postgrad	Undergrad	Postgrad	Undergrad	Postgrad	Postgrad
Age of baby	1 year	1 year	1 year 6 months	9 months	11 months	1 year 5 months	1 year 8 months	2 years
Baby's health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health	Good Health
Type of delivery	Natural	Natural	Natural	Caesarean	Caesarean	Natural	Natural	Natural
Feeding method	Breastfed	Bottle feeding	Breastfed	Breastfed	Breastfed/ Bottle	Breastfed/ Bottle	Breastfed/ Bottle	Breastfed
Pregnancy Intended/Unintended	unintended	Unintended	Intended	unintended	unintended	unintended	unintended	unintended
Living arrangement	Husband	Boy friend	Husband	Partner	Husband	Parent	Partner	Parent

<sup>2</sup> Pseudonyms are used to ensure the anonymity of participants.

### **3.6 Data collection**

Given the broader qualitative methodological framework of the study, the researcher collected data through in-depth individual interviews. Detailed oral reports on the parenting experiences of the participants were collected from a sample of eight respondents. In order to guide the audio-recorded interviews, a semi-structured interview schedule was employed (See Appendix 1). Throughout the interviews, biographical materials and in-depth accounts of pregnancy, birth and parenting information were obtained. Participants spoke about their experiences, their emotional responses, as well as their social context (Nicholson, 1998).

#### **Interviews**



Interviews are research tools that allow participants to give an account of their views and experiences and to define the world in their own way (Banister et al., 1994). Interviews should be carried out close to the natural setting, or within the interviewee's own space, as this may provide more insight into their social world (Plummer, 1983).

Babbie & Mouton (2001) argues that interviews are suitable tools to use for research. Interviews, provided by the participants, help to construct the data needed for an exhaustive and comprehensive insight into the research area. Recording emotions, experiences and opinions or feelings are some of the purposes of interviews, rather than capturing precise or straight-forward responses. The advantage of using qualitative research is that it allows the use of interviews which give participants the freedom to discuss sensitive issues. Interviews, when managed well. The detailed accounts given by participants (e.g., of their emotions and views) throughout the interviews can provide invaluable insight into the subject of the research. In addition, interviews also provide interviewees with a platform to elaborate their views and unearth what they consider as salient issues.



Interviewing offers researchers access to people's ideas and memories, and in the event where the researcher has omitted some point of interest and concern in the previous interview, a follow-up interview may be organised with the participant (Smith, 1995). In-depth interviews tend to exist beyond the limits of questions and answers, allowing participants to reproduce their experiences more than they might have if they had not been interviewed (Oakley, 1990). Accounts ingrained in the realities of the lives of the participants can be brought to light by the use of detailed interviews (De Vault, 1999). Participants' enthusiasm to talk was also facilitated by the interviewer's receptiveness and attentiveness (Plummer, 1983). Accordingly, the interview method is the most appropriate and accessible means of obtaining information that is personally sensitive and revealing, and for which personalized questioning is required. As a qualitative method, it can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind social-psychological phenomena about which little is yet known (Creswell, 2003).

### **3.7 Research procedures**

The eight participants were informed about the nature and objectives of the research. They were also informed about the interviewer's credentials, in order to reassure them that they were interviewed by a researcher who possesses the skills required to facilitate the interview, and who was committed to the ethical obligations implied by the research. According to Krueger (1994), providing sufficient background information to participants serves to minimize tacit assumptions about the nature of the questions, which in turn reduces the possibility of participants providing responses on faulty assumptions.

Participants signed a consent form (see Appendix 2). They were assured about the researcher's strict adherence to ethical considerations of anonymity, confidentiality, and the respondents' right to leave the interview and not to answer queries that they deemed sensitive. Participants were interviewed at a convenient time and location on campus, with follow-up interviews conducted for the purposes of discussing any novel challenges they were encountering, and to see if there had been any developments in their

circumstances since the first interview. A detailed, one-on-one interview was done privately. With the permission of participants, all interviews were audio-recorded, and the researcher also wrote down notes during the interviews. The interviews took between sixty and ninety minutes. The use of an audio-recorder does not hinder the process, but rather allows the researcher to engage in discussion without interruption or distraction. The interviews were carried out in a comfortable conversational way, with reflective and clarifying communication techniques employed to gain detailed accounts of the young women's life experiences of motherhood. Every interview was followed by a debriefing session with the interviewee. It was during the debriefing session that the young women described their own experiences. All the original recordings were stored in a safe and secure place.

### **3.7 Approach to data analysis: thematic analysis**

Boyatzis (1998) characterises thematic analysis as a process, firstly, relating to the observation of the pattern in the information provided and being able to make sense of it; secondly, defining or describing the pattern in other words, classifying or encoding the process; and thirdly, interpreting or analyzing the pattern. The guidelines used in this study can be described as becoming immersed in the data, listing emerging and recurring themes and analyzing emerging themes.

A thematic analysis was utilised to understand the content of the interviews (Harding, 1986). McMillan and Schumader (1997, p. 533) describe thematic analysis as the presentation of persistent concerns, with the researcher making a selective analysis of the various aspects of the actions of human beings that present the frequency of themes. Hence the themes provide an explanation of the situation.

Qualitative thematic analysis enables the highlighting of key themes; this process involves an initial stage of systematic scrutiny and arranging interview transcripts. This was followed by synthesizing and interpreting the descriptive data (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). It involved concurrent flows of activity, all of which entailed data reduction, as the

mass of collected data was separated into manageable units, and interpretation, as the researcher brings meaning and insight to the words of the participants in the study (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

The analytic procedures adopted in the present study were based on Marshall and Rossman's (1995) non-linear model for analysing qualitative data. Marshall and Rossman (1995) warn against "tightly structured, highly organised analyzing strategies which tend to filter out the unusual, the serendipitous" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 111). They suggest that this model strikes a balance between efficiency considerations and analytic flexibility.

During the phase of transcribing the interviews, the researcher made sense of the data collected by organising it (Mouton, 2000). This process engaged the researcher as she devised information based on the respondents' feedbacks. The transcribed audio-recorded data was analysed thematically, acknowledging the participants' experience. This process aimed at authenticating the correct interpretation of the data.

Soon after each interview, the recorded data was transcribed. The words of the respondents were used in the transcripts. In order to ensure anonymity, the participants' names were altered.

The use of transcribed interview summaries enabled the researcher to analyse the interviews in order to create a list of emergent concepts or themes (Mouton, 2001). While the researcher was bringing ideas or experiences together, themes were identified which are often insignificant because they were viewed alone (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The themes presented some similarities in terms of young motherhood experiences among the eight participants (Denscombe, 1998).

In order to illustrate the responses of the interviewees to each theme, a qualitative data matrix was drawn up (Hall & Hall, 2004), by presenting a summary of the interviews.

From the interviews, diverse themes emerged and codes were used to identify such themes deemed significant by the researcher. A list of themes was created through the use of transcripts in coding and also peer review.

Some elucidations and clarifications on the themes that emerged from the data were given by participants to the researcher after the interviews (Denscombe, 1998). Besides, throughout the study, the respondents provided the researcher with incessant feedback. These sessions of feedback aimed at accurately capturing the young mothers' voices

The transcripts in this study were analysed for themes relating to meaning embedded within the lived experiences of participants, underlying values and social and cultural conditions that shaped their lives, their constructions of motherhood and its impact on their working lives. The analyzing of data was conducted within the theoretical framework of social constructionism. This framework holds that identities are not fixed, but are always in the process of being created in relationships with others. Therefore, the society creates identities in the lives of men and women and there a great influence of power relations, class, history, gender and culture on our lives (Parker et al., 1995). We should take into account the many ways that people negotiate their lives, exploring the history of this and what it means to the people concerned.

Through the process of thematic analysis, the set of behaviours and experiences that are defined for mothers by their cultural contexts was uncovered and deconstructed. Deconstruction refers to “the processes of reading which unravels the way categories are used to suppress different perceptions and behaviours” (Parker et al., 1995, p. 4). In this study, motherhood and gender were identified as such categories. In the thematic analysis of the experiences of the participants, the underlying assumptions that hold these categories in place were revealed.

### 3.7.1 Becoming engrossed in the data

Smith (1995) notes that the meaning of the content and complexities of the research topic is not transparent from the transcripts. Rather, the researcher has to maintain a close interactive and interpretive engagement with the transcripts, in order to understand what the participant is saying. The researcher immersed herself in the data by reading and re-reading through the transcripts many times, and this was an important part of the analysis process. During this reading process, she made notes of emerging themes or items relevant to the study, which Boyatzis (1998, p. 4) refers to as “seeing something notable and making sense of it.”

### 3.7.2 Recording rising and frequent themes

The next step involved listing those words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs which stood out as meaningful, and then developing them into possible themes or patterns. This process entailed searching across and within the transcripts for items that stood out as meaningful, and that were recurring and could be sorted into themes. At this point the data was re-read and the transcripts were re-examined for material relating to each theme, with these themes further refined whenever necessary. Themes were colour-coded and then extracted from the transcript so that all occurrences of each could be put together. During this process, Silverman’s (2000) cautionary note about the disadvantage of grouping items together into categories that could divert attention away from uncategorized activities was noted. Thus, information that fell outside of the themes that were identified was explored in terms of whether it could further add to the depth and richness of the analysis.

### 3.7.3 Exploring emerging themes

In examining and understanding the lived experiences of the participants, their narratives were analysed and unravelled to explore the meanings that they attach to their experiences. Furthermore, the present researcher examined their actions as mothers, attempting to uncover the layers of the context they used in their construction of motherhood. In the process of analysis, the view that was taken was that the narratives provided by the participants represented a piece of their identities and were authentic representations of experiences. It was also taken into consideration that some of the knowledge and meanings generated were shaped by the interview context (Lewis & Nicholson, 1998). The themes were analysed or interpreted for meaning and understanding in terms of what was experienced, as well as how meaning was constructed and negotiated (Hayes, 2000).

### 3.8 Validity and reliability of the study

Within the paradigm of qualitative research, internal and external validity, reliability, objectivity and generalisability do not have the same functions (Babbie et al., 2003). Neuman (2003) notes that researchers employing qualitative methods of research emphasise validity by giving a true, balanced and objective societal report from the respondents who live and experience such life on a daily basis.

According to Cresswell and Miller (2000), the core concepts of credibility, transferability and dependability – all notions which ensure reliability – establish a link between the participant and its representation. A number of different methods, including interviews and participation, are used to document the findings of qualitative researchers in a holistic and reliable way. For instance, to ensure stability and reliability, observations are made systematically over a period of time by researchers. The rapport between the researcher

and the subject matter is considered by Neuman (2003) to be an evolving and growing process.

According to Creswell and Miller (2000), it is essential to verify the authenticity and accuracy of the results from both the participants' and researchers' points of views. The two scholars contend that this is what is meant by credibility. In other words, the researchers have to accurately deduce the participants' point of view and experiences (Creswell, 2003). Credibility is also achievable through triangulation, which means utilising a varied information outlook on a research (Janesick, 2000). Peer debriefing is one aspect of credibility (allowing participants in a research to verify the correctness of the information gathered and the accuracy of the deductions made). In qualitative research, the endpoint of the research is achieved through sufficient information and purposive sampling, which entails the maximisation of the data from various locations (Babbie, 2001). In Chapter Four of this study, the researcher connects the participants' experiences to various theoretical studies. The eight respondents in the research were specifically interviewed on their experiences of motherhood, since they were aware of the researcher's area of interest (Denscombe, 1998).

Another important notion in qualitative research is dependability, which means that if a study is carried out using the same respondents within the same framework, the account should be found. Nevertheless, it happens that the same respondent in a different time frame may not be within the same framework as before. Hence, in order to ensure dependability, a technique is used through a methodological approach to data collection and analysis (Babbie, 2001). Unclear recorded interviews have to be clarified to the researcher by the respondents.

In order to enrich the dependability, validity and reliability of the study, reflexivity was used. The present researcher recorded her own emotions and feelings in an academic journal, including her personal responses or thoughts during the research process (Hall & Hall, 2004). Thus, considerable insight into this research area was captured.

### **3.9 Ethical considerations**

The study was conscious of the sensitivity surrounding the issues of pregnancy and motherhood, as it was in part an investigation into sexuality and intimate interpersonal relationships. Efforts were made to avoid any unnecessary pain or negative feelings being raised among respondents.

All research participants had full rights of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were not asked to divulge any information that might infringe their constitutional right of privacy.

Participation in the research project was voluntary and participants were fully informed about the aims of the research. The participants were assured that they were free to quit the interview at any time during the process.

An informed consent form and a covering letter were provided to each participant. The research participants were fully informed of the project and asked to read and sign the contract of informed consent, which all did (see Appendix Two). This contract was a means to guarantee the appropriate protection and rights of the participants. Moreover, the informed consent form was a written statement pointing out that there would be no payment for participation in the research. It also gave consent for the use of a tape recorder during the interviews. As mentioned, the participants were given a draft of their interview transcript for comment. Therefore, transparency and debriefing were part of the ethical principles throughout the research. The research process aimed to protect the participants' dignity through not passing judgment on their viewpoints or the experiences they shared during the research project. Counselling and other support referrals were made available to all participants, in the event that they required these during or following the research process.



### **3.10 Self reflexivity**

Within the qualitative paradigm, the subjectivity of the researcher was acknowledged and indeed was understood as a positive contribution to the research findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Furthermore, the location of this study in feminism emphasizes young mothers' voices and the experiences of all parties involved, including the researcher. The researcher strongly believes that her subjectivity impacted on this research in numerous ways, as being a student mother herself she could relate to many experiences of the participants.

It is also noted that the common experiences shared by the researcher and the researched are considered by feminist theorists as the researcher's role of identification with the researched, and is a significant part of the study (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The reflection leads to objective thoughts on how to improve the insight of the study carried out. It allows researchers to present and analyse the feelings of the participants in the course of the study. As a result, researchers are able to grade themselves and to be aware both of their potentiality and of their challenges during the study. Moreover, the objectivity of the researchers can be viewed as the interview process is a co-construction by both the participant and the researcher. In other words, both parties are actively involved in the interview process.

In order to keep track of the reactions of the participants and their gestures as they express their experiences, a diary was used by the researcher. It is common practice for researchers to use research diaries to record all decisions taken during a particular study. As noted by Hall and Hall, (2004), it is common practice for researchers to write down ideas about conceptual insights, thus recording their feelings in their research diaries.

The researcher realized that she and the respondents shared both similarities and divergences of motherhood experiences. The researcher is a student and a mother of two children, which places her in a similar position to her respondents. The researcher thus

believes her position as a student mother enabled her to create a bond that ensured an interactive and smooth research process.

Initially, mothers in the study felt that young student mothers are generally regarded as promiscuous by society, since they have no husbands. The participants were keen to know the reasons why the present researcher was conducting this research. The researcher shared her intention or purpose for the study with the participants, in order to significantly facilitate the creation of a setting conducive for them to express their sentiments during the interview process. This process of interviews, which provided a comfortable platform for the participants to express their feelings, consequently elicited emotional responses.

More information about the relationship between participants and their babies was revealed through interviews. All the student mothers were grateful for participating in the research: they felt validated and fulfilled by the experience since it gave them an opportunity for their voices to be heard. Hence, they participants were very optimistic that other women would be empowered after they had read their transcripts.

The researcher played a significant role in the process of production and the interpretation of the data. In this regard, it has been a debate among feminists that women can best research on core factors related to their beliefs, values, racial identities and their subordination in society (Denscombe, 1998). As a student mother, the researcher managed to create a valuable bond between herself and participants. In addition, there were instances of shared mothering experiences between the researcher and the researched, in terms of being student and female in a heterosexual relationship. The data in this research is the outcome of the interaction between the researcher and the researched.

### **3.11 Conclusion**

This chapter presented the methodological framework for this research. The chapter makes it clear that this study is situated in a feminist and qualitative framework, in order to understand the participants' experiences of motherhood in educational institutions and, further, how they made sense of the world which acts upon them and on which they act in return. The following chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.



## **CHAPTER FOUR: STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES: BALANCING MOTHERHOOD AND ACADEMIC WORK**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents an analysis of participants' experiences of motherhood and their lives as conveyed during the interview process. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis as outlined in the previous chapter. The themes have been interpreted and discussed with the aim of understanding how this group of female students construct and experience motherhood within their social and cultural contexts, with a particular focus on how they balance the demands of academic work and that of parenting.

The findings show that student mothers in this sample faced a number of challenges within the university environment, at home and with respect to balancing these two areas of their lives. Reflecting back on the literature review, it became evident that there are some similarities but also differences between local studies and global studies on young mothers. For example, some studies carried out in the United States display the possibility for young mothers to attend separate schools/colleges, with counselling readily available to these young mothers. In South Africa, the situation is different as there are no separate schools or colleges for young mothers, who may carry on with their studies only in normal institutions of higher education (Pillow, 2004). Additionally, access to counselling for the student mothers is subsidiary and not specifically dedicated to their particular needs. The resumption of the young mother's studies depends on the financial capability of her family (Kaufman et al, 2001; Hallman & Grant, 2006).

Within an identified all-encompassing theme of inequality, gender differences impact powerfully on the experiences of these young mothers. As argued earlier, it is women who are still expected to take primary responsibility for children. Hence mothers and fathers do not have the same precondition of parenting and assuming household and family obligations. Consequently, the burden of child-rearing and caring tends to fall on

student mothers. Given the prevalence of patriarchy, men are highly positioned in society and therefore continue with fewer parenting responsibilities (Elvin-Nowak & Thompson, 2001).

It should be noted that most of the experiences of each participant are based on the concept of gendered inequality, and the constructs of their subjective meanings. Hence, the sub-themes are underpinned by the cross-cutting theme of gender inequality as intrinsic in the construct of motherhood and the mothering experiences of this particular group of participants.

The data is presented in two main themes with sub-themes emerging from the analysis of the participants' experiences of motherhood on their lives: these include the social constructions of motherhood and the experiences of being both a parent and studying.

#### **4.2 Social constructions of motherhood**

Studies on the perception of motherhood focus on how women construct the concept of motherhood and how this impacts on their lives within the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they live (Everingham, 1994; Hattery, 2001; Miller, 2005; O'Reil, 2004). Motherhood is multilayered, diverse, and continuously shaped by the particular historical, cultural and political needs of the society in which women mother. The society informs us what it means to be a mother, how a woman should mother and what behaviours are appropriate. The dominant ideology put forward in Western culture espouses a universal truth about a natural, forever self-sacrificing, good, sensitive, caring and nurturing mother (Arendell, 2000; Hattery, 2001; O'Reil, 2004). Under the theme of social constructions of motherhood, a number of sub-themes including: *motherhood as self-actualisation*, *motherhood as identity*, *mothers as nurturers* and *motherhood as self-sacrificing* were identified.

#### 4.2.1 Motherhood as self-actualisation

Motherhood was in many instances expressed as a medium for achieving existential meaning and purpose in life. This sentiment was expressed through notions of children providing ultimate happiness and fulfilment for women. Motherhood in this sense becomes a pursuit in its own right, as achieving identity for a woman is 'self-actualised'. Through childbearing, children become an extension of one's self in the actualisation process. Nicole, one of the participants, emphasised the significance of motherhood as a mode of self-actualisation in the following extract:

*I think having my baby is important for me and being a mother as a woman is what life is all about (Nicole,<sup>3</sup> 25, married, postgraduate student).*

*I just think it is important for me to extend myself by having someone who is not exactly like me, and has a major part of me ... I just want my life to be more than about my studies and my dream career. I want my life to be more about something else, maybe my life is to be about someone else and my baby will just carry on the legacy. It is a great achievement to me and I am very happy (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).*

*Having my baby is actually that defining moment in my life. Something that has contributed to my life was when I had my baby (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

The dominant theme evident in these quotes reveals a particular way of talking about and understanding the social construct of a mother. This understanding implicitly evokes an image of motherhood that is pure, idealized as a defining essence in any woman's life that is primarily fulfilling and meaningful. Ruddick (1989) elaborates on this

---

<sup>3</sup>Due to ethical considerations, the real names of the participants were withheld. Therefore, pseudonyms were used in this regard.

identification in her use of the term ‘maternal thinking’ to describe the processes by which women are fundamentally empathetic and care-oriented. The participants indicated that motherhood is an awesome event in their lives. It had provided fulfilment and had given them a sense of purpose. In describing the experience as fulfilling, it implied that there had been emptiness before and that now their lives had become worthwhile. As mothers, they had acquired a new identity, one that is embraced and celebrated by society. The description of motherhood by the participants seems to equate their personhood as being intertwined with their role of motherhood. A way of understanding the intensity of this fulfilment of a woman’s life and how deeply embedded it is in the social and cultural construction of a woman’s identity, is to compare it with the feelings experienced by women who cannot have children. Studies on childlessness and infertility reveal that women who are unable to conceive express feelings of disappointment, loss of autonomy, identity and independence. In short, they do not feel that they have reached true womanhood as defined by society (Zucker, 1999; Sevon, 2005).

#### 4.2.2 Motherhood as identity

This ideology regards motherhood as a woman’s destiny, one that will provide the ultimate fulfilment; thereby creating unrealistic expectations. In the process of espousing a universal truth, this ideology engulfs a woman’s identity and femininity. Some participants indicated that the notion of motherhood as identity is viewed as an integral part of women. Society perceives women as ‘instruments’ created to give birth. The act of giving birth is celebrated as an essential aspect of being a woman, with the female body perceived as primarily functional for the creation of life and, thereby, an extension of herself.

*...I think motherhood is actually an integral part of a woman’s identity. I think that women were really created by God to give birth. It is the most wonderful aspect about a woman. She can bring a new life into the world. It is a wonderful gift from God Almighty (Nicole, 25, married, postgraduate student).*

On the other hand, this construct of motherhood was not always perceived to be the 'ideal' or essential goal for young women. The changing landscape of gendered subjectivities and experiences of many young women today has arguably influenced the projections and relations to the practice of mothering, so that not all the participants buy into this. Buying into this idealized image of motherhood may also make it very difficult for these young women, when they find themselves resisting mothering or challenges and then feel guilty that they 'should' be 'loving it' and feeling fulfilled. In other words, the idealized notion that motherhood should be fulfilling sets women up for failure and is a part of the social pressure on women to be mothers. Nicole is projecting essentialist notions of motherhood; however, while women's bodies are capacitated to give birth, this does not mean that they were created to give birth. Besides, all women are not mothers.

As Nayak and Kehily (2008, p. 59) observe: "... there are different ways of being a girl and femininity is no longer so rigidly defined or hinged to the domestic". The idea of varied resources that could be drawn on in creating an image of oneself as a successful woman was equally evident, with some participants expressing a wish to 'fulfil' their desires and identifications through experiences other than being a parent. More than this, an awareness of how such experience has traditionally been constructed as the ideal of women is questioned. Some participants were very assertive in rejecting the notion of motherhood as something natural or biological. In the discussion below, motherhood is seen as a social construct that needs to be critiqued and interrogated, as elaborated in the quotes that follow:

*There are many aspects to a woman's identity besides bearing a child (Gladys, 27 married, postgraduate student).*

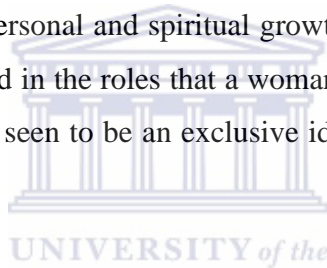
*Nowadays, women have many others things to do besides bearing children (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*



*You find many women who are very ambitious out there and motherhood is not their only identity (Nicole, 25, postgraduate student).*

At the same time, there is an implicit understanding of the social expectations of being a student mother and eventually a future career-driven individual, and how these different roles may be experienced in conflicting ways. There is no valorisation of the ideal mother in these expressions; instead there is a semblance of the student mother and eventually the career woman as caught between differing choices and social positions. These are difficult in themselves, but become even more so when conflicted with the mothering roles.

Motherhood, both as a role and ideological practice, was also seen to contribute in different ways to a woman's personal and spiritual growth (Kruger, 2006). In this sense, individual identity is constituted in the roles that a woman takes on, such as in mothering a child. However, this was not seen to be an exclusive identity or choice in her personal development.



Relating to an earlier theme of multiple and varied resources of identification available to young women, the abovementioned quotes highlight participants' attempts to separate roles from identity. In this sense, while women may embrace the experience of motherhood to be integral to personal development and fulfilment, this is not considered the sole purpose of meaning and personal fulfilment. If having children was considered essential for personal development by some participants, it is in the sense that it opens up new kinds of challenges and experiences that allow them to grow as individuals. However, this growth is perceived to be ideal and possible only when nurtured in a healthy manner. In this regard, some participants were critical of those who could not separate out their own identity and needs from their roles as mothers. They regarded mothers who choose to become part of their children's lives as hampering the children's growth and limiting their option to grow as people. This is evidenced in the subsequent quote:

*I think that once you have children, you incorporate them into what your life is and you grow with them. You don't stop growing when you have children; you don't stop having dreams. It just becomes a little bit harder to realise your dreams because you actually sacrifice most of your time and energy during the process of motherhood. However, if you are a strong enough woman who has ambitions and enough love to give your children, you can do anything you want to do (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).*

While this is clearly an important argument to make and is indicative of critical thinking on the part of the participants, it also in part subscribes to a binaristic notion of 'good' and 'bad' mothering. What is interesting to note is that the ideal of what mothers should be and do is not completely discarded, but is re-ascribed to create different categories of what constitutes a good mother. In this instance, the 'stay-at-home' mothers are criticized for failing to nurture a separate identity from their children. This may be in part a way of legitimising these participants' inability to be stay-at-home mothers themselves and their possible guilt at being divided between their own studies and their care-giving. In constructing these mothers as overbearing and detrimental to their children's growth and independence, participants may be seeking legitimation for their own situation of parenting. Nadia's and Gladys's interviews emphasised a construct of motherhood characterized by balance, one that must be mastered by the 'good' student mother and that strongly rationalises their own choices to be both mothers and students.

#### 4.2.3 Mothers as nurturers

What is essentially implied within this theme is the combination of child-bearing and child-nurturing. Inherent in the interviews therefore are links to the theme of motherhood as being primarily about accessibility and sensitivity to children's needs. Most participants indicated that the responsibility for their children resided with them. They described this responsibility as encompassing the physical and emotional aspects of

nurturing. The physical aspects included bathing, ferrying to and from the crèche, cleaning, feeding, and spending time playing. The emotional aspects of nurturing were expressed as being constantly worried about their children, being overprotective, wanting to do everything and not wanting to leave their children and, especially, as concern about correct emotional development and having well-adjusted children.

*I am put in a responsibility of taking care of my baby by God and it is my responsibility to take care of my baby. I am his mother (Doris, 18, single, undergraduate).*

*I have to take care of my baby. She is my baby (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate).*

*I am the one who is taking care of my baby. I am not complaining; it is my duty (Lynnsha, 28, married, postgraduate student).*

*I am the mommy and it is my duty to take care of my baby and my entire family. That is the role of a woman in a family. A man can just assist his wife but it the duty of the woman to assume all the household responsibilities (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

*After the birth of my child, my whole life changed, I couldn't even recognize myself anymore. I had to spend sleepless nights, breastfeeding, changing nappies, calming my baby not to cry, get up early in the morning, bath my baby, get him dressed, feed him, bath myself, take my baby to the crèche, and find my way to campus. At five PM, I must leave the campus and rush to the crèche to take my baby and the circle repeats itself (Nicole, 25, postgraduate student).*

In subscribing to these stereotypical male and female roles as prescribed by society, the participants were actively constructing and perpetuating the perception of the mother as

the nurturer within their social and cultural contexts. By upholding the notion that motherhood falls within their social and cultural contexts, mothering falls under the domain of women, with fathers potentially excluded from the mother-child relationship (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005). As Miller (2005) remarks, despite the shift in social relationships in terms of gender defined responsibilities, women are still defined by society in terms of their motherhood role and this, in turn, influences how they view themselves. This action perpetuates the unequal workload of parenting and gender divisions. However, a sense of ambivalence can be observed in the comments made by the participants. They want to be good mothers in terms of societal expectations, however, in trying to meet the societal expectations, they faced frustration, guilt and emotional and physical consequences. This created hesitancy, inconsistency and ambivalence among them. Their personal reality created their frustrations, while their social construction reflected the prescribed role of the mother as the nurturer. O'Reil (2005) suggests that if mothers do not perform their role correctly, they will be made to feel guilty or marginalized. In this regard, the extracts quoted above demonstrate mothers as central care givers, nurturers and selfless beings, who sacrifice all their time for the wellbeing of their babies (Hayes, in O'Reil, 1994; Choi et al., 2005).

#### 4.2.4 Motherhood as self-sacrificing

The theme of self-sacrifice or selflessness arises out of the theme of accessibility, which requires that a mother be available to her child and that her availability is proportional to her worth as a mother. The incontestable pre-eminence of the needs of the baby over the needs of the mother leads to the deprivation of the mother's own needs. Intrinsic in the notion of motherhood is the supposition that a mother acquires angelic qualities by only caring for, in this case, her child at the expense of neglecting herself. The following quotes demonstrate this theme. The participants in this study reflected throughout on the great effort that it took to cope with the demands of motherhood. They have very little or no time for themselves, and feel guilty when they spend time by themselves. Some indicated that they were suffering from emotional and physical tiredness. They

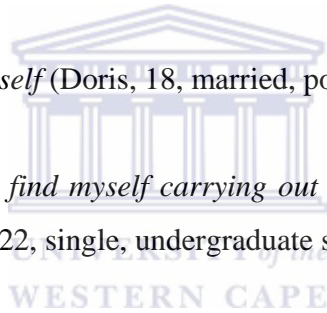
acknowledged that they required personal recreation time away from their motherhood roles and that they would have to consciously make this decision, but they found it difficult to implement. Even those mothers who managed to make time for themselves felt guilty about leaving their children behind, as the following quotes illustrate:

*Motherhood is quite a selfless act, and now there is going to be another person in the world that I am responsible for and I would sacrifice all my time on my child, so ... it's quite selfless I think* (Lynnsha, 28, married, postgraduate student).

*I think once a woman has children, her life stops. But I think that's also a very limited way of looking at motherhood and how it becomes a part of a woman's life* (Nadia, 20 single, undergraduate student).

*I wish I had time for myself* (Doris, 18, married, postgraduate student).

*Despite the tiredness, I find myself carrying out my motherhood responsibilities without noticing* (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).



Some participants reflected that the stress of both roles impacted on their physical health:

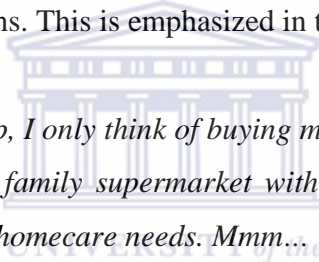
*My studies were very stressful and I applied pressure on myself. It was not good for my health* (Nicole, 25, postgraduate student).

*I often suffer from headaches and muscles spasms in my waist and back* (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).

The above quotes highlight psychological stress and negative health consequences that mothers face, as a result of trying to meet the challenges posed by the gendered nature of the role of motherhood (Aliko, 2003; Wallis & Price, 2003). All the participants in this study indicated similar stresses, with many experiencing emotional and physical

tiredness, in addition to the physical health problems. Some employed various coping mechanisms like being organised or having a schedule, but found that trying to keep to this was stressful in itself. In applying extra effort in order to cope with their various responsibilities, it could be argued that they continue to view themselves first and foremost as mothers and wives.

In a sense, the participants were voicing and reflecting the tension that existed between their needs and the expectations of the traditional motherhood ideology. The participants were actually held captive by societal and cultural expectations of mothers, as well as by the potential judgment of their actions by others. These participants challenged societal expectations by questioning and challenging in their own various ways, even though they continued to reconstruct and perpetuate their gendered roles in society through their personal expectations and actions. This is emphasized in the following quotes:



*Whenever I am in a shop, I only think of buying my baby's stuffs. Most often I will leave home, get into a family supermarket with a list of my home needs be it foodstuff, toiletries and homecare needs. Mmm... (laughs). As soon as I get on the baby's range, I take diapers, baby's food, my entire baby's needs then I will have to come back the following day and purchase what I intended to buy. Ho, that's motherhood (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

Nina describes the need to subsume her needs for those of her baby. She illustrates how a selfless construction of motherhood is fraught with ambivalence and consequent guilt.

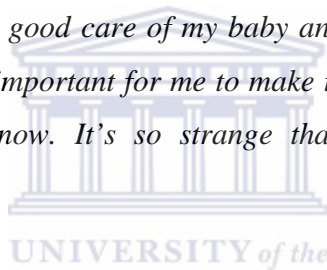
*I remember, sometimes I do not recognize myself anymore. My hair is usually not properly styled the way it used be before I had my baby. Almost no makeup on my face, I am extremely busy with school work, being a mother and a wife. I have got almost no time for my own self (Lynnsha, 28, married, postgraduate student).*

Lynnsha views the mothering role as unselfish when expressing her ambivalence about being a mother.

*Whenever I am shopping and I come across a beautiful jacket, or a dress, I will look at the price and immediately reflect that I should rather buy clothes for my baby and make a present for my husband rather than buying for myself ... (laughs)... It is a fight for my space with my baby and my husband (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).*

Gladys expresses the clash of needs in her mothering role as a struggle to simultaneously manage time for her studies and look after her baby.

*It is only me who takes good care of my baby and my partner. They are my two babies....and it is very important for me to make them happy first before thinking of how I feel....you know. It's so strange that I survived this (Nicole, 25, postgraduate student).*



Nicole expresses the selfless and emotional components of being a mother, besides prioritizing the needs of others above her own needs.

#### **4.3 Subjective experiences of being a student and a mother**

Inherent in the word 'student' is the assumption of studies and of an institution of public learning, where studies are unrelated to the tasks of motherhood. The central point of this theme is combining motherhood and academic work. This relates to a social judgment that women should give priority to their motherhood obligation over any other activity, as women's desire for acquiring knowledge and developing a career may be realised only after she has fulfilled her mothering responsibilities. Inherent in the interviews therefore is guilt associated with studies, which links it to the theme of mothers balancing their studies with parenting. Under the theme of the subjective experiences of being a student

and a mother, balancing the load of parenting and studying, experiences at the institution, responses and support from the university and lecturers, experiences and support in relation to male partners, experiences of the single student mothers and financial challenges faced by student mothers were emphasized.

#### 4.3.1 Balancing the load of parenting and studying

All the participants indicated that it was necessary for them to study in order to have a better future with their babies, despite the fact that their studies interfered with their roles as mothers. Studies intruded on their lives at home and clashed with their motherhood roles. They often have a double day, coming home to fit in household chores and childcare responsibilities. Performing the combined roles of being a mother and a student were demanding and tiring. At times they brought their stress from campus home and it impacted negatively on their family relationships, resulting in even more feelings of guilt.

*I feel guilty leaving my baby behind when I am going to the university. But I must be sincere, it is hard work being a mother while studying and also playing the role of a wife simultaneously, it's quite challenging. Some days I am very tired, stressed up and I feel like crying and I actually cry. It is not easy at all (Doris, 18, married, postgraduate student).*

*I feel guilty about not coping with all my numerous roles. Combining motherhood responsibilities and studies without anyone to support is absolutely illusory. Being a first time mum and combining it with studies or work is extremely difficult (Nicole, 25, married, postgraduate student).*

*I feel like quitting my studies most often. If I have to choose between my studies and my baby without hesitation, I will choose my baby. I am just studying to improve myself, to have a better career and take good care of my baby... that is*



*why I am still studying. Everything I do is to make my baby happy (Marie, 26, single, postgraduate student).*

*Most often I think of my baby while I am on campus. I wonder if they take good care of him at the crèche. I wonder if he is crying especially when my nipples are tickling. I am always guilty of not being a good enough mother because my baby stays in the crèche the whole day and I am supposed to fulfil my obligations as a mother but I am studying as well. I don't know what to do (Nadia, 20, single, undergraduate student).*

The above quotations portray the ambivalence of being a mother and a student and of balancing the dual roles. Despite the fact that their studies were essential from the point of view of a successful future, the participants were of the view that the responsibilities of motherhood were more important than those of their studies. Hattery (2001) indicated in her study that, for many mothers, beliefs about motherhood comprise their biggest hurdle in their pursuit of studies and careers. This was also evident in the literature where women who were studying and economically active at the same time still perceived themselves as mothers and wives first (Milkie & Petola, 1999; Marks & Houston, 2002; Aliko, 2003; Vincent et al., 2004). The participants clearly struggled with meeting the demands of work and fulfilling the cultural expectations of the all-giving mother. When these roles clashed, they experienced feelings of guilt. Some participants express astonishment at their ambivalence, and consequently they prioritise their mothering responsibilities over their studies and career aspirations.

Even though this aspect of guilt was not singled out in the literature, it is a reflection of the deeper underlying traditional gendered perceptions that the participants hold about the role of women in society. As Kushner (2005) points out, it is the social and cultural perceptions that intensify the sense of responsibility of women as mothers, wives and caregivers by intensifying their sense of responsibility to their family over their personal expectations for themselves. Therefore, women generally tend to make more sacrifices

and tradeoffs to ensure the smooth running of the family (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). This study also demonstrates that being both a parent and a student has implications for academic performance. The load of parenting appears to impact negatively on both the attendance and success of participants. The majority of participants face problems of irregular lecture attendance and their academic performance is barely satisfactory, as they feel that average results are the best they can achieve given the demands of motherhood. Theron and Dunn (2006) argue that childbearing among young women may result in academic failure, as motherhood roles often disrupt lecture attendance. This is evidenced in the following quotes:

*My success rate is not high because I have lost the motivation. I just want a pass, 50%. With my baby around, I cannot cope. Really! I just cannot get down studying for long hours as I did some time ago before being a mother (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).*

*The time I fell pregnant, I had to miss some classes. I failed most of my modules. The early stages of my pregnancy were not easy. I was always sick, always tired, feeling pains, wanting to sleep all the time. Sometimes when student mothers come back to study, they find a lot to deal with at the same time. Besides, being a mother is quite involving and at the same time to study makes the whole situation more complicated. It is quite a great challenge (Lynnsha, 28, married, postgraduate student).*

There are instances when the baby falls sick, and the student mother finds herself having to stay with the sick baby. Consequently, the student mother may not attend seminars, lectures and tutorials. However, lecturers and tutors will not go through those lectures or tutorials to assist the student mother to catch up. On this point, Nicole says:

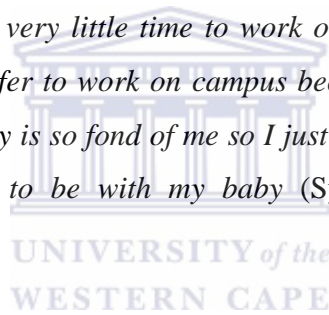
*From time to time, I feel like I am switching from the role of being a student to the role of being a mother and vice versa. Combining the two is always very difficult.*

*But I will never ever break away from my child because of my studies (Nicole, 25, married, postgraduate student).*

All the student mothers interviewed articulated that they struggle to have adequate time to focus on their studies. After a busy day at campus, their family members who always assist them in babysitting will need a break. Besides, their babies also need to be with their mothers. Some participants commented on this:

*I never really have enough time to work on my assignments ... after taking care of my baby and put her to bed, I am already tired (Nina, 22, single, postgraduate student).*

*Most often, I have just very little time to work on assignments and work on my thesis. Sometimes I prefer to work on campus because once I get home; there is no time for me. My baby is so fond of me so I just ignore my academic work for a while because I have to be with my baby (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*



*When I think that I really wanted to have a baby and to be a mum and .... mmm...honestly it is really a shock to realise that I am ambivalent about it now. I've got no time for myself. I really struggle to create time for myself, to create time to study. Being a student and a mother is very challenging especially when the kids are still very young and tender, needing all the care and love all the time (Lynnsha, 28, postgraduate student).*

*Since I am the one looking after my baby at home, I struggle to find time to do my academic work (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*

*My baby always cries at night and throughout the night I am only calming my baby down and breastfeeding him. Honestly, there is no time to study. I always*

*make sure I finish my assignment in the library on campus before I go home because once I am at home, I cannot do any academic work effectively. My baby needs me* (Marie, 26, single, postgraduate student).

South African researchers have highlighted that after young mothers have given birth, they find it hard to embark on their studies because of the difficulty in organising time to accommodate both academic work and mothering responsibilities (Kaufman et al., 2001). A similar concern was echoed in the United States, where it was noticed that student mothers face difficulties in simultaneously having to care for their babies and create adequate time to study (Arlington Public Schools, 2004). Although some participants had assistance with household chores, it did not alleviate the demands that they experienced (Naidoo & Jano, 2002). They continued to experience the emotional and physical demands manifested and imposed by the perception of the mother as the primary caregiver. These demands manifested as responsibility, worrying, and the desire to give up their studies and not having enough time to spend with their children.

In meeting the demands of studies and motherhood, the participants reported that they had to make constant compromises. They expressed great difficulties in balancing the demands of motherhood with those of academic work, indicating that it was not possible to maintain a balance. Rather, the approach was to neglect one at the expense of the other, depending on which required urgent attention. Where participants had the support of their spouses or partners, they continued to carry the greater share of the responsibility for childcare, as evident in the following quotes:

*When there were certain deadlines of assignments that I have to meet at the university, I have to neglect my home* (Nadia, 20, single, undergraduate student).

*I have to take some time I was supposed to spend with my baby to do my assignments* (Lynnsha, 28, postgraduate student).

*I do neglect my studies sometimes; I suppose even my motherhood responsibilities I sometimes neglect. I don't understand my body anymore, I get so tired easily. Both studies and my duties as a mother suffer* (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).

*I don't know if there is actually balance. I am more on campus* (Marie, 26, single postgraduate student).

According to Pillow (2007), the possibility of balancing the demands of work and motherhood is a myth. This is borne out by the experiences described by the participants, as mentioned above. They had to compromise and negotiate around meeting the expectations and demands of studies and motherhood, and were frustrated by not being able to accomplish their tasks in the available time (Wallis & Price, 2003; Kushner, 2005). For instance, taking their assignments home imposed on family time. This imposition created a conflict between studies and motherhood demands and manifested in feelings of guilt – not spending enough time on their work requirements, not spending time with their families and guilt about bringing their stress home.

*I am not balancing my life and my studies. I just can't. My studies are really draining. ...I am always very tired. Sometimes I have to focus on one and I find myself neglecting the other* (Gladys, 27, married, postgraduate student).

Little has been done to inform university policy-makers about the difficulties confronting student mothers on campus. It can be said that the university's approach towards student mothers is cause for concern, and its lack of support in terms of policy may well influence lecturers' attitudes towards student mothers. In this respect, Hallman and Grant (2004) affirm that the main inhibitor of females' academic performance is student motherhood. The following quotes illustrate this issue:

*I was asked to quit the residence when I was eight months pregnant. I was informed that student mothers were not allowed to live in the campus residences. Renting a flat out of the campus residences is very expensive (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*

*I was asked to leave campus residence when I was seven months pregnant. It was not easy for us to look for a flat. Flats are very expensive (Marie, 26, single, postgraduate student).*

The excerpts above highlight the difficulties participants faced in looking for alternative accommodation, given that the university does not provide appropriate accommodation with all the facilities needed to take care of babies for student mothers.

Most student mothers resume their studies after childbirth without any counselling, and the effect is that these young mothers may be depressed due to their dual role of mother and student. As a result, they may fail to cope in performing one or both roles and consequently drop out of the university. Hence, a counselling session would have been vital to assist them with time management, coping with stigma and strategies to relieve stress, just to name a few. The following quotes express this issue:

*Nobody offered counselling to me when I came back to study (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*

*When I was pregnant, I thought it was easy to just have my baby and proceed immediately. I wish I had some counselling to know how to deal my present situation. I did not know motherhood was this demanding. I think I would have waited, finished my studies before engaging into being a mother (Nadia, 20, single, undergraduate student).*

*I really wish I had some counselling. I am often stressed up. I did not know being a student and a mother was this difficult. I wish I knew (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*

Young women who have become mothers while still at higher educational institutions and particularly those who are not married, may be stigmatised and experience low self-esteem as a result. Dealing with this necessitates support and, in particular, proper counselling. Without going through counselling to enable them to deal with stigma, student mothers often become depressed, dropping out of university.

*I am the only student mother in my class and my mates are very surprised that I have a baby. They ask me all sorts of questions, if I am still with my boy friend, and how I am coping? Is he supporting me and the baby? (Doris, 18, single, undergraduate student)*

*I think some of my mates always talk about me. They wonder if I will cope with my studies. I am determined to finish and I will no matter what (Nadia, 20, single, undergraduate student).*

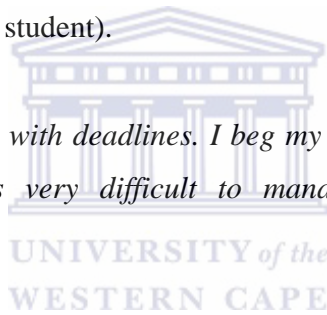
The excerpts above illustrate the situation faced by young mothers, who find themselves in a predicament that may lead to low self-esteem and may negatively affect their studies. It is noted that low self-esteem may result in poor academic performance, eventually increasing the drop out rates among young mothers (Kenway, 1990). For this reason, it is vital to employ some mechanisms to deal with this problem. In the United States, for example, there are a number of support systems in colleges and on campuses to help young student mothers cope, with adequate support provided so that they handle their challenges with ease (U.S. Department of Education, 1992; Taylor, 1997; Chevalier & Viitanen, 2001; Kaufman et al., 2001).

The participants of this study feel that the challenges of their situation are not taken into consideration, as lecturers and tutors are always complaining about their ‘unsatisfactory’ academic performance. The following quotes illustrate this:

*Two of my lecturers are complaining that I always submit my assignments late. It is very difficult to study while being a mother. Sometimes I sleep in the lectures because I was awake the whole night. My baby often cries at night (Nadia, 20, single, undergraduate student).*

*Most of my classmates always tell me they do not wish to be me. They wonder how I cope with my studies and take care of my baby. They are often surprised. I often plead with my lecturers to grant me extensions to submit my work (Sylvia, 25, single, postgraduate student).*

*I often struggle to meet with deadlines. I beg my lecturers to submit later due to time constraints. It is very difficult to manage both roles (Lynnsha, 28, postgraduate student).*



From the above, it seems that there is a need for academics to be guided by professionals, or given some form of training or sensitivity awareness, to enable them to better understand and deal with student mothers’ situations (Bloem, 2000; Olivier, 2000).

#### 4.3.2 Experiences and support in relation to male partner

While mothers are obliged to engage in mothering, most fathers are distant from fatherhood. Mothering necessitates both a physical and emotional obligation, sometimes to the detriment of women’s needs. If women want to be good enough mothers, they need to fulfil these above-mentioned obligations well. For many of these women, they share a common experience in terms of their respective partners’ lack of support for their young



children, although in some cases they received financial support. This situation impacted negatively on participants' experiences of childcare and of being a student:

*My partner is very supportive financially. I am only a student, and a mother. My partner is the one who works, he is the provider. He buys Pampers, food for our baby, he pays the rent and gives me pocket money....but if only he could also help me take care with our baby when I am busy with my assignments, I would be the happiest mom (Marie, 26, single, postgraduate student).*

*I wish my partner could at least help me in taking care of our baby. Especially when our baby is crying in the middle of the night, I am the only one who gets up to feed and to calm down calm the baby while my partner is dozing, and doesn't even bother to help. It is very frustrating (Doris, 18, single, undergraduate student).*

*I am the only one who takes care of our baby, and of all the house chores. I was brought up like this, that taking care of the baby and the cooking and all the domestic work is for women and not for men. My mother used to tell me we can never change that (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

Whereas Doris complains that her partner is not sufficiently proactive in the parenting of their child and she does not know if he will ever change, she nevertheless constructs fatherhood as a choice. It is clear from this excerpt that Doris, in employing fathering as a choice discourse, has different expectations of her partner in relation to his being a good parent from her own. Despite the financial support of her partner, the extent of a father's effective and instrumental involvement in parenting is measured against different standards from those applied to the mother. Thus Doris relays her frustration with this imbalance between mothering and fathering.

Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001), in analyzing the interactions between mothers and fathers in the daily care of their children, found these to involve negotiations regarding responsibility for caretaking.

*When I analyse my situation, being a student mother and living with my partner, I am completely a housewife, a caregiver to both my partner and my baby, a mother while my partner is the provider. I have got no choice; such is life. I just have to accept even though it is difficult and very challenging (Doris, 18, single, undergraduate student).*

*My husband keeps on supporting in taking care of our son when I am busy with studies or cooking. Everybody admires him as being a good father. It is quite rare to find men like Gaby, he is awesome, so it is like he a strange type of father especially an African. More often in the African cultures, the woman does everything in the household while the man is just the provider and when both the woman and the man are providers women are just like slaves. I am really blessed to have a man like Gaby; he took after his father because his father is a very caring and loving man. His parents make a great couple (Nicole, 25, married, postgraduate student).*

Most of the biological fathers seem to be absent in this study and the load of the parenting role falls on women (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). According to the participants in the study, fathers who are deeply involved in their parenting roles are regarded as extraordinary men who assist their women. These fathers are viewed as ‘angels’ and are always being admired. Thus, other women inadvertently perpetuate the myth of the mothering role as being essentially a woman’s duty. In the study, one woman who had a very engaged partner testifies that he helped her immensely. However, the quote also shows how he was idealized and admired for this, while women who are engaged in such work do so with no reward or acknowledgement.

When reflecting on how her husband's fathering abilities and involvement is received by her community, Nicole eulogises her husband, pointing out that her husband is regarded as an extraordinary or exceptional man since most men do not take care of children and regard motherhood as the domain, obligation and responsibility of only women. Most traditional communities in Africa regard caring fathers and husbands as men who deeply love and "spoil" their wives. The following illustrates this:

*The responsibility of nurturing is shared between my husband and I. We both take care of our baby. My husband is a lecturer at a renowned college in Cape Town. I must confess; he is a very good husband and a good father to our son. When I am busy with my academic work, he will take care of our baby, feed him, bath him, play with him and go to bed with him. He supported me throughout my pregnancy and I was an honours student. He will cook, does laundry, ironing, make sure I eat properly and he always reminds me to take my vitamins. I gave birth when I had many assignments and a mini-thesis that I was still working on. To be very honest with you, my husband helped in gathering material for my assignment and in collecting data for my thesis. Without him I would not have been able to make it (Nicole, 25, married, postgraduate student).*

*However, I think my partner is really awesome. When I compare myself with other friends of mine and other women, I honestly see myself to be blessed. Most of my friends who have children do not live in the same house with the father of their baby and most are not still involved with the father of their baby. You know men disappear when the woman is pregnant, running away from their responsibility and some are nowhere to be found. The women are left alone with their children and it is very hard for them to bring up the children alone especially nowadays with inflation, the cost of living is very high, and everything is expensive (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

Whereas Doris complains earlier that she feels her partner is not sufficiently involved in parenting, she nevertheless constructs fathering as a choice. She has different expectations of what it means for her partner to be a good parent and what it means for herself. It is more than sufficient for the father to provide financial support (“my partner is the provider”). Within this life history, therefore, the extent of the father’s affective and instrumental involvement is measured against different standards from those applied to the mother. Most importantly, student mothers seem to be in a powerless situation where they have no choice because of their financial disability, instability and dependence – as evidenced by the following statements: *“I am just a student.....he is working.....he is the provider.....I don’t have a choice.....Such is life.”* Student mothers look at their situation as the work of fate, a permanent destiny; yet, they still feel privileged in that they are students, hoping to have a better future, and with more advantages than other young women who are university drop outs, due to pregnancies and motherhood responsibilities. This perspective acts to motivate them.

#### 4.3.3 Experiences of single student mothers

Single mothers in this study appear to experience the added stigma of being unmarried and they face challenges with little or no support systems. These single student mothers solely perform the roles of care-giving and child rearing.

Out of the eight participants in the study, five were single and three were married student mothers. Three (Nina, Doris, Marie) out of the five single mothers were living with their partners, while two (Nadia and Sylvia) were with their parents. The three living with their partners faced less challenges than the two living with their parents. From the interviews, those mothers who were single parenting were facing more challenges than those who were married. Some of the student mothers, who are suffering from emotional impacts of the stress of parenting while studying, have eventually experienced panic attacks more than once during their motherhood experience. This is further evidenced in the following quotes:

*It's a terrible experience. I felt my entire body cold, and felt like I will die. Luckily I was at home. My family rushed me to the hospital and the doctor said had a panic attack caused by a lot of psychological stress. I knew it was true because I had broken with my ex boy friend when I was pregnant and he does not want to assume his responsibilities. He abandoned me and started dating another lady. Therefore, I was left alone with my baby (Nadia, 20, undergraduate student).*

*It's not easy to be a single student mother anyway. I didn't know being a mother was this tough until I experienced it myself. It makes me to be very moody, sometimes I just burst in tears, not even knowing why I 'm crying. It's hard ....It's quite hard. What makes my situation worse is that I am alone, no support from the father of my baby (Nina, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

Stress and disappointment in love relationships among some single young mothers may push some single student mothers to depression or contemplate suicide (Barnet et al., 1996). Some single mothers experienced rejection as they complained they did not receive love and affection from their partners during their pregnancy. This is illustrated in the following quotes:

*When I discovered I was pregnant, immediately I thought of abortion because I knew my parents would be very upset since I was at the university studying and living in the residence. I didn't know what to do but I love my boy friend. When I told my boy friend and he reacted positively, I changed my mind about the abortion I was planning to do. He told me he was happy to be a father. He is a business man and I knew there would be no financial difficulties in taking care of our baby. He even promised to marry me....but later, he was nowhere to be found, he abandoned me (Nadia, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

*One day I was in my room at the student residence, my baby was sleeping and I bought a lot of pain killer tablets and I took more than thirty I think. I was unconscious when my friend came in and found me lying on the floor and I was rushed to the hospital. I was not dead yet, when I gained consciousness, I saw my mother sitting next to me on the hospital bed. I did what I did because I could not take it anymore, when I see couples together with their baby and I am here dumped and abandoned by a man who deceived me with empty promises, it really hurts, it really hurts, it deeply hurts. My studies meant nothing to me at that stage. All I wanted was to get rid of my life (Nadia, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

Nadia's situation is one of numerous cases involving single mothers. Fortunately, she survived her suicide attempt and was connected with a campus psychologist for counselling. The outcome of their thrice weekly sessions was positive and, therefore, their meetings decreased eventually to once a week. Nadia's baby was at the crèche while she was attending classes and studying. She acknowledges that her mother, friends and classmates were extremely supportive throughout.

In Nadia's case, support from her mother, friends, classmates and a psychologist has impacted positively on her academic pursuit. For Nadia, motherhood has not been a hindrance to academic pursuit. But motherhood posed substantial challenges to her quest to achieve academic excellence, with the major source of challenge being the capacity for self-motivation and time management. She finds motivation is her determination to graduate despite the challenges she faces with in terms of time management in the context of motherhood and studentship.

#### 4.3.4 Financial challenges faced by student mothers

There is no doubt that the intersection of material disadvantage with parenting and studying exaggerates the challenges of participants. Due to financial difficulties, many students are unable to pay a crèche or a baby sitter to look after their babies. This affects

their studies negatively, as they struggle with time management and do not have sufficient time to devote to their assignments. The following quotes demonstrate this issue:

*When I do not have anybody to look after my baby, life seems so difficult for me. I wish I have a baby sitter (Marie, 26, single, postgraduate student).*

*Baby's food and clothes and diapers are very expensive. Now I am taking care of two people. My baby and I and the cost of living is very high. Most often I struggle financially and the stress of being broke even affects my studies (Nadia, 22, single, undergraduate student).*

From the above, it can be noted that access to socio-economic resources are a vital component for the ability of young mothers to resume studies. This should be viewed in the context that there is a high rate of early motherhood among young women from poor homes (Kaufman et al., 2001; Hallman & Grant, 2004). Thus financial constraint may hinder these student mothers' studies directly or indirectly.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the themes revealed the tensions and ambivalence experienced by the participants, as they negotiated the social and cultural expectations of motherhood with their reality in meeting the demands of motherhood as working mothers. In their struggle to meet the social and cultural expectations of motherhood, they placed tremendous emotional and physical stress upon themselves. Thus, in voicing their experiences, they were also making sense of it and, in this way, exposing the myths of motherhood.

When analysing the transcripts, it became evident that most of the themes reveal that gender inequality is intrinsic in experience of motherhood. It was also evident that there were discursive constructs that challenged and resisted these traditional constructs of

motherhood. Constructs of 'good' and 'bad' mothering were evident in the discussions on the development of the child and absent mothers. However, these constructs were often ambiguous and contradictory. Not only the demands of studying but also the deepened understanding arrived at of, for example, social constructs like idealised motherhood, seemed to create feelings of ambiguity and contradiction in how the participants positioned themselves. On the one hand, furthering one's studies and possibly looking forward to a career was considered desirable for personal development but, on the other hand, the possibility of pursuing one's studies and at the same time being a 'good' mother was deemed a challenge. The constructs indicate the need to explore further how young women are positioning themselves in an increasingly competitive global environment, and how they are negotiating ambiguous and at times contradictory gendered roles and practices.

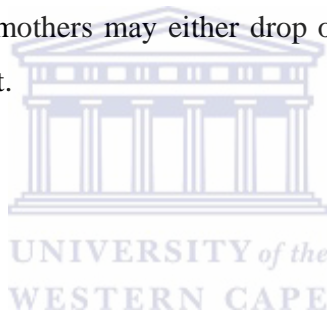
Deducing from the outcome of the study, it can be concluded that merely allowing young mothers to resume their studies after childbirth is not by itself an adequate measure in terms of assisting them to complete their studies successfully. Hence, student mothers need further support to prepare and enable them for their mothering role before they resume their studies.

Moreover, it is disturbing that there should be an experience of stigma occurring on campus that further undermines the experience of in particular single mothers on campus. Drawing on societal norms, young students are stigmatised since they have become mothers before completing their studies and often before getting married. Thus it is evident that social responses to young mothers who are studying are a further challenge to ensuring support for their academic progress.

It is further evident that popularised psychological pressures on motherhood and notions of what constitute a successful mother also impact on student mothers in negative way. This context creates a gendered division of roles and, in so doing, legitimises the mother



as the primary caregiver. The inherent inferiority of women is illustrated by the prevalence of the 'good enough' mother. Despite the fact that the notion of motherhood being centred on women is debatable, participants feel they should embrace the role of mothering, even though this role renders them to be inferior their whole life. As a result, they express guilt if they do not adequately perform their mothering roles in line with popular expectations, as they endeavour to devote sufficient time to the mothering responsibilities. The theme of selflessness illustrates the great effort women put into their mothering roles, as mothers often surrender and sacrifice their own needs in order to fulfil their children's needs first. This striving to be a 'good enough' mother nevertheless leads to feelings of guilt on the part of the mothers, who can never be 'good enough' on account of the constant clash of needs. This conflict of needs usually arises from the baby's need for the mother's presence and the mother's need to study and develop a career. Consequently, student mothers may either drop out of university or pursue their studies at a huge emotional cost.



## CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study, which looked at the various experiences of a group of student mothers at the University of the Western Cape. The objectives of the study were to identify the experience of student mothers, the various challenges they faced and to examine the impact of these experiences on their studies. To achieve the stated objectives, in-depth semi-structured interviews were used to collect primary data which was then analysed through thematic analysis. A summary of the research findings is presented below. Focus is on the implications of the conclusions for future studies and, indeed, for the way in which motherhood is currently constructed in South Africa. An exposition of the recommendations and perceived limitations emerging from the study is included, as is a final conclusion and a personal reflection on the research procedure.

### 5.2 Summary of research findings

The findings from interviewing eight female students from UWC revealed two major themes and eight sub-themes within these. The first main theme is the social constructions of motherhood under which the following key components of the way in which participants constructed motherhood were evident: motherhood as self-actualisation; motherhood as identity; mothers as nurturers; and motherhood as self-sacrificing. The second theme relates to the subjective experience of the student mother, which includes the following sub-themes: balancing the load of parenting and studying; experiences and support in relation to male partners; experiences of single student mothers; and the financial challenges faced by this group of student mothers.

This study examines the experiences of the participants through a social constructionist approach which holds that the way in which we interact with the world is shaped by our

beliefs and perceptions about it (Houston, 2001). In order to examine how participants viewed their world and made meaning of their experiences, the context in which their practice of motherhood occurred was explored in their reflections. These reflections revealed that the social and cultural contexts of participants embody a view of motherhood that is gendered, comprises ideals of a caring, nurturing and giving mother, and links motherhood to dominant constructions of womanhood and the female identity in the cultural contexts of the participants. The participants, situated in their social and cultural contexts, are affected by these traditional beliefs. Hence, the impact is twofold: their choices and behaviour in respect of how they perceived motherhood were directed by external social and cultural contexts. This, in turn, was influenced by their personal expectations which affected decisions made and actions taken, leading to their shift of consciousness. One of the key findings in this respect was that participants shared a similar personal dilemma of wanting to engage themselves wholeheartedly in childbearing and caring, in nurturing of the family, while at the same time engaging in their academic pursuit. However, these mothering responsibilities appeared not only to perpetuate motherhood ideologies including the stereotyping of women but also hampered the ability of these young mothers to be successful in the world, not just as females but as human beings free from gender barriers.

In addition to the fact that participants' social experiences of motherhood are intricate and inexorable, most mothers in the study seemed ambivalent and torn between their ideals as mothers and their personal career goals. These feelings of ambivalence are driven by both cultural representations of the mother and the social arrangements of motherhood. Given that motherhood requires great time and energy, participants are stuck between desperation to succeed academically and eventually to proceed in a career, and determination to succeed in their mothering roles and the social punishment that comes with not fulfilling the expected norms of mothering. Thus participants described the challenge of desiring their own self-actualisation while attempting to be 'good' mothers which is interpreted as a complete devotion to the child and family. However, most participants fought these feelings of "selfishness" (desiring self-actualization) since

they had become mothers. This raises the question of whether motherhood and feminist goals of women's empowerment and equality with men are mutually exclusive.

Almost none of the participants in the study were adequately prepared beforehand to face the challenging emotions and material conditions that come with motherhood. Drawing on women's accounts of their feelings and experiences of motherhood, young mothers tend to fear they are losing their sanity as their experiences involved emotions such as anger, guilt, resentment, fear of not performing their mothering roles adequately and, hence, an overwhelming sense of their own inadequacy. Motherhood responsibilities were experienced as inhibiting their independence, economic freedom and professional advancement. Most participants found motherhood as much a source of pain as of pleasure. Hence, this understanding of maternal ambivalence reflects a coexistence of love and hate which can stimulate and sharpen a mother's awareness of the relationship between mother and child. Drawing on interviews, there seem to be conflicts confronting young mothers at every stage of motherhood.

The participants' awareness of how the psychological, personal, intimate realm is linked to the social collective and academic realm can itself be a major shift of consciousness of what it means to be a mother, and of the multiple ways to be a good mother. Hence, student mothers in the study are coming to consciousness about their lives by sharing their experiences and by realising the commonalities of the shared stories and experiences.

During this process of shift of student mothers' consciousness, these young mothers acknowledge throughout history, the significance of women's major role and biological function as mothers and caretakers. Nevertheless, unlike many mothers nowadays, and in spite of their love for children, most of the participants are not of the opinion that acceptance of this mothering role and its expectations of nurture and care is liberating for women. From the findings, and according to all the participants (student mothers experiencing motherhood), motherhood responsibilities are almost unrivalled to any

other livelihood and leave little room or energy for other matters, especially academic work since motherhood encompasses the all-consuming focus – mentally, physically and emotionally. Over and above this, motherhood ideologies romanticise and personalise women's maternal instincts and feelings, thus promoting the perception that mothers should fulfill parenting roles and are literally hard-wired to do so, with optimised capacities. Such constructions and participants' clear buy-in to these further exacerbate the challenges they face.

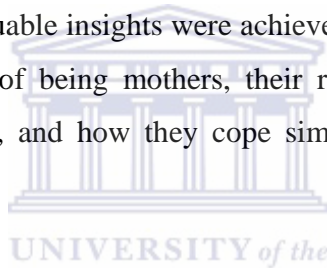
While for most participants continue to carry the primary load of childcare and are aware of the multiple roles they are playing as primary caregivers for their partners and children, the study shows that some positive constructions of the husband and father are evident in participants' experiences. Some men are reportedly becoming more emotionally responsive as fathers and husbands. One aspect of gender role strain that men were reportedly feeling was the conflict between their traditional dominant male role and the nurturing role in the childcare since the traditionally male role does not perceive fathers as being warm, caring and accessible fathers. Hence, the significance of the father has changed within some families, with the shifting involvement of fathers within their families and cultural conditions. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that those fathers who are described as playing a nurturant parenting role are constructed as 'exceptional' and 'strange type of father' (see Nicole, 25, married postgraduate. Page 86), highlighting that the dominant experience is still one of a double load for the mother, where the biological father is less responsible for childcare and domestic duties than the mother and wife/female partner is.

### **5.3 Key challenges identified**

The study highlights some aspects of the complexities of this group of women's lives, especially with regard to the push-pull between the demands of motherhood and those of academic study. All the participants in the study suffer from the conflicts emerging from the demands of motherhood and the demands of studies, both of which often conflict with

the student mothers' personal needs. Since motherhood is self-sacrificing, with mothers always putting their babies' needs above their own (including their need to study), there seems to be no way to alleviate this conflict. Due to social structures, student mothers in this study found it difficult to find personal ways to deal with or resolve these contradictions. These contradictions included problems of time constraint and time management, in relation to balancing their need to reflect and study, to fulfil their academic demands, with providing child care and to child rearing, apart from their personal needs for leisure and relaxation. In addition, these women were conflicted about their need to reflect on these problems, exposing their feeling to their families and peers, lest in the process they hurt their loved ones.

The study raised a number of issues in relation to needs, experiences and the perceptions of student mothers. Hence, valuable insights were achieved by gaining details concerning student mothers' experiences of being mothers, their relationship with their partners, families, friends and lecturers, and how they cope simultaneously with their roles of students and mothers.



The study also revealed that student mothers in the research were not adequately prepared to assume the responsibilities of motherhood, as some were suffering from feelings of hopelessness and depression. Interestingly, the few married student mothers who planned to have their babies did not foresee the huge challenges of motherhood.

While some married student mothers reported the enormous assistance of their husbands in their new mothering roles, the single mothers reported great dependence on their families in helping them in their dual role. It is notable, that most of the single student mothers reported the desertion and total absence of the fathers of their babies. These mothers were then compelled to assume their parenting role single-handedly and appeared to be under considerable emotional and financial strain. Hence, it became evident that there was a need for physical, emotional, financial and social support during the participants' pregnancy experiences, the birth experiences and after the birth

particularly for single parenting female students. It was evident that participants who were coping better were those with more support from their families or partners.

For these reasons, therefore, support remains an important issue in this study, with the nature of the support needed varying with each student mother. The findings revealed that married student mothers or those in long-standing relationships received childcare responsibility, financial and emotional support from their husbands and partners. It is conclusive from the research findings that unsupported motherhood may pose serious challenges that could impede the pursuit of effective academic studies by the participants in the study. From the findings, it emerged that some single mothers in the sample group faced more challenges than the married mothers. Among the challenges faced by single student mothers are lack of finances and the challenge of having to care for their children alone. Hence, it is deduced from the findings of the research that married student mothers receive greater support from their partners than do single student mothers, although some single student mothers confirmed receiving support from relatives and friends. Nevertheless, both categories of student mothers face serious challenges that may impede their progress in attaining their academic pursuits. The challenges ranged from self-motivation to time management.

The findings from the study also cite traditional constructions of motherhood and gender relations as a serious challenge, especially for married student mothers. In terms of many cultural traditions represented here, women are regarded as being only “good for” the raising and nurturing of children, whilst men are considered the breadwinners who provide the requisite finances and resources for home-keeping. Thus, there are still certain culturally related reservations about women who pursue studies and, eventually, careers over above their role as mothers.

In addition to the above challenges, this study notes the absence of any kind of support from the university and other institutions. The study reflects on student mothers’ experiences of not being supported and the evident lack of understanding of their

situation by lecturers. It can be concluded from the above that all student mothers face serious challenges in combining studentship and motherhood. These tend to have adverse repercussions on their potential to achieve academic excellence.

## **5.4 Recommendations and limitations**

### **5.4.1 Recommendations related to research findings**

From the data analysed in this study, it is apparent that particular challenges encountered during motherhood prevail for this group of young student mothers. A feminist framework was applied in this study and the data analysis reveals that the dominant construct of motherhood serves to undermine the experience of being a mother for this group of students. The study further presents the difficulties faced by young women who choose not to conform to the dominant motherhood ideologies, since the insinuations of the construct of motherhood are deeply ingrained in socio-cultural and political contexts. Moreover, it was evident that their experience was further exacerbated by stigma, lack of support from partners, stigma from their peers and a generally unsupportive culture on campus.

Drawing on societal norms, young students are stigmatised because they have become mothers before completing their studies and, often, before marrying. Thus, it is evident that social responses to young mothers who are studying are further challenges to ensuring support for their academic progress. Challenges to the normative social construction of motherhood with its assumptions of women as primarily mothers need to be made at the level of consciousness-raising and general social transformation.

Drawing on the inadequacy and absence of some fathers in the study, it becomes clear that it is imperative for men to understand their fathering consciousness as their involvement in parenting roles and that, as such; they play an extremely important role during the conception, gestation and birth of their children. Fathers and mothers need a better understanding of the importance of parental involvement, and deconstructing



assumptions that being nurturant makes them less of a man. Hence, it is argued that it is crucial to encourage men to be more involved in parenting, by helping them to understand how important parents are to their children and providing them with concrete steps on how they can improve their parenting roles.

Hopefully, this study will also serve to encourage those men who are caught in a stereotypically masculine role to step out of this snare and thus to reclaim their humanity as partners and as fathers. It is hoped that this study will empower men to grasp the important role of fatherhood during the childbearing years of their partners, such that they will become more emotionally responsive as fathers and husbands. This study may also assist men in examining their status as the primary “breadwinner” and their gender ideologies in shifting the breadwinning boundary.

This study may also go some way in enabling mothers around the world to strive in building on the strength and knowledge of the past, and to create a new platform in women’s consciousness. Hence, it is hoped that studies such as these may impact on the public consciousness to shift expectations of motherhood and the idealized, romanticized notions that equate successful femininity with motherhood, so that women who are attempting to both study and mother may not judge themselves as harshly as they currently do.

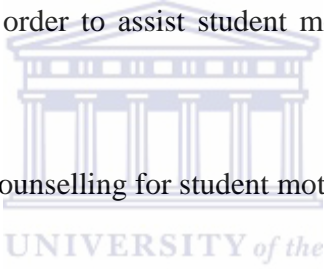
In order to challenge the social stigma and punitive discourses on young mothers who are studying, more work needs to be done around unpacking the social responses to them. Hence a particular programme could be outlined alongside legislation and education as an integral part of anti-stigma campaigns, in order to understand and challenge the social roots of stigma through the promotion of critical thinking.

Drawing on the findings, single student mothers’ experiences of stigma in particular may have adverse repercussions for these young mothers. Since stigmatisation may hinder student mothers’ education, and could have detrimental effects on the lives of these

young mothers, stigma reduction strategies should be implemented at the university. These could be aimed at both individual and group levels in order to be effective individual or intrapersonal strategies. These strategies could include counselling, cognitive-behavioural therapy advocacy, empowerment and group counselling. In addition, support groups should be designed to assist students to overcome the challenges they encounter.

From the above, it seems that there is a need for academics to be guided by professionals, or be given some form of training or sensitivity awareness in order to enable them to better understand and deal with student mothers' situations (Bloem, 2000; Olivier, 2000).

In light of the results of this study, the subsequent suggestions could be implemented in the university environment, in order to assist student mothers to be successful in their studies:

- 
- Make available proper counselling for student mothers before they resume their studies and during:
  - Ensure that lectures and tutorials for student mothers are made available at a time that is convenient for them;
  - Provide training to lecturers and tutors to enable them to be more sensitive to the needs of student parents and render support to student mothers in their studies;
  - Consider building more residences adequate for student mothers with babies' facilities, given that student mothers are currently not allowed to live in the residences at UWC due to the lack of babies' facilities and the unfavourable nature of the residences for student mothers.

#### **5.4.2 Recommendations for further studies**

The study raises an important issue that could be addressed in future studies. Considering the high rate of single motherhood among young female students in the South Africa, it would be appropriate for further research to explore their particular challenges, including the lack of their partners' engagement in parenting. More work on male parents at universities would complement and deepen the current findings.

Furthermore, a longitudinal study that explores shifts and changes over time and documents longer term challenges of being a student and a parent at all stages of child development could be conducted. In addition, further research is required to provide opportunities for women to reflect on their experiences, given that these are so complex and diverse. Also, in terms of their experiences of parenting, the voices of young women and young men should be heard, so that the complex and diverse parenting experiences can be explored. The construct of motherhood and the experiences of mothers should be examined more widely, taking into account different contexts and focusing on class, culture and the experiences of gender inequalities in South African society. Hence, more diverse accounts of mothering experiences would be captured presenting a more representative experience of motherhood among young mothers in South Africa.

#### **5.4.3 Recommendations for knowledge production**

According to feminists such as Burns (2000), alternative voices are essential to deal with the status quo, and a different construction of motherhood is required in order to facilitate adequate conditions for gender equality and justice. The literature on motherhood, both globally and locally in South Africa, essentially highlights the way in which women continue to confront gender inequality on a daily basis. Gender normative practices

regarding parenting do not appear to have shifted very much and women still appear to carry the load, even while at a university where gender is challenged intellectually. Based on the outcome of this study, it can be said that most women perform parenting obligations on their own, with little active support from men, and with little support or understanding from the society at large, and often punishment and stigmatisation instead, and that this reveals and promulgates gender inequality. Optimistically, young women would be better equipped to deal with these inequalities that are intrinsic and basically unnoticed, if more knowledge on the social construct of motherhood is produced. It is noted that feminist knowledge and human rights discourses have challenged gender inequalities and the subordination of women. Yet deeply ingrained ideologies and practices continue to persist. Therefore, by displaying the struggles faced by UWC student mothers, it is hoped that various ways to facilitate alternative constructions of motherhood and, hence, to facilitate academic excellence among student mothers will be opened up.

Further, in order to rebuild our assumptions of social norms, values and ideas surrounding the definition of motherhood, these young student mothers' stories are important as they bring to light the shifts (both material and in terms of consciousness) young female students have to go through when they become mothers. Support and balance are vital for student mothers who, forced into "survival" mode, have no peripheral vision and are generally unable to think beyond issues that are not linked to parenting, family, food, nappies, home and their studies. Hopefully, feminist research will assist young mothers to regain autonomy over their lives, and to share their experiences with others, thus enabling them to shift out of the isolation they feel their mothering role has constrained them to. It is hoped that the experiences of the young mothers in this study will lay a foundation of knowledge for other young mothers in South Africa in particular and worldwide in general.

Having achieved some noteworthy changes at the level of student participation, South Africa is now grappling with the question of how to achieve significant changes at the

level of academic staff and university leadership. In view of the overall analysis, the presentation suggests that while equity-related legislation and policies are necessary, there are insufficient mechanisms in place to bring about gender equality. Thus feminists are endeavouring to create a different concept of motherhood, one where mothers can tackle sexism and other forms of discrimination and challenge patriarchal, heteronormative, traditionally gendered norms and motherhood ideologies. In this way, based on the strength and knowledge of motherhood ideologies, a platform for women's consciousness will be built. To address the challenges of gender inequality and its changing nature, universities need to be progressively more proactive in the interventions that they undertake.



## Bibliography

Albertyn, C. (2005). *Defending and Securing Rights through law: Feminism, law and the Courts in South Africa*. *Politikon*, 32(2), 217-237.

Aluko, Y.A. (2003). *Women's employment and family stability in Nigeria*. A survey of working women in Ibadan Metropolis. *Ife Psychologia*, 11(2), 192-213.

Arendell, T. (2000). Conceiving and investigating motherhood: the decade of scholarship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 14(3), 265-280

Arlington Public School (2004). *Teenage Parenting Programmes*.  
<http://www.apsva.us/teenageparenting> Retrieved on 12-02-2010

Aveling, T. (2002). "Having it all" and the discourse of equal opportunity; reflections on choices and changing perceptions. *Gender and Education*, 14(3), 265-280.

Athanasiadou, C. (1997). Postgraduate women talk about family and career: the discursive reproduction of gender difference. *Feminism and Psychology*, 7, 321-327.

Babbie, E. & Mouton, J. (2001). *The practice of social research*. Cape Town: Oxford Press Southern Africa.

Banister et al. (1994). *Qualitative Methods in psychology: A Research Guide*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Barnet, B., Joffe, A., Duggan, A., Wilson, M. & Repke, J. (1996). Depressive symptoms, stress and social support in pregnant and postpartum adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*, 150,64-69

Bhana, D., Clowes, L., Morrell, R. & Shefer, T. (2008) South African schools' responses to pregnant girls and young parents: a study of some Durban and Cape Town secondary schools. *Agenda*, 76, 78-90.

Bhana, D., Morrell, R., Shefer, T. & Ngabaza, S. (2010) South African teachers' responses to pregnant young women and young mothers in schools. *Culture, Health and Society: An International Journal for Research, Intervention & Care*, 1464-5351.

Bloem S. (2000). Die menings van sekondere opvoeders betreffende 'n adolescent wat 'n swangerskap laat temineer het. Ongepubliseerde MEd verhandeling. Port Elizabeth: Universiteit van Port Elizabeth.

Brown, L. and Gilligan C. (1992). *Meeting the Crossroads: women's psychology and girls' development*. Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Boonzanier, F. (2006). A gendered analysis of woman abuse. In T. Shefer; F.Boonzaier, & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The Gender of Psychology* (pp. 135-150). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998). *Transforming Qualitative Information*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Bozalek, V. (2006). Analysing text on the prevailing paradigm of 'family' in the 'psy' professions. In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The Gender of Psychology* (pp. 151-163). Cape Town: UCT Press.

Brickell, C.(2006). The sociological construction of gender and sexuality. *The Sociological Review*, 87-112.

Brink, B.& De la Rey, C.(2001). Work-Family interaction strain: Coping Strategies used by successful women in the public, *South African Journal of Psychology*,31(4),55-62

Brown, C.E. (1999). *An investigation into the perception and execution of the maternal role*. Unpublished thesis, Psychology Department, University of Stellenbosch.

Burman, E. (1994). *Deconstructing developmental psychology*. London: Sage.

Burr, V. (1995). *An introduction to social constructionism*. London: Routledge.

Bradlow, E. (1993). Women and education. *South African historical journal*.

Buttrose, I. & Adams, P. (2005). *Mother Guilt*. Australia: Penguin Group.

Caldas, S. J. (1993). Current theoretical perspectives on adolescent pregnancy and childbearing in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 8, 4-20

Chadwick, R. (2006). Pathological wombs and raging hormones: *psychology, reproduction and the female body*. In T. Shefer; F. Boonzaier, & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The Gender of Psychology* (pp. 233-248). Cape Town: UCT Press.



- Chelser, P. (1972). *Women and madness*. New York: Doubleday.
- Chevalier, A. and Viitanen, T. K. (2001). *The Long-Run Labour Market Consequences of Teenage Motherhood in Britain*. London.
- Chodorow, N.J.(1978). The reproduction of mothering. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Choi, P., Henshaw, C., Baker, S. & Tree, J. (2005). Supermum, superwife, supereverything: performing femininity in the transition to motherhood. *Journal of reproductive and infant psychology*, 23(2), 167-180
- Chigona , A. & Chetty, R. (2007). Girls' education in South Africa. Special consideration to teen mothers as learners. 15 *Journal of Education for International Development* . September 2007
- Christian, B. (1985). *Black Feminist Perspective on Black Woman Writers*. Oxford: Pergamon Press Inc
- Christierson, V. A.B (1997). Part-time work, motherhood and accumulated role satisfaction: a study of white South African nurses. Unpublished thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Witwatersrand.
- Creatsas, G.K. (1993). Sexuality: sexual activity and contraception during adolescence. *Current opinion in Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 5: 774-783

- Creswell, J.W. (2003). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches* (Second Edition). Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J.W. & Miller, D.L. (2000). Determining Validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into practice*, 39(3), 124-130.
- Cronin, C. (2003). First- time mothers identifying their needs, perceptions and experiences. *Journal of Clinical Nursing*, 12 (2), 1-11
- Cowdery, R.S. & Knudson-Martin,C.(2005). The construction of motherhood: Tasks, relational connection and gender equality. *Family relations*, (54).3335-345.
- Cinamon, R.G., & Rich, Y. (2005). Work-family conflict among female teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21, 365-378.
- Department of Health (1999). *South Africa Demographic and Health Survey 1998*, preliminary Report Pretoria and Calverton; MRC South Africa and Macro International.
- Devault, M. L. (1999). *Liberating method. Feminism and social research*. Philadelphia: Templeview Press.
- De Vos, A.S. (1998). *Research at grass roots: a primer for the caring professions*. Pretoria: J.L. van Schaik.
- De Villiers, V.P. (1991). Seksonderring onder tieners in die Paarl. *South African Medical Journal*, 80: 231-232

- Denscombe, M. (1998). *The Good Research Guide for small –scale social research projects*. Philadelphia: Open University Press.
- Deutsch, F.M. (2007). *Undoing gender*. *Gender & Society*, 21(1), 106-127
- Dolby, N. (2000). The shifting ground of race: the role of taste in youth's production of identities. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 3, 7-22.
- Drake, R. (2001). Guidance on the education of school age parents.  
Unpublished paper written for the department for education and skills.  
London.
- Elvin-Nowak, Y. & Thompson, H. (2001). Motherhood as idea and practice. A discursive understanding of employed mothers in Sweden. *Gender and Society*, 15(3), 407-428.
- Ex, C. & Janssens, J. (1998). Maternal influence on daughter's role attitudes. *Sex Roles, A journal of Research*, 38 (3), 171-187.
- Everingham, C. (1994). *Motherhood and Modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.Ltd.
- Finchilescu, G. (2006). Women as a Minority Group. In T. Shefer; F. Boonzaier, & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The gender of psychology* (pp. 198-219). Cape Town: UCT Press.

- Friedmann, A., Weinberg, H. & Prins, AM (1998). Sexuality and motherhood: mutually exclusive in perception of women. *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research*, 38(9-10).
- Glenn, E.N. (1994). *Social Construction of mothering: A Thematic Overview*. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang & L. R. Forcey (Eds.) *Mothering: ideology, experience and agency*. New York: Routledge.
- Gillespie, R. (2003). Childfree and Feminine: Understanding the Gender Identity of Voluntary Childless Women. *Gender & Society*, 17, 122-136.
- Gordon, T. (1990). *Feminist mothers*. London: Macmillan Education Limited.
- Gouws, E. and Kruger, N. (1994). *The Adolescent: An educational perspective*. Johannesburg: Butterworth.
- Grant, M. and Hallman, K. (2006). "Pregnancy-related school dropout and prior school performance in South Africa," *Policy Research Division Working Paper* no. 212. New York: Population Council.
- Gurrina, R. (2002). Feminist Critique of European Policies on Motherhood and Employment. *The European Journal of Women's studies*, 9(1), 49-68.
- Hallman, K. & Grant, M. (2004). "Poverty, Educational Attainment, and Livelihoods: How Well Do Young People Fare in KwaZulu Natal, South Africa?" *Horizons Research Summary*. Washington, D.C.: Population Council.
- Hall, C.M. (1991). *Women and Identity: Value Choices in a Changing World*.

New York: Hemisphere Publishing Corporation.

Hall, I. & Hall, D. (2004). Evaluation and Social Research. *Introducing small-scale practice*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. England: Open University Press.

Hare-Mustin, R.T., & Marecek, J. (1990). Gender and the meaning of difference: postmodernism and psychology. In R.T. Hare-Mustin, & J. Marecek (Eds), *Making a Difference: Psychology and the Construction of Gender* (pp. 22-64). New Haven: Yale University Press.

Helge, D. (1989). *Preventing Teenage Pregnancies in Rural America*. National Rural Development Institute. Western Washington University, Bellingham WA.

Herrman, M.M., van Cleve, L. & Levisen, L. (1998). Parenting competence, social support and self-esteem in teen mothers case managed by public nurses. *Public Health Nursing*, 15(6), 432-439.

Hoffnung, M. (1998). Motherhood: Contemporary conflict for women. In Freeman, J (1998). *Women: A feminist perspective*. California: Mayfield publishing Co.

Hollway, W. & Featherstone, B. (1997). *Mothering and ambivalence*. London: Routledge.

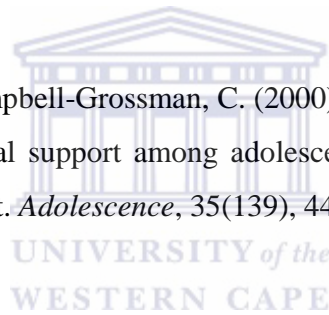
Hill Collins, P. (1994). Shifting the centre: race, class, and feminist theorizing about motherhood. In E. N. Glenn, G. Chang & L.R. Forcey (Eds.). *Mothering: ideology experience and agence*. New York: Routledge.

Hill Collins, P. (2004). "Some Group Matter: Intersectionality, Situated Standpoints, and Black Feminist Thought" in *Feminist Frontiers*. McGraw-Hill.

Houston, S. (2001). Beyond Social Constructionism: Critical Realism and Social Work. *British Journal of Social Work*, 31, 845-861.

Hrdy, S.B. (2000). *Mother Nature*. London: Vintage.

Hudson, D. Elek, S. & Campbell-Grossman, C. (2000). Depression, self-esteem, loneliness and social support among adolescent mothers participating in the New Parents Project. *Adolescence*, 35(139), 445-453



Human Sciences Research Council (2006). 2005 *South African Social Attitudes Survey*.

Human Rights Watch (2004). Publications. *Hrw.org Defending Human Rights Worldwide*. New York.

Ireland, M.S. (1993). *Reconceiving Women: Separating motherhood from female identity*. New York: the Guilford Press.

Jagger, A. M. (1998). *Feminist Politics and Human Nature*. Grt. Britain: Rowman & Littlefield.

- James W. et al. (2000). Values, Education and Democracy. *Report of Working Group on Values in Education (South Africa)*.
- Jeannes, L. C. (2002). *A discourse analysis of South African women's experiences of motherhood*. Unpublished thesis, Psychology Department, University of the Western Cape, Bellville.
- Jhonston, D.D. & Swanson, D.H. (2003). *Invisible mothers: a content analysis of motherhood ideologies and myths in magazines*. *Sex roles*, 49(1/2), 21-32
- Johnson-Hanks, J. (2006). *Uncertain Honor, Modern Motherhood in African crisis*. Chicago Press USA.
- Kane, E. (1998). Men's and women's beliefs about gender equality: Family ties, dependence and agreement. *Sociological Forum*, 13, 611-637.488  
*Itumeleng Mamabolo, Malose Langa and Peace Kiguwa*
- Kaplan, M.M. (1992). *Mother's images of motherhood*. London: Routledge.
- Kaufman, C. (2001). "Adolescent pregnancy and parenthood in South Africa." *Studies in Family Planning* 32(2): 147-160
- Kenway J. (1990). Privileged girls. Private schools, and the culture of success.  
In: Kenway J. and Willis S. (eds), *Hearts and Minds: Self-esteem and the schooling of girls*. London. Falmer.

- Khupiso, V. (2006). *Teen pregnancy rocks schools*. Sunday Times. 28 March 2006.
- King E.M. and Hill A.M. (1992). *Women's Education in Developing Countries: Barriers, Benefits and Policies*. World Bank.
- Kiguwa, P. (2004). Feminist critical psychology in South Africa. In D. Hook(Ed.). *Critical Psychology* (278-315). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.
- Klein, R. D. (1983). How to do what we want to do. Thoughts about feminist methodology. In Bowles, G. and Klein, R. D *Theories of Women's studies*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Knowles, J. & Cole, E. (Eds.) (1990). *Woman-defined motherhood*. London: Harington Park Press.
- Kruger, L. (2006). 'Motherhood' In Shefer, T. Boonzanier, F. and Kiguwa, P. (Eds) *The Gender of Psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press.
- Kruger, L-M. (2003). 'Narrating motherhood: The transformation potential of individual stories.' *South African Journal of psychology*, 33(4): 198- 204.
- Kunio, K. and Sono, A. (1996). *Study on the Promotion of Unwanted Teenage Pregnancies: Perspectives Drawn from the International JFPA (Japan Family Planning Association)*.
- Kushner, K. E. (2005). Embodied context: *Employed mothers' personal and family health decision making*. Health Care for Women International, 26(1), 69-86.



- Lather, P. (1991). *Getting smart, feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. London:Routledge
- Leadbeater, B., Bishop, S. & Raver, C. (1996). Quality of mother-toddler interactions, maternal depressive symptoms and behavioural problems in preschool of adolescent mothers. *Development and Psychology* 32(2), 280-288.
- Lee-Rife, S. (2002). *The Educational Trajectories of Pregnant Adolescent in South Africa*. Department Of Sociology and Population Studies Center: University of Michigan.
- Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist Research in theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.
- Lewis, S. E. & Nicolson, P. (1998). Talking about early motherhood: recognizing loss and reconstructing depression. *Journal of Reproduction and infant Psychology*, May-Aug 1998, 16, 2/3, 177-196.
- Long, C., & Zietkiewicz, E. (2006). 'Going Places': Black Women Negotiating Race and Gender in South Africa. Johannesburg: Wits University Press
- Long,C. (2009). *Contradicting maternity: HIV-positive motherhood in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.
- Lofland, J. (2001). *Gender Inequality: Theories and politics*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Lorber, J. (2001). *Gender Inequality: Theories and Politics*. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing Company.

Lorber, J. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. New Have: Yale University Press

Mackinnon, C. A. (1991). *Towards a Feminist Theory of the State*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Macleod, C. (2006). 'Early Reproduction and Gendered Assumption about Adolescent Hetero-sexuality'. In Shefer, T., Boonzanier, F. and Kigwa, P. (eds) *The Gender of Psychology*. Cape Town UCT Press.

Macleod, C. (2001). Changing patterns of teenage pregnancy: *population based study of small areas*. In BMJ1, 323, 199-203

Macleod, C. (1999). The Causes of teenage pregnancy. *South Africa Journal of Psychology* 29, (1) 8-16.

Mama, A. (ed). (2003). *Feminist Africa Changing cultures*. Cape Town UCT Press.

Marks, G. & Houston, D. (2002). *Attitudes towards work and motherhood held by working and non-working mothers*. *Work, Employment and Society*, 16(3), 523-537.

Martineau, R. (1997). Women and Education in South Africa. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 66, Fall 1997 (4) 384-397.

- Maynard, M. (1994). 'Methods, Practice and Epistemology: The Debate about Feminism and the Research'. In Maynard, Mand Puwis, J. *Researching women's lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor and Francis Ltd.
- Mc Mahon, M. (1995). *Engendering Motherhood*. New York: Guilford Publication Inc.
- McGurk, S.R. (1993). Utilisation of a School-Based Clinic for Identification and Treatment of Adolescent Sexual Abuse. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 14:196-201.
- Meena, R. (2001). quoted in Africa: Women are losing the battle for education In Win News: Spring 2001  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m2872/is\\_2\\_27/ai\\_75099774](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m2872/is_2_27/ai_75099774)  
Retrieved on 18-03-2010
- Meitjies, S. (2005). Gender equality by design: The case of South Africa's Gender Commission on Gender Equality. *Politikon*, 32(2), 259- 275.
- Meyers, D.T. (2001). The rush to motherhood-prenatalist disclosure and women's autonomy. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 26, 735-773.
- Myers, M. (1997). *Information Systems: An Emerging Discipline?* McGraw-Hill, London.
- Ministry of Education (2000). Summary of Decision of the Meeting of the Council of Education Ministers, 31 July.

- Mogotlane, S. (1993). Teenage Pregnancy: An Unresolved Issue. *Curationis*, 16:11-14
- Mokgalabone, M.B. (1999). Socio-cultural conditions, teenage pregnancy and schooling disruption: themes from teachers and teenage mothers in “poor rural schools. *South African Journal of Education*, 19(1):55-66
- Mies, M. (1983). *Towards a methodology of feminist research*. In Bowles, G. and Klein, R. D. *Theories of women’s studies*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Milla, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood*. UK: Cambridge Uni Press.
- Miller, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood: a narrative approach*. United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Milkie, M. A. & Pethola, P. (1999). Playing all the roles: Gender and Work-Family Balancing Act. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, May 1999, 61(2), 476-490.
- Mitchell, J. (1971). *Psychoanalysis and feminism: A radical reassessment of Freudian psychoanalysis*. London: Allen Lane.
- Mouton, J. (2000). *How to succeed in your Master’s and Doctoral studies: A South African guide and resources book*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- National Gender Summit. (2001). *Briefing document*. Braamfontein, Johannesburg.

- National Research Council and Institute of Medicine of the National Academies.  
(2005). *Growing Up Global: The Changing Transitions to Adulthood in Developing Countries*. Ed. Cynthia B. Lloyd. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.
- Naidoo, A. V. & Jano, R. (2002). Role Saliency of Dual – Career Women Managers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28(3), 69-74
- Nayak, A. & Kehily, M.J. (2008). *Gender, youth and culture: Young masculinities and femininities*. New York: Palgrave.
- Neuman, W. 1. (1997) Social Research Methods. *Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*. USA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Neuman, W. 1. (2003). Social Research Methods. Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches. Fifth Edition. USA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Neilson, P. (1988). *Sex-role orientation and career choice of technikon women students*. Unpublished Med dissertation. Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand.
- Newel, S. (1996). *The superwoman syndrome: a comparison of the “heroine” in Denmark and the UK*. *Women in Management Review*, 11(5), 36-41.
- Nicols, F. & Zwelling, E. (1997). *Maternal-newborn nursing: Theory and Practice*. Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders.

- Nicholson, P. (1999). The myth of the maternal instinct: feminism, evolution, and the case of postnatal depression. *Psychology, Evolution and Gender, 1*, 161-181.
- Nicolson, P. (1993). Motherhood and women's lives. In D. Richardson & V. Robinson (Eds). *Introducing Women's Studies* (201-223). London: The Macmillan Press Limited.
- Oakley, A. (1990). Interviewing women. In Roberts, H. *Doing feminist research*. New York: Routledge and Kegan Paul.
- Oberman, Y. & Josselson, R. (1996). Matrix of tensions - a model of mothering. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20*, 341-359.
- Olivier, M.A. et al. (2000). Adolescents' view on termination of pregnancy. *South African Journal of Education, 20*:213-221
- Olivier, M.A. (1996). Adolescents' perception of sexuality. *South African Journal of Education, 16*:5-8
- O'Reilly, A. (2004). (Ed). From motherhood to mothering. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Ornstein A. C. and Levine D.U. (1997). *Foundations of Education*. New York Houghton Mifflin Company.

Panday, S., Mukiwane, M., Ranchod, L., Letsoalo T., (2009). *Teenge Pregnancy in South Africa with specific focus on school-going learners*. Pretoria: Department of Basic Education.

Parker, I (1999). *Critical textwork: an introduction to varieties of discourse and analysis*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Parker, I. (1994). Discourse analysis. In P. Banister, E. Burman, I. Parker, M. Taylor & C. Tindall (Eds.), *Qualitative methods in psychology*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Passino, A., Whitman, T., Borkowski, J., Stellenbach, C., Maxwell, S., Keogh, D. & Rellinger, E. (1993). Personal adjustment during pregnancy and adolescent parenting. *Adlescence*, 28, 97-122.

Pearton, A. (1999). *Cognitive Competence of Adolescents to Termination of Pregnancy: An Ecological Perspective*. Unpublished DPhil thesis. Port Elizabeth: University of Port Elizabeth.

Plummer, K. (1983). Documents of life 2. *An introduction to the problems and literature of a humanistic method*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Preston-Whyte and Zondi, E. (1989). 'To control their own reproduction; *The Agenda of black teenage mothers in Durban*.' *Agenda* (4) 47-75.

Post-Apartheid South Africa.(2006). In T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier, & P. Kiguwa (Eds), *The Gender of Psychology* (pp.198-219). Cape Town: UCT Press.

- Phoenix, A., Woollett, A., & Lloyd, E. (1991). *Motherhood: Meanings, practices and ideologies*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Pillay, V. (2007). *Academic mothers*. England: Trentham Books Limited.
- Pillow, W. (2004). *Unfit subjects: Educational policy and the teen mother*. RoutledgeFalmer. New York.
- Porter, N. B. (2006). Re-defining superwoman: An essay on overcoming the “maternal wall” in the legal workplace. *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*, 13(55), 55-84.
- Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviours*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Prodromidis, M., Abrams, S., Field, T., Scafidi, F. & Rahdert, E. (1994). Psychosocial stressors among depressed adolescent mothers. *Adolescence*, 29(114), 331-344.
- Quinn, J. (2004). Mothers, learners and countermemory. *Gender and Education*, 16(3), 365-378.
- Ramsay, K. & Letherby, G. (2006). The experience of academic non-mothers in the gendered university. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 13(1), 25-44
- Reinharz, S. (1992). *Feminist methods in social research*. Oxford University Press.



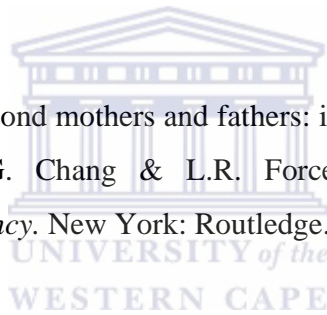
Reinharz, S. (1993). 'Neglected Voices and Excessive demands in Feminist Research.' *Qualitative Sociology*, 16,(1) 69-15.

Rich, A. (1986). *Of Woman Born*. New York: W.W.Norton & Company Inc.

Richardson, D. (1993). *Women, motherhood and childrearing*. London: The Macmillan Press Ltd.

Rowbotham, S. (1989). To be or not to be: the dilemmas of mothering. *Feminist Review*, 31, 82-93.

Rothman, B.K. (1994). Beyond mothers and fathers: ideology in a patriarchal society. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang & L.R. Forcey(Eds). *Mothering: ideology, experience and agency*. New York: Routledge.



Ruchala, P. & James, D. (1997). Social support, knowledge of infant development and maternal confidence among adolescent and adult mothers. *Journal Obstetrics and Gynecology Neonatal Nursing*, 26 (6), 685-689.

Ruddick, S. (1989). *Maternal thinking*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Schultz, K. (2001). Constructing failure, Narrating success: Rethinking the "problem" of teen pregnancy. *Teachers College Record*. Vol.103, No.4 pp 582-607

- Sen, A. (2006). *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Penguin Group.
- Sevon, E. (2005). Timing Motherhood: Experiencing and Narrating the choice to become a Mother. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(4), 461-482.
- Silverman, D. (2000). Analysing Talk and Text. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Silverstein, L. B. & Phares, V. (1996). Explaining the mother-child paradigm. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 20, 39-53.
- Smith, J.A. (1995). Semi-Structured Interviewing and Qualitative Analysis. In J. A. Smith, R. Harre & Psychology. London: Sage Publicatios Ltd.
- Sommer, K., Whitman, T.L., Borkowski, J. G., Stellenbach, C., Maxwell, S. & Keogh, D. (1993). Cognitive readiness and adolescent parenting. *Development Psychology*, 29,389-398.
- Stake, R.E. (1994). Case Studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 236-247).
- Stephens, S. A. (1999). *Improving outcome for teen parents and their young children by strengthening school based programmes: Challenges solutions and policy implications*. Centre for Assessment and Development Policy – CAPD.
- Sunday Times* (2007). *School with 144 pregnant Pupils*. *Sunday Times News*

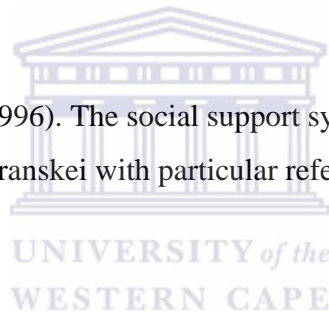
20/05/07. P6.

Swainson, N. (1998). Promoting girls education in Africa. The design and implementation policy intervention. Education Research Paper No. 25 (141) 1998

Swartz, S. & Bhana, A. (2009). *Teenage Tata: Voices of Young fathers in South Africa*. HRSC Press. <http://www.hsrcpress>

Tang, T.N. & Tang, C.S. (2001). Gender role internalization, multiple roles, and Chinese women's mental health. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 25, 181-196.

Tanga, T.T. & Uys, E.R. (1996). The social support system of unmarried pregnant adolescents in the Transkei with particular reference to parents. *Curationis*, 19, 50-55.



Taylor, G.L. (1997). *Women's experience of abortion: a qualitative study*. Unpublished MA dissertation. Grahamstown: Rhodes University.

Terre Blanche, M. & Durheim, K. (1999). Social constructionist methods. In M. Terre Blanche & K. Durheim (Eds). *Research in practice: Apartheid methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Town Press.

Theron, L. & Dunn, N. (2006). Coping strategies for adolescent birth-mothers who return to school following adoption. *South African Journal of Education* vol. 26(4), 491-499

- Thody, A. & Kaabwe E S. M., eds. (2000). *Educating Tomorrow: Lessons from Managing Girls' Education in Africa*. Kenwyn, South Africa: Juta.
- UNESCO (2003). Education for All Information Kit: Educating Women and Girls.  
[http://undg.org/documents/girlseducation/UNGEIActionPlanFinal\(11-00\).doc](http://undg.org/documents/girlseducation/UNGEIActionPlanFinal(11-00).doc)  
Retrieved on 02-03-2010.
- U.S. Department of Education (1992): Office for Civil Rights, Teenage Pregnancy and Parenthood Issues under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.
- Van Vuuren M. (1990). Family planning is the key to saving our planet.  
*Community health in South Africa*, 5:16-21
- Vincent, C. Ball, S. J. & Pietikainen, S.(2004). Metropolitan mothers: Mothers, mothering and paid work. *Women's studies International Forum* (27), 51-587.
- Wager, M.(2000). Childlessness by choice? Ambivalence and female identity.  
*Feminism and Psychology*,10(3),389-395).
- Walker, C.(1995). Conceptualising motherhood in twentieth century South Africa.  
*South African Journal of Psychology*, 21(3), 417-445.
- Wallis, T. & Price, L. (2003). The relationship between work-family conflict and central life interest amongst single mothers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 29(1), 26-31.

- Weaver, J.J. & Ussher, J.M. (1997). How motherhood changes life-A discourse analytic study with mothers of young children. *Journal of reproductive and infant psychology*, 15(1), 51-69.
- Wetherell, M. (2004). *Identities, groups and social issues*. London: Sage Publications.
- West, C. & Zimmerman, D.H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2),125-151.
- White, J.W., Russo, N.F & Brown Travis, C. (2001). Feminism and the decade of behaviour. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*.25, 267-279.
- Wilson, H. & Huntington, A. (2005). Deviant (M)others: The Construction of Teenage Motherhood in Contemporary Discourse. *Journal of Social Policy*, 35(1), 59-76.
- Wolpe A., Quinlan, O. and Martinez, L. (1997). Gender Equity in Education: A Report by the Gender Task Team. Pretoria.
- Woollett, A. & Boyle, M. (2000). Reproduction, women's lives and subjectivities. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(3). 307-311.
- Woollett, A., Phoenix, (1991). Motherhood. In Phoenix, A. & Lloyd, E. (Eds) (1991), *Motherhood: Meanings, practices and ideologies*. London: Sage publications.
- Yampolskaya, S., Brown, E. C. & Greenbaum, P.E. (2002). Early pregnancy among

adolescent females with serious emotional disturbances: Risk factors and outcome. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioural Disorders*.

Zucker, A. N. (1999). The psychological impact of Reproductive Difficulties on Women's Lives. *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research*, 40(9-10), 767-786.



## **APPENDIX ONE: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

1. What was the circumstance of your pregnancy and how did you feel about it?
2. How did you feel during the pregnancy and your transition into having a baby and into motherhood as a whole?
3. What were the first few days and weeks after birth like?
4. What did you understand about breast feeding and what was your decision regarding it and why?
5. What gendered experiences did you face regarding child rearing and parenting and what kind of assistance did you get from your partner and family?
6. What is the context of child care while at school and how do you feel about it?
7. How has your position of mother impacted on your studies?
8. How has motherhood impacted on your relationship with your partner?
9. Describe your awareness of being a mother among your classmates or just to Yourself.
10. What are your experiences as a student mother, and how do you cope with your studies?
11. How do you balance both academic work and motherhood? What kind of support do you get from the university as a student mother to undermine your academic development?

## **APPENDIX TWO: RESEARCH COVERING LETTER**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I am conducting research on the experiences of motherhood and parenting among young female students at the University of the Western Cape.

I am carrying out this research towards my Masters Degree in Women and Gender Studies at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). My supervisor is Prof. Tamara Shefer.

I am at the stage of collecting data and would appreciate if you would agree to grant me an interview. All data collected will be strictly confidential and you will remain anonymous at all times.

The proposed way of collecting information from you with regard to your experiences will be through the means of semi-structured interviews and life history interviews. All interviews will be conducted by the researcher using a tape recorder. I will also transcribe and analyse all data collected to ensure confidentiality. Once tapes have been transcribed, they will be destroyed to protect the confidentiality of my participants. Transcripts will be kept on the file at the researcher's home, but will be destroyed if the respondents so request.

Participants may choose to be identified by a different name to avoid being recognized. Thus all personal information will be secured or will be concealed and will be made public only behind a shield of anonymity.

In case of any psychological or emotional problems that may arise during the interviews, I would offer referrals for counselling and the Student Counselling Service or elsewhere in the area.



I will commit myself to share with you the findings and to get your feedback before submitting the final thesis to the University.

Data will be published in a mini-thesis as a requirement towards my M. Phil. Degree in Women and Gender Studies at UWC.

I would appreciate it if you would inform me either by email or telephone whether you are prepared to partake in my research.

Thank you very much.

Ngum Funiba

Cell: 0793982700

Email: [funibamelvis@yahoo.com](mailto:funibamelvis@yahoo.com)



## **CONTRACT OF INFORMED CONSENT**

I hereby declare that I have negotiated with Funiba and have understood the present contract outline, the purpose and the outcome of Ngum Funiba's research, as well as my participation in it.

I understand that Ngum Funiba's research is conducted for her to complete her M.Phil at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). The research will be used for her final thesis and her final thesis will be available in the Main Library at UWC, both electronically and on hard copies. Her thesis will be written in English and it will be available to anyone who uses or gets access to the library.

I understand that Ngum Funiba is exploring the experiences of motherhood and parenting among the University's female students. I have agreed to grant the interviews about my own experiences on motherhood. I am aware that the interviews will be tape recorded but the tapes will be available to Ngum Funiba alone and her supervisor. I am also aware that tapes will be destroyed after transcribing.

Furthermore, I have agreed to the following:

That my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw at any time and at any stage of the research process should I feel to do so.

That my participation will be anonymous and strictly confidential.

That before joining the research, I will be fully informed about the aims of the research and the research process.

That my participation will amount to three to four hours divided into two interview sessions.

That I am aware of the research topic and do not need to experience any trauma or emotional problems related to the topic.

That I will receive no money or other compensation for my participation.

That I am free to enquire about anything related to my participation.

That I will not be asked to divulge any information that might infringe on my constitutional right to privacy, or any other right, as within the South African constitution.

I am allowed to approve the interview transcript before and comment on the analysis.

That the research process aims to protect my dignity through not passing any judgment on my view points or experiences shared during the research process.

That any characteristics that could lead to my identification will be changed.

That this contract can be changed if necessary but with mutual consent between Ngum Funiba and me.

-----

Name of the participant	Name of the researcher
-------------------------	------------------------

-----



Signature    Signature

-----

Place

Date