

PREGNANT AT THE WRONG TIME: Experiences of Being a Pregnant

Young woman while Schooling - Selected Lesotho Cases

By

KARABO M. MOKOBOCHO-MOHLAKOANA

Dissertation submitted in fulfillment of requirements for the degree:

Doctor of Education

In the School of Educational Studies

University of Kwa- Zulu Natal

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Promoter: Dr. Suchitra Singh

ABSTRACT

This study is an exploration of participants' experiences of being pregnant as young women. The study attempts to respond to the following set of questions:

What are the issues that surround young women's pregnancy in general? How has history shaped the construction of womanhood, family, sexuality, motherhood and young women's pregnancy? What are the beliefs, perceptions and policies surrounding young women's pregnancy and that underlie responses to it and how might they (beliefs, perceptions and policies) be changed? How do issues of sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS among young women interact with issues of pregnancy? What are the ways in which schools, students and pregnant young women handle the issue of pregnancy, the continuation of pregnancy while schooling, and the implications or impact on the women's career trajectories? What are the experiences of women who have been pregnant at young ages with regard to their education (including the implications for it)?

The study utilized a feminist research methodology to interact with women who have been pregnant while schooling. In addition, the study employed feminist research to establish the way in which the *Basotho* construct young women's pregnancy and to decipher the basis for the way this is constructed. A survey questionnaire was used to generate baseline data on the current interactions of school and young women's pregnancy. The storied lives of pregnant women have been shared in the study in their Lesotho context, a small mountain Kingdom completely land locked by South Africa. In-depth interviews were conducted with eight previously pregnant women while some past pregnant women were accessed by the use of focus group interviews. Additional interviews were conducted with principals, parents, siblings, proprietors, and partners of past pregnant young women. The researcher's autobiography as a previously pregnant young woman was also used. The data in the study was analyzed at different levels. The first level was a narrative analysis of the eight stories, including the autobiography, which have been presented as their stories. Data from the focus group interviews was analyzed by picking up themes from the interviews and presented by discussing the themes together with some of the direct words of the participants to reinforce the discussion. A

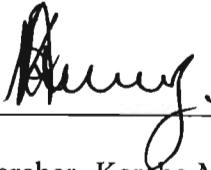
cross sectional narrative analysis was done for principals, parents, siblings, proprietors and partners. A narrative analysis was also done for a separate principals' survey. At the final stage the study brings together information that relates to the research questions.

The analysis of the experiences of young woman's pregnancy has been illuminated by the interrogation of who constructs these experiences, what the constructions are and what they are based upon. Each story in the study is unique and not dependent on another however, it is interesting to note that the way young women's pregnancy interacts with the family, partner, school and religion has much to do with the social construction. The sudden altering of context of "good girl" to "bad girl" causes a sharp shift of the pregnant young woman's experiences, thus the fluid nature of social construction is observable. The negotiations that occur as individuals struggle to handle pregnancy are brought forward. The study has not gone without observations on the challenges faced. The study has also moved from the context based possibilities to the way forward.

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Karabo Mokobocho-Mohlakoana hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted previously for any degree to any other university.

I have also acknowledged all sources that I have used.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Karabo', is written above a horizontal line.

Researcher- Karabo Mokobocho-Mohlakoana

DEDICATION

For my mother, the lady who taught me the value of silence as data.

According to My Son's (Tsepo's) Words:

My Dear Old Granny
Your Skin so Pale and Wrinkly
She Lost Her Physique in Her Youth
Left With But One Tooth
With a very Short Temper
But a Good Sense of Humor
Walking On Three Legs
And Always Sitting In The Shade
Dear Old Granny

(TSEPO MOHLAKOANA 2003 inspired by Ausi Fifi-The Family Poet)

To my father who taught me how to be strong and protected me against the strongest winds.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is at moments like this, when emotions and feelings well up in me, that it is necessary to take a moment to appreciate in a specific manner all those who supported me in different ways so that I was able to undertake my studies. Even though these studies have been my responsibility and task indeed you were there for me.

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Had it not been for the support of the research colleagues in the weekend seminars and through other modes of communication, this study would not have been possible and would not have taken the shape that it has taken.

To the research participants in the study, I salute you in a very special way. I took your time, invaded your privacy and your world. At times I provoked feelings in some of you that you have been taught to suppress, and yet you still stood by me. I am proud of you and the sharing we have had. The encounters with you remain in my life and in many ways influence my actions.

I salute the shoulders of my family on which I leaned during very testing times in the study. My wonderful parents, my late father *Ntate Kopano Mokobocho* and my surviving mother *'M'e 'M'atsietsi* you have raised me well. *Malome Teti*, *'M'angoane 'M'amokoena*, my late brother *Tsietsi* and your families, you taught me how to care through your own little ways while I was studying.

To my three children: *Fumane*, *Refiloe* and *Tsepo* with my grandson *Thabang*. At times it might have seemed like you did not matter, but today I take this opportunity to say thank you in a big way for waiting for me to be fully back with you. Cousins Mohau,

Limphe and your children, I salute you.

I would also like to thank the Lesotho Government for allowing me to undertake the study and giving me both financial and logistical support and permission to access information. Had you not funded parts of my studies, some of my undertakings would not have been possible.

To all those colleagues at my workplace, The Institute of Development Management, who had to listen to my complaints about how heavy life has been because of this study; I respect you for bearing with me. I wish to specially thank the then Acting Country Director *Ntate Mokone Motselebane*. Thank you so much for supporting me through very trying times.

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much you struggle with as women in your own ways. It is from you that the debate on diversity became concrete for me. Those knowing smiles from you, those desperate calls I made for you to assist my family while I was far and inaccessible will always be remembered.

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AGRONYMS

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
CEDAW	Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CRC	Convention of the Rights of a Child
FIDA	Federation of Women Lawyers
HIV	Human Immune Virus
ICPD	International Conference and Population and Development
LCE	Lesotho College of Education
NUL	National University of Lesotho
SADC	Southern African Development Community
STDs	Sexually Transmitted Diseases
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Educational Fund
WILSA	Women in Law in Southern Africa

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Chapter One

The Battle Field

”...little research has focused upon teen parents themselves, allowing news magazines and popular myths to construct the popular image of teen parents. In these ways, teen pregnancy is a complicated and political policy issue which offers a challenge to our current methods of research and analysis.”

(Pillow, 1997:135).

1.1 Introduction

Deliberations about the apposite age at which a woman should become a mother are old. It is only in recent decades that young women’s pregnancy has received much attention and become branded as a major social, economic, political and health problem. This study takes the case of young women’s pregnancy experiences in Lesotho as well as pregnant women’s interactions with some schools as its focus. The aim of the study is to understand the experience of the interaction of pregnancy and schooling by young women. It explores from the young women themselves what their experiences have been like by presenting their answers to the subsequent questions.

The research is centered on the following as a critical question:

What are the experiences of young women’s pregnancy in Lesotho over time, how are the experiences shaped, and what effects do they have in the young women’s education path?

The sub-questions are as follows:

1. How has history shaped the construction of womanhood, family, sexuality, motherhood and young women’s pregnancy in the Lesotho context?

2. What are the beliefs, perceptions and policies around young women's pregnancy that underlie responses and how might they (beliefs, perceptions and policies) be changed?
3. What are the ways in which schools, students, and pregnant young women handle the issue of young women and pregnancy, the continuation of pregnancy and schooling and implications/impact on the women's career trajectories?
4. What are the experiences of women who have been pregnant as young women with regard to the implications for their education?

The rest of this thesis will be tackled along the following general guidelines: I will first situate the thesis citing the socio cultural context of Lesotho. I will then move to place it within the context of other studies. Having placed the study within its context I will then address the theoretical framework within which the study is taking place. Moving from the general to the specific, I will then consider the young women's own stories as well as my story. I will then move towards the conclusion where I discuss the results of the research and recommend the way forward.

1.2 Personal dilemmas about young women's pregnancy

In the attempt to understand young women's pregnancy experiences I will engage with some wider ongoing debates. In view of the existing debates on young women and pregnancy that I alluded to in the introduction, in this study I push to make meaning differently. I wish to dispel the infiltration of, what I term, 'regulatory language' as I observe that even the policies and interventions that are in place feed into and are fed by the existing discourses (Epstein and Johnson, 1998). Epstein and Johnson (1998) have argued that research and interventions that support and perpetuate dominant discourses around the issue lead to biased policies. A central aspect of the argument I submit is the attempt to understand the experiences of young women who have been pregnant while schooling. I will interrogate the influences, beliefs and values that have shaped womanhood and sexuality and try to understand the stories that surround young women's

pregnancy and observe how the stories are shaped by, and how the stories shape, the interaction with pregnancy. I also try to understand how individuals, families, and schools deal with young women's pregnancy in the Lesotho context.

1.3 Personal experiences

My experience as a pregnant young woman while schooling forms the core of my interest in the study. My study is driven by what Marshall and Rossman (1989) have termed a robust autobiographical constituent. As such, in the study I am both a researcher and the researched. As a pregnant young woman many years back, I accepted all forms of experiences of punishment, ridicule, and stigmatization that emanates from being pregnant as a young woman while schooling. At that time when I was pregnant almost thirty years ago, I believed that it was my fault that schools were unable to deal with my pregnancy and that the punishment they used (expelling me from the institution) was correct. These feelings stayed with me until I realized that what is described as wrong or right depends on the interpretation of society at the time. I have since changed my analysis of the situation. However, the analysis and status has not changed for some *Basotho*¹ young women who fall pregnant while schooling. For the young women, expulsion from school still exists as just one of several forms of punishment.

1.4 Personal observations

My further concern for the study stems from my observations and interactions with schools in my former job as a Senior Inspector/ Education Officer in Lesotho for secondary and high schools. In my encounters with principals during management inspections I observed that despite all efforts to educate citizens there are still schools that continue to exclude young women from access to education because of pregnancy. I get more provoked by the observation that in some cases, young women who fall pregnant but are quick to marry do not get as stigmatized as the ones who remain single. The evidence of my observation is that some schools in Lesotho admit the married young

¹ The citizens of Lesotho are Basotho and the singular is Mosotho

mothers but not the single ones even after both young mothers have given birth. Some schools expel the single young mothers even in cases where there is a rumor of having been pregnant in the past. Due to my interest in areas around the discrimination and intimidation of women, I find a further drive to undertake the study. In my observation the discrimination manifests itself in different ways. One of these ways is how young women's pregnancy continues to be viewed and researched as a crisis and a sin is highlighted in studies like the one carried out in Botha Bothe high schools that I revisit later in the literature review (Polonyana, 1993).

1.5 The contested space

Debates surrounding the topic of young women and pregnancy highlight the area as being surrounded by contradicting and conflicting dominant social beliefs in relation to being a child and being an adult and where the two overlap (Murcott, 1980). Thus the location of young women in the conflict space leads to confused portrayal of young women's pregnancy from the different locations. One way in which the confusion about this intersection manifests itself is indicated by the various ways in which the groups of young people are described, named, and defined. In some cases, debates employ different terms such as 'young', teenager, adolescent, young mother, or lone-mother. In other instances, chronological age is used to define the period wherein different studies allocate different ages to groups. The rest of the debates choose to use a combination of the age and terms for example the use of the phrase 'teenagers of 14 to 17 years of age'. In all the above cases there exist contradictions and therefore overlaps. The confusion in the debates may therefore lead to members of different age groups being represented more than once or even omitted. Hobcraft and Kiernan (2001) raised similar observations, though in their study there is an indication that the age is not a problem in itself, as young mothers seem to experience similar challenges like poverty and low educational opportunities.

I also reiterate that in studies where chronological age is used, there are sometimes overlaps between the groups of the young people. The age seems to be determined according to the standards of the body that commissions the research or the country's

stipulated margins (Kidger, 2002).

1.6 The sexual young women?

In addition to the definition of who a young woman is, society constructs a young woman as one who is sexually innocent and ignorant. The innocence is expected in the form of having no involvement in sexual intercourse. The 'construction' of a young person in this manner therefore warrants the older members of the community to control, restrict, and monitor the sexual activity and behavior of the young people. The world of sexual intercourse then remains a no go area for young women. According to a number of studies sexual activity is a space that belongs to, is reserved for, and rightfully inhabited by heterosexual couples and adults (Murcott, 1980; Pilcher, 1997; Griffin, 1993; Mturi and Moerane, 2001).

Any signs that indicate divergent behavior from the depicted sexual innocence are unacceptable to society. Pregnancy, an experience that is exclusively female is therefore one way in which the young women are considered to have gone astray. The shift to active involvement of young mothers into sexual matters forces society to engage with sexuality in a way that makes reproduction the legitimate means through which society gains control over women's bodies (Lawler and Shaw, 2002 and Lephoto, 2000). Lephoto (2000) and Diaho (2003) have shown that the issue of female sexuality as a guarded terrain in most societies is well documented. In the case of young women's pregnancy, the unacceptable status of a sexual woman is made worse by the discourses surrounding age.

Sexuality as an area that has been documented as 'the best kept secret' that human beings struggle with has become an issue that calls for research that focuses on young women's pregnancy (Telela, 1995). Through the use of research and every day talk, women who have had babies in the 'wrong time and space' can be investigated in a manner that is right.

The questions of research, which are based on the belief of young women's pregnancy as being problematic, are asked in ways that interrogate the very mode of questioning. When research questions are focused away from the problem to that of understanding and away from asking why to being focused on the relevant participants, the products of studies change. In research undertaken there are concerns about the absence of young mothers as co-researchers in a situation that directly affects their lives (Davies et al., 2001).

In addition, my concern for research on young women's pregnancy strengthens as I review the literature on the subject. It is clear that the positivist and medical view on the subject dominates documentation and research (Kidger, 2002 and Lawler and Shaw, 2002). There is much evidence of research that focuses on young women's pregnancy as a health issue. Similar trends have been reported from the American experiences where there exist similar observations that research is predominantly from the health perspective (Burdell, 1995). Further observations attest that the health perspective has led to young women's pregnancy being defined as a 'pathological (and pathogenic)' condition with causes '(etiology)' that can be identified, and results (prognosis) leading to medication or a cure (Nathanson, 1986).

The research concerns point to the lack of research by relevant individuals. Personnel who serve the education sectors realize that schools, as institutions, have not undertaken any studies focusing on young women, pregnancy and schooling. A result of this lack is a tendency to borrow from contexts that are different from school and which, sometimes, do not tally well with the school environment. The move to encourage that school based research should be pioneered by practitioners in the field of education is a concern of later arguments.

In addition to involvement of practitioners in young women's affairs, some documentation that center pregnant young mothers as knowers have begun to emerge. Studies are beginning to consider the consultation of young women and how they (young women) make sense of their lives (ibid).

1.7 Debates on young women's pregnancy trends

At the introduction of the chapter I pointed out that views of young women's pregnancy are a problem in some spheres. It is important to note that there is evidence of young women's pregnancy prior to the interest I allude to. In some Southern African countries records reveal premarital childbearing experiences much earlier. For instance, in Botswana there are records that since 1934 sexual practice before marriage and births in this sector are recorded as being high (Makatjane, 2002).

Despite the record of previous existence of young women's pregnancy, a 'problem' phase emerges and the phase is marked by different kinds of engagement in the area of research around the 1990's in Britain and the United States of America (Kidger, 2002 and Lawler and Shaw, 2002). Around the 1970's, in both Britain and the United States of America, the interest in young women and pregnancy was based on efforts to improve the overall health of babies and mothers (Kidger, 2002 and Lawler and Shaw, 2002). Due to the rising cost of this undertaking, programs with different aims began to emerge. The major focus became the prevention and control of young mothers' births from the medical perspective (Moore, et al. Undated).

On the same note, according to Kidger (2002) the interest creates a sudden biomedical control of reproduction that results in young women's pregnancy research and conferences as constituting the highest priority for countries. Responses to young women and pregnancy are therefore filled with regulatory, pathologic and demonizing language (Kidger, 2002). The current language that is used and the labels attached to young women's pregnancy depict a consideration of unacceptable behavior for young women in this 'time and place' (Lawler and Shaw, 2002: 1). An addition to this view is that motherhood gets described according to cultural, social, economic and political rhetoric (Burns, 2000).

In basically the same period the interpretation of young women's pregnancy as a public

health problem emerges and strengthens. The dominant presentation of this mode discusses public health problems in a manner that couples young mothers' pregnancy with HIV/AIDS under sexual risk behaviors. As a result, the two share some common social, medical, and psychological frameworks in approaches to their control.

Similar trends as the ones reported in the United States and England are observed in North America as a whole and in other parts of the world. The African continent also took up the challenge and moved to embrace young mothers' pregnancy as a health problem listed together with some diseases like heart attack (Site). Similar debates began to emerge in the South African Development Countries (SADC) with countries such as Botswana, Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe serving as examples.

The latest discourses surrounding this issue include arguments that view young women's pregnancy as a problem while there are those who still urge to the contrary. Some arguments observe that young women's pregnancy is a form of exclusion (Lawler and Shaw, 2002 and Kidger, 2002). The South African example of Macleod (2001) points to similar observations with Geronimus (1992) to question the credibility of young women pregnancy as a problem. For the purpose of this introduction I avail few of the examples to support the argument and I revisit the review later in chapter three.

1.8 Day to day debates around young women and pregnancy

In this study, I argue that the descriptions of young women's pregnancy are evident in every day talk, the media, and policy documents and that this language infiltrates research. The general public interest creates a surge of daily debates around young women's pregnancy. These debates are important as the experiences of individuals emerge from popular beliefs that are grounded in everyday talk. The talk targets the individual, family, society, and the school.

The media and stories at the family level propagate the messages and language that advocates young women's pregnancy as a 'problem'. Stories and warnings from parents,

peers, teachers, churches, and governments echo these perspectives and young women's pregnancy is resultantly agreed upon as a 'problem'. Parents tell of how much they try to warn their daughters against pregnancy (Khashane and Hlabane, 2003). The young mother in some areas is portrayed as being irresponsible, arrogant, poor, dependent on social security grants and misguided (ibid).

1.9 Young women in pregnancy research

Research debates, in addition to the daily language, emanate from the use of established theories to investigate sexual behavior. Components of sexual behavior such as pregnancy and HIV/AIDS get investigated in the same manner. The debates also target the individual, family, society and the school.

1.9.1 Theories

An example of a theory-based model would be psychology theories that are based on the individuals as a target for behavior change. On the other hand, social theories that explain behavior solely on the notion that social structures on their own are answerable for individuals' behaviors and dictate people's way to display certain behaviors are used.

1.9.2 The individual as responsible

Examples of existing debates on the individual point out those children born of young mothers are faced with risks like developmental delays that lead to academic difficulties (Barrat, 1991). These research perspectives target the individual as the one responsible and answerable for her experiences and the wider structural and socio-cultural factors are in turn neglected. Social institutions like the family, schools, and health facilities are not viewed as accountable in terms of how they disperse their power. Stated differently, removal of responsibility from the wider social setting and the placement of responsibility on the individual privatize young women's pregnancy completely. The response to such occurrences concentrates on the individual and ignores the issues about the failure of

structures to provide for the young people (Giroux, 2002). The very structures are prejudicial to women and pregnant young women in particular. The placement of young mothers as problematic members of the society, viewed as children who have gone out of control and are as a result a problem and threat to adults, influences researchers' approach to the topic (Giroux, 2000). In *Lesotho* the presentation of this view can be summarized by the phrase "*bana ba kajeno*" which translates to "children of today" to refer to the perceived problematic nature of the young people of today.

1.9.3 The family

The families of pregnant young women get investigated through siblings and parents. Studies at times indicate that children born of young mothers follow in their footsteps and have babies at a young age too. Young women from poor family backgrounds, divorced parents, and drug and alcohol abusers have also been mentioned as being susceptible to unwanted pregnancy. Some studies add that when one sister gets pregnant the siblings follow (East, 1996 and Widmer, 1997).

1.9.4 The society

On the other hand, there is research that targets society by pointing out that the high maternal mortality observed in developing countries has been attributed to high young women's pregnancy rates.

The descriptions are sometimes coupled with theories of race such as a white or black mother was not responsible for making any reproductive choices (Davies et al. 2001).

1.9.5 The school

I understand the term school as referring to a diverse system of people who interact in the space and in communities alike. Stated differently, parents, students, and community members along with school employees are all stakeholders and participate actively in

bringing about constructive change in the education system (Moeletsi, 2005 and Giroux, 1992).

Schools have been the context in which many of the studies have been conducted. In the Lesotho example the reasons given are that young women are found mostly in homes or schools (Polonyana, 1993). Dominant research in these contexts, however, replicated the wider societal values and joined the view of young women's pregnancy as a 'problem'. The unimaginable idea to mention school and pregnancy as occurring at the same time has been mentioned as a serious challenge for some people (Epstein & Johnson, 1998). School is observed as a place for children and children are perceived as sexually pure, sexually ignorant and free from any sexual ideas. Pregnancy on the other hand is a result of sexual intercourse that is out of bounds for the young people. Young women's pregnancy in the school context therefore is out of bounds and covers the same space as homosexuality and being infected with HIV (Epstein, 1996 and Goodley, Lawthom, Clough and Moore, 2004). Issues of the role of education, the school environment and uniform have been researched but no conclusive information has come out.

1.10 Traditional research

In addition, research in the area rests around positivist, statistical views that have dominated the past and some current epistemological climate in young women's pregnancy. The studies conducted in this manner call for evaluation by indicating the causes and effects of young women's pregnancy and related control programs (Kidger, 2002). The inclination disrespects and disregards the role of the young women in the knowledge making game.

The political debates that inform and are informed by research indicate the trends to record, analyze, and debate engaging rates, comparative statistics, and quantifiable results. In addition to this, the sexuality debates in research become involved in 'hard facts', for example rates of sexually transmitted infections, age at first intercourse and number of sexual partners.

1.11 Young women's pregnancy as a health problem

Mention of pregnancy related health problems such as high blood pressure, anaemia and haemorrhaging is common (see for example: Zabin and Kiragu, 1998 and Mohai, Thaane, Mpotla, Mokutlulu and Luwanja, 2002). In Lesotho a possible relationship between possible higher proportions of abandoned children and 'never married mothers' due to stressful conditions has been made (Makatjane, 2002). Some new observations have emerged that are contrary to the emphasis of young women's pregnancy as being a medical health problem. Some current debates in places such as England and Ireland, attest that young women's pregnancy does not fit the criteria to qualify as a public health problem (Lawler and Shaw, 2002).

1.12 Debates and methodology of choice

Though I extensively deal with issues of methodology in chapter four, I share some of it herein. The design of the study is fundamentally qualitative though I balance it with quantitative information. Due to the feminist approach to the study, I pay attention to issues of reflexivity and I give priority to the voice of the pregnant young women. My voice as a researcher, together with voices of the researched pregnant young women together give priority to the experiences that form the core of the study.

1.13 The sample

Despite the overlaps that I highlighted earlier in the chapter in dealing with definitions of the young people who are pregnant, I choose to use the term young women for this study. In the study I refer to pregnant young women as all women who were pregnant before their nineteenth birthday. Since the study documents experiences of young women while schooling, in Lesotho, the ideal maximum high school leaving age of seventeen is observed, however, to give allowance to situations that are not ideal I use the age of nineteen (Moeletsi, 2005).

Some of the participants are now adults while others are still young mothers. I may have chosen to refer to the adults as having been pregnant young women but somehow I am uncomfortable with that. The experiences of the older women that I include in this study are there to illuminate their experiences as young mothers of their time. I am also aware that the older mothers may have more experience and their life experiences are now combined with wisdom from maturity (Kidger, 2002). This observation therefore implies that I investigate experience over time and not at a fixed period.

I target young mothers in this study as a group that is targeted in the debates surrounding young mothers' pregnancy worldwide. The debates around women's sexuality point to young women as the most affected by sexual risk behaviors such as HIV/AIDS and young women's pregnancy. The response is also, to some extent, in response to Magazine headlines such as "Pregnant Girls: Should they be in School?" (Khashane and Hlabane 2003) and research reports such as "An investigation into the causes and Effects of Teenage Pregnancies in Schools in the Botha Bothe District in Lesotho (Polonyana, 1993).

1.14 Theoretical frameworks

In order to understand the varied experiences of young mothers with pregnancy I engage an amalgam of frameworks, namely feminist theory with specific interest in feminist post structural theory and feminist critical theory. In addition I engage discourse or narrative analysis and social ecology theory. In the next chapters I indicate the relevance of the theories to the context of the study. I engage all frameworks throughout the study though the feminist framework specifically informs the methodology. I use the feminist framework in all methodological considerations that focus on issues surrounding the selection of participants, data collection techniques, analysis, and the representation of stories (Lepphoto, 2000 and Reddy, 2003). Since the women in the study are at the center of the research, the study utilizes the feminist theory to direct the research. The privilege that a feminist framework affords the participants' voice is very important for a study of pregnancy. This coupled with my interest in the experiences of young women's

pregnancy, tallies well with a feminist framework. Feminist frameworks encourage and celebrate women's lived experience as data (Lather, 2001).

The feminist approach to the study is as a result of an established and documented hesitance to indulge in issues of young women's pregnancy even by feminists (Nathanson, 1991 and Burdell, 1995). The establishment of the position of feminist research and young women's pregnancy was enhanced by a study that points out that "[d]espite the extensive feminist work around mothering in different contexts, the issue of teen mothers is largely ignored... feminists remain uneasy in the face of teen sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing" (Davies et al., 2001: 84). In Lesotho there exists a knowledge gap on women's circumstances and sexuality, including young women's pregnancy (see for example: Letuka, Mamashela, Matashane-Marite, Morolong and Motebang, 1998 and Kimane, Molise, and -Makara, 1999). Therefore the need to carry out research using feminist frameworks has been of outmost interest to me and works to bridge the existing gap (Letuka et al., 1998).

Since experience is not functional unless it is expressed, I needed to employ a second framework of discourse analysis to portray meaning. I restricted the use of the second framework to the colloquial meaning of discourse unlike the use in linguistics as elaborate analysis of text. The second framework I use in the observation that for experience to be shared and therefore understood there has to be a medium of communication. In the study I use language as a mode that carries meaning and through language meanings are made. In all contexts, the use of language may involve power operations, compulsion and interests. I therefore engaged the young women in the study by listening to them and allowing them to share their story.

Therefore specific ways of talking, acting, thinking, believing, dressing, reading, writing, gesturing and so on (Lankshear and Knobel, 2004: 291) are context specific. My interest is on the dominant stories that are told in everyday life about young women's pregnancy and how those stories or narratives construct and are constructed by the use of language. This approach observes that in social relations, language that is used as we talk and write

is based on, and acts as a basis of, the way we interact with each other (Fairclough, 1989; 1995 cited by Janks, 1997). The challenge for such an approach is sometimes hindered by academic requirements to use a foreign language. The use of English in the study of *Sotho* speaking young women a challenge.

Inside this framework the research world might begin to focus our interests to observe the role that is played by what we say in determining experiences for both next person and our selves. In the context of young women's pregnancy, it is imperative that we begin to open paths to effective and productive dialogue between adults and young people.

1.15 Participants

Participants in the study fall into two categories. Category one is made of the pregnant young mothers who stayed in Maseru² during the study period. The age of the participants in the group range between seventeen and thirty five. The second category of participants were needed to assist me in setting the context of the study. The group includes siblings, parents, partners, principals, church representatives and a representative for the Ministry of Education.

1.16 Data generation

I engaged multiple ways of gathering data for the study in order to better understand young mothers' experiences of pregnancy. To generate data for the study, I used individual interviews, focus-group interviews, and questionnaires. Throughout the study I keep memos to remind me of feelings and observations that tape recording may miss. For the full details of the engagements in the area see chapter four. Since I am both a researcher and researched in the study, I engage with my experience through an autoethnographic presentation as one of the testimonies in the study. My experience is an advantage in gaining rapport and enabling insights into others' experiences (Kuh and Andreas, 1991).

² Maseru is the capital town of Lesotho. It is a town in which I stay.

1.17 Significance of the study

During a period when there is commitment to giving consideration for the ‘voice’ of the underprivileged members of society, it is imperative for the pregnant young mothers to be included. In particular, the global outlook is to ensure that all citizens have access to education (UNICEF). The need for opportunities to access education is high on the agenda for the Lesotho Government, as it is for the rest of the world. The evidence of this urge can be found in that government has signed the Elimination of Discrimination of all forms of Discrimination and other International Declarations and has put policies in place (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003).

Despite the efforts by government through legislation, discrimination of pregnant young women continues in some institutions and in some schools in particular. The intention of this study is therefore to make an additional contribution to the knowledge that may guide the implementation of the current policy to reduce discrimination and stigma of pregnancy at a young age. In addition, the study may be used for guidance in the development of future policies as a response to the plight of the pregnant young women and their education.

In awareness of the unbalanced power relations, the study prepares young mothers, schools and parents alike to view young mothers’ pregnancy from a different perspective in order to help with decision making for all concerned. The interactions that the participants have with each other and with the study may assist to expel some of the beliefs and values that always inform the negative attitude towards pregnant young women. In the same manner, pregnant young women may get opportunities to tell their side of the story in relation to their experiences as they negotiate career opportunities. My major hope with studying in the area is to start opening communication channels so that different members begin to talk constructively about young women’s sexuality issues.

The understanding that comes from the study may be used in young women’s pregnancy

intervention strategies and advocacy programs that are relevant to the Lesotho context. The kind of interventions I refer to need to be informed by research that is for the benefit of the young women with the owners as active participants.

With this study I add to feminist scholarship by understanding the young women's pregnancy as a feminist researcher, educationist, black woman and having been a pregnant young woman. My understanding of the phenomena in the manner I propose assists me to work together with schools, parents and pregnant young women so that we are better equipped to do research and advocacy on issues of young women and pregnancy and the interaction with schools.

1.18 Thesis outline

Chapter one introduces the whole study in terms of the general details and picture. In the chapter I share with the reader my motivation and circumstances under which I conceptualize the study. The chapter presents the rationale and significance of the study. I also present a brief discussion of the theoretical framework and the methodology that I use. The chapter also introduces the study by giving a short theoretical basis of the study through a review of the literature in relevant areas to the study.

Chapter two presents the context of this study. It introduces the country in which the study is located. I also introduce the women of Lesotho in relation to the political space they occupy in society. This chapter presents the historical, political and societal environment and the relationship with the situation of women and how the position manifests itself in the young women's pregnancy discourses. I point to the relationships of societal institutions like the family, churches, and schools in shaping these experiences. In the chapter I further point out how the existing climate influences the educational climate in relation to women and how young mothers' pregnancy fits in the bigger picture.

Chapter three covers the literature that I review in the study. I review work related to young mothers and pregnancy in relation to the language that prevails in every day

discussions and research. I present the studies that are conducted in the area from a different perspective. I attempt to deeply interrogate the studies in terms of methodology and presentation of the findings. I focus attention away from the young women to the environment of research, the home and schools. I indicate the possibility of learning from pregnant young women in order to bridge the established gap in most research.

Drawing on the previous chapter, chapter four presents the theoretical framework for the study. The study engages discourse analysis as a theoretical base to understand the experiences of pregnant young women. The framework interrogates the meaning of day-to-day language and research language and the interaction with the pregnant young women's experiences.

Chapter five presents the theoretical basis for choices I make in relation to methodology. In addition, I present and rationalize the data collection instruments as well as techniques that I use in the study. I also present issues of sampling in relation to techniques, sample size, and criteria for the selection of participants in the study. I present the data collection process, procedures and actual processes in the field. Procedures that I employ to capture and edit data form part of the chapter. I also bring forward data analysis procedures as I engage in the study.

In the sixth chapter I present a qualitative analysis of the interviews of the participants. I use this to establish the context of young women and pregnancy in Lesotho. Here an analysis of interviews with school principals, parents, church representatives, partners, siblings and a government official is presented in order to establish the context of the study. The chapter also presents a qualitative analysis of a questionnaire that I sent to school principals in order to get the current practice in schools in relation to young women and pregnancy policy. I herein bring out the opinions of the individuals in relation to reasons for and against pregnant young women's presence in the classrooms.

In chapter seven I present the stories of young women in two parts, namely, Part One and Part Two. Part One presents the testimonies of eight pregnant young women as I elicit

through the one to one interviews. I present the narratives together with the analysis that the participants made of their experiences. The lived experiences are presented according to what the participants chose to share in the study, drawing on segments of their lives that they find applicable at the time. At the end of these stories, I present a short synthesis as I bring together the main points of the stories. Part Two on the other hand presents the analysis of Focus Group discussions with pregnant young mothers who were not able to participate in the one to one conversations due to limitations of time. The presentation of part two is a combination of my analysis of the discussions and snippets of the women's sharing in relation to specific issues.

Chapter eight presents my experiences of being a 'Mosotho' young woman growing up in a small village. In the form of autoethnography I present my self and my experiences together with evidence for part of my life as part of the analysis I make. I also relate my experiences as a pregnant young woman and as being pregnant within the school system in Lesotho. The presentation consists of bits of my life that I chose to present to indicate the relationship that I make with young women's pregnancy in relation to my career path. I present experiences that I relate to the social construction in the area of young women's pregnancy as I interpret them and as I make an analysis of the events now.

Chapter nine presents a complete picture of the study. I pull together the threads of the research journey and present the relationships of the chapters as I tie the strands to establish the lessons I have learned. Due to the experiences of the research, I point out to what I observe as the possible way forward and suggest the direction for future studies in young black women's pregnancy.

Chapter Two

Young women's Pregnancy 'Problem': The setting

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter I present the context of the study that I conducted in Lesotho. In order to understand the experiences of young pregnant women I discover specific dynamics that outline the spaces within which the women negotiate their lives. I present Lesotho in relation to the national gender situation, family, and school environment and how young women's pregnancy fits into the picture. I use the events and occurrences of the past as a way to view 'historical and contemporary' experiences together in order to widen the understanding of life at a particular time (Cole and Knowles, 2001:80). I also use literature to bring about relational encounters of young women's pregnancy in Lesotho with other parts of the world. Considering that experience is highly context based, it is imperative that I describe the context of the study.

2.2 Lesotho

Lesotho is a constitutional monarchy headed by King Letsie III. The country is currently under the rule of a prime minister. There exists the National Assembly of 120 members, 14 of who are women, while women's membership in the 33 members Senate is 12. There are currently four women who are government ministers, while there are two female assistant ministers. The representation of women in this manner is a new initiative and warrants acknowledgement. However, representation of women does not automatically convert to the ability of the elected members to push the women's agenda (Lephoto, 1995). The point to note is that the Lesotho government has, for a long time, not had the female input that would assist in pushing the agenda on women's issues.

The political environment is conducive to the uptake of women's issues as indicated

through the constitution that embraces non-discriminatory policies. The country operates with two legal systems in that the Constitution embraces customary law as a parallel legal system. The situation is complex for progress in women's issues as under customary law women are marginalized and remain perpetual minors (Letuka et al., 1998 and Mapetla and Nkhasi-Tuoane, 2003). The status of women in the manner suggests that all unmarried women are under the custodian of their fathers or brothers. When women marry they then belong under their husbands' custodian. If the husband dies the son or a closest male relative will look after the woman in case there was no son born in her family. The meaning here is that women will not make any major decisions or own property, especially land.

2.3 Lesotho's international relations

The United Nations marked the period 1975-1985 as a decade for women of the world and the Nairobi International Conference followed this in Africa on women's issues. These periods mark a heightened international concern for the low status of women globally. There are concerns about the lack of women's participation in all issues (Lephoto, 1995; Singh, 2000; Naidoo, 2002). However, studies point out that the advancement of women's participation has not made much progress to date, (Buvinic, 1986; Kerr, 193; Lockwood, 1992). Some marked changes did occur in Lesotho around the abovementioned period. The development of a Women's Bureau is a hallmark of the transformation. The bureau is charged with the role to act and advocate on behalf of the women of Lesotho (UNICEF, 1991; Lephoto, 1995 and The Women's Bureau, 1986).

In participation with other African states, Lesotho has signed some major conventions of the United Nations. Lesotho, in addition, has ratified the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Addendum on the Prevention and Eradication of Violence Against Women and the Convention on the Eradication of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)(Longwe, 1990). CEDAW is a treaty that is among the top powerful legal tools and documents in the policing of countries to uphold standards with regard to women's issues (Anand, 1993).

The country's participation in meetings like the International Conference and Population and Development (ICPD) is indicative of its commitment to the advancement of women. In such meetings, the agenda includes the reproductive and sexual rights of teenagers. As a result of the meeting, Lesotho has developed and finalised the National Population Policy. Another step instituted by the government is its response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. It has put in place a national strategy that, among many aspects, stresses the need to involve young people in the battle against HIV/AIDS. This move is encouraging as HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy share certain spaces, as I alluded to in chapter one.

Different government ministries have also developed sector policies in support of these national moves. For example, the Ministry of Health has developed the National Reproductive Health Policy and National Adolescent Health Policy as specific responses to the reproductive health of young people. In addition, the policies safeguard the reproductive rights of the young people (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003). Within the Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation a youth policy has been completed.

In the policy there is reference to young mothers and the indication of an attempt to address their problems. The goal of the policy is stated as "To promote the dignity and self esteem of all Lesotho youths; ensure their physical, intellectual and moral well being; and take all measures to accelerate their full participation in the socio-economic; cultural and political life as healthy, active and productive citizens of the nation" (Ministry of Gender, Youth, Sports and Recreation Youth Policy, 2002:12). The policy identifies youth as "essential human resources" that, in the Lesotho context, face several economic, social, political, psychological and cultural challenges. The young people are therefore nested in the centre of the existing power struggles while they battle to be independent in a society that treats them as dependents. This leads to a conflict of expectations in relation to the roles they are supposed to play. My thinking behind this is that the social unacceptability of teenage pregnancy adds to the already large numbers of disadvantaged groups of individuals in Lesotho. The policy addresses the issue by specifically stating that pregnant girls should not be expelled from school.

2.4 The nation

The Lesotho nation is mostly ethnically homogeneous which can be understood in terms of the national language that is spoken, namely '*Sesotho*'. Although Lesotho is known for the homogeneous nature of its people, differences do occur in practice from one part of the country to another, between families and individuals (Lephoto, 2000 and Cole and Knowles, 2001). In addition to differentiation by gender, subjects belong to varied clans, class, religious and political affiliation and location or residence.

Lesotho operates under a patriarchal framework and this is observed and marked by a belief in the power, privileges and superiority enjoyed by men. This system supports the subordination and inferior status of women, which seems to be accepted and supported by the status of women as minors in traditional law which I alluded to earlier (Walby, 1990, Mapetla and Tuoana-Nkhasi, 2003, and Mohlakoana, 1998).

Due to the patriarchal practices in the country, discrimination against women persists in some areas, even though Lesotho has signed and ratified CEDAW. In general, women appear in insignificant numbers in key political posts. Women in Lesotho constitute eighty percent of the unskilled labor force (Lephoto, 1995). Women tend to occupy certain fields and are rarely found in the luxurious scientific and engineering professions. In addition, within the education system women are not found in the predominantly male fields such as science and technology (Mohlakoana, 1998 and Lephoto, 1995).

Women in Lesotho are renowned for their collectivized habit of joining clubs, organizations and associations. The membership into the clubs is an extension of the caring role of women due to the way they have been socialized. The functions of most of the clubs are indicative of the point, for example the women will be learning how to sow, knit, cook and make Vaseline. But very few of the organizations work at the observation of gender imbalances that are prevalent in the country. Due to the imbalanced power relations between men and women, women's sexuality is highly controlled. The controls get even tighter where teenage or girls are concerned and when pregnancy occurs the

teenage are stigmatized (Lepphoto, 1995).

As an effort to curb teenage pregnancy, families follow certain 'control measures' whereby teenagers that have gone through puberty are watched and guarded in order to prevent pre-marital pregnancies (Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999). This is an important aspect of a girl's life as a girl who has a child out of wedlock is difficult to marry away, and that is not easily acceptable to some people. Even in cases where families arrange a marriage for such a girl, the total number of cattle the husband's family pays for the girl's 'lobola' (bride price) reduces by six cattle. Cattle paid for a girl's 'lobola' gives a sense of pride to her family and the number is critical as a symbol of status, as a result, individuals view pregnancy at a young age with suspicion (Mohlakoana, 1998).

As a result of the control, teenage sexuality in any form is still frowned upon (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003; Diaho, 2003 and Lepphoto, 1995). Where expression of sexuality has led to pregnancy, the pregnant young woman may experience many forms of abuse and suffering. Depending on the context, the young woman may have nasty experiences in the home, church, and at school. Predominantly, the experiences of young women's pregnancy affect the female since virginity is valuable for girls, as they are perceived to be sexually innocent while their male counterparts do not have similar controls, as I alluded to in chapter one (Mturi and Moerane, 2001).

As a sign of distaste in children born in this manner, some families name children born to single young mothers or married mothers who conceive from an extra marital affair in an insulting manner. Some of the common names include *Molahlang*' (throw him or her away) or *Matlakala*' (trash or rubbish). The practice is fading away but still persists in some spheres (Mturi and Moerane, 2001).

2.5 Roots for formal education

The 'Basotho way of life in general was altered by the arrival of the missionaries in 1833. This arrival affected the Basotho way of life by causing it to alter, amalgamate, and unify

into a mixture with the missionaries' way of life. These imported ways of doing things and living are incorporated into the Sesotho way of life. For example, the missionaries brought with them Christianity which has its own ways of celebrating marriage through marriage contracts, which has led to the increase of experiences of subordination by women (Mamashela, 1985 and Lephoto, 1995). The two cultures collude on the high value placed on virginity especially for young women. The two cultures merge on many issues and influence each other in a way that makes it uneasy to separate the two.

In addition, the missionaries brought with them schools. Any individuals who maintain the observation of traditional ways of education get fewer in number as Christianity increases. This is because Christianity, as practised in Lesotho, completely opposes the traditional Sesotho Education as carried out in the initiation schools. Christianity undermines the traditional education and regards it as paganism. As a result of the fear that is instilled in the people by religion, few Basotho wish to be associated with not believing in Christ (Mohlakoana, 1998 and Polonyana, 1993).

Mission education in Lesotho was highly supported by the colonial rulers during the country's term as a British protectorate. The teachers are first evangelists and teachers only second (Education Sector Survey Report, 1982). Almost all the early preachers have a history of being known as Reverend-Teacher in Lesotho. Though there have been developments for evangelism and pedagogy to stop being coupled in this manner, in some aspects the practice persists. The effect of all the above incidents has a bearing in the way education is run even today.

2.6 Women and education

Lesotho is a country where women are generally more educated than men. The state of affairs is, among other things, a result of the role of men as herders of livestock. In addition most Basotho men work for better pay in the South African mines so education was less attractive to them (Mohlakoana, 1998 and Makatjane, 2002). Lesotho is one of the few countries of the world where gender parity in access to primary school education

has been realised. Lesotho has access rates of 82 percent for girls and 75 percent for boys. The completion rates at primary school are 80% for the girls (UNICEF, 2003). The enrolment rates from primary to high school indicate that there are more girls than boys, though the boy's enrolment is rising.

Despite the gender parity rates I have pointed to there is concern about the girls who seem not to make it to higher education due to repeating classes or dropping out of school (Lesotho Embassy, 2004). The trends in grade one to seven indicate that girls have a higher drop out or repeater rate and, as a result, completion rates are lower by 30 percent for girls than for boys. The following adapted table is indicative of the trends I refer to in primary school from grade one to seven from 1998 to 2001.

Table 1: National Repeater and Dropout rates at primary school level

GRADE AND SEX															
		1		2		3		4		5		6		7	
		M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Repeat	1998	25.8	21.2	25.9	19.8	23.6	17	24.1	18.5	19.5	14.5	13	11	20.4	19.6
	1999	33.2	26.5	24.9	18.7	22.6	17.3	23	17.9	18	14	13	11.6	17.1	17.7
	2000	25.2	21.4	31.9	24.8	21.7	15.2	23.3	17.5	18	13.8	1	11.1	11.5	11.1
	2001	28.9	24.9	27.8	22.2	29.2	21.6	22.8	16.7	17.1	12.6	13	11.6	11.4	12.2
Drop Out	1998	10.9	7.4	6.8	4.6	6.1	3.6	10.6	5.3	10.6	6.5	11	10.6	5.7	4.4
	1999	5.3	5.9	6.6	4	5.5	1.8	9.6	4.6	9.8	7.5	1	8.5	12.5	6
	2000	16.7	12	0.9	7	7	4.4	9	5.3	9.9	6.6	9	7.4	2.5	3.5
	2001	13.1	10.7	2.8	-0.2	1.8	-0.7	9.5	5.8	11.7	7.1	9	7	4.4	0

Source: Lesotho Embassy in Washington (2004)

The feminised nature of the teaching profession, as I mentioned earlier, is evidence of enrolments in the Lesotho College of Education (LCE). In the LCE, for all the years, women enrolments in teacher training have been higher than men.

Table 2: Enrolment at Lesotho College of Education 1998-2002

Year of study	YEAR									
	1998		1999		2000		2001		2002	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	98	264	85	179	94	251	146	249	376	784
2	49	252	98	279	81	187	90	245	72	178
3	80	205	44	240	91	266	84	185	85	248
Total	227	721	227	698	266	704	320	679	533	1206

Source: Lesotho Embassy in Washington (2004)

This table is confirmation that the college trains far more female teachers than their male counterparts. The college trains teachers who qualify to teach in primary schools and secondary schools, which means up to the first three years of post primary schooling. One therefore rightfully expects that there are more female teachers at this level (Ntsoaole, 1998).

At the National University trends are beginning to indicate that the female and male numbers do not differ the same way they do in the college of education. The enrolments for women are still higher, except for the first year cohort of 2001. The indication from the figures is that among the students who graduate at the National University of Lesotho (NUL), women are in the majority. The National University trains students in different disciplines. There is an observation that the largest numbers of graduates from the university are female. The majority of the women graduate with degrees in education, social sciences, and the humanities while few women are found in the faculty of science (Lepphoto, 1995 and Mohlakoana, 1998). The point further indicates the way in which

women were socialised to select those disciplines that enforce the roles as assigned by society. The idea of passive, not so intelligent as descriptions of women dictates that women are not suitable for the courses like science which are perceived to be harder and demanding, the kind that are above a woman's brain capacity. I use the table that follows to indicate the enrolment by year of study and gender to indicate overall enrolments.

Table 3: Enrolment at the National University of Lesotho 1998-2001

Year of study	1998		1999		2000		2001	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	285	328	316	335	415	437	671	640
2	261	317	258	316	385	498	381	410
3	234	304	233	292	284	327	278	370
4	188	230	203	289	211	287	237	279
Total	968	1179	1010	1232	1295	1549	1567	1699

Source: Lesotho Embassy in Washington (2004)

The general picture from all the tables is that although girls do not complete at rates equivalent to their enrolment rates, some continue and get to higher education. However, the women are found at the lowest paid jobs of primary school teacher (Ntsoale, 1998 and Lephoto, 2000). Even with secondary and high school teachers, though women are many, men dominate better paying positions such as that of principal. Similar trends pertain in the case of the National University of Lesotho where the academic staff members are predominantly male and women are hardly found in the luxurious management positions (Lephoto, 2000). The absence of women in higher ranks of the university that is the most active research site, has led to a lack of research by women and for women (Letuka et al., 1998 and Lephoto, 1995). When the point is stated differently, access to education on its own fails to respond to the question about the quality of education that institutions offer. Education that does not equip women with empowering

skills to penetrate and influence the world of research falls short of good quality (Bhana, 2002). Due to the disempowerment, women collude in different ways to remain at the lowest levels of the education structures.

2.7 The current role of the church in schools

Government, churches and parents share school ownership. Collectively churches own more than 90 percent of schools, while government or communities own the remaining 10 percent. The Catholic Church owns majority of the schools, followed by Lesotho Evangelical church, the third being the Anglican Church of Lesotho and fewest by other denominations. In Lesotho, the church is an important institution, deeply involved in education, providing community support and setting standards of behavior. The church also owns some tertiary institutions. Thus, the influence of the church filters through different levels of the education system. Government finances schools by providing the payment of permanent teachers' salaries, the purchase of equipment and buildings. In addition, government develops and makes national policies. Day to day management of schools and school level policies belong to the proprietor who may be the government, the community or the church.

Education is, among other roles, always a means of the transmission of culture in societies (Giroux and Purpel, 1983). The role of schools as transmission of values is universal though the values that they emphasize may differ from context to context (Zappulla, 1997). In the Lesotho context, the Church, through schools, becomes the perpetrator and the power that drives morality, as defined by the Church, in the schools. The placement of education in the church context results in the protection and advancement of the schools that view issues of morality from the proprietor's point of view. The education system in Lesotho therefore continues to place value on the Church perspectives of what is right and what is wrong, often little regard is given for Human Rights as a basis for morality. Even schools that are not owned by churches are strongly influenced by the practice of most schools, which are Church-based. The Church philosophy and outlook is that it is unacceptable for an unmarried girl to be sexually

active and to get pregnant (Polonyana, 1998). Therefore pregnancy at 'the wrong time' warrants punishment of some sort. This is therefore driven through expulsion or pushing of pregnant girls from schools and sometimes from their families too.

2.8 Teenage pregnancy in Lesotho

The qualitative presentation of young women's pregnancy as a crisis that is on the increase exists (Mopheme, 2004; Sadik, 1997 and Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999). The observations are made with the acceptance that statistical presentation of young women's pregnancy in Lesotho is uncertain as there is sparse or no experiential data to hold up the increasing incidences (Kimane et al, 1999 and Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999).

The young women's pregnancy figures and trends have been a focus of studies carried out in Lesotho. Most studies have cumulative figures for young women regardless of whether they are in school or not, as a result it is not possible to present selective figures for this study. In 1993 a study reported that 51 percent of attendees of the Ante Natal care clinic were women aged 19 and below (Morojele, 1994). From a later study the young women's pregnancy rate of 23 percent was reported in 2002 (Mohai et al., 2002).

Only one study was school based and the indication is that of all the school principals asked about whether girls get pregnant in schools 73% affirm this, 85.71% of the managers also confirmed this query. All the parents in the study stated that the rate of young women's pregnancy is alarming (Polonyana, 1993). A recent newspaper article reaffirms the high rates and points that in one 'form one' class; eleven girls are pregnant (Solwandle, 2004). It is difficult though to use the statistics, as there is no indication of further figures to support the claim of a high prevalence.

There exists evidence of high numbers of young women who are sexually active. A recent 2003 study also indicates that there is a problem facing young women's in Lesotho in the form of young women's pregnancy. The high pregnancy rates are not surprising as there is evidence that teenage do not use contraceptives and yet when asked they disclose

that they do not want to be pregnant (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003). Studies that have inquired about reasons why girls do not use contraceptives have come with different reasons. Some of the reasons are that contraceptives promote promiscuity, girls do not have sufficient knowledge, contraceptives make girls look younger, issues of accessibility and discouraging and unfriendly health facility environment including staff (Mohai et al., 2002 and Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999).

The community at different levels, especially the adult community in Lesotho, is against the idea of a sexual young woman. Attitudes towards young women's pregnancy are not conducive to communication or dialogue across the age boundaries. The lack of support on sexuality matters leads to neglect of the sexual young woman both in the family, at school, and in health facilities (Mohai et al., 2002). The lack of support in the manner has in addition rendered unresponsive Non Governmental Organization movements as adults with similar values man them. The attitudes have also led to neglect of the UN charters I alluded to earlier in the chapter.

KAPB conducted a study on Adolescent Sexuality and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) or AIDS in which a revelation was made that sex education is still a problem for most parents (KAPB, 1992 quoted in Kimane et al, 1999). Parents find it impossible to discuss sexuality issues and the school curriculum is also not clear in terms of what is and what is not taught in sexuality. This is because bits and pieces are found in and under different subjects and there is no evidence of what really transpires in the classroom when teaching and learning occurs (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003).

2.9 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented Lesotho as the study location. I presented the wider political structure, the global relationships and status in relation to the ratification of U. N. conventions that are relevant for the study. I further observed the location of women within the decision-making structures. I discussed issues related to young women's education and how their pregnancy is viewed. In the next chapter I will present and

review existing literature within the young women's pregnancy field.

Chapter Three

Understanding Through Stories

3.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I presented the context of the study. I detailed the historical, political and policy related aspects that have a bearing on young women, pregnancy, and education in Lesotho. In this chapter I present the literature review.

I wish to review literature in a way that deviates from focusing on the individual pregnant young woman. The young woman who is observed through some of the studies as ‘the problem’ I situate differently, with the intent to view how the individual and structures can be brought to a dialogue on issues of pregnancy. The idea is to acknowledge all the approaches that have been taken, but to push our understanding even further through efforts to understand how young women’s pregnancy interacts with the social dynamics of daily experiences. I do this to dilute the wider stories that exist even in research.

3.2 Motivation for the choice

My motivation for the review emanates from the search for literature on young women’s pregnancy in my country. The search revealed that there exist very few studies that are specific to young women’s pregnancy in Lesotho. Examples of studies that do exist are Polonyana’s study of 1993 and Tau’s study of 1994. There are studies that touch on young women’s pregnancy as a women’s health problem or as a health challenge. Though the treatment of young women’s pregnancy in this manner may not have given sufficient coverage of young women’s pregnancy for this study, it does build the stage on which I set my study.

Most studies share some common themes that I find helpful. The studies propose that young women's pregnancy is a crisis and agree that something needs to be done. Some studies suggest this something in the form of sex education, without providing much detail on sex education, its meanings and implications. The recommendation evokes some thought. Some studies suggested a return to the cultural practice of initiation schools as the preferred model. Other studies propose sex education in the formal school curriculum. Yet others propose a joint venture between informal, non- formal and formal education. In a study that was conducted with young people in Lesotho, they also pointed out that they would be comfortable with sex education from parents and teachers as the two most preferred sources (Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999).

These studies follow global biomedical trends in terms of theories for design. The trends apply different disciplinary theories to handle young women's pregnancy, despite the acknowledged failure of these approaches. The acceleration of young women's pregnancy figures that are reported and statements around an increase in the rate of young women's pregnancy indicate that the fight against young women's pregnancy is not won (Kidger, 2003, Macleod, 2001 and Davies, 2000).

An example of the theory-based model is that of psychological theories that are based on the individual as a target for behavioral change. These theories compartmentalize and separate the individual from the rest of society resulting in individuals being blamed even for structural inefficiencies such as poverty (Reddy, 2003 and Burns, 2000). In other words, sexuality and reproduction are treated as something people engage in voluntarily, with people choosing whether to get involved or not. Therefore, all who engage in sexual activities against the norms of society should realize that all the consequences are in their hands, and are isolated from the social influences around them (Nathanson, 1986). When pregnancy occurs, young mothers are expected to seek redemption and forgiveness, which emphasizes that they were completely answerable for their condition as individuals (Lesko, 1990).

In contrast, engaging with social theories explains behavior solely on the notion that structures are answerable for individuals' way of doing things. These theories also do not

suffice as the autonomy of individual practices gets undermined and people become portrayed as victims who have no choice as to how to live their lives (Reddy, 2003 and Kidger, 2003). The victim label views humans as totally dependant on the environment; as a result we may just give up hope and the knowledge that with every situation change is possible. In order to refute the portrayal of humans as victims, I lean heavily on the conceptualization of power as also being productive, which is central to Foucault's work. I combine the strength of my discussions of power through its relationship to a post structural feminist view, which I attend to in the research frameworks. I argue that approaches, which ignore different ways of knowing around young women's pregnancy, do not allow a complete picture to emerge (Lesko, 1995). The complexity of young women's pregnancy issues demands that the situation be observed from different corners.

3.3 Review away from the young woman

Coming from a different perspective, I use themes that point to the failures of young women as the point of departure for the study. I refer to issues of bias that need further reshaping. Following this, I investigate two institutions that are most important for the understanding of young women's pregnancy in the Lesotho context. Firstly, I interrogate the wider methodological choices for past studies, secondly, I review literature related to the family in relation to parent child relationships and, thirdly, I review literature that targets the school under the roles and general environment. I finalize the review by critically reviewing the role of education in young women's pregnancy in the current context of 'problem'. The choice of the two institutions proposed in some studies as possible sites for education portrays a pattern of adult dominated territory that is highly authoritative, just like most research. The school and the family are of interest as places that interact with young women's pregnancy and make most decisions in the area. The influence of the family as the basis for strong sexuality regulation has been observed. Families are institutions to whose membership one comes with a vow to abide by standardization. Sometimes the regulations limit one's differences or choices for the sake of the institutionalized. This implies that the regulations sacrifice essentials of the personal to the collective (Hoogland, 1999).

I understand school as a multifarious system of people who produce general change in our schools and communities. Stated differently, parents, students, and community members along with school employees are all stakeholders and participate actively to bring about constructive change in the education system (Norum Undated). My choice to interrogate the school is based on the observation that schools represent governments, churches, families and individual players. Schools are also "...what is probably the most powerful social institution in this country, our educational system."(Zappula, 1997: 6).

3.4 How are young women portrayed?

The idea of young people as being problematic members of society has been around for some time. States and parents present the picture of children who have gone out of control and as a result, are a problem and threat to adults (Giroux, 2000). This aspect is reflected by utterances like Giroux's (2000:284):

"In recent times a whole generation of youth have been labeled as spiraling out of control - not corporate culture, not corrupt government institutions, not the church."

In Lesotho the presentation is summarized by "*bana ba kajeno*" which translates to "children of today". This global picture of young people has implications for the way society views challenges such as pregnancy that face young people. Since the pregnancy occurs during young ages, it is therefore to be viewed as problematic for the young woman.

The problematic nature of young women's pregnancy is defined in different ways, depending on who defines it. I will cite a few examples. If the one who defines has a background in psychology, the problem will involve mental aspects that lead to emotional immaturity. Through emotional instability, young mothers are sometimes painted as lacking appropriate vocal skills and their children experience learning difficulties as a result (Barrat, 1991). Medical personnel may cover physical development that will lead to health problems for mother and baby. Thus the medical point of view of young women's pregnancy is defined as a 'pathological (and pathogenic)' condition with causes '(etiology)' that can be identified, and results (prognosis)' and can be treated with

medication or be cured (Nathanson, 1986). In addition to the medical outlook, the economist observes that government budgets can no longer afford young women's pregnancy costs as young women's pregnancy drains taxpayers' money (Mohai et al., 2002 and Makatjane, 2002).

3.5 The young women's pregnancy research

The view that young women's pregnancy is problematic is filled with many flaws and challenges. Some of the complexities in the studies result in questions arising around how studies are conducted and assumptions are made (MacLeod, 2004). It is some of the flaws in research in general that I point to in this review. These assist me to reflect on the mechanism of networks and the web of issues that influence young women's pregnancy experiences' at her age. The hesitance of research to consider socio-economic factors around young women's pregnancy complicates the current knowledge base on the subject (Buccholz and Korn-Bursztyn, 1993 cited in Macleod, 2001).

One challenge for research in the area is rooted in defining who the young person is. In Chapter One, I presented different terminology to represent the age as a way to describe the young people, but I also pointed out many ways in which the group was known. The words that are used in many studies are accompanied by chronological age to name the young person. This demarcation in terms of age may not be important, but for research purposes figures have played an important role and have influenced the policies that are made (Kidger 2003 and Mohai, 2002).

The flaw in using different ages to refer to one group of individuals may pass lightly but, in subjecting the age discrepancy to my research framework, I believe the mix up in age results in maintenance of societal value systems to target young people. When pregnancy ages run along a continuum, society and research are able to move the participants to fit the categories of the time. In different countries and regions, there are specific 'maturity ages' for purposes of participating in elections, the purchase of alcoholic drinks and cigarettes, as well as acquiring certification as a driver that are stipulated. There exist differences between regions, and countries but none among individuals within a country.

The confusion in age may be one of the issues that contribute to the observed lack of reliable data on young women's pregnancy (Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999 and Makatjane, 2002). For example, in Lesotho, the issue of age has been reported with the qualification 'premarital', where data includes 15 -49 year old women who never married (Makatjane, 2002 and Mturi and Moerane, 2001). The observations make me wonder if the issue is to further push the Christian ideal of birth of babies as contained within the marriage institution (Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999 and Solwandle, 2004). Maybe the traditional law that says 16-year-old women are marriageable by law further brings about the confusion.

3.6 Young women's pregnancy as a health problem

In addition to age, the observation of young women's pregnancy as constituting a health issue has been widely advocated. Similar observations seem to cover much research in the area. Similar experiences have been voiced in the western world where, for example in America, research on young women's pregnancy exists, but it is targeted at young women's pregnancy as being a health issue (Burdell, 1995 -1996). Back home in Africa like models predominate with examples from Botswana by Boonstra et al., (1998) and Zimbabwe by Leach et al., (2000). In Lesotho the issue of young women's pregnancy has been dealt with as a health problem in studies that were commissioned by the Ministry of Health or donor partners like the United Nations Family Planning Association, the United Nations International children's Educational Fund, and the World Health Organization (Mohai et al., 2002, Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999 and Morojele, 1994).

Some of the studies that observe young women's pregnancy as a health problem depart from a broad perspective of attention to problems facing young people to involvement in risky behaviors that pose many challenges. Among the list of risk behaviors, sexual behavior, which in some instances leads to 'risk of pregnancy and of HIV/AIDS and other sexually, transmitted infections', ranks high (Kalmuss et al., 2003:1). In countries such as Britain, young women's pregnancy has been ranked as a major public health problem together with 'cardiovascular disease, cancer and mental health' (Lawler and Shaw, 2002:552).

3.7 Absence of young women from research

The absence of marginalized members of society from participation in research has generated much interest and issues surrounding the lack of representation have been observed by feminist scholarship. In particular, the absence of women in research as researchers and researched in their own right has been a concern. The absence of women in knowledge making circles did not change much even after issues of women have become issues of concern worldwide (Lephoto, 1995; Singh, 2000; Naidoo, 2002).

Despite the interest in women generally, there exists little research by women and for women in their own right (Letuka et al., 1998 and Andersen, 1983). This has been interpreted as a move to maintain male ideas of making knowledge and applying it to women's research (Letuka et al., 1998 and Burdell, 1995). The silence of women in research demands to be exposed and women should be required to speak up and act against "victim-blame". If the silence gets removed, blame will shift from the women and children to the perpetrator (Dobash and Dobash, 1998).

The absence of women in research in general has led to a deficiency in the area of young women's pregnancy. I argue that the male dominated research approach forgoes and leaves out young women's experiences that lie within the empowerment and Human Rights discourses (Kidger, 2003). The loophole in many of the studies I have referred to has been documented as the inability to investigate why young women continue taking sexual risks (Reddy, 2003). The question would be best responded to by the young women themselves. Thus research that exists globally, with few exceptions, refers to and regards young women's pregnancy as a 'problem' to other people with very little consideration given to the young women's own views and feelings.

The lack of research by women, especially by young women, indicates a lack of studies based on feminist principles. This has led to the production of research that is not responsive to the absence of women at the center of studies. Research in this manner is biased and demonizes some members of society such as pregnant young women. The lack of relevant research, adds to the silence of the oppressed groups as observed by

feminist researchers. Research therefore seems to embrace and acknowledge the use of silence to ensure that children, the category that includes pregnant young women, and women, do not talk about the injustice that they suffer (Hester et al., 1996 and Nathanson, 1991). This silence ensures that the poor and powerless conform to the status quo, so that they are not able to get support from outside sources such as unions, associations and governments.

With these observations in mind, I argue that the current debates, including research debates on young women's pregnancy, are influenced by and add to the social construction of the issue. I believe that young women's pregnancy experiences will be better understood through the involvement of young women in the conversations.

3.8 Culture and the sexual young women

The approach in Lesotho predominantly portrays the breakdown of culture as the cause for young women's pregnancy (Tau, 1994 and Polonyana, 1993). The studies point to the importance of culture in the sense that the old ways in which boys and girls were initiated into adulthood have been eroded. Culture is not fixed and static; in other words culture changes. As Polonyana (1993) pointed out, we use culture to gloss over issues that we are not willing to change.

Specific behaviors are maintained as tradition with the view that tradition can be observed as either lastingly whole or disintegrating. No space gets located for culture as flexible and shifting (MacLeod, 2004).

These claims are countered by the use of culture as a basis for research. Our understanding of our past helps us to understand our experience. The need to take into account the importance of culture has been pointed out (Geronimus, 1997 and Burdel, 1995-1996). The importance of culture in young women's pregnancy research opens the door for researchers to understand different ways in which culture constructs and relates pregnancy. The relationship between young women's pregnancy, sexism, and culture is in the way culture observes motherhood. The cultural construction of motherhood has been interesting to feminists who argue that there should be no prescriptions in relation to

proper behavior for women (Macleod, 2001 and Burns, 2000). Cultures have joined hands to redefine women's role in relation to reproduction and this debate includes young women or high school girls. This redefinition signals a critical examination of how these school-aged women are defined publicly in relation to motherhood and sexuality (Geronimus, 1997 and Burdel, 1995-1996).

The observation of changed roles and persistent outlook on young women as non (re) productive, and of blaming the pregnant young woman, may have come from societal roles that were assigned to these women according to their age. In using culture in this manner, studies continue to construct young women as passive, soft, and naive in relation to their male counterparts. Though culture naivety is expected to lead to sexual innocence and virginity it is to be maintained through abstinence (Polonyana, 1993). I argue that if the idea of the innocence of girls holds true, then somebody was answerable for "soiling" the girl, and that is the perpetrator. The idea becomes complex since in pregnancy the perpetrator must be a male. The maleness of the guilty party then forces us to look elsewhere and therefore the best option is to blame the victim (Singh, 2000 and Macleod, 2001).

The cultural construction of innocence for young women in particular co-exists with ideas of choices and Sexual Rights (Hof and Richters, 2001). The media is flooded with messages and pictorial representations of sexual individuals. All these are in direct conflict with research and societal values. Some forms of media strive to carry messages that are aimed at lowering the rates of sexually active young people. As a result, many young people spend their lives in a constant battle trying to negotiate themselves within the cultures in which they are found. In the battles and struggles, people seek to make meaning of everyday life, of the immeasurable confusion of images, perceptions, values and beliefs, in their hope to survive. The challenges are even more pronounced where the issue under negotiation is a configuration of sex and gender that profiles so much of everyday experience. The mix of culture around the debates thus becomes confusing.

The bias and perpetuation of culture through research is an effort that observes the cultural view of women in general as passive and lacking choice in sexual matters. The

issue of women's choice in sexuality and reproduction, as it is embedded in deep principles, inhibits attempts at looking at the situations of individuals objectively (Burdell, 1995-1996).

The proposal to use the old cultural approach of Sesotho traditional ways to control risky sexual behavior is questionable due to the lack of a clear establishment that the system worked better. Contrary to the idea of the revival of old systems, research has indicated that the old ways have no impact on information giving to young people and therefore risk behaviors are maintained (Welbourne-Moglia & Moglia, 1989).

3.9 What does the church have to do with young women's pregnancy?

In Chapter Two, I pointed to the role of the church in education. It is crucial that I revisit the church before focusing on discussions surrounding the family and the school. I will interrogate the relationships that implicate the dominant church discourses in relation to young women's pregnancy and schooling. The church has become an important institution due to its prominent role in education. In addition, it provides support to the community and sets standards of behavior. The influence of the church therefore filters through the home and education system. Education is always a means for the transmission of culture and cultural norms. In the Lesotho context, the Church, through schools, becomes the perpetrator and the power that drives morality as defined by the Church. The existence of a 'relay' for transmission of societal beliefs and values through schools, family, and churches becomes the status quo. At the same time, the norms of the school and therefore the church are channeled through the family to society (Hunter, 1994). Beliefs regarding the innocence and purity of children are dominant in Christian philosophy and drive the way Christians interact with young women's pregnancy (Polonyana, 1993).

The placement of education in the church context results in protection and advancement of the schools looking at issues of morality from the owner's point of view. The education system in Lesotho therefore continues to place value on the church's perspective of what is right and what is wrong, often giving little regard for human rights

as a basis for morality (Diaho, 2003, Lephoto, 2000, and Hof and Richters, 2001). Even schools that are not owned by churches are strongly influenced by the practice of Church-based or Church-owned schools.

There are implications for young women's pregnancy when viewed from the perspective of church frameworks that are proposed and interpreted by the church members. According to the observations I site in the study, the Holy Bible does not support sexual intercourse at a young age. According to a teacher in one primary school in Lesotho, children are told that God would be angry because He does not want them to have sex (Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003). The Christian philosophy and outlook as interpreted in this manner observes that it is unacceptable and a sin for an unmarried young woman to get pregnant (Polonyana, 1993). Therefore, pregnancy at 'the wrong time' warrants punishment of some sort, as all sins do.

The church emphasizes abstinence as the key to the avoidance of pregnancy. The view of abstinence persists; contrary to research that indicates that that too does not work. In support of similar debates, Molly (Undated) uses a study from the Journal of American Medical Association. Since the study adopted an experimental design, the young women were divided into three groups and sexual behaviors were recorded. During the follow-up after a year, the abstinence group was more sexually active and used condoms less than the other two groups. Further support on the debate against abstinence in some reports shows that dependency on young women's self-disclosure distorts the findings (Haffner, 1996). The element of trust in young women's honest self-disclosure seems to be the key. Put in another way, young women can be honest people and they can give us information when and if they have a need to do so.

From my personal experience, in the same manner that some churches expel (ho khaola) or suspend (behella ka thoko) defaulters from membership, schools follow suit. One way to reinstate church membership is by service of a trial over a stipulated period and through specified tasks (*beha tekong, tefelo*) followed by admission of guilt and a request to be reinstated (*busetša litulong*). In some churches the punishment extends to the female parent or guardian of the defaulter. In some countries, similar experiences of girls

being expelled from school due to young women's pregnancy were observed, though that does not happen anymore (Burdell, 1995-1996). Expressions of how pregnant girls used to be expelled from schools because the school management could not deal with the issue of pregnancy, as well as the pushing out of pregnant girls has persisted in countries such as Lesotho and South Africa (Khashane and Hlabane, 2003, and Mapetla and Tuoane-Nkhasi, 2003).

I am compelled therefore to view school relationships in order to examine how they interact with young women's pregnancy.

3.10 The family

The family has been researched under different studies from different angles. In this study I review literature looking at the socio-economic status, parent child relationships and sibling behaviors.

3.10.1 Family socio-economic status

Predominantly, research carried out on the socio-economic status of families from which pregnant young women come seems to agree on the low status of the families. The families are generally described as being poor, having a low educational background, a low income, single parent, black community based, abusive, and other terms that indicate low social status. Though the above aspects do not directly cause pregnancy, they are greatly observed as contributing towards predisposing young women to early sexual involvement without contraception, which therefore leads to higher chances of pregnancy.

Research indicates that young people who grow up in solid families with two biological parents portray secure socio-economic status and thus the young people make better sexual choices such as delayed sexual activity. Also, children from advantaged families with a higher income and education tend to make better sexual choices (Manlove, Terry-Humen, Papillo, Franzetta, Williams and Ryan, 2002).

The trend for the low socio-cultural status of families seems to run between countries, with poorer countries of the world (in the global south) recording larger proportions of pregnant young women compared to their counterparts in the western countries. Even within countries, the poorer and sometimes rural communities of a country bear the heavier occurrence rates (Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 1999).

This relationship between socio-economic status and young people's sexual risk behavior however needs to be approached with caution as it should not be interpreted to mean that young women from poor family backgrounds lack the power and the decisions to either have babies or not.

3.10.2 Parent child relationships

The relationship between parents and children has been documented as one of the major contributing aspects towards young people's risk taking behaviors. The relationship has been researched under pointers like parent/child connectedness, which includes being close to, sharing warmth, being attached to one another, support or being responsive. Children who perceive their parents as interested in their welfare and feel the sense of belonging have been observed to make constructive sexual choices. If the young people have a high quality relationship with parents as indicated by parental involvement in the young people's education, this sometimes influences positive sexual choices (Manlove, et al., 2002, Markham, Tortolero, Escobar-Chaves, Parcel, Harrist and Addy, 2003 and Miller, 1998).

In relation to investigations on family connectedness, a survey of 976 high school students was undertaken in Texas. The findings of the survey reaffirm that the issue of family connectedness may be beneficial in the protection of young persons from risky sexual behaviors (Markham et al., 2003).

The findings that support good parent relationships, however, contradict the findings of some studies that indicate negative relationships as a result of family connectedness. An example of a longitudinal study carried out in Minnesota indicated a negative correlation of parental connectedness in that the young people who were highly connected to parents

displayed risky behaviors such as sexual behavior, suicide, and unhealthy dietary practices (Neumark-Sztainer et al., 1997).

The second area of research has focused on the monitoring of young people by parents. Though there are recommendations for more research in the area of parental control and monitoring, some studies have been conducted in the area. The findings are, however, contradictory. Some studies attest that the control or regulation of young people leads to positive sexual choices. On the other hand, some studies have found no relationship between control and acceptable sexual choices such as the reduction of sexual intercourse. A further contradiction indicates that in families where parents are very strict and controlling, the young people show increased sexual risks (Manlove, et al., 2002).

The third area for research in the area has focused on communication. This area has also produced inconsistent findings. Some studies indicate that communication is related to a decrease in sexual risks, other studies present a contradiction in that more open communication on sexual issues has been observed as perpetuating a greater risk of sexual behavior. Some studies have also found that there is no correlation between open communication and safe sexual behaviors (Miller, 1998).

Despite the mixed and contradictory findings from studies, there is observation that most parents do not value the role they could play in relating to young people in order to discuss and deliberate on sexual matters. As observed by Davies (2000) the majority of the parents react disapprovingly, get angry and annoyed when it comes to young women's sexuality. Parents of pregnant young ones get embarrassed and are embarrassed by the pregnancy (Davies, 2000).

In Lesotho several studies indicate the unwillingness of parents to engage in any sexual talk with the young people. The reaction of rage and total anger has been noted. I have found no study that has investigated how the parent child relations work in response to risky sexual behaviors. In 2003 a study was undertaken by Mturi to check parental attitudes on young women's sexual behaviors in Lesotho. The findings of the study indicated a clear indication of a lack of communication between parents and young

people on sex related issues. This is in line with studies undertaken in the country before (Mturi, 2003).

3.11 The schools

Like the family, schools have attracted attention from researchers from different backgrounds and with differing interests. For the purpose of this study I review literature looking at the roles, socio-economic status, parent child relationships and sibling behaviors.

3.11.1 Roles of schools

The school is of interest as a place that interacts with young women's pregnancy and makes most decisions in that area. The influence of the school as the basis for strong sexuality regulation has been observed. The school is a strong and powerful institution for beliefs that inform morality (Giroux and Purpel, 1983). Institutions like schools represent morality and by joining their membership one implicitly makes a vow to abide by standardization. Sometimes the regulations limit ones differences or choices for the sake of the institutionalized. This implies that the regulations sacrifice essentials of the personal to the collective (Hoogland, 1999). Schools in different contexts may emphasize different values but all have some common values that they emphasize. Indeed schools are charged with insuring that children learn what society values as being acceptable behaviors. In order to achieve this end, schools reward specific ways of behavior and punish individuals who do not abide by the desired ways of life (Zappala, 1997). The schools are therefore enmeshed in a web of relationships. The actions of schools are not independent and free, but schools make decisions within a context. The context runs through the ethics of the profession, the community, legal and policy systems, the learners and the self. This is especially important on issues such as involvement within hidden curriculum like the socialization of students into specific value systems.

At a political level, under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments have made efforts to avail educational opportunities for all children, specifically the girl child. The Lesotho government, like many other countries, has also taken the matter seriously

and embraced the move. For example, government introduced free primary education and policies to encourage children's education. In addition, the Department of Gender has included in its policies that pregnant women should not be expelled from schools.

These were moves to respond to the research that was carried out on young women's education. Some areas of research focused on the financial, communal, and cultural constraints and barriers outside the school. It is only recently that studies examining the gendered structure of schooling and experiences of learners are being investigated (Leach et al, 2000). In Lesotho, the issue of young women's pregnancy was researched from relatively similar angles and no studies have taken gendered experiences into account (Polonyana, 1993 and Mturi and Moerane, 2001).

Research has neglected to observe gendered relations in schools (Bhana, 2003). It is this missing piece that results in simple explanations of pregnant girls disappearing and not coming back to school, dropping out, and parents withdrawing them from school. The research then fails to pick up what principal Sefali says in an article in a local newspaper. The good principal observes that teachers are not trained as nurses and classmates laugh at and insult pregnant young women (Khashane and Hlabane, 2003, and Solwandle, 2004). The gendered power relations result in an unbearable environment that is antagonistic and sometimes cruel to the girls. Such behavior has been naturalized, accepted and tolerated by both perpetrators and victims alike (Leach, 2000).

In studies that used gendered frameworks to investigate schooling experiences, in general schools have been identified as dangerous places, more so for girls (Bhana, 2002; and Leach et al, 2000). Both male and female students experience violence but the gender specific experiences are different. An example of gender specific violence may result from pregnancy. The pregnant body translates the experience.

The violence is from student to student within and across gender and may also come from teachers. Sometimes students become victims of power relations among teachers themselves. More studies indicate that young women are the worst victims and in general established that male and female pupils and teachers abuse young women (Leach et al,

2000). They are abused both verbally and physically both within and outside school. Some girls passively and obediently accept their status and acknowledge the existing power structures. By behaving in this manner, the girls resign themselves to being afraid.

Where young women have witnessed or experienced abuse from teachers the situation is made worse by the lack of trust in the teachers to protect them. The case of pregnancy while schooling therefore magnifies the ongoing abuse. Sometimes the perpetrator is in the same classroom as a teacher and at times as a classmate. Young women who have been confronted with abuse within the same classroom walls have expressed their feelings in the following words: “embarrassed, shy, ashamed, miserable, insulted or scared they felt like hiding”. A number of young women in the study said that there were teachers who made young women pregnant. They have also said they knew of relatives who had been made pregnant in school by their principals. One added a testimony of her family where she was told that her mother was her father’s student. The father has made her mother pregnant while she was his student. The father and student later married her (Leach et al, 2000).

I argue that schools are not neutral institutions but value-laden replicas of community, church, family, and research in terms of imbalanced power relations. Differences in experiences exist for both girls and boys. Abuses of female learners that include sexual abuses originate from both male and female family members and teachers alike. Also boys within and without the school and other girls have been noted as abusive to one another (Leach et al, 2000). The type of abuse that happens creates an atmosphere of fear around the young women. Evidence of coerced sexual relationships that result in young women’s pregnancy is the order of the day (Leach et al., 2000 and Boonstra et al., 1998).

The discourse that reigns is that of an adult who is constructed as a savior, a guide; a control manager and a role model for behavior. The immediate adult in the school is the teacher and learners look to teachers for support. However, a number of young women in the study said there were teachers who made young women pregnant. How then do the young women manage when the teachers who promised protection erode the pledge in

overt and covert ways? It surely is not the young woman's fault that the teachers abuse them, and structures are answerable for the safety of children.

In a school-based study in Zimbabwe, parents were asked what should happen if a young woman gets pregnant while schooling. Some participants felt that the young woman should be given permission to return to school after giving birth. Most people with this view set some limitations around which this return should occur. Some observed that the young woman's father might refuse (Leach, et al., 2000).

3.11.2 The school environment

Surprisingly, some parents operate in a similar manner to schools in that when parents were asked about what should happen when a schoolgirl gets pregnant the respondents blamed the pregnant young women. Some individuals were surprisingly harsh in the way they made suggestions on possible ways to punish pregnant young women, for example: causing them suffering, beating, being sent to the partner's home, being sent to stay with relatives in rural areas, and jailing. One said she should be beaten but not killed. Such harsh suggestions are a clear indication of the strong feelings that young women's pregnancy evokes in some members of the community. While many countries are trying to revoke the death sentence on the basis of the right to life, some participants even think of young women's pregnancy as punishable by death. Just the thought that the participant says 'be beaten but not killed' indicates the intensity with which some people view young women's pregnancy. I wish to argue that for any occurrence in life to brew and blow so much dust, there must be a very strong reason. But what reasons are they? Only research that questions the very source of the emotions can be relevant. The same harshness, if not adequately addressed, gets transferred into both written and unwritten policy as adults are dominant in the policy making world in many countries (Khashane and Hlabane, 2003, 2003 and Leach et al., 2000).

3.11.3 The school uniform

The relationship between dress and control of women and their expression of sexuality is not new. In the case of school going woman the politics is around school uniforms

(Boonstra et al, 1998) When that kind of dress and size does not fit, the young women know that in an unfriendly environment, other means of hiding must be found. The uniform on its own is not problematic for advocates of exclusion of pregnant girls from school. School uniform forms a dress code for students in many countries and is usually not discussed. The uniform becomes problematic when worn by a pregnant body. This emanates from the constructed notion of women's bodies that are idealized as sexy and slender. Many pregnant women do not qualify to be sexy and slender according to the norms (Bordo, 1993).

3.12 The role of education in young women's pregnancy

From the uniform debate I move to further my debate through an investigation of the idea of sex education as proposed by studies in Lesotho. I have proposed that any means at controlling young women's pregnancy assumes that it is a problem. As I discuss education in this light, my goal is to challenge the proposition and not to join the proponents.

A school-based study was carried out in Lesotho (Polonyana, 1993) that investigated the causes and effects of young women's pregnancy in secondary and high schools of the Botha Bothe district. In this study there is a strong feeling that a lack of education leading to knowledge on issues of sexuality leads to young women's pregnancy, among other things. Outside of the African Continent, Singapore is an example that resonates with Polonyana's interest in education. Polonyana's (1993) study further proposes formal, informal, and non-formal sex education. The proposal for formal sex education is seen in the form of a school curriculum while informal education is taught by aunties, mothers and a revival of the traditional when saying that it was the responsibility of the family and community to see to it that the youth were shaped to conform to the societal expectations (Polonyana, 1993).

The idea of the family and school as constituting a basis for the protection of young people from risky sexual behaviors is not valid (Entwisle, 1990). In a study on the abuse of young people in Lesotho, the participants revealed that the parents and teachers were

the top abusers (Motlomelo, and Sebatane, 1999). Evidence of abuse by adults on school going-children has been highlighted in some countries like Botswana in Boostras' work (1998) and Zimbabwe in Leach et al, (2000). The potential role of schools to protect and guide young people through risks, especially in relation to sex, has been established (Ball, 1997).

One way in which I discuss the idea is to check the value of education in all forms as a means of discouraging young people from engaging in risky behaviors. The debates have been based on whether knowledge of risky behaviors leads to a curbing of that particular behavior. Some literature has shown that high levels of knowledge about risky behaviors do not seem to translate to safe sexual behavior (Fawole, et al., 1999 and Fisher & Fisher, 1992). There are also studies which point out that knowledge about risk behaviors does seem to have an impact on limiting risk behaviors (Hyde and Swainson, 2002). The question, therefore, of whether knowledge directly impacts on changing behaviors remains, and an evaluation of programs is necessary to examine how those based on education models perform in comparison with models without education (Kidger, 2002).

In interrogating the idea of knowledge, whether school or home based, together with a model that proposes education of young women by adults, as parents and teachers, I emphasize the following arguments. I argue that the systems that have been proposed in the school based study in Lesotho present many challenges for me. I am troubled by the intent to bring young women to conform to societal needs. The needs in the Lesotho context clearly reflect and construct young women as people who should conform despite their own feelings and opinions. The wishes of society in Lesotho are to control, eradicate, and decrease young women's sexual activity. I see the argument as perpetuating moralistic versions of young women's pregnancy within many societies.

In my view, education, whether school or home-based, will not be the answer as long as young women do not get consulted and continue to have no say on the issue of young women's pregnancy. This situation continues despite obvious pointers that all those wishes are not quite working. In the old system, young women still fell pregnant after interference by the church. I deliberately do not focus on the issue of numbers, as studies

in Lesotho have affirmed absence of, or unclear statistical representation of, young women's pregnancy (Motlomelo and Sebatane et al, 1999). What is missing here relates to the voices of the young women in many studies. Even in cases where some young women indicated that they wanted to have babies, such opinions were hardly incorporated. However, the desire for some young women to have babies has been pointed out (Mapetla and Tuoane –Nkhasi, 2003).

Teachers persist in saying, in Lesotho, that:

“Most of the time before we get to our classes we teach them the Bible, so what we really teach them is to fear God and what we put in their minds is that sexual intercourse makes God angry when it is done by unmarried people and we encourage them to stop it (Female teacher, 33, Maseru urban quoted in Mapetla and Tuoane –Nkhasi, 2003 pp. 82-83).

In one study the school was established as the highest site of sexual activity (Motlomelo and Sebatane et al, 1999). This is backed up by almost similar observations from Singapore (Ball, 1997), this deems the school to be one site where young women should be targeted to make an input in young women's pregnancy for both those who would want to make a choice to have babies and for those who would rather wait. This opens other areas I do not intend to discuss here but will tackle under Human Rights. Such issues relate to the schools' readiness to have pregnant young women as their students (Polonyana, 1993, Mapetla and Tuoane –Nkhasi, 2003).

I have presented what I consider to be challenges for young women's pregnancy with emphasis on the literature from Lesotho and the rest of the world. There is a need to interrogate the everyday lived experience of young women's pregnancy and make it available through the language of research. Young women continue to be neglected and there is a dire need to engage them in dialogue. The view will be helpful to contest the social construction of young women's pregnancy (Luker, 1996).

3.13 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the literature review for the study. With this chapter I have indicated the possibility of learning from pregnant young women in order to bridge the established gap in most research. Absence of the young women's stories from research on their pregnancy has resulted in the gap. I have also reviewed literature that is relevant to the parent child relationships and investigated several aspects of the school environment. In the next chapter, I scan the theoretical landscape of the study.

Chapter Four

The theoretical inclination of the study

4.1 Introduction

In the last chapter I reviewed literature that has a relationship with this study. With this chapter I discuss the theoretical leaning of the study. As I pointed out in Chapter One, the study is situated within a combination of theoretical and conceptual knowledge. The study engages with and draws its orientation from discourse analysis and leans on feminist theories, critical theory, and social ecology theory.

4.2 Feminist Theories

There are many different feminist theories in literature and there is no single way of revealing the understanding within feminist theories. The classifications may differ, for example, Flynn's (1995) work which points out to the existence of liberal, radical, cultural and poststructuralist sectors. But for the purposes of this study, I rely more on two feminist perspectives, namely feminist post structural theory and critical feminist theory.

The combination I choose will serve my purpose better as it is a synthesis of approaches to allow the research to benefit from each of the frameworks as outlined in Hammersley, (1995) and Jayaratne and Steward (1991). What has been seen as too simplistic, sterile and no longer holding debate is emphasized by the works that suggest that when different frameworks are employed they complement each other if they are used with care, in relation to their strengths and weaknesses.

4.2.1 Feminist post structural theory

The feminist post structural theory concerns itself with the observation that the individual is constantly confronted with conflicts within processes that are constructed within

existing power relations (Pierre, 2000 and Weedon, 1997). The feminist notion of the poststructuralist concern is better explained by Weedon who portrays the multiple nature of positions within which discourses are found as a way that gives voice to socially constructed meaning (Weedon, 1997). The experiences that individuals get into, are seen as situated

In expanding experiences of individuals within society, it is important to observe that inside discursive spaces where language, social structures, subjectivity and power relate, and produce opposing ways of allocation of meaning to subjectivity (Jackson, 2001). The ways in which young women's pregnancy is understood depend on the meaning as allocated by society.

Put differently, as individuals interact with different discursive fields, certain values become deeply held and seeded such that the meanings that they make out of life become constant fields of conflict.

Entrenched in the different young women's discourses there is evidence of meanings that are made out from many spheres but exclude the experience of the young women in decision-making processes. The result of the undertaking is that the societal involvement and social interactions are normally neglected or discarded in relation to young women's pregnancy. The implication is that society constructs certain ways of being and the young woman is expected to fit into the mould. The outlook forgets that in the path of growing up there are negotiations with the world and those who share the spaces. Those in power, such as teachers, parents and policy makers, socially construct the discursive spaces within which the young women live.

In the application of feminist post structural theory to trainee teachers, the study found that there is need to engage with power relations, discourse, experience, and subjectivity such that there is proof that the straight version of experience does not exist. What subsist are negotiated paths and routes which are locally and specifically tailored and that are interpreted in varied ways (Jackson, 2001). In agreement, Harraway observes that the politicized nature of interpretations and meaning making is engineered by power. The

discourses and the interpretations that are powerful inherit their status from societal interactions (Harraway, 1988).

Along with this recognition, I concur with the post structural theorists in the view that the spaces individuals occupy are fluid and highly influenced by and through context. The ideas are closely linked to the critical feminist perspective that I engage with next.

4.2.2 Critical Feminist Theory

Closely related to post structural feminist theory is the critical feminist theory. Critical theory generally bases its assumptions on the value that issues are socially constructed. The value positions are the tools through which the different ways of interpretations are measured (Giroux, 1992). In support of the theory, there is observation that human beings, through interactions with each other, become bound by norms and ways of doing that exist within a particular context. The two share similarities as the perspectives suggest that experiences and all thinking emanates from power relations that are socially mobilized. In addition, the perspective observes that individuals occupy often conflicting and mobile spaces. As a result, individuals do not have any fixed identities (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994).

Applied to the study on experiences of pregnancy by young women, the two theories question the notion of generalized versions of individuals within varied contexts. Since experiences emanate from and are highly influenced by interpretation there is need to be open-minded. Being open-minded will in turn lead to acceptance of multiple, shifting truths about what is known and how it is known. There is no fixed truth, even for one individual, as spaces that people occupy seem to shift many times.

4.2.3 Drawing from feminist theories broadly

In trying to understand the experiences of young women's pregnancy and its interaction with schooling in the Lesotho context, I engaged the above approaches. In order to facilitate this understanding, I set out to answer the questions for the study by situating

myself around feminist theory since it allowed multiple ways of understanding phenomena and places women at the center of understanding.

Feminist theory has been a valuable tool that has moved beyond traditional research by the active removal of power imbalances between the researcher and the researched. Feminist theory is also motivated by the political intent to change oppressive situations while it begins with women's lived experience. Feminist theorizing acknowledges the active role of the researcher as the mould that shapes the research through the beliefs and values that are eminent in the researcher.

4.3 Social Ecology Theory

In social ecology theory there is an emphasis to broaden our view of issues and to move away from simply concentrating on individuals to bring in to play environmental aspects that surround the individual. The theory accepts that individual involvements are surrounded by a collection of systems and groups. Therefore, if structures and institutions do not make an effort to better the experiences of individuals, challenges will persist. In its bringing together of the environment and the individual, the theory recognizes that the way individuals behave does not occur in a vacuum. The theory observes that experiences of individuals are part of the bigger picture of the cultural, political and economic package (Wandersman, 1996).

This theory has been widely used in young women's pregnancy research and program design. It has been a shift away from the psychological models, for example, the theory of reasoned action, which holds that the individual is solely responsible for certain, experiences. The social ecology theory in its implementation permitted the investigation of environments, laws and policies. The theory further recognizes that the behaviors displayed are sometimes beyond the individual. The display may be due to relationships that are going bad or well with significant others and family members.

With this recognition, the social ecology theory bears some similarities with the feminist theories I identified above. Even if the theories are not completely alike, some elements seem to work towards the same goal.

4.4 The theoretical orientation of power

The theories I refer to as the framework for this study share the notion that relationships are constant power struggles. In order to theorize power I draw from Foucault's conceptualization of power and discourse as engaged to explore experiences of participants in the study. I revisit the point and reference to Foucault and power later in the chapter. In order to engage the lens that I have selected, I draw from diverse backgrounds to drive the choice to present women's experience through stories or spoken language.

By the choice to frame the study in this manner I move from the traditional view of research. In the traditional view women have been studied and have been portrayed as victims who have no capacity to break loose from the oppressive situations. The basis for such views observes power as owned and retained in one place or several places of the same kind who use the power to inhibit, block and break up. With the use of the framework outlined above, I observe the opportunity to observe dominant ways of living life without intent to change them but to push further to view experience as a product of past experiences through practices of social regulation.

I extend the traditional view of power, as being static, rigid and fixed by the employment of the feminist lens to point out that power is fluid. In the same manner that feminist theory observes power and contests the characteristic of power as oppressive and repressive as it has been highlighted in traditional research. I make the choice to move in a manner that contests the use of biological and economic status as fixed drivers used by men to oppress women. I argue that it is the power relationships that trigger women's vulnerability and inhibits the women's choices about personal matters such as sexuality related issues. Understanding the experiences of women in any context thus involves deep-seated and intransigent, embedded factors in power relations that define male and female roles in different societies (Baylies, 2000).

4.5 Feminist research framework

The issue of the use and existence of feminist research has been extensively argued elsewhere (see Harding 1987; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Mies, 1991; Reinharz, 1992). It has been argued that the issue of 'feminist research', feminist method and methodology, does not exist. Such deliberations point out that each research places itself as feminist. The placing comes from the way research indicates the areas it wishes to attain in terms of goals. The purpose of the research has to be focused on the women (Harding, 1997). The argument goes further to observe research through the way power is allocated within research. In addition, research becomes feminist if it has a relationship to political commitment and emancipation (Burman, 1991).

An additional view is added where the contest is that research places itself as feminist only if it centers gender as the framework of operation (Lather, 1991). Giving opportunity to the researcher's experiences to be located in the research is also a feminist thought (Harding, 1997). To be more specific, there are three elements that qualify a study to be properly feminist: Research thus defined is that which allows and makes use of women's lived experiences, has women as the purpose of doing the research and incorporates and makes use of the experiences of the researcher. These three elements assist to engage feminist methodologies in doing research (*ibid*). The same opinions are echoed through pointing out that the researcher be the 'overt subject matter'. The idea is to place the researcher's ideas such that they are fused and engrossed throughout the study (Jayaratne and Steward, 1991).

In addition to this basis, the identification of research as feminist is a dedication to a specific, feminist epistemology. Feminist research therefore may relate to the use of a theory and political analysis. The analysis questions dominant ideas about ways of knowing and knowledge making. The ideas also ask questions around the implications of gender in the center of knowledge. This undertaking that declares the relation between being and knowing, 'between ontology and epistemology', works to identify research as feminist (Harding, 1987; Stanley, 1988 and Burman, 1991). In addition, emphasis is on issues of ontology as what is knowable and epistemology as the how of knowing what we

know. How the relationship between the knower and the known has been negotiated becomes pertinent to feminist research. The methodology that covers how we come to know what we know is of prime importance (Skeggs, 1994). These three elements also help us define or confirm the feminist nature of any study.

In addition to these views, the following guidelines for research to be considered as feminist have been highlighted. The ability of the research to reduce the gap that has always existed between researchers and researched is a feminist thought. The aim is to allow both researched and researcher to experience each other's worlds. In feminist terms, women should assume the status of 'subject' rather than 'object' in the study.

There is a further vote for the type of research whose main role and intent is to emancipate and set free. It should be research that sets the minds of people to be instrumental in changing their unwanted situations (Mies, 1997). An addition to this view further attests that the research should also aim at changing the oppressive structures (Lather, 1988). This invitation, that research should capsize the boat of authority and power, is a further question of feminist ideas.

In this study of young women's pregnancy discourses, I draw heavily from the above guiding principles as I move and interact with data, methods, participants and also myself.

4.6 Sexuality and power

The issue of young women's pregnancy puts itself inside the debates surrounding biological, sex and power relations. Traditional ways of understanding sexuality as natural givens and as innate libido are problematic. The argument is that desires do not control biological entities. The debate points out that both are composed in social interactions. Stating it differently, the body is shaped through power and is therefore a cultural rather than a natural entity (Reddy, 2003 and Foucault, 1981). The view of current politics around pregnancy research, which approaches sexuality as a purely biologic understanding, observes that if we control the hormones we shall be successful in the control of young women's pregnancy. Whereas if our understanding encompasses

that young women's pregnancy is produced through power and is thus culturally and historically constructed we open more avenues of knowledge. Like many aspects of relationships, teen pregnancy is enmeshed in a play of power relations (Connell, 1995). This study operates from the point of view that power is fluid. In asking about experiences of young women's pregnancy I move to engage with how young women are positioned and how they position themselves in relation to pregnancy while schooling. I observe the challenge to look closely when researching women and children. The challenge is to widen and allow researchers to engage varied theoretical frameworks for empirical studies (Bhana, 2003 and Thorne, 1993).

4.7 The theoretical lens of discourse analysis

Developments in feminist scholarship have used discourse analysis as the tool of their choice. In this section I indicate how the attention to discursive debates is helpful for my understanding of young women's pregnancy. Without going into the details of how the different studies utilized discursive knowledge, I select the main notes that I find useful for this study. In deliberations about discourse, arguments are put forward such as people are not fixed but are positioning and being positioned by others at the same time. This implies that people are engaged in a constant remaking of themselves and others. Discourses are therefore practices that operate to make objects of the ones spoken of and discourses are not about objects but they comprise them and in the practice conceal their own intervention (Foucault, 1977).

From this point of view, that discourse and meanings are intermingled, discourse is socially constructed and also defines the boundaries of what can be done and said (Bhana, 2002 and Burman, 1994).

The focus of oral ways to give experience is important for the provision of subjective evidence that does not exist in other forms of communication. The importance of oral presentations is more where the participants in the research are marginalized groups whose versions of knowledge have always been neglected (Mather Undated).

There have been thoughts around how interactions between subordinate and powerful individuals unfold. The relations I try to interrogate through the questions I just posed are indicative of the unfolding.

4.7.1 Public stories, private stories and personal stories

The point that I raise in relation to discourse and in relation with feminist theory in investigating the experience of young women's pregnancy is to point out "once a discourse becomes 'normal' it is difficult to think outside it."(Bhana, 2002: 11). Due to the status of normality awarded to certain stories, the private stories also emphasize the normal stories and are strengthened by the telling and retelling of the girls and people around that young women's pregnancy is bad. This is done through everyday encounters with family members, communities, schools and churches. The media and research stamp it. These would be stories that are shared with a few selected individuals. These are stories that mothers and daughters share, stories that aunties have to give to the young girls.

Within this view of discourse there are observations that what participants at specific contexts are bound by is what is admissible within the boundaries of acceptability. There are groups of people who are deemed powerful and so can exercise the power to their advantage (Weedon, 1997). In such cases, the subordinates say what they say to please and buy favors of the dominant members (Mather Undated).

In this manner, strategies of domination operate as well as those of resistance as power circulates and can attach either way (Diamond and Quinby, 1996, quoted in Muwanga – Zake Undated). This implies that discourse can be described as a tool of control over how we experience the world and meaning of what is. In addition, it includes social interactions inclusive of our thoughts, feelings and accepted ways that make us to be with the rest of the people in a specific context (Muwanga –Zake Undated).

Such stories about young women's pregnancy articulate that young women's pregnancy is problematic. The use of stories in the way public narratives are used to hide and mystify the actual occurrences and experiences of individuals is common. The stories

used in that manner use moralistic language to hide what really happens. These would be stories such as the ones in research reports and in conference rooms in relation to young women's pregnancy as constituting a problem. Stories such as

It is surprising though that discourse would be context bound and yet be accepted as the international truth as occurs in young women's pregnancy where these discourses are taken and written about even in research frameworks (Pinkus, 1996). Within discourses, power is exercised in manners that govern and control individuals. This implies that discourses are positions from which people communicate and engage the battles of power that are permitted (Best and Kellner, 1991). In other words, power is embedded in discourse because it has the leisure to label or name by the use of right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable with all that is acceptable and right being socially constructed. Since discourses make up who we are and how we act, we fail to accept children as sexual beings. The dominant discourses in everyday stories that adults tell young people, attach power to sexual innocence of certain individuals including children and some adults (Epstein and Johnson, 1998).

The personal stories that the subordinates tell themselves may be different. The individuals may tell certain elements of their stories but change their stories to suit the context within which they find themselves. For example, the young mothers who participated in a school peer group discussion changed or modified their stories while with school going girls. What they said in the context differed from what they revealed to the researcher (Kidger, 2002). The indication of the change is how both the public and private stories subsume the personal story.

Despite the different categories I just outlined there is a need to realize that the experiences of individuals do not operate in the same manner as to split experience into the personal, private and public. Experience melts all those categories such that all have an influence on each other. Sometimes even to make the distinction becomes impossible. There are things we tell ourselves, they do not come from nowhere. We have crossed paths that we interpret as ours now and we have come to accept it as us. My use of these categories in this manner is to indicate how that distinction becomes complicated. What

we always refer to as personal after all, even at that level, experiences are intertwined with all that constitute who and what I am with at that time.

The argument that the personal is political needs serious consideration in the points I raise. It is on the basis of the personal as political that I am influenced that the relationship works from both directions. The personal and the political are forces that work with each other (Mahala and Swilky, 1996). It is on this basis that I argue that the young women should be recognized as a crucial source for rich experience related data. In this chapter I pointed to the move in social science to view a human being together with the rest and not alone. It is important though to observe that even that collectivism, if teased, we find the composition is focused on individuals. Both groups and individuals learn from each other. The relationship makes us to remember that we all have a potential to learn from each other. My argument to use stories in the young women's pregnancy studies is to invite the personal and the political to support deliberations to bring change for the good of the young women and therefore the countries of the world. Research in this manner will work as a tool for emancipation or freedom from oppression (Morris 1999 and Singh, 2000)

According to Foucault, there exists what we call subjugated knowledge. In this regard the issue is that we seem to separate stories and data narrowing the area of public discourse available for considering lived experience as a source of knowledge, and in particular, the lived experience of marginalized groups as with women who are pregnant at a young age. The other groups of subjugated knowledges are those which Foucault refers to as local popular or indigenous knowledges: "in particular there are those knowledges that are currently in motion but are left without or deprived of the space in which they could be adequately performed. These are knowledges that survive only at the margins of society and are classified as the lowest. They are assessed as lacking status and are untrue." (Foucault, 1980: 26).

The personal, the private and the public stories may be different from each other. The possible difference in stories therefore directs me to question the issue of power by the following questions; which stories are heard? Which are not heard? Why is this? And

how can the situation be changed? To relate to these questions, I revisit Foucault's conception of power to which I alluded earlier in this chapter.

4.7.2 Linking power and discourse

The questions that I have just posed I use as a basis of the sense I make out of the concept of power as being productive. My inclination towards poststructuralist feminism is the regard for power as it directs my discussions around the issue. The poststructuralist feminist view emphasizes my view as shared in the following manner "New approaches to power have meant that people are not passive recipients of socialization or biologically fixed and psychologically determined. People actively construct and impact upon the world shaping their lives and others" (Bhana, 2002: 10).

Power, as I refer to it in the study, has been identified as being productive unlike the use of power as authoritative power that one person has and the other lacks. The conception of power as being productive and not destructive is what I embrace. In the conception of power in this manner, it has no single sources that are all oppressive. Instead, power operates through multi ways and from different relations (Foucault 1976/1990).

This implies that power is not only oppressive it is also productive. To use the notion of productivity in relationship with power unfolds the multi faceted nature of power. Power is therefore not conceived as being brought or imported from external sources. The idea is not to deny that imbalances exist where one body that is in power at that time can oppress the other (Butler, 1997a). Power is thus conceived as not constituting closed circuits as utterly immobile. Power is not fixed at one point permanently and it can be intercepted. The states of power as always local and unstable make power a useful tool to use. If power was fixed or belonged to certain individuals, control would have belonged to the powerful only and would not create potential disturbance.

As Foucault puts it, no one can predict the exertion of power, as it is erratic. Because power is not static it comes from everywhere (Foucault, 1976: 95). The idea to understand power in this manner does not propose therefore that complete control of one oppressive group over individuals is possible, nor does it promise equal unmitigated

personal autonomy. It follows that when we conceive power in this manner we realize that in all regulatory forceful situations, individuals still have ways to escape. Power in this manner fills us with hope that we have means and ways to bring change when in difficult situations. The concept of power as unstable and productive draws our attention to observe that power is neither fully external nor internal. Stated differently, for power to operate from any direction then suggests that for the environment of power to persevere, they must be restated (Butler, 1997). This also implies that power does not work for all time.

In the conception of power as being productive, even though powerful groups may wish to restrict individuals, the oppressed still remain with a choice to do what they wish. Within the conception of power as productive and the dependency on repetition of norms for survival of power, when the reinstating is done incorrectly, that provides space for reconciliation to occur (Butler, 1997).

According to the concept of power as productive my argument is that, in terms of issues surrounding gender, people are made understandable as male or female through the historically and socially celebrated practices that act on and through material bodies (Butler, 1990). Unlike with gendered aspects, being a child is something one is born into. However, being a child is about being in relation to adults, being subjected to being a child through a variety of notions of child that existed prior to the individual's birth' (Rofes, 2000: 56-57).

Like gay politics, young women's pregnancy is laden with legal, psychological and religious disciplines (Khayatt, 1992). The idea for young women to tell all through coerced means and to have to ask for forgiveness or be punished still ranks high in some situations.

The lessons to learn from these debates include the understanding that we are all spellbound by power but that we can strategically adapt its hold on us. Nothing binds us to the social construction of what we do and how we decide to do it. A word of caution however, our choices to be different from the dominant expectations are molded by the

political debates and strengths of the time. “There are always contradictory discourses about who to become but because some discourses have more political strength than others, they dominate and put pressure on us to adopt the dominant version” (Bhana, 2002: 14).

4.7.3 Why use narratives for the study of experience?

The motivation of experience as a way to understand lives emanates from the observation of humans as unique beings. The idea to use stories thus embraces the individual manner in which lives are storied and how the stories, as told, influence decisions that we make. In addressing an experience as female as pregnancy, I find it compelling to develop a framework that allows women to bring the single stories of their lives. The strands that the stories constitute form the basis of the bigger picture (Heikkinen, 1998). The stories, such as I use, are not necessarily every pregnant young woman’s experiences in that context. The understanding of experiences of life as voiced by individual persons or groups that share certain contexts are sometimes used in the manner to depict particular cases.

As my argument for the study suggests, there are many stories that are told around young women’s pregnancy. The society tells stories about young women where certain pictures are painted, for example, young women as being emotionally unbalanced and therefore rude (Khashane and Hlabane, 2003). The story as a framework therefore facilitates as a vehicle to transport the young women’s own stories that are part of their experiences.

4.7.4 Theories, discourse and young women and transformation

The women who are participants in this study assist with the feminist theorizing framework as the study intends to strive for change in the society. With input in this manner, the team study may recommend for policy change or be a part of the larger political initiatives to move for action both singly and collectively. This research is a basis for women to engage as a tool to transform the sexist society (Cook and Fonow, 1986). The raising of awareness in this manner is a strategy for people to start analyzing

their situations. The result is empowerment for the participants and realization that what is experienced is relational and depends on context.

Armed with this information, women will start to conceptualize the things that add value to their lives and those that really matter. Since language seems to favor men more than women, the feminist conviction has to be to listen to women when they share their experiences in their own words. As pointed out “In addition, the sexism in everyday language is also contained in the research process” (Brayton, 1997).

I have argued in this study that the language that is used to discuss young women’s pregnancy is regulatory and has infiltrated the world of research. The status I argue for would be, in my view, better investigated by the use of frameworks such as the one I have proposed for this study.

Since I want to understand from the participants’ point of view, I am interested in the stories that the women share and how I share my own story in that process. In my presentation of the theoretical basis for this study, I intend to bring together some work in the use of experience as a form of data that is acceptable for research purposes. Since, for me, experience is the building block from which this study is constructed, the framework I engage embraces the feminist view to respect women’s experiences as data. Through lived experience we are able to understand how individuals understand themselves in relation to the world around them. Stated differently, the intent to study human beings according to the way they relate to themselves and the relationships between individuals and contexts with which the individuals are found is helpful (Pithouse, 2003 and Clandinnin and Connelly, 1994).

The relationship between experience and stories was portrayed by the view that experience is experienced and communicated through narratives or stories. On the other hand, narratives also contribute to our ways of experiencing. Narratives have been described as dynamic ways in which individuals live and tell or even relive and retell stories (Clandinin and Connelly, 1994a). Discourse has been used to mean different things. I choose to use it as it is used in the feminist post structural manner where it has

been used to not only mean language, but also as a social construction through history and culture as precise ways in which we allocate meaning in our lives, act out our lives, invest expressively in our lives and make sense of our social structures (MacNaughton, 2000).

4.8 Time, space, current, past and future

The narratives, time and meanings are intertwined. When telling the narrative, the human being analyses events apparent in time according to the meanings he/she has given to them, so that the whole is relatively coherent and the narrated life complete. The past, the present and the future alternate and overlap in the fabric of the narratives. The present is a point in the narrative on the way from the past to the future. When narrating, the person builds his/her identity, which is preserved, developed or transformed along with the narratives. A person can have several unfinished narratives of him/herself, different and from different times; these narratives can be forgotten, change or resist change (Estola and Syrjala, 2000).

When observing lives in relation to context, there have been observations around how similar and matched story content seems to run. In writing about the stories collected among higher education women there were comments about how the stories of the women seemed to replicate stories of women in many other circumstances. Even though the expressions vary from woman to woman, themes and issues seemed to point in the same direction (Singh, 2000 and Estola and Syrjälä, 2000). Women in the stories are not one person and yet the single voices from each of them join and duplicate to give a voice on issues of young women's pregnancy experiences.

4.9 Feedback from participants

The silence that exists around young women's sexuality and women's sexuality was alluded to in chapter two. The participants in the study, much younger women in comparison to me, expressed how they felt they were important by the meetings we had together. Some told me later how they were surprised that, as an adult and fairly educated woman, I could share my own experiences of being a pregnant young woman in my life.

According to one of the young women adults and educated women were never pregnant as young women in the eyes of those who goes through that same experience. Adults do not share such stories. Due to the experience then the young women lose all hope to be responsible and respected citizens.

The process of research on its own is a journey: it is an experience that shapes and is shaped by the undertaking. This is how a life history researcher or narrative inquirer merges the journey together with the parts of the study to make a unified whole. The undertaking of research in this manner does not live out the benchmarks: the feelings and encounters that have been parts of the journey through the study. The use of part of my life story, the observations and fears that are deeply infused in this study are based from my observation of research as an experience - a portion I have accepted as part of my whole journey of life. The experience through which I have gone in the process of doing this study has affected the participants and me. We are not the same people as when we started. We have learned new things in life have met new people and made and developed new friendships and, since the journey and its parts are at different stages, the effects may have been different for all of us. The journey has its moments, some are encouraging and high while others tend to be low and all these are pictured and portrayed throughout this study. By bringing the researchers' own story into the research attaining reflexivity as a necessary element of research on humans is aided (Wood, 2000).

4.10 Conclusion

In this chapter I presented the theoretical milieu that informs the decisions for the choices that I made in the research. I indicate how I used different theories as a lens through which I looked to make decisions. With this chapter I have indicated the possibility of stories from pregnant women to bridge the established gap in most research. The absence of the women's stories from research on pregnancy has resulted in this above-mentioned gap. By using this framework I have created an opportunity for young women to tell another side of the story, thus to interact differently with the dominant stories. In this study, participants have had the opportunity to revisit their experiences and, through the use of this approach, an awareness of opportunities for better lives has been facilitated.

Through partnerships that have resulted from the study thoughts can thus be evoked around how circumstances can be improved for pregnant young women at different contexts. The next chapter presents the methodological choices for the study.

Chapter Five

Methodological Considerations

"The way we research
is a reflection of how we orient ourselves to the world-
our epistemological assumptions.

We need to understand those assumptions before we begin,
and we need to use that self-awareness as a guide throughout the research process."

Cole and Knowles (2001:48)

5.1 Introduction

Due to my commitment to a feminist methodology and framework, as I mentioned in Chapter One, throughout this research I am conscious of the processes that are involved in knowledge making. In the last chapter I discussed the pertinent literature on young women's pregnancy, women's sexuality and social discourses that surround the pregnancy discourses. Through this literature review I justified the need for young women's pregnancy to be understood under a different mirror; as a result I came up with four research frameworks for this study, namely: feminist frame work, discourse analysis, social ecology theory and narrative analysis.

In this chapter I therefore provide evidence to support the processes that I engaged with in the study. I explore the processes through which the research questions in this study have been addressed. I will commence this by introducing the broad aspects and a discussion of the research methodology. I then narrow down to feminist research as used in this study and as a theoretical framework on which this study is based, in relation to methodology. I justify the methodological choices I made accompanied by the realistic, ethical and philosophical reasons for my activities. Further, I explain the study design, the methods I employed for data collection and analysis, the ethical considerations that have

governed this study and the preparatory activities for this study, which in turn guided my decisions and informed the data collection activities.

The issue of is the nature of reality and how, in research, we come to know what we think we know and explain it as reality has been at the axis of debates in the social sciences. The exclusion of some members of the society from contributing to the activities of knowledge making has caused certain individuals in the research community to debate and question the type of information from which this biased knowledge has come. This debate prompted some push towards knowledge development that is representative of the community and does not treat individuals as 'other'. This debate further constructs interest in knowledge that does not privilege select members of the research community and methods from the rest. The debate pushes the agenda to methodologies as a kind that feminist research employs which in turn lends this study to employ feminist frameworks. This framework above all values lived experiences of individuals as data and incorporates the bigger structural, cultural and contextual factors that contribute to both causes and outcomes.

5.2 Two different Worlds?

For some time now debates have circulated around issues of quantitative and qualitative research. The main feature of quantitative research has been objectivity, factual, predictions and generalizability of findings (Mouton, 2001 and Creswell, 1994). Alternatively, qualitative methods have been known to give priority to voice and to allow people to give descriptions of their lives in their own setting. Though quantitative research has been dominant in the social sciences for some time, in recent years a move towards qualitative research in the same area has been witnessed. This move carries with it the observation from the critical heritage with one example as feminist approach. Despite the direction that the debates take, there is an agreement in some areas that the approach to split and slice into compartments is out dated. The current suggestion calls for a synthesis of approaches to allow the research to benefit from each of the frameworks (Hammersley, 1995, Jayaratne and Steward, 1991). What has been viewed as

too simplistic, sterile and no longer holding debate is emphasized by the works that suggest that when different methods are employed they complement each other if they are used with care in relation to the strengths and weaknesses of each.

This study on young women's pregnancy is a qualitative feminist study that has, in some cases, borrowed from quantitative studies to strengthen the points being discussed.

The use of quantitative methods on the other hand is observed as inappropriate for use in research that involves emotions of the people (Jayaratne and Steward, 1991 and Dunne, 1996). On the positive side quantitative research helps researchers to test their data precisely in order to obtain results for use in explaining and making predictions (Marshall, 1977).

In addition to the distinction indicated, several writers point out that a combination of both paradigms is not problematic. The methods rather complement each other and may assist to fill the gaps in data collection (Yin, 1984 and Ely, et al., 1991). In both quantitative and qualitative approaches a researcher uses similar instruments to collect data, however, the instruments may be used differently (Marshall, 1977). In order to benefit from both approaches, I use both data in order to get combined benefits. Nevertheless, this study is still predominantly a qualitative one.

5.3 Feminist research methodology – The Bridge?

The issue of the use and existence of feminist research methodologies has been extensively argued elsewhere (see Harding 1987; Fonow and Cook, 1991; Mies 1991; Reinharz, 1992). It has been argued that the issue of 'feminist research', as well as feminist method and methodology, does not exist. Such deliberations point out that each research places itself as feminist. The placing comes from the way research indicates the areas it wishes to attain in terms of goals: the purpose of the research has to be the women (Harding, 1997). These arguments go further to observe research through the way power is allocated within research. In addition, research becomes feminist if it has a

relationship to a political commitment and emancipation (Burman, 1991).

An additional view contests that research places itself as feminist only if it centres gender as the framework of operation (Lather, 1991). Giving opportunity to the researcher's experiences to be located in the research is also considered a feminist thought (Harding, 1997). To be more specific, there are three elements that qualify a study to be properly feminist. Research thus defined is that which allows and makes use of women's lived experiences, has women as the purpose of doing the research and incorporates and makes use of the experiences of the researcher. These three elements assist in engaging feminist methodologies (*ibid*). The same opinions are echoed through the notion that the researcher should be the 'overt subject matter'. The idea is to place the researcher's ideas in such a manner that they become fused and engrossed throughout the study (Jayaratne & Steward 1991). Research employs the participants in an array of question asking activities and questions around what comprises feminist research have been raised. In earlier work, Harding differentiated research by use of 'method' as a procedure of data gathering, 'methodology' as theory and analysis of research deed and 'epistemology' as what constitutes knowledge in terms of who owns they type of knowledge that is being studied (Harding, 1987). In agreement with Harding, Skeggs later pointed out that 'Ontology' refers to what is knowable, 'Epistemology is how we know what we know and what is the relationship between the researcher and the researched and 'methodology is about how we get to know (Skeggs, 1994a). The combination of the two therefore suggests the feminist approach as being interested in who, the what, and the how of research.

In addition to this basis, the identification of research as feminist is a dedication to a specific feminist epistemology. Feminist research therefore observes the use of a theoretical and political analysis, in such a manner as to question dominant ideas about ways of knowledge making. The ideas also ask questions around the implications of gender in the centre of knowledge. This undertaking to declare the relation between being and knowing, 'between ontology and epistemology' works to identify and characterise what feminist research is like (Harding, 1987; Stanley 1988 and Burman, 1991). How the

relationship between the knower and the known has been negotiated becomes pertinent to feminist research, as such, the methodology that covers how we come to know what we know is of prime importance (Skeggs, 1994). These three elements also help us define or confirm the feminist nature of any study.

In addition to these views, the following guidelines for research to be considered feminist have been highlighted. The ability of the research to reduce the gap that has always existed between researchers and researched is a feminist thought. The aim is to allow both researched and researcher to experience each other's worlds. In feminist terms, women should assume the status of 'subject' rather than 'object' in the study. There is a further vote for the type of research whose main role and intent is to emancipate and set free. It should be research that sets the minds of people to be instrumental in changing their unwanted situations (Mies, 1997). An addition to this view observes that the research should also aim at changing the oppressive structures (Lather, 1988). This invitation that research should capsize the boat of authority and power is a further question of feminist ideology.

Feminist researchers as qualitative researchers use different ways and approaches to their research. There is an observation that good feminist research has to make use of women's resources in conducting research. The notion of feminist research, as highlighted above, points out to the variations that exist within different issues of methodology. But the main focus in them all is the drive to value experience as data. This outlook carries concerns about whose experience matters within a particular study (Burman, 1991). The way to know data as influenced and determined by experience determines the directions that a feminist study should take. It is in this manner that the voice of the poor and discriminated against people of the world receives opportunities to make meaning of their lives. Through receiving the opportunity to question the existing power relations. In this study of young women's pregnancy discourses, I draw heavily from the above guiding principles as I move and interact with data, methods, participants and also myself.

5.4 Getting people interested

In order to get people interested in the study, I took advantage of already existing women and men's groups. The groups were in the church, community, work, and at social settings such as gatherings. I had informal talks with people in and at whatever venue I could get a moment to share. I spoke with colleagues who work with women like Women in Law in Southern Africa (WILSA), Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA) and The Department of Gender in Lesotho. I also made telephone calls and made personal contact with some of the women who I knew had been pregnant girls. In all the situations I always left an open invitation for the people to indicate interest. I left a number of possible ways in which interested people could contact me. Then, if the people became interested I would be informed so that I could make the initial arrangement to meet. Some participants could not make the meeting and so we talked over the telephone for our initial discussion.

After the invitations were extended, I was almost overwhelmed by the responses that I received. There were many people who indicated their interest in young women's pregnancy issues, though some declined. I called meetings and explained the study. Some of the people 'fell off' after the initial meeting while others remained. Among the reasons why some 'fell off' is that they were not comfortable for their stories to be documented. Issues of anonymity and confidentiality were discussed at length; however some members were still not convinced. The fear that family members would be embarrassed if they found out that they had aired their dirty linen in the open was another reason given. On the other hand, some women expressed fear that their partners might abuse or victimise them when they discover that they have discussed some of the issues.

Initially, after some screening, I had fourteen participants identified. Four of them could not be part of the study because they were no longer available. They gave reasons ranging from personal issues to workplace situations. From the ten that did join two opted to join the focus group sessions.

5.5 Gaining Participants' access and consent

At the inception of the study, I wrote a letter to the Principal Secretary of the Ministry of Education in Lesotho. In the letter I explained the study and requested his permission to conduct research within schools. I also appealed for the ministry's support in any manner as I conducted the study. This was important as in my sample of participants; some participants were located in schools. Schools were but one of the many sites I was to cover. I was granted permission and in the same letter I was introduced to whoever I wanted contact with in the ministry. Some of the participants were minors, although at the time of the study they were not in school. Therefore, for both in school and out of school minors, I wrote letters to seek parental approval to interview their children. In addition to parental approval I also sought the approval of the participants themselves to make sure that they were willing to be involved in the study. A consent form accompanied each letter to a parent or guardian. Either a parent or guardian filled in the form to allow the child to participate. However, where the parent or guardian was not willing they kept the form.

5.5.1 The selection criterion

I selected participants for two aspects. The first group was for participants who assisted in the survey of the context while the second was for the major study. All the participants were *Basotho*. Some of the participants spoke both English and *Sesotho* while others spoke only *Sesotho*. All participants in the second group resided in *Maseru* at the time of the study. In stating that they resided in Maseru at the time of the study I mean both those permanently and temporarily staying in the Maseru town. Maseru (as I mentioned in the chapter on context) is the city in which I stay and there are people who live there for different reasons, such as work and school, though they still maintain their original home. The reasons for the selection were motivated by the accessibility of participants for interviews; I selected all the sites where participants could be found conveniently (Creswell, 1994). Being around the same town allowed me easier access in person or by telephone as well as being faster to arrange for repeat visits. All participants were willing

to be part of the study (Plummer, 2001).

The general criteria I used for the selection of participants for interviews were that they were all in one way related to the notion of pregnancy and education (Flick, 1999). For in depth interviews, the girls had to have been pregnant young women while schooling.

I used eight participants for the in-depth interviews and eleven for two focus group sessions, comprising of five and six participants respectively. Six of the participants in the one to one interviews and all the girls in the focus group interviews were pregnant while at school in the last two years or less. The six girls were between ages fourteen to nineteen and were all either seventeen or younger when they fell pregnant. I have also used two participants who are an exception to the previous group. One of the participants was pregnant and in school six years ago and she is now twenty-two years old. The second was pregnant at the age of fifteen and she is now thirty-six.

In establishing the context, participants were parents and siblings from a background that has had a pregnant young woman as a family member. They should have still be in contact with the young woman enough to witness her life at the time of the interviews. In addition, partners participate as men who have made a schoolgirl pregnant in the last two years. The last group of participants consisted of school principals. Three of the principals came from '*Maseru*'. One of the principals came from '*Leribe*' District. I selected this principal because of an incidence that I had learned about at my workplace. The principal had just expelled a pregnant young woman and when I called he agreed to talk and participate in the study. The second principal, who was not from '*Maseru*', came from '*Teya-Teyaneng*'. I shared my study with him and he became interested. My interest in him was evoked by the strict nature of the management of the school, and the pregnant girl issue was of interest to him. In all the cases, five members were interviewed from each group.

I realized the need to allow for diversity in this study. I added to the studies voices other than the pregnant young women's and mine. I added the male voice and those of women

who have not been pregnant. The male voice was important for this study to capture any information that might have been differentiated by gender. This was necessary, as I do not condone the absence of a male partner in many young women's pregnancy cases in Lesotho (Letuka et al., 1998). The study does not aim to compare the experiences of the women with any other experiences what the design pushes for is the allowance of different perspectives on the same situation. The inclusion of several groups responds to an exploration of the wider society's construction of young women's pregnancy in the words of others (Naidoo 2002 and Kathard, 2003). The members of the group are different from the previously pregnant mothers due to class, location, age and lack of being pregnant as young women.

5.5.2 Sampling

As I have already mentioned in chapter One, the study is not meant to give statistically generalizable results. That outlook has had an influence on the participants' selection. I am aware of debates around sampling and sample size (van Rensburg, 1999). With a study like this one any number of participants would have worked as well as the other. The number was not an important factor. What was important was the quality of people's willingness to participate. In addition, the amount of time we could both afford and make available to conduct the study decided on who participated.

This study has benefited from the use of purposeful sampling. I undertook the selection of participants with experiences fitting the type of information I was looking for. This type of sampling has sometimes been called purposive or judgemental. Purposeful sampling utilizes convenience samples; the researcher relies on the individuals who are 'available and willing' to participate. Purposeful sampling allowed the selection of available participants according to the purpose of the study (Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. 2000 and Wiersma 1991). Sampling in this fashion should not be done without setting prior criteria. The approach benefited from a snowballing or networking effect. By this I mean that individuals I originally contacted to participate in the study assisted by selecting or putting forward names of others who might be suitable for the

study (Vaughn et al., 1996). Participants thus selected should suit the laid out criteria (Bailey 1994).

In addition to purposeful sampling, I used convenience or accidental or opportunity sampling (Cohen et al., 2000). I used a self-selected sample to distribute questionnaire to school principals I used for establishment of the context. I distributed one hundred and fifty questionnaires to schools that were represented in a meeting that was held by the Ministry of Education. Of all the questionnaires, I allocated one half to primary schools and the other half to both secondary and high schools principals. The package to each school principal contained a letter that requested principals to fill in the questionnaire. I also included the questionnaire together with a self addressed and stamped envelope to facilitate return of the questionnaire.

5.6 Ethical Considerations

Studies as this one may violate the private lives of individuals. This interference with individuals' private spheres has implications. Some of the implications can be harmful while others could be beneficial. In order to minimise harmful effects of the violation of participants' rights, research has to consider ethical issues. Being ethical entails making efforts to minimise any harm to the participants (Olesen, 1994) and the participants should be protected against disclosure (Neuman, 1997). When this occurs people are able to open up and give honest answers. The participants in this study were to be exposed to unfamiliar ways. The stories we were to share came from highly sensitive areas of sexuality. The stories of young women's pregnancy question in many ways the sexuality of the oppressed. If the research failed to be ethical harm could be experienced in many ways. Some of the ways have been indicated by the reasons for some people to withdraw from the study. The ethical considerations involved bringing minimal quantities of 'undue stress, unwanted publicity and loss of reputation' to the participants. Some ethical considerations are necessary in feminist interview research because feminists use the views to avoid research that exploits women (Reinharz 1992). In addition, feminist researchers are committed to building relationships with the participants. Some of the

feminist researchers also realize that their role is to build a trusting relationship with the participants. As a result, construction of trust becomes an important aspect of the research.

5.6.1 Preliminary meetings

In relation to ethical issues I held preliminary meetings with participants. Some participants who were not able to attend group meetings benefited from the one to one sessions I had with them. Part of the information in the preliminary meetings related to the following issues:

- Those who were willing to participate would sign a contract form (see Appendix).
- The participants had a right to withdraw at any stage of the study if they wanted to.
- The participants have to receive full details about the research they are involved in (Olesen, 1994 and Trochim, 2002).
- The use of a tape-recorder was to be negotiated with each participant.
- They had a choice of what issues to tell and not to tell.
- They were bid to take part as active participants.
- They were informed that they could interact with the study up to the final stages.

The following ethical issues were elaborated on in the following manner:

5.6.2 Confidentiality

Confidentiality entails protecting a research participant's identity. To ensure that both participants and I were at peace, they were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. To ensure this ethical aspect, participants' real names were not used when reporting the interviews (Neuman, 1997; Willig, 2001; Kvale, 1996). Each participant chose a pseudonym to be used for the purpose of the study. I did not choose the pseudonyms. Each participant chose a name that she liked (Gregg cited in Reinharz, 1992). The name was used throughout the entire data generation process through to the writing stage. This worked well as an added measure to ensure confidentiality.

5.6.3 Voluntary participation

The participants in this study had the freedom to either participate or not. The participants in the research voluntarily signed the contract that was prepared before the interviews. They were informed of their right to terminate the contract or to negotiate for changes in the contract if the need arises. Another important consideration of ethical social research is to never pressurize anyone into contributing; participation should be voluntary (Olesen, 1994 and Trochim, 2002).

The information that I gave included the observation that the general public was aware that I was undertaking the study. The participants who were constantly seen with me could be labeled as those who were seen with that pregnant young woman and that could be used to assault the participants either emotionally or even physically.

5.7 Why feminist research for this study?

I bear in mind that research can only be feminist if it follows a number of patterns and characteristics I have already discussed at the beginning of this chapter. In this section I give further evidence of the characteristics, but I also further relate the characteristics to this study of young women's pregnancy in Lesotho. This study uses the feminist framework, discourse analysis, and narrative form of presentation to explore the experiences of pregnant young women. As was indicated earlier, with this study my interest is to understand how pregnant young women feel about their lives. With this study I give the young women space and a voice to tell their day-to-day undertakings and the feelings that are a part of their experiences. The study provoked and invited young women to interpret their own lives in their own words. They need to make meaning out of the way they express themselves. The social construction of gender in issues of young women's pregnancy is at the center of the investigation (Lather, 1991). With this study on young women's pregnancy I bring forward the voices of the under privileged as young women who are or were pregnant.

This study on women's experiences of young women's pregnancy addresses part of women's lives and it lends itself therefore to be studied in a feminist manner (Hall, 1993). The circumstances of young women's pregnancy invite feminist research due to 'its methodological underpinnings, which see reality as differently constructed and experienced' (Kittay, 1997). This feminist perspective allowed me to journey with the pregnant young women as they unpacked and explored their gendered lives. Each of them got an opportunity at making meaning out of their lived experiences. Feminist research allowed them a unique way of knowing, a way that respects and responds to their world. This study fields itself as being in need of feminist methodologies as it is a study that has allowed me, as a researcher, to deny the possibility of neutral and value free science and knowledge. Feminist methodologies applaud what would have been called 'bias' because of researcher experiences that have been used.

In addition feminist research allowed and encouraged the use of my autobiography and acknowledged that as being a part of knowledge (Wolf, 1996). The formation of the problem statements, the methodology, research tools and the interpretation of the data were relevant to young women's pregnancy. They bound well and resonated with the intent of the study.

This study that explores experiences of young women's pregnancy in schooling bears some differences from the studies that have been conducted in Lesotho. The approach of using life history methodology adds to that difference. The study recognises the differences in all those who participated in knowledge making in the study. Feminist research embraces and understands the notion of difference. Feminist research salutes those who use these differences to construct their knowledge. Knowledge has been interpreted as being universal by many mainstream researchers. Instead, within a feminist approach, these diversities are seen as necessarily and inevitably dependant, united through the associations between the purposes, conduct and outcome of the research (Lather, 1998 and Burman, 1991).

As I indicated, the aims and objectives of the study guide us in the decisions of whether

research is feminist or not. According to these criteria this study qualifies as a feminist study. It qualifies because it has the qualities of qualitative feminist research as discussed above.

5.8 Methods

My decision to use a feminist approach to this study provoked me to employ a qualitative approach in order to bridge the gap that has been identified in the young women's pregnancy research area, which I mentioned earlier in this chapter. I wish to contribute to the type of research that values women and their lived experiences as information relevant for knowledge making. With this idea in mind, I opted to combine data collection methods: interviews, memos and questionnaires. This approach allowed me to collect in depth information, feelings and elaborate issues that surround young women's pregnancy from different angles, sources and frameworks. The benefit from the richness of data that has been gathered by use of combined techniques has been observed in areas such as HIV and AIDS research (Potsonen & Kontula, 1999b). In addition the suggestion to use combined ways in feminist research has been documented (Reinhartz, 1992). The benefits, as pointed out in these studies, indicate that sometimes information from different tools differ, as a result the use of multiple ways of data collection assist to confirm or filter data.

5.8.1 Interviews

The aim of the study is to understand the young women's pregnancy discourses from the experiences of young women who fall pregnant while schooling and goes further to give the analysis that the young women make of their experiences. The discursive nature of young women's pregnancy in addition touches on the role of language in the construction of young women's pregnancy and this element warranted addition of perspectives other than the young woman's own. The addition of these participants is in no way to check the young woman's experiences against the thoughts of individuals around the young women. The intent is to investigate the role of society as seen through the eyes other than

the young woman's own and to find out what informs the actions that are experienced.

5.8.1.1 Getting ready for the interviews

I had to make certain preparations before I finally interviewed the participants.

5.8.1.2 Interview schedules

I designed the schedules with the help of the doctoral seminar group members. Suggestions that came up from colleagues and supervisors were included and represented. Like the questionnaire that I used for the survey, I shared the interview schedule in order to get feedback. The final schedules that I have used represent opinions and suggestions from different corners. The initial contacts I had with some of the pregnant young women also helped me to include some of the points I might have missed. The schedules I constructed such a way that I could ask questions where issues were not clear for me. The participants did not have to answer questions in any particular order, they could choose to start anywhere they felt comfortable.

5.8.1.3 Re-listening in preparation for interviews

I will just share experiences and the challenges that were posed by having to learn to listen in a different way. Anderson and Jack (1991) prompted me with the challenge to start questioning my ability to listen well by saying:

... we need to refine our methods for probing more deeply by listening to the levels on which the narrator responds to the original questions. To do so we need to listen critically to our interviews, to our responses as well as our questions. We need to hear what women implied, suggested, and started to say but didn't.

(Anderson and Jack 1991:17)

In one of the research seminars, the facilitator in the group put emphasis on the role of listening in carrying out research. The emphasis was on listening well in any activity where information will be given orally. This aspect of listening was important and it became even more important as the interviewees and the interviewer engaged with each other on issues of feelings. Here I was an adult, a mother, having to listen to the people with whom I was to interact. The challenge also came with me having to listen to younger people. The practice is not common in the culture in which I have been brought up. Both the interviewees and myself had to renegotiate and observe that the time was for the women and other participants to talk (Kathard, 2003).

This double confusion to me was brought about by the job orientation from which I have come and in which I still work. In the world of lecturing I am accepted as the knower and the teller. I got used to many years of telling and the struggle to learn to listen was not an easy one. I took the challenge seriously and got myself enrolled in a communication class within my own institution. The class emphasises listening as a skill that can be learned. The practical aspects of the course planted in me the patience to sit and listen. I practiced with my colleagues, some of my friends and my children. They were not very interested at first but they still helped. My children reinforced the idea to learn how to listen to younger people in a different way. As a result of the class, my contacts with people improved. I can tell because of the remarks I have received lately. I have been asked in many conversations why I am so quiet, and I am able to say my reason is that I am listening.

Doing feminist research and choosing to do life history research lends itself to being able to listen and listen well. Listening well means to me listening for more than just the words. Listening pays attention to meanings in the words and the feelings and emotions that make the interaction between the interviewee and their meaning making process. I had to work on listening well and to negotiate with research participants to allow me to listen to them "...first we have to learn to be quiet in order to listen" (Heyl, 1997: 4).

Because I had to interview younger people I was not familiar with the ways in which they

expressed themselves at times as language has evolved over time. Similar notions have been shared and suggestions were made that, when we interview, we should not pretend that we know what we do not know. It is in a situation where trust has been established that individuals are able to declare their ignorance about certain issues (Kathard, 2003 and Gregg cited in Reinharz 1992).

That shift was dependent on some level of trust having been developed: trust that the other wouldn't laugh at the naïveté and ignorance revealed in our requests for clarification. Our talk over time built trust. But clearly it isn't talk that builds rapport and trust. It is almost a cliché' that talking at someone is very different from talking to someone

(Heyl, 1997:4).

I needed to learn this earnestly due to my awareness that the participants had stories to share. The issue of researcher commitment came into my mind: I was committed to learning from participants' stories. Their stories had 'something to teach me' (Heyl, 1997).

I have mentioned the instruments and will discuss the theoretical backgrounds of each. In addition, I will explain how I utilised the various instruments in this research. Lastly, I present the challenges that I experienced. In some cases the challenges include the coping strategies that I employed. In this following section I infuse my experiences and feelings about the use of the instruments and what it has meant for me as a researcher. This procedure of presenting the instruments is followed for all the instruments and techniques of data collection. The order and manner in which I present the instruments has no bearing to the study.

I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews with the young women, parents, siblings, church representatives, school principals and partners. I preferred the use of semi-structured interviews to other techniques like structured interviews as it enabled me to dig

deeper and gain further understanding of young women's pregnancy. The semi-structured interview helped me to establish gaps, pick up contradictions, ask for clarification and pick up on areas that seem to be difficult for the participants (Banister et al, 1994, Smith & Van Langenhove, 1995; Willig, 2001). My choice to use semi-structured interviews allowed me to be flexible in asking questions and allowed participants to begin where they felt comfortable (Smith & Van Langenhove, 1995). In addition, the semi-structured interview allowed the participants and me to gain insight into our own meaning making process. As Kvale (1996) puts the idea, the participants and I "co-create" the world and the meaning we make out of it. This allows us, in different ways, to develop our own awareness and make meaning of the magnitude of the young women's pregnancy phenomenon. The uses and benefits of semi-structured interviews in feminist research have been documented elsewhere (see Best and Khan 1989, Gay 1992 and Bailey 1994).

All participants were asked to give their opinions on what they consider as basis for the pregnant young woman's way of experiencing. Initially I intended to use focus groups for the rest of the participants in this group. However, I only succeeded in having focus group discussions with some of the pregnant young women. The intent to use focus group interviews failed because some efforts to bring the participants together failed. There was difficulty in trying to convene the meetings.

5.8.1.4 Pregnant young women's Interviews

Previous research into the sensitive area of young people and sexual health has shown the importance of in depth, semi-structured interviews for reflecting the interpretations a young person places on their experiences, not just through the words they use, but through silences, and the difficulty they have in expressing certain issues (Holland et al., 1998). I selected to interview the young women individually and in focus groups. The aim of the pregnant young woman interviews was to collect deeper details about experiences of young women's pregnancy and their interactions with schooling. The information allows an analysis of the views of the young women regarding the ways in which their careers have been touched by being pregnant young women in school. With

the interviews I also wish to gain an understanding of pupils' attitudes, beliefs, and norms towards young women's pregnancy and parenthood.

The use of semi-structured interviews in eliciting information from young people has been highlighted. As I have already discussed, the flexibility of a semi-structured interview schedule allowed the interviewees to exert more control over the process, and to guide the flow of the interaction to the issues they considered particularly important with regard to the sessions and young women's parenthood more generally. Kvale (1996) notes that in interviews both participants co-create knowledge and meaning about the world around them. Using this method therefore increased my awareness of my own part in the research process and the way in which who I am and my particular worldview not only influenced what the interviewees said, but also how I interpreted and built on that. On a practical level, the unpredictable nature of the groups and schools coupled with my lack of control over these settings meant that using methods which acknowledge and focus on the uniqueness of each case, rather than relying on controlled contexts for gathering data, was more appropriate.

I held two focus group interviews with pregnant young women who were not included in the one to one interviews. The two focus group discussions had five and six members respectively. The number of participants was guided by the notion that a group had to be large enough for a lively discussion to emerge without people feeling crowded or overwhelmed (De Vos, 1998). The focus group allowed for the sharing of ideas by more than just two individuals. It was a cooperative way of soliciting data rather than the individualistic method of data collection exemplified in a one to one situation. The opportunities in the group interviews allowed for many ideas to be represented and heard. The experiences were shared in an enabling environment that allowed members to support each other. I used group interviews to elicit larger amounts of data within a manageable time. The human interactions that emerged in the settings built strong networks whose positive results have started to pay back in their own ways. Experiences seemed to become deeper as members reminded each other and reflected as other participants did their own sharing. Focus group interviews were used to provide insight

especially in situations where beliefs and attitudes that underline behaviour are under exploration (Garey, 1994). When collecting data through focus group interviews, perceptions and opinions of a rich nature emerged. The rich data that was generated in this manner arose as a result of individuals interacting with each other and with the data. For some people, the interaction that occurred provided an opportunity to deliberate beyond the individual to the wider perspective.

The two groups used the services of a group leader that was selected by members (I was included in the membership). One pregnant young woman acted as a scribe to both sessions. The choice was made because some participants expressed the idea to have a closed group attended by insiders, which in this instance was determined by having been pregnant while schooling. The group interviews ranged from one and a half to two hours.

In addition, a different group of previously pregnant young women were interviewed on a one to one basis. The one to one interviews with these participants ranged between one and one and a half hour. Interviewing participants in this manner gave me an opportunity to create a situation where researcher and researched could interact. For people to express their situations, feelings, thoughts, and intentions, they need to be given an opportunity and a safe space to do so.

5.8.1.5 Interviews with Principals

As mentioned above, the interviews with the school principals were on a one to one basis (see Appendix J). The intent was to gain an overview of the national as well as particular school policies in relation to young women's pregnancy. The aim was to investigate issues around admissions, readmissions, transfers, support, and the expulsion of pregnant young women in schools. A further aim was to find out how the policies were informed and who was involved in coming out with policy in the area. The principals were also asked about their own views in relation with young women's pregnancy and schooling. Each participant was interviewed for between 45 minutes and 1 hour at their office.

5.8.1.6 The parent interviews

All the interviews with parents were one to one encounters (see Appendix M). I spoke with different parents and requested their participation in the study. Some were willing while others were not. I was finally able to arrange with and interview five parents. I included the parents, as I was interested in getting information about what informed their decisions and values in relation to young women's pregnancy. I was also interested in the influence they have or lack in relation to pregnant young women and schools in their capacity as co-owners of schools together with government and the church. The parents were interviewed for thirty five to forty five minutes.

5.8.1.7 The partner interviews

These interviews were also one to one encounters (see Appendix N). The males who were in this section were those of any age who had been partners to a pregnant young woman while the girl was still in school. Five men presented themselves for this part of the study. The group was to share their view of the women's experiences and the possible reasons for their perceived view. The group members were asked about their view of the pregnant young women's experiences. The partners were interviewed for thirty five to forty five minutes.

5.8.1.8 The sibling's interviews

Also one to one encounters, the participants for these interviews were of any age with the criteria being limited to at one time having resided with a sister who had been pregnant while schooling (see Appendix O). There were five participants three of who were females while two were males. The group was to share their view of the women's experiences and the possible reasons for their perceived experience. The experiences from this group also included the school and home experiences of the pregnant young women. The siblings were interviewed for thirty five to forty five minutes.

5.8.1.9 The interviews with church representatives

The group was asked about the practical experiences in relation to the National, and school policies versus practice (see Appendix P). They were also requested to give their views on the possible reasons for some of the decisions that they or other stakeholders have taken. The idea was to find out their views in relation to the interaction of policy with the school experiences of young women's pregnancy. The church representatives were interviewed for thirty- five minutes.

5.8.1.10 Interviews with Government official

I held one interview with an Officer from the Ministry of Education to give the official stand and policies in relation to young women's pregnancy (see Appendix Q). The Ministry official was also to give a view on the policy versus the practical aspect of young women's pregnancy in schools. The government officer was interviewed for forty-five minutes.

5.8.2 Questionnaire

A semi-structured questionnaire was also used to elicit information from a wider coverage of school principals. The reason for this approach emerged from the varied type of data that was necessary in order to address the critical questions. The location of participants, time limitations and scarce funding contributed to the way data was collected. The data that was to be collated and not the methodology informed the research instruments, a process that conforms to a feminist view (Reinharz 1992).

The idea of a questionnaire came as a result of one of the research seminars. As I scanned the field on young women's pregnancy from the perspective of it not being a problem, there was little information available. I needed to establish a few pointers in support of the rationale for the study. The challenge was further compounded as I looked for school experiences of pregnant young women. The group agreed that a survey would be useful

as a tool for situation analysis. The aim of the survey was to establish whether schools have experiences with pregnant young women. In addition, I wanted to explore what schools did with issues of young women's pregnancy and what informed the decisions they took in cases where they had a pregnant young woman. The questionnaire was constructed in such a way as to elicit qualitative data only. The reason for this choice was that available studies had sufficient statistics to indicate that young women's pregnancy is a reality in schools within the '*Lesotho*' context. Though the studies did not investigate school experiences, there are statistics to include the school going young woman in the pregnancy '*crisis*' (Morojele, 1994 ; 'Kimane' et al., 1999 and Mapetla' and 'Tuoane-Nkhasi', 2003).

The intent of the data I collected in this survey is different from the others; I have effectively supplemented the other data in a way. This study attempts to capture the questions of why and how things happen. It has asked participants to think of what informs their actions. Though the findings of this study are not intended to be statistically generalizable, I sent out a questionnaire to get information that was to be found in the schools of Lesotho. I sent out 150 copies of the questionnaire survey to principals in schools. They were sent to 75 primary schools and 75 secondary and high school principals. The package contained a copy of the questionnaire. In addition there was a self-addressed stamped envelope. I included one letter to explain my request and a copy of the letter from the Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Education. The questionnaires were given to schoolteachers who had attended a training workshop who originated from all ten districts in Lesotho. The use of this instrument was to strengthen the school experiences of pregnant young women by use of the survey to supplement and complement other approaches (Best, 1981).

The use of a highly male constructed tool, such as a survey questionnaire for data collection, has been used in this study. It is a tool that poses great challenges and frictions for me as a feminist researcher (Singh, 2000). The type of data I am to handle in this study however necessitates that I use a survey. As I reflect back to the choice of a questionnaire I observe many struggles that I was confronted with. Struggles included

how the document should be designed and the various possible meanings of some questions to some participants. I also wondered about how structured, semi-structured or open-ended or closed-ended the questions should be. Some of the issues have been thoroughly debated in the last chapter. I mention them here to reiterate that even as I get into how I interacted with this tool the challenges had not stopped I used a different questionnaire for the survey in the schools. All the questionnaires were piloted with some of the school principals around Maseru, my colleagues at work and some fellow research students. The questionnaires that I finally used were a joint effort in this manner. All questions were written in English but I could ask questions in either 'Sesotho' or English depending on the preference of the participant.

The questionnaires were finally constructed with a mixture of open-ended and closed-ended questions. Bell (1997), Jegede (1995), Ary, Jacobs and Rasavich (1985) and Cohen and Manion (1997) all reach a consensus about the usefulness of mixing open-ended and closed-ended questions. The closed-ended questions on the other hand assisted me to find out issues that needed a yes or no answer or specific information like age.

Though I sent out the questionnaires, the return rate was slow and in some cases they came in much later than I had expected them, despite my pleas in the letter, which included a proposed deadline. The late response in some incidences caused some concern as the data was to form and reinforce the rationale for this study. The challenge of a lack of control over who responds and timeframes was experienced in this study. The return rate was successful as it was above fifty percent (Singh 2000). I have had my suspicions about the high return rate for the following reasons: Some of the primary school principals were my former students at the teacher training college, I have also met and interacted with secondary and high school principals all over the country in my position as a schools inspector. The return rate has challenged me to propose for further research on what makes participants choose to return or not return questionnaires timorously in the context of Lesotho.

5.8.3 Memos

As the events around this study started, I kept memos. It is amazing how those notes I kept myself have become a treasure. As I try to pull together the different strings and layers that makes up the study. The memos were written at different times. I wrote some immediately after the interviews, some I wrote on the long trips between Maseru and Durban as I travelled either by bus or taxi. In addition I would write at awkward times. I would just wake up in the middle of the night and write a note to myself in relation to the data. The memos are a constant reminder of my interactions with this study. As I read some of them, I was reminded of crucial moments in my journey with this study (Singh, 2000; Lephoto, 2000 and Kathart, 2003). The pleasure that some of the contents gave me is summarised by regarding the entries as a part of my life. They are a part of my life history and a telling of my journey as I undertook this study (Griffiths, 1994). I kept little notes with sometimes-shortened versions to remind me of valuable information. The memos served as pointers of moments inside and outside the interviewing. They act to capture my feelings on some of the days after the encounters, the sharing, and the self-reflection. The notes were not kept in any formal way. There was no format and no strict rules about what I should write and when to do so. Any time there was something I felt I should write down I did.

The informal nature of the way I kept the memos, presented me with challenges in some instances. I would have a shortened version of some kind. As I tried to interpret this for myself I would fail to make the connections. I still keep those bits though. They may become helpful some day. As a feminist researcher and an advocate for the use of life history, I believe in the power of the memory.

5.8.4 Autobiography

I have had my experience in life. One of the components of my life history in relation to this study emanates from my experiences as a pregnant young woman while in school. In exploration of the experiences of young women's pregnancy, as in this study, my

knowledge and experience is used as data (Griffiths, 1994). As such, the tolerance of feminist research around the use of experience as data is valuable in a study such as this one.

My autobiography in this study is presented in a narrative form that settles around my experiences of young women's pregnancy. Because of my situation in an African Feminism context, my approach needs to be explicit. The narrative covers my personal story. In addition it touches on the way I felt in relation to significant others. In the autobiography I raise issues concerning the use of identity as a tool for discrimination purposes. My situation in African Feminist research opens the narrative to interrogate the role of institutions such as the family, church, school and community (Mama, 1995, Diaho, 2004).

As I embarked on writing my autobiography, I was aware of the questions that have been asked around the use of autobiography as data. These issues include a lack of objectivity, lack of 'scientific' evidence, and a reliance on memory as compared to other research methods commonly used in research such as interviews, questionnaires or observations. I have already deliberated at length on this debate in the last chapter. I found some arguments that have been forwarded to contest that such views are flawed. The arguments observe that the autobiography, like any other method, may be used badly or well. Efforts to work hard on issues of validity and rigor are essential to making a success of each research method. Autobiography also has to meet the criteria for reliable methods of gaining knowledge (Griffiths, 1994). The politics around issues of criteria, though, pose further challenges for research validation.

As I wrote parts of my autobiography, feelings of great hurt, pain and remembrance of sorrow came flooding back into my mind. There are debates that point out that disclosing as I have by offering my form of knowledge in an autobiographical form is not meant to be cathartic. But it has potential to heal as pointed out in other works (Arvay, 1998). The experiences of 'autobiographical writing' as being demanding and painful have been echoed elsewhere (Griffiths, 1994). I argue, therefore, that we can learn from each other's

stories. By telling my story, sharing with participants in the research and also allowing my work to be interrogated by others operating both in the same and in different frameworks from my own I am enriched.

5.9 Researcher as instrument

The methodology of my choice has taught me that I cannot in any way tear myself away from the women and other groups of people that I have met and interacted with in the study. In feminist research, the researcher is observed as an active participant. The personal contribution of the researcher is a valuable resource (Harding, 1991). Feminist views of research base some of the assumptions around the researcher as a knower, thus, the value of a researchers' opinion and experience forms part of the data (Stanley, 1990). The researcher who has this kind of role becomes part of the research. This assists to balance the power relations between researchers and researched.

In this study, all my choices were guided by my 'social location'. Issues around my age, social class, maternal status, marital status and gender have made the study follow certain patterns. Because of this eminent space that I occupy, the study is what it is. Feminist research has allowed me to review my position in relation to this study. My acceptance of me allowed me to relate my actions to my social place (Brayton, 1997). In this way the research has brought me closer to the realities that are faced by the women than I thought possible. I am sure I cannot be able to separate myself from the people who have made such a contribution to the way we now know. I share the belief that is asserted in the deliberate effort of a researcher to infuse her self in the study and to declare her situation in relation to the participants so that it is known (Mbilinyi, 1993).

There is a hierarchy that exists in the research situation and power dynamics are evident between the researcher and the researched. The possible ways in which to put the researcher, who is in a power position, in an equipped perspective is to use techniques in research that allow both the researched and the researcher to interact through sharing in order to try and spread power relations (Mbilinyi, 1993). Power exists in the interview

relationship. Research participants are not to be researched as objects but they are to be allowed to state their own experiences with their own voice. In order to minimise the hierarchical nature of interviewing, I gave opportunities for the participants to talk with as little as possible interruption from my side (Beoke-Betts, 1994).

I have found the study and the way I have approached it to be fulfilling. As I have come to interact with the participants, with myself, and with the data, I have enjoyed the fulfilment of opening myself up for sharing with the participants in the study. The relationship has been characterised by a sense of give and take, though I must observe that the extent to which we benefited from the sharing will be utilised differently by us. Each one of us, with our individualism, would contextualise the encounters differently. I agree with observations that the approach that has been found to work for some researchers is when the 'inquirer' is situated as the overt subject throughout the research process (Naidoo, 2003 and Jayarante, 1991).

I was aware of the complications that could arise because of the power relations between the researched and myself as a researcher. On the other hand, I felt that I belonged to the same family though I still had an upper hand in that I had been a pregnant young woman many years ago and the experiences I have been through in life may have removed me from the current realities of young women who are just experiencing most of what has now become history for me. This is why I had to reflect on my intentions and my place in the research and to expose my place as a previously pregnant young woman who has experiences of her own to share.

Again, I had to realise that as a result of my acquired status through education and age I might be a threat to the researched and contribute towards blocking the very process that I intended to facilitate. I guess there is something in being committed like I was, some magic that unfolds when individuals share and share with sincerity and honesty. Trust and mutual respect between the participants and myself yielded data that is normally difficult to illicit. Sexuality issues are heavily laden with values and good women and girls are not expected to discuss the topic, as they may be judged as being 'loose' and

anti-Christian. I have alluded to the realization that, among other qualities, feminist research observes and recognises knowledge as experienced and reconstructed by women. The experiences alone, without analytically examining details and surrounding issues, will render feminist research as lip service. For researchers to realise their devotion to research that elicits action, researchers have to engage thoroughly with the experience and theorising of those experiences.

5.10 The research process

Before any formal interviews started, I had informal chats with individuals as a way to establish rapport. The basis on which trust is built among individuals depends largely on successful bonding represented in the form of rapport. A failure of the participants and the researcher to build rapport can lead to unsuccessful interactions, which can then hinder the interview process. Opportunities for me to answer questions and clear misconceptions that are possible in research were created by this space. It was important that participants understood my intentions clearly so that they did not participate with hopes for material support that I did not have to give. On the other hand, it was important for me to convince the participants that I did not in any way intend to exploit them (Phoenix, 1994 and Maynard, 1994).

All the interviews were tape-recorded. For this study I wanted a method that would allow me to interact directly with participants (Devault, 1999). Unlike the traditional and the non-feminist approaches to research; truth and objectivity as observed by traditional methodology is not my concern. My believe lies in the prospect of as much interaction as possible with participants and the data (Neuman, 1997).

Flexibility allowed both the researcher and the researched to go beyond the questions as asked. This element also allowed me to take and add on information that I could have missed by neglecting to use a semi-structured interview. The response rate increased as there was no writing involved. In cases where there was writing I kept it to a minimum. The use of this instrument allowed for the employment of feminist research approaches. I

was able to observe none verbal behaviour that I could have missed by the use of other techniques, such as a survey. The instrument allowed me as the researcher and the researched to be able to control the environmental factors. If any one of us felt they needed to go to the bathroom they could say so and they could go. In this type of interview the study has benefited. The rich data that participants elicit without consultation with anybody other than themselves is valuable. The consultations that they gave were constructions that they made independently. To give them the space to do so, I watched as they paused and engaged in and with their minds over a point. I gave an opportunity for them to remain silent and respected that silence. I only assured them to indicate to me when they are ready to begin talking.

The use of these instruments allowed me the benefit of reusing the schedule. The value of 'multiple interviews' as being more accurate than single interviews has been observed. It allowed for additional questions to fill the gaps and to clear misconceptions from the former interviews (Reinharz, 1992).

The responses to the schedule did not have to follow any order. The type of questions made me feel I have had data that is rounded and provides a deeper breadth. The semi-structured interviews gave opportunities to collect data that included the opinions of the interviewees. For example, I was able to ask, "How do you feel about that? What do you think of this?"

The idea of hierarchy in this research was foremost in my mind. The idea of acknowledgement of hierarchical research has been observed (Hermans, 1992; Mies, 1982; Reinharz, 1992 and Singh, 2000). I tried in the study to give opportunity to the researched and myself to balance power. We drifted from time to time back to a situation where some participants in this study waited for me to lead the way as a knower. At times, I found myself wondering between probing and information giving which has been so characteristic of my life. Like Arvay (1998) I was confronted with similar statements, such as "Well, I'm not sure if this is what you want, but . . ." and "Well, I'm not sure where you want me to start . . ." and "I hope this is useful." Some of the participants

shared that they had been involved in interviews before and their expectation that they derived from their former experiences of being interviewed was different from the way this study unfolded. As we had more encounters in situations where we had repeat interviews the situation improved, but not in similar ways for every situation and participant.

5.10.1 Researcher self-disclosure in the process

Self-disclosure is communication in which a person voluntarily and intentionally tells another person accurate information about himself or herself that the other person is unlikely to know or find out from another source (Pearson, J and Spitzberg: 1990). In this study, the basis for my feminist approach utilized and valued the idea of ‘researcher self-disclosure’. I declared my relationship to the study and to the participants in it. I see self-disclosure as a way to declare myself as being full of feelings, values and favouritisms that I have constructed for my way of making meaning. Even as I conducted this study I felt an urge to say who I am in this research because it illuminates my ways of doing things. I have been a pregnant young woman, I have been a community member in communities where young women’s pregnancy interacts with society and I shared these experiences. As I shared my having been pregnant as a young woman, the participants in the study opened up and told me things they said they would not have been willing to share normally.

5.10.2 Researcher Vulnerability/Receptivity

In doing the research in the way that I have chosen it left its mark on my way of life. The interactions I have had with the participants and the data has changed the way in which I look at situations. My life has been changed in observable ways in which I ask questions. I share the new me with my colleagues in their own studies. My colleagues point out the change they observe in my language and my way of interrogating data even from related studies. This interaction with the participants and the stories they told combined with my story to reawaken in me moments where I have been touched and become emotional about some of the experiences that have been told. In my journey in this study I kept notes of these feelings and they appear in different parts of this thesis as part my research

journey. I had read Singh (2000), Arvay (1998) and I thought I would be alert and protect myself from feeling any pain. In their studies they were also touched in similar ways. I have been touched and I have been transformed, as this will be observable in this study. The way I wrote my proposal has been an indication for me that I have shifted. It was the beginning that I made a mark of unaware. As I read my thesis at its final stages I pick out the new me in it. I do not think that I have a way to stop. This is who I want to be till other calls come and who know I might enjoy that unknown land even more than this.

5.10.3 Self reflexivity

The use of self-reflexivity has been observed as an effort to examine and re-examine the researcher's position in relation to the research and the researched. The ability to reflect on one's own location acknowledges that ways of knowing are not innocent and flawless, these ways of knowing are indeed influenced, directed, and guided at times by the values that are deeply rooted in both the researcher and the researched. Reflexivity has been defined as the ability to "reflect upon, examine critically, and explore analytically the nature of the research process" (Fonow and Cook 1992:2). The idea of reflexivity has been helpful for me in this study. The main participants in the study are women who are either currently pregnant or have been pregnant some time back.

Due to my constant effort to reflect, as I listened to the stories as told and the surrounding ways in which we struggled to tell our different stories it dawned on me over again that the participants also have to reflect to tell their stories. As I listened to the storied lives of others I was reminded of my own telling and became aware that what we say and the ways in which we say it is also socially constructed. As we reflect upon our lives, and open dimensions that we frame ourselves from, the way we do this emanates from 'a cultural context, one that has historically demeaned and controlled activities' (Anderson and Jack, 1991:18). Participants in the study at times asked me what do you think I should tell, what do I tell and what do I exclude? In fact the question articulated more a seeking of permission, it says is it all right if I told you what I want to in the way I want to. Or as usual I have to talk according to what would be socially acceptable.

5.10.4 The Question of Research rigor

The issue of validity also has to evolve and match the claims of particular frameworks (Vithal, 2000). I support democratic participatory validity as it touches at the very core of my feminist approach to the study. The pillar on which the concept lies has a strong attraction for me because of the issues of choice, negotiation and reciprocity.

In this study, participants had the freedom to quit if and when they wanted to and indeed some did leave and chose not to participate. The participants also chose the venues for the interviews and the timing of each was deliberated upon and where some participants felt uncomfortable with the venue it was changed. There were girls who I had met through their parents and some parents were interested in the study hoping their children would want to participate. But after I had met some of the girls, they said they were not willing to participate and nothing forced them to stay. We had to agree on terminating that emerging relationship.

The idea for participants to be able to negotiate many aspects of the study was built into the study. For example, there was a case of one girl with whom we had agreed to do the interview at home, little anticipating that her mother would try to hear what we discussed and was passing by where we were seated. This is an example of a situation where the girl felt uncomfortable and she decided to meet me at my workplace the following day and the interview went well. The negotiation has continued in different patterns, with some of the participants, they have already made suggestions of how we can use the material produced in this study for the benefit of a wider community like dramatising some aspects.

The study was ensured reciprocity by mentioning and explaining the study to participants at different forums. The explanation included the benefit of the study to the participants. This was helpful as some of the decisions to leave and not participate were based on the total exposure of the objectives of the study from my part. Some participants who came to the meetings had information that gave them hope that the project would give money

as support and possibly force schools to take the girls back. But within the confines of this study this was not possible. Maybe after this study is completed, we shall find possible ways in which we can assist each other in ways that will be possible at the time.

5.10.5 Reliability

Reliability refers to the “degree of consistency with which instances are assigned the same category by different observers or by the same observer on different occasions” (Hammersley, 1992:67 cited in Silverman, 2001:225). However, qualitative researchers are less concerned with reliability and are more interested in exploring the specific problem in detail (Willig, 2001). Furthermore, they believe that qualitative methods can generate reliable results if applied appropriately (Silverman, 2001 and Willig, 2001). When reporting on interviews, qualitative researchers address the need for low-inference descriptors by using an audiotape for all face-to-face interviews, take care to transcribe the tapes carefully and present their research report (Silverman, 2001).

5.10.6 Validity

Valid research can be identified as research that matches the methodology used to the participants’ experiences. Participants make an effort to make meaning out of their lives, they ‘understand and transform’ discrimination as they have experienced it (Eisenhart and Howe, 1992). Because of this theorising of their situation, participants validate the theoretical input from the researchers’ side. As a result they both better their positions in relation to power in the research, though it is evident that it can never completely be overcome. Thus the practical and the theoretical get glued together as relationships are made.

Validity is defined as the extent to which research describes, measures or explains what it was designed to describe and measure (Willig, 2001). It has become a common practice for social researchers to use the notion of truth instead of validity and goodness of fit. According to Mouton, the terms validity and goodness of fit “capture the idea that a

statement or collection of statements can be more or less truthful” (1996:30). Feminist researchers use terms such as credibility and plausibility instead of terms like validity and goodness of fit. The way in which validity is defined shifts from the traditional way in which the term has always been used. What I see is the conscious inclusion of the participants and the way to know both from and with the participant (Vithal 2000, Eisenhart and Howe, 1992 and Lather, 1991).

The question of what is true or valid is one that feminist researchers have in common with all social scientists but there is an obvious difference in how they conceive of this truth. Feminist research is not interested in prediction, but aims to show that the results accurately reflect the aspects of social life that they claim to represent.

Qualitative methods are flexible and open-ended, allowing for the evaluation of what is considered to be valid. Respondents can, for instance, challenge the researcher’s assumptions about the meaning and relevance of concepts and categories (Willig, 2001). Thus the great strength of qualitative research is “the *validity* of the data obtained: individuals are interviewed in sufficient detail for the results to be taken as true, correct, complete and believable reports of their views and experiences” (Hakim, 1987:27).

In addition, a qualitative researcher can get feedback on her findings from the participants. If the study or findings make sense to participants, then it seems to have some validity (Willig, 2001). Lastly, the fact that qualitative researchers are always reviewing their own roles in the research process and do not impose their own views or meanings on participants promotes validity. However, reactivity is the biggest threat to the validity of research findings when human behaviour or characteristics are the sources of information (Mouton, 1996).

Some ways of enhancing validity and reliability are triangulation, extensive field notes and member checks.

5.11 Triangulation

This study used several tools for data collection. I used interviews, memos, autobiography and surveys. All of the techniques were used to strengthen and complement each other. Qualitative research makes the most of the strength of each and minimizes weaknesses inherent in a single strategy (Woods & Trexler, 2001). Triangulation, or the use of multiple methods, reduces the possibility of over-relying on a single way of data collection. Using a combination of methods in the same study, researchers can partially overcome the deficiencies that flow from one investigator or method (Denzin, 1989:236; quoted in Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

5.12 Data processing and analysis

The data that has been collected has to undergo some processing in order to make meaning.

5.12.1 Transcripts

I was guided by the view that to transcribe is to interpret practice. The relationship between the ways I transcribe is guided by my feminist approach to research (Riessman, 1993). I have noted studies that utilized professional transcribers (Kathard, 2003). In this study, my main interest was making meaning with the participants and not to have every word and every sigh that transpired in the interview transcribed. I have stated my position in the research and, in trying to construct the narratives. I have indeed interfered with the data. In a way I have been part of the writing and I have chosen what to pick and what not to pick in the writing of the narratives and several ways in which data in this study has been presented (Mishler, 1986). There are cases where single words have been important to me because of the loaded nature of the words in my language. Where this has happened, I have explained my reasons for the sudden change from my 'normal' way of constructing the narrative. The events as used in this study emerge from past events. Most of the participants relate past lives. The lives we relate have also been selective

portions of those lives (Denzin, 1995). We have all done selection at different times and in different ways. The transcripts in this study, therefore, are not and can never be a definite picture of what transpired during the interviews.

Our stories (and transcriptions of these stories) do not mirror the world as lived because our stories are constructed retrospectively. We can only attempt to reconstruct life events and hope that there will be some degree of verisimilitude

(Arvey, 1998)

Data as exact interviews could never fit into the margins of this study. I have represented the participants and shared with them. Some details have been omitted and others altered because they were threatening for concealing the participants' identity. In a study as sensitive as young women's pregnancy that touches on individual's sexuality, I cannot afford for participants to be easily traceable. As I transcribed I had to put all that in mind. The role that reflexivity played in the transcription of stories into narratives has been unimaginable. I had to retrace my steps several times and wonder who is talking. I finally had to agree and let go. The stories are a mixture of voices. The voices represent me the researcher, me the research tool, me the writer and the participants' views. I cannot measure and say how much of whose voice is where, but the effort for the representation to be balanced has been made. My biases are strengths through which the narratives have come to be.

In this study, I had to translate the interviews from '*Sesotho*' to English. I am a native '*Sesotho*' speaker and English is my second language. I point out in this study that I faced challenges to try and use English in the way it is used in most 'acceptable' studies. There is a '*sesothoised English*' that is common especially amongst the women in my country, the research site (Kendall, 1995). As I write throughout this text some '*sesothoised English*' can be picked. It is not because I am unaware of the grammar requirements of the English language. But that language that makes its way in some cases for me keeps me in contact with the land from which I come.

5.12.2 Analysing Data

This study has mirrored analysis at different levels and stages. The study on young women's pregnancy has been a long journey for me. It started many years ago, even before I experienced young women's pregnancy myself. The analysis may have shifted with a changing exposure and the influences of the world around me, but at each point in my life the whole discourses of young women's pregnancy and education have been analysed by my being. The intent to do the study was influenced by and has had an influence in the road to analysis. As I settled for doing research in the way I have done, the analysis has been with me throughout. And as indicated by the drafts of the work that I have been engaged with, I have done this analysis in all the steps of the study (Ely et al 1991). I have made notes to myself, to others, and to the text, and I realise analysis throughout. In the analysis I have not been alone. The participants in giving me information have gone further to analyse their situation and the situation of others in the pregnant young woman arena. They have done it in their own ways that are not anybody else's ways, and in this our trip together they are allowed to be as individual as I am (Singh, 2000).

Unlike quantitative research that ends with the analysis of the specific data collected, I believe that qualitative, research continues to grow and develop, sometimes exponentially. To me, qualitative research provides the opportunity to study people in their natural settings, uses more flexible techniques for collecting, analysing and interpreting data and allows me to creatively report findings that bring individual voices into examination.

(Maxwell, 1998:5).

I invited the participants to be free to interact with the data even at the stage of analysis. Some were more interested than others. The less interested shared how issues of research are for groups other than them. I took these opportunities to reaffirm their importance in the undertaking that we have begun together. I see the layers of analysis as strength to

finally come out with what is ours. The researcher and researched have analysed as they put their efforts together to make the experiences making meaning and to add to the body of existing knowledge.

Content from the memos that I kept and the notes I made on documents informed the analysis. This added to the final product memories that would have otherwise been forgotten and buried. The details are part of the journey and they comprise data as well as analysis. The challenges, opportunities and achievements are contributory to the analysis and the whole process.

5.12.3 Questionnaires

The questionnaires were manually analysed by question. All the points that bore similar meanings were grouped and a narrative analysis of opinions in each question is presented.

5.12.4 Interview Data

In my analysis of interview data I did not impose a predetermined set of categories, but permitted these to emerge from the data. To ensure a rigorous and systematic analysis, I devised a four-step process by which I analysed each set of data. Although these stages are presented as a linear process, I in fact moved between the data, findings, and emerging theory in a cyclic fashion, (Blaikie, 1993). I describe the procedure as for interviews here, but I also used the same one for the observations:

Step 1: For this step, and indeed the next, I kept the distinct groups of interviews with all parties according to opinions for and opinions against pregnant girls attending schools. I first went through each interview, and noted emerging themes and any subcategories that became evident within each one. This resulted in a list of themes for each group of interviews, with the subcategories listed beneath, and the interviews in which they appeared noted next to each heading.

Step 2: I then went through each list, amalgamating any themes that were sufficiently similar, and moving subcategories into other themes if they appeared to fit more appropriately. At this stage I also began to break down the bigger themes conceptually.

Step 3: At this point I linked all the interview sets together, by drawing out themes that were shared between them, and examining their relationships. I continued to develop higher-level concepts to link themes together and bring more interpretation into the descriptions.

Step 4: The final stage involved returning to each interview, and actively searching for exceptions to the developing themes. Where exceptions were found I examined the reasons for this, and used that information to modify and further develop the emerging theory (Seale, 1999), until I was able to construct a coherent, interpretive account of the interview data.

5.13 Pregnant young women interviews

I did not analyse the stories of the eight girls who I had one to one conversations with. I tried to present their stories together with their way of analysing their experiences. I felt that if I were to analyse the stories I would have subjected my own frame of reference in presenting their lives. At the end of the stories, though, I pull them together while still avoiding analysis. On the other hand, the focus group sessions were analysed by question. Due to the nature of the interviews and the amount of time available I had to finally select those bits that were answering the questions that guided the conversations.

5.14 Data Representation

I looked through various dissertations and observed how creative some writers had become. I became more comfortable with other ways like the narrative as a story (Singh, 2000, Kathart, 2003), a mixture of researcher's interpretation with direct quotations of participants' voices (Kimane et al. 1998, Reddy, 2003), and interviews to represent data

(Kathard, 2003). Some of the studies I have mentioned have utilised more than one way of presenting the data. A choice I found useful in this study. I have data from different sources and the ways in which I have made the presentation is different although dominated by the narrative form. The ideas also came from the sharing in the group discussion of the research colleagues.

I have chosen to write the text by use of the 'I' representing the first person. This is contrary to the way I learned to write research by use of the third person. The "I" helped me to reflect even more on the data in my power. I challenged that way of writing by claiming to be data as well as part of the construction of the final product that appears in the study. I made a decision therefore to write the narratives as first-person accounts. This type of presenting the participants' experiences, takes the shape of stories that are not as original as taking transcripts as they are would be perceived to be. The researcher in this case gets the opportunity to balance the voices of those who have been involved rather than hiding as if the researcher has had no influence in the way the study is negotiated, moulded and presented. I took the liberty to present the experiences of the participants in the first person unlike the traditional way of using the third person as an effort to keep the voices of the participants. Richardson (1997) observes that in academic writing as the study I am writing, the researcher or the writer is always a part of that writing. This is one acceptance that we have to live with as long as we are able to acknowledge and work with it in mind.

But to try and minimise the situation of misrepresenting the experiences of the participants, I consulted with them after I had written down what I thought they told me. Some of them could not recognise some of the things they had shared with me and we had to revisit the recorded versions to verify. Even after verification, the participants were reminded of their right to withdraw any information that they did not feel comfortable with placing in the final version and some alterations were made, though these were few.

5.15 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have argued for a methodological approach to the study. I have presented relationships of the methodology to the kind of data that I had to elicit. The feminist approach to research influenced the decisions on how to move within the chapter. My personal values and beliefs about research guided me. I have discussed ways in which I chose to enhance quality in the study. The chapter presents the use of the modified version of grounded theory. The experiences of the participants in the study had to be taken as data from which to form theory. The theory that has come out of this study is not cast in stone. In the following chapter, which is chapter six, I present the data from all participants in the study besides pregnant young women's stories.

Chapter Six

Setting the context

6.1 Introduction

In the last two chapters I presented the methodological considerations of the study. I made explicit the choices I took and the justification for them. In the current chapter I present the findings of the participants of the research who participated to set the stage for the study. Through the approach I used I investigated what actually took place around young women's pregnancy from the home to the school. I also wanted to find out issues at national and school levels in terms of the formulation and implementation of policy. It was important for me to do this as some people I talked to about the study denied that young mothers experienced challenges both in their families and the schools. People told me all that had changed, as the punishments in homes and expulsion from school were things of the past. On the other hand, reports of incidences surfaced, so I needed evidence for what actually happened (Solwandle, 2004).

I begin the chapter by an exploration of the interactions that occur in the young women's pregnancy discourses that operate and influence the experiences at individual and collective levels. In the chapter I build on the notion that pregnant young women get expelled from some schools (Solwandle, 2004). In exploring these issues I address some questions by an investigation of how history has shaped the construction of womanhood, family, sexuality, motherhood and young women's pregnancy in the Lesotho context. I was also interested in finding out the beliefs, perceptions and policies around young women's pregnancy that underlie responses and how they might (beliefs, perceptions and policies) be changed. Lastly I investigated the ways in which schools, students and pregnant young women handle the issue of pregnancy, continuation of pregnancy and schooling, and implications/impacts on the women's career trajectories?

6.2 What do participants for the context say?

The addition of individuals in this manner was justified by the words of an author who assisted me in establishing the relationship through the following words:

'Educational institutions and individuals who are involved in and with them are a heterogeneous bunch with different attributes, abilities, aptitudes, aims, values, perspectives, needs and so on. Furthermore these institutions and individuals are located within complex social contexts with all the implications and influences that this entails. On its own, research whose findings can be expressed in mathematical terms is unlikely to be sophisticated enough to sufficiently accommodate and account for the myriad experiences that are involved.

(Bassey, 1999:ix)

This chapter gives a qualitative presentation of the interviews I held together with the questionnaire I sent to schools. I also supplement the context in some cases with relevant literature. As part of the context for the study, I present snippets of direct quotes that portray opinions and values of the participants in the following manner:

1. Results of the questionnaire – filled by school principals
2. Interviews with the school principals
3. Interviews with church representatives
4. Interviews with Government official
5. Interviews with parents
6. Interviews with siblings
7. Interviews with partners to pregnant young mothers

6.3 Questionnaire to principals

I provide a qualitative analysis of the responses to the questionnaire that I sent to be filled in by school principals. The analysis covers only those schools that returned the questionnaire.

In response to issues of occurrence of young women's pregnancy, principals admitted to having experienced the issue in the school within the last five years. The principals also affirmed that in some cases they knew about the cases while the young women were in attendance while at other times the school only knew after the girl was gone. The descriptions of young women who are gone included that they opted out, dropped out, left, never returned, were expelled from school, parents withdrew her, and, we told her to leave politely.

“We told them that it is the policy of the school that a pregnant girl should be expelled as she is going to influence other girls, who are innocent to fall pregnant too.”

“Some self-respecting parents withdraw their girls before the other children notice the pregnancy. Again this is done to save the same girls' face. Many pregnant girls do not want to be seen around school when they are like that.”

“There is no way I can know the details of what made the girl stay away from the school once she gets pregnant. The girls who choose to get pregnant get out of my school.”

The responses point out to the students going away from school. This going away is explained in different ways. But the point of the matter is that the total absence of the pregnant young women from school seems to be the way in which parents, principals, and students deal with young women's pregnancy. This is why it becomes imperative that

studies investigate relationships between students, teachers and parents. The principals use the absence of the pregnant young women as a form of protection of the innocent non-sexual, and therefore, non-pregnant students. Principals also reveal the relationship of young women's pregnancy to upbringing. The pregnant young women are understood to be a disgrace to their families and the schools; thus they need to disappear in order to salvage their worth together with what is left of the parents' value. Good parents and schools should never have young women who fall pregnant seems to be the view of some participants.

In response to whether schools had any policy at all, the responses indicated that some of the schools have a policy. Some schools had specific policy on young women's pregnancy though in some cases the policy was not documented. In certain schools, there were documented policies but the young women's pregnancy policy was not written.

“As the church owns the school of course there is a policy on student pregnancy though it is not written.”

“We have a policy and it is written. But the policy on young women's pregnancy is not included, it is common knowledge that we do not accommodate pregnant women.”

In some schools policy is not written but practised. In some cases general school policy was written though policy on pregnancy does not appear on the document. The principals seemed to be uncertain on how to proceed with young women's pregnancy as a policy issue, despite the clarity of the national policy on the matter. The response that mentions the church seemed to indicate that the principal's opinion is that a church school has to develop and implement policy in a church specific manner.

In response to how policies are developed in schools principals, mentioned that a variety of stakeholders were involved. No principal mentioned involvement of students in any manner. So schools do not regard students as stakeholders resulting in a lack of

representation of the learners. At times, when a school experiences a case of pregnancy the principal calls a parents' meeting to make decisions.

“Remember these children are ours, we are also parents and know what is good for their future. Parents trust us with the children and we have to do just that. I make decisions and receive backup from the teachers to formulate policy. But when situations are difficult I call the parents to decide.”

“In this school we as teachers sit and make decisions when something has happened. But the practice on young women's pregnancy is a known one. I did not start the process of policy formulation. The former principal just told me that the way they have always dealt with the issue is to expel them.”

This happens because of lack of clear policy, so community members get brought in to validate decisions. When schools lack clear guidelines for the way to formulate policy, they resort to norms and traditions practiced at the community level. One principal pointed to an interesting issue that I will return to.

“Some of issues in schools do not need any formal policy formulation process with many people involved. These are just decisions that are understood. If when a single teacher is pregnant, she is suspended or expelled at a church school so why can a pregnant child not be expelled? In both cases the teachers and advisory committee discussed the issue related to girl's pregnancy and came to the conclusion of looking at it as immoral.”

What informs the policy or the decision?

The response to what informs the policy decisions; the responses indicate some of the stereotypes that inform the behaviour of schools in relation to young women's pregnancy. The school principals suspect that pregnant young women would disseminate

promiscuous behaviour to the otherwise innocent scholars. In addition, the responses classify pregnant young women as adults and thereby claim that schools are for children. Some of them reflect mere biases, while others may be true but have been once off, unfortunate cases, of giving birth at school. Schools have ways in which they deal with medical emergencies. Birthing at school qualifies as an emergency that warrants medical attention and it should be taken as just that.

“To avoid a situation where a pregnant young women could give birth at school and to avoid gossips at school.”

“Some of the issues around pregnancy are obvious. A young woman who chooses to be pregnant chooses to be out of school. We do not have time to be bombarded with problems of handling pregnant scholars.”

In response to how soon pregnant young women leave or are asked to leave school, the responses indicate that girls leave as soon as they are found out, within one week, at later stages of pregnancy, close to having a baby around eighth to ninth month and anytime after arrangements for her to go home have been finalised.

“As a school we do not say when a scholar should go. Many go even before we say or do anything. But the ones who wait we expect to leave as soon as they realise that we know about the pregnancy.”

“Some parents intervene by pulling the young women out of school even before we know about it. But when parents do not begin the process, we tell the girl to go home as soon as we realise her pregnancy.

“Decisions on how soon depend on the circumstances. If the young woman is to write an external examination like Junior Certificate and she is still in early stages of pregnancy we wait till after exams are completed.”

There is no stipulated time for young women to leave school. Schools express their uneasiness to discuss the pregnancy even among adults as teachers, principals and parents. The observation does not indicate any interactions and discussions with young women. The lack of discussions may hide a conflict of interest, for example, the timing of pregnancy as being in a later stage may not match the young women's conception of what constitutes early and late.

“In my school we do not allow them to come back. I know of those who requested but did not succeed.”

“Some have come back after the baby was born. But it is not common. We do give them the choice to come back if they are still interested. Some parents have accused us of promotion of pregnancy as we have allowed them to come back.”

“If they understand that they need to repent and further their studies, as education is a universal right for all we allow her back. They are the ones who indicate when they are ready to come back.”

How do schools deal with the partner?

Some principals say all that is left with the parents even where both the young woman and the partner are in the same school. But some schools say they encourage the partner to continue with his studies so that he will support the baby and the mother.

“We do not do anything. We do not even get to know who the partner is at times. Again those are family affairs and once the young woman is away from school we do not intervene.”

“To be able to look after the mother and the baby, the boy can continue with education. To be honest the boy is not pregnant and it is difficult to say he is the father.”

How is the girl’s performance after coming back?

Opinions about the girls’ performance seem to be varied from the ones who work very hard to those who do not perform at all.

“I have not observed but the girls are not the same. Some work hard while others are not serious. We had one who disappointed us and got pregnant again.”

How are relationships with other students and teachers?

Some principals have expressed the relationship as good. The female teachers are portrayed in some cases as the ones who ill-treat returning students more. Fellow students have also been reported as intimidating pregnant scholars.

What is your opinion about the young women’s Human Rights?

“My opinion is that all children have the right to education and right to pregnancy then they should experience both and will decide on their own but they are not safe from HIV/AIDS when they have unprotected sex.”

“My opinion is that it would be good only to talk about Right to education but young women should be discouraged to engage themselves in sex at early stages of their lives this should come after having finished with studies, I see a contradiction of Right to education but pregnancy is not a Right.”

This part of the study indicates that there are individual principals who would not tolerate pregnant young women in the schools even though education is a Human Rights issue. But there are also those principals who feel that the presence of pregnant scholars will not affect the school negatively, as a result, they see nothing wrong with having pregnant young women in schools as they have a Right to be there. Some principals express their knowledge of some of the Human Rights due to all the children. Other principals, though, express their desire to be selective on the issue of Human Rights. The principals observe that the pregnant young woman has the Right to education but not the Right to child bearing.

6.4 Interviews with principals

I interviewed principals in addition to the questionnaire. Similarly the participants have their own ideas and practices around what they use as policy. Likewise, some schools have a written policy while others have a policy that is not documented. Since not much was different from the questionnaire, I present points of emphasis and slight difference from the interviews. One of the principals pointed to a statement displayed on the wall to say the school does not expel pregnant girls, while four do. One principal addressed the issues of policy by saying:

“In my school we are members of an understanding community. We have our own established value and anybody that does not abide like anybody who just decides to get pregnant knows where she belongs, and that is outside school. We do not have to expel, the students, they just do not come to school.”

“In this school we do not expel students for pregnancy. It is a government policy and we adhere. And to be honest as a school we do not find pregnancy as problematic in any manner. The policy is here, have a look at it and we practice it.”

Another principal says they have a policy that the pregnant girl should stay home for two years though most girls will drop out or their parents will withdraw them from school once the pregnancy is discovered.

”Though as a school there is a policy that exists, we do not adhere to it because as teachers we are uncomfortable and we become nasty to them in our own ways till they leave school. We do not want pregnant girls”

Even if there are policies at national and school level some individual teachers are not ready, in terms of attitudes, to get involved with pregnant girls. The teachers shared how they make pregnant girls to quit school. She went further to point out that many times when they suspect that a girl is pregnant they attract attention somehow to her and the other learners join in.

Some principals say they know what the government policy says about the situation of pregnant girls, but as a school they have decided to pretend that the policy does not exist because:

“The government makes policies without consulting with us the people in the schools. The schools and staff in the schools do not have the right skills to deal with pregnancy and should there be any problems related to pregnancy we shall not know what to do.”

So the principal discloses that at the moment, while the school struggles with how to keep pregnant young women in schools, they just pretend that they do not see the pregnancy and hope that nothing goes wrong.

One of the principals indicated that they involve the women in making decisions about staying on in school. The principal pointed out, though, that the young women normally deny that they are pregnant and the principal remarked:

“We summon the pregnant girls to the office to discuss the observation we have made and our concerns. Majority get here only to cry and refuse to talk. In that case we have had to call the parents to show them that it is best to take the children home and they can come back to school after they have given birth.”

In the case of this school, no time is stipulated for how soon after giving birth they can come back to school. The principal shared that the few who have actually come back did so at very different times. Those who have come back have also had to be placed maybe a year or two back depending on the changes in the curriculum.

One principal said that at his school they leave pregnant young women to attend school until they are due to deliver because that is what is required. According to this principal he sees no problem in this as pregnant young women make a choice to leave and, as a school, they do not follow them to the family. Some have come back to the same school the following year. The exception to this policy applies where they are at the last year of study, because they can come back sooner to sit for examinations. The principal further points out that he felt it was not proper just from the moral side to let pregnant young women continue with pregnancy and school at the same time. He pointed out though that he would not use the moralistic view to decide to expel them. The principal had a view that they should not be blamed for the pregnancy by saying:

“In my opinion I think that as schools we also have a role to play in the young women’s pregnancy issue. We don’t give them the necessary information and enough details about the relationship of certain behaviours to pregnancy. Otherwise, they must stay at home; they are a bad example to the younger girls.”

“Though we fall under the same manager as schools at this school the owner said pregnant girls should not be allowed. The school has a non-

documented policy not to allow any pregnant and having been pregnant women in the school. The policy has been practiced since the formation of the school. The policy she suspects to have been formulated by the influence of the strong and dominant families in the church.”

Some principals shared that the school’s policy, though unwritten, demands that the young women be expelled from school and that is what she implements. The school therefore has in its prospectus a clause that says that they do not take pregnant young women in their school. They have it as a matter of compliance to the needs of the church head who is in control at the moment.

“As teachers we are not in favour of the policy, but nobody asks our opinion in the matter. At times we have even tried to ignore the pregnancy but obviously we do not succeed. The changes in the girl’s body end up betraying the situation. I have no objection to support the girl’s education after the baby’s birth as long as the girl goes to a different school, because our school is totally against that.”

“Even if we discover that a girl was pregnant some time ago while attending a different school we have been ordered to expel her by the head of the church.”

“I do not believe that the girls who have been pregnant will be a bad influence and teach the other learners to have sex and babies. I believe that the girls “have been burnt” as a result they are afraid of the fire. I also believe that as a result, the performance of the learners would be excellent.”

6.5 Interviews with church representatives

The representatives I interviewed are both school managers of two different churches. Both of them mainly suggested that it is indeed immoral for young people to be involved

in sexual intercourse. As churches, they do not see how they can allow the children to get pregnant in their schools.

“The schools belong to the church and the church does not accept such behavior from our youth. We need to teach our children the ways of God.”

“Though we get disturbed that the girls’ future is destabilized by possible delayed or lack of education, I do not see how we can help. The girls should take care of themselves.”

“We lose too many of our values both as a nation and a Christian country. It is not possible to expect schools to be full of pregnant girls. The teachers are already overloaded without having to look after pregnant women. I do not think I am ready to load them more.”

“The policy may seem unfair when we refuse the children to come back to school as the teachings of the church encourage forgiveness.”

“I am aware of the national policy but we shall have to check how to accommodate that without upsetting the wider church community.”

The members are aware of the challenges of the girls after they forgo their education completely. But both felt the church cannot go against its teachings. One of the managers said in his school for now they agreed with parents that pregnant girls should not be in attendance. One of the participants said as parents they feel bad that the girls are expelled but policies do not belong to one person.

6.6 Interviews with Ministry of Education Official

I had an interview with an officer of the Ministry of Education. In the discussions the officer pointed out that the school principals know that the different government policies demand that pregnant girls should not be expelled from schools. The ministry is aware of the expulsions that happen at schools though parents or learners have not taken the matter up for justice to prevail. As a body, through different offices, they try to educate the different school management committees to ensure that pregnant girls are not excluded from schools. The schools feel they lack skills in case of pregnancy related accidents. The officer promised that they would do all they can to ensure that the policies are implemented as per the requirement of the prevailing policies.”

“As a ministry we are concerned about the issue of girls who get expelled from schools due to pregnancy. We are aware of rumors that it happens and we are working on exactly how to approach the issue. Soon some moves will be made. The policy is clear and schools need to observe that.”

6.7 Should pregnant young women be in school?

This part of the study mainly addresses the views of the respondents in relation to whether pregnant young women should be in school or not. Then, depending on the answer, I probed to establish the basis for or what informed the response. I present the themes that emerged and point to them and the ideas from parents, siblings and partners.

Different opinions were expressed on whether pregnant young women should be in school or not. The responses in the area are presented into those that supported the idea of and those that are against the idea and the third group of those who are not sure.

Opinions that support girls’ attendance of school:

One parent felt that it was unfair to keep young women out of school simply because they

have been pregnant. All children should be given chances in life. The parent says in growing up all people meet with one behavioural problem or another and it is unfair that schools would reinstate children for certain offences and not others. The second opinion observes the changes that are in schools lately.

“Children make mistakes both at home and in school. As parents we have to learn to forgive our children and accept them back in our lives. I feel that pregnancy is a mistake like telling a lie so children should be allowed back in school.”

“Nowadays we have married women who are students in our schools. If we say young women who have been pregnant will teach our other children about sex then the married women should also not be in school. I think it is not fair to expel the pregnant girls from school.”

One sibling observed that pregnant young women be allowed in school because:

“Even when they are pregnant they are our sisters and they need education more to be able to raise the children. Again I do not think girls choose to get pregnant. I believe it is just an accident.”

A partner interjected that:

“I would like to see a situation where girls are allowed to come to school. I have always felt that it is not fair when as boys who pregnant the girls we continue with education. Sometimes we do not even marry the girls. I am sure I would not mind having pregnant women in class.”

Opinions that do not support girls' attendance of school:

Some opinions against pregnant girls and school attendance have been pushed through the way learners dress. The school uniform is seen as a piece of clothing that is not

suitable for pregnant young women. Some people feel that the learners have to wear the school uniform and they feel strongly that the pattern has not been designed to accommodate pregnancy. A parent observed that:

“They do not look good when the uniform starts to be too tight around the tummy. They end up doing things to alter the pattern or even wear blazers and jerseys in very hot weather cover. School uniforms are not designed like maternity wear.”

The other reason that has been given for young women’s pregnancy as a problem is that the *Basotho* are a Christian community and parents cannot stand by and encourage children to sin. The young women are coerced into observing the values of family even if they did not subscribe to similar notions. The parent said:

“I belong to mother’s union and when my child gets pregnant I feel that she has sinned because I have failed as a mother to raise her. I feel I have failed God and the Church and I find that difficult to deal with.”

Some participants worry about the modelling of bad behaviour, which was observed by a parent in remarking that:

“The little experience I have with young women’s pregnancy says it runs in families. I am worried that my other girls will also get pregnant. I will be very disappointed if all my girls get babies out of wedlock.”

A partner echoed the same idea by the expression that:

“Allowing pregnant girls in the schools would be to say to the other girls they can be pregnant and to condone young women’s pregnancy and allow it to continue. Girls should have learned a lesson that they are the ones who get pregnant and they need to take care of them. If they are allowed to

be in school they will discuss with other girls and encourage them to misbehave like them.”

A parent who is a schoolteacher points out that:

“I do not see why schools should even begin to think of supporting such learners. It is dangerous even to think of having them in school as that may send wrong ideas to others, and they might think that school unlike the family is a place to support what they do and it should not be so.”

The other reasons that were given are financial. Pregnant young women are perceived as a financial burden for the family. She has brought an additional mouth to feed and now talking about paying school fees and baby’s care at the same time seems problematic. The issue of class and economic status of the family come into play here as financial implications for the family interact with the young woman’s pregnancy. One parent said:

“I have this family to feed and now she goes to get me an additional mouth to feed and a body to clothe. Do you also realise that I have to pay for a baby sitter also? “

One student believes that the presence of a pregnant young woman in class makes the other learners to feel sleepy:

“I was always told that in my home and in the community. Even as classmates we discuss that we get sleepy once there is a pregnant girl in class. Nobody wants them in class because she surely makes us sleepy. You can understand that as she sleeps all the time in class.”

I have indicated the opinions of individuals for and against attendance of school by pregnant young woman. In addition the basis for each position has been outlined and presented.

As subjects interact, explanations and responses are given within the existing power struggles. According to the critical theory observations, experiences of African women are largely decided upon by the oppressive structures. Within the larger society as represented by participants of this study, there exist tensions related to discourses of young women's pregnancy of the time and space. The observation of feminist theory, particularly Black feminism attracts our attention to the struggles of Black women whose troubles are not just with gender. From the participants I have observed for example struggles with poverty, religion, value systems, nationalism and morals in addition to gender.

6.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored a detailed terrain in what the interactions of the pregnant young women involves with their relation to schooling. Though opinions differ, there is evidence of resistance to the sexual young woman and school. It is important though to realize that at all levels there are those who observe that pregnant young mothers should be in schools. The idea to use religion and culture as the basis for expulsion raises an issue that needs to be seriously explored. The chapter has informed us how some women lose their opportunity for studies and never regain that. The government, on the other hand, acknowledges awareness that girls get expelled from some schools. Principals do not have any records of performance to indicate the trends for pregnant or returning pregnant learners. In the next chapter I present the individual stories of some eight pregnant young women and analysis of two focus group interviews with different pregnant young women.

Chapter Seven

Memories matter

“They are our lives with our own personal pasts.

They are ways of saying this is who I am...

In looking back on their experiences,

And remembering how life was for them,

They are saying a lot about who they are now.

They are people with a past, a past that has helped shape them.

So often the pasts of people with learning difficulties have been discounted.”

(Atkinson, 1990:36)

7.1 Introduction

Research on young women’s pregnancy is characterised by regulatory and controlling discourses. In so doing the research has cast aside the knowledge and everyday experiences of the pregnant young women. This can be seen in the way that research in the area continues to blame the pregnant young woman and ignores the social and cultural constructions of young women’s pregnancy. It is only recently that studies have begun to recognise the need to include both the pregnant young woman and their lived experience as valid research data. In this study I point to young women’s pregnancy as entangled in the societal web of issues that are highly contested. In presenting the context in chapter two, I point to some of the surrounding factors from which the society in the country constructs what are regarded as realities or truths on young women’s pregnancy. The world of research I revisited has followed suit and used regulatory language to communicate on young women’s pregnancy. Pregnant young women have continued to be silenced. In this chapter I present my caption together with stories that are unique to each participant in part one while in part two I present precepts of group interviews together with my synthesis.

7.2 Approach in presenting the stories

Having discussed the contextual and theoretical basis of the study in the previous chapters, I now move to present the lived experiences of women who were pregnant as young women. I present the chapter in two parts, namely part one and part two. In part one, by focusing on the stories of Lebo, Nthabi, Lerato, Mpho, Thato, Celina, Tumi and Neo, I present the meanings of young women's pregnancy from the point of view of those who have experienced it. In part two I present data from two group discussions that involved eleven pregnant young women.

I have pointed to the enormous importance of studies that have been carried out in the area of young women's pregnancy research. But I also pointed out that the studies only present a partial picture of young women's pregnancy. The partial presentation emanates from investigations that have ignored women as knowledge co-constructors. Though the studies have formed the basis from which this study departs, there is need to employ different frameworks to interrogate the knowledge in them.

In reading texts on young women's pregnancy and in view of different outlooks expressed in different media, I am always amazed by the contradictions between what I hear and my personal story. Women who have been pregnant young women, such as myself, have expressed similar views and concerns. The above observation therefore emphasises the need to allow the stories of such women in the wider debates. The worth of stories of experience as data has been acknowledged in many areas; the studies of Zappala (1997), Plummer (2001), and Goodley, Lawthom, Clough and Thomas (2004) are pertinent examples. The opportunity to allow individuals to tell us their stories provides us with a deep understanding of a situation (Anderson and Jack, 1991).

With this study I push to complement and strengthen the existing knowledge on young women's pregnancy by accommodating the experiences of the pregnant young women as data. I have the permission of the participants to share their stories in this study. The stories are personal, as experienced and told from the personal perspective of each

participant. I use them here to explore the wider societal debates around young women's pregnancy.

In presenting the stories, I try to narrate the data in a way that allows the form and structure to flow. The stories I present herein have been transcribed, translated and expressly edited. I have maintained the use of the first person 'I' in narrating these stories in an attempt to maintain the individual women's ownership of their stories.

I have kept the stories of the eight women in integral wholes so as to avoid disruptions that may have been caused if I had cut the data up along thematic lines. The stories encompass the women's theorising and analysis of their experiences. I find it imperative that the meaning the women make gets fore-grounded in the study. The women's understanding is of importance and is what matters. The study is not about what is false or true but focuses entirely on what the participants perceive as their experiences.

In my presentation of the stories, I follow up with a summary that serves to highlight and encapsulate relationships and overlaps within the different stories as experienced and analysed by the participants.

The second part of this chapter presents the focus group discussions I held with pregnant young women. The presentation is not in story form but is presented as samples of direct quotes from the interviews together with the synthesis. I also later revisit, in the last chapter, the stories and the rest of the chapters of the study as a way to bring closure and projection to further work on young women's pregnancy.

7.3 Young women's pregnancy story number one – Lebo

This is a story of one eighteen-year old young woman. It was one of the very heavy encounters I had with the pregnant young women. She was living in a home with a family that took her in after she was thrown out of her own family home. She was thrown out because her father, when he came home from the South African Mines, learned about her pregnancy. The home where she now stays is within Maseru. I had known about the case

of the girl previously and had been a regular visitor, so both the family and the girl had been in contact with me before.

I am eighteen years old. I left school a year and a half ago because I was pregnant. I was in Form B and that was my second year of secondary or high school education.

I had had this boyfriend of mine for some three years and I had come to trust him and relax without thinking one day he could be my enemy the way he has been. You see he has been my enemy and the enemy to my family. How can he make me fall pregnant and not take care of the baby and me by marrying me? This is my first child and I feel I should have had her in marriage instead of out of wedlock. I am a 'Mosotho' girl and I feel sorry for what I have done.

You see I have let my parents down, especially my mother who has been looking after me all the time my father was in the mines. My father is now home and I pity my mother because all the time I hear my father scold her and telling her that she raised me badly. My mother did not raise me badly I know. Like all mothers she constantly warned me to be careful with boys to avoid pregnancy. I did think I was being careful but I do not know what happened and I gave in to making love with my boyfriend. I get very disturbed by the way people look at me lately, it is like they think I am a bad girl. I know that I am not bad but I think I was just unfortunate. Some girls that I know still have sexual encounters and they do not get pregnant. It is not like I expect people to be happy that I have this baby but also I wish they could not look at me with those eyes, like they think they know how I must have behaved and at times they say cruel things in my presence without directing the words to me. I am not able to answer back and I have learned to swallow my pain and keep quite.

I ran away from school after I discovered that I had missed my period for two months. I had to run away from school because things had started happening to me, like I was uncomfortable and experienced some vomiting at times. The teachers had called me into the staff room to ask about when I last had my periods and I lied about the dates. The

way they looked at me, I could tell they knew I was hiding something. Because I was expecting, my tummy began to swell. I became afraid to wear my uniform. My skirt had been made to fit especially around the waist but by then it did not feel quite comfortable anymore and I hated the way it was getting tight. It would betray me. I did not know that I was surely pregnant, but I felt in my heart that I was. I did not tell anybody at school, I had to go somewhere to hide. I did not know where to go, but I had to go away from school. I thought of running away to a very far place but I did not even know which place to think about.

Oh my poor mother, I thought about her all the time, how much I have let her down. I thought of running to my boyfriend's home and I did though I waited till it was a little late for fear that I might be disappointed if he threw me away and people witnessed that. I asked a neighbour's son whom I met through my boyfriend to help. My boyfriend came and I shared my fears, he told me there and then that the pregnancy was my business and I had to take care of it myself. He could not take me in so I left even more stranded than I came. I had to walk to my home since it was in the same village.

That was the last time we talked about my possible pregnancy up to today. My father is not willing to take the usual steps of court cases because he says he does not want to be ashamed in front of so many people. "What about if the boy will win the case? You girls are at times not trustworthy, who knows how many men you have been having sex with?" and that hurts even more coming from my father.

I ran away from school in that manner. I could not face the people there because I felt sort of dirty. I had lost my purity. My mother tried her best to comfort me and had to hide money from the family savings to support me with the baby after it was born. But you see it was difficult because my mother was not employed and my father beat her up more after this pregnancy. He said he knew we were stealing his money.

I am now at this home with this family where my baby and I are cared for and we have been here now for a whole year but we still go back to my home to visit. My father's

anger does not seem to subside and I continue to feel bad. While I am here I pray for my mother's safety.

I never thought about abortion, though at times because of all the troubles I have gone through I wish I had killed myself. I would not live well knowing that I killed my child and the best thing would have been for both of us to die.

The most painful thing I have experienced in all this is adding to the suffering of my mother and making life so bad between her and my father. I feel if anybody has to be punished it has to be me. It is painful to look at the other girls going to school. I cannot go because the teachers and students will gossip about me the way they have done to the other girls who remained in school till they were discovered. My baby is my happiness, much as he cannot yet properly talk, I confide in him and would share my deepest fears for both of us.

Throughout this pregnancy I did not go to any clinic. My mother's sister prepared herbs for me at home and I drank those to make the labour much easier. I have learned not to share about the pregnancy and I think people do not even want to hear your side of things so it does not help. They all think I lie about everything and they do not trust me. In the home where I stay there is peace, I am here with my baby and the other children of the family and it is peaceful because everybody knows I have this baby and they do not ask questions.

These days I hear a lot about HIV and AIDS but I am not so sure of exactly what is being said. I have heard that I need to get tested and check my blood for the virus. I do not even know where to get tested and I am afraid to know that I will die soon and leave my baby because I have nothing but him. I do not remember any talks about HIV and AIDS in my school. So even now I do not know whether I have the disease or not.

My church has been very understanding. This is why they allow me to attend normal services so that I realise that God loves us despite of becoming pregnant. I do not have

any plans to go back to school. I just want to get financial assistance for my mother and my child. Marriage does not come to my mind, who would want to marry a girl like me anyway?

Yes I have heard about rights and going to school but you see I do not know what all that is. We do not talk about that when we are in the family.

My relationship with my friends is just not important, as I am not able to do things with them anymore so I really do not know how they feel about my pregnancy.

7.4 Young women's pregnancy story number two – Nthabi

Nthabi sits by the roadside, selling apples, sweets, and other small items. This is the way in which her mother and her make a living. Her baby plays around her with stones, pebbles, and grass. There are no toys that are observable from where I am. I was just passing by and once I saw the baby, I chatted to Nthabi and established the baby playing next to her was really hers.

When I discovered that I was pregnant I was sixteen years old and in Form C. I do not even know where to start telling you my story because it all seems so confusing and bad. You want to know about my days with everybody else before my pregnancy. All I can say is that my life was like any other girl's life. We have always been a poor family. We have always survived on what my mother was able to collect selling the same items as I do now. Before I got pregnant I did not help with the selling, I only helped with the carrying to and from the market. But after the baby I have also had to fend for it and myself and the other family members. The teachers from my school discovered that I was pregnant, they informed my mother and she was heart-broken. She kept asking me why I was pregnant and still in her home. I understood that because if I was pregnant my mother expected me to be at my boyfriend's home. The question was a difficult one for me to answer because as I told my boyfriend about the pregnancy, he told me that he was not willing to know more about the pregnancy and my plans for it.

My mother is the most secretive person I have known. She has always insisted that issues in the family remain just so. She told me that the idea of me getting pregnant exposes her to the village community as a bad mother. My father and mother separated when I was a little baby. My mother also worried that my father would say, "you see, I told you she is a useless woman. How can she let the girl get pregnant?" So my mother said she would be humiliated by the pregnancy.

For the first three months, I was able to hide that I was pregnant. I had wanted to tell my mother but I knew she would worry about many things. We were poor and I was bringing another mouth to feed and many other problems like what people will say about her and me. Everyday when I woke up, I prayed that I would not be discovered. I did not sleep well at night and this made me to fall asleep in the classroom during the day. That brought the attention of teachers and students on to me. I am sure I did not fall asleep because I was pregnant but rather that I fell asleep as I missed good sleep during the night because of all the worry in my mind. At home I was particular about doing my household work as usual because if I did not, my mother would realise that I was pregnant.

But some day my mother confronted me and demanded to know what was wrong with me. She told me that she had been watching me and had realised I had been withdrawn and had realised that sometimes I had been crying. I did not want to lie to anybody but I was afraid to discuss the pregnancy so I decided to tell her I have just been having a stomach pain. That was my first mistake because my mother took me to the hospital. They talked with the doctor about my periods and tests and in no time the pregnancy test revealed I was pregnant. There was so much that followed but I think my mind was too far away to feel anything. I felt numb though I realised that I was terribly afraid. My mother made a decision that I stop going to school. She did not want me to wait to be expelled. She could not bear to have me go back to school despite the final examination being about a month away. She told me that my tummy had started to show and she could not see how a pregnant girl can be in the same class with other students.

When I was pulled out, I was between four and five months pregnant and I knew that the baby was some months away. I could have at least written my final exams and I would be able to get a better job than what I am doing here. I never mentioned school to my mother though I would do anything to be back at school. I will be late compared to my former classmates but I would not mind as long as I can be allowed back in the classroom. This is why it was so painful when my mother pulled me out of school because I would have passed and now I would be able to go back to school in a higher class. Now I do not even know where to start but it does not matter. My mother at times would keep quiet as I talked to her, and during days like that I would observe that both my older brother and my younger sister were not talking to me. I became suspicious that sometimes they talked about me behind my back. What remained prominent through out the pregnancy and having the baby is how much I prayed to God to forgive me.

I am a Christian girl and I should not be pregnant. I should not have allowed that man to do this to me. I knew that he would not be available to me in case of trouble. You see, he has a family and would not leave his wife for me. This aspect has been hard, my mother is very angry with me for not disclosing the name of the man. I swear I will not. It is my shame and I will carry it. Yes, he is much older than I am but it was like he was so supportive. At times he gave me gifts and I could be able to buy items like other children at school.

I do not disclose him because I know it was not right to see him like that. Again, if I tell my mother the truth, she intends going straight to the home of the responsible man. She tells me it is a father's role to take care of his child. You ask me about rights to be protected. I do not want the rights to work here. I cannot tell anybody and I tell you just because you make me feel different. You have not asked me who the father of my child is and I like that because I do not want to tell. My worst fear is spending my life on this road selling like this. I want to get back to school. I know that I can work hard.

I do not know much about sexually transmitted infections but I know at the clinic I was treated for one of them. And when the baby was born also the eyes were treated and they

told me it was because of sexually transmitted infection (STI). At the clinic they also told me about HIV but we were not tested. So I do not know if I have it or not. If I did have it I would be very scared because then it means I would die and leave my baby.

7.5 Young women's pregnancy story number three – Lerato

This once pregnant young woman is now a mature lady of thirty years of age; she is now married and has two lovely kids. She heard of the study I am conducting and has come to find out how she can be of assistance, because her current experiences tell her that it is not proper that even in these times young women's pregnancy is still a punishable crime. She feels those of us who have been pregnant young women should assist in all the ways we can, especially to address the expulsion and ill-treatment of pregnant young women in schools.

Sometimes I sit back and wonder as I remember all that pain I had to bear as a pregnant teenager, especially where it all started: in school. In my school, we held evening dances during some weekends. During those days we called them 'seripe'. The 'seripe' was held during weekends as a way to unwind from the week's demands, I guess.

The dance also served as a place and opportunity for us girls to get to know the boys and in one of these 'seripe' I got myself a boyfriend. Mixing and being close with the opposite sex was not a norm in the area where I came from. After all, I was a girl from a very rural community. The only conversation I remember having with any adult in relation to boy-girl relationships was with my mother. She was already accusing me by saying that if I let boys play around with me I would be pregnant. Once I heard 'boys and pregnant', I knew I could not ask any more questions. I had tried before to ask and she had become quite hostile. She accused me again because during their days they did not ask such questions. She could add that the result of not questioning has been to get themselves good men to marry. All my life I have known that I have to be a good girl for a husband I would marry and nothing for myself. As I look at it now I know it is not fair to programme my whole life to match what the man would want and nothing of what I

would want. I had avoided the relationships so far and I was still running away from getting myself pregnant when pregnancy, indeed, finally caught up with me.

I say finally caught up with me because I had been seriously careful and I had been warned in due time. But now that I have been through some exposure in life I have come to question the idea of telling an innocent young girl to run away from pregnancy; but not being open enough to say how, where to, and how far they should run. What I try to say here is that the information we had about sexuality was not sufficient for us to avoid pregnancy and the resources were there but inaccessible to girls my age. None of us would even dream of accessing family planning and we could not even ask questions about prevention methods and availability of stuff to use in any form.

Now that I have gone past that stage and I look back, I remember how shocked and alone I felt when I discovered that I was no longer a virgin. My loss of virginity troubled me as I had been told that my mother in law would check if my bed sheets had any bloodstains during my first night of marriage. And I also had heard that if no stains were found then I would be confirmed as having lost my virginity and that would bring shame to me and my family and in many cases has disrupted the marriage even before it starts. This becomes critical for me because even before the pregnancy came, I was already in trouble for not being a virgin out of wedlock.

The 'Sesotho' culture had taught me the values of being a virgin till marriage comes. As girls we shared about these issues that another girl heard from some auntie of hers, with little knowledge we passed the stories on. Nobody bothered about how correct the information was but at least we knew something.

Sometime after the sexual encounters, I became pregnant. I had known that the pregnancy might come some day. I had known that I had to stop having sex but I had not stopped and I did become pregnant. I could not ask anybody how I should stop because I did not want people to know that I was having sex. My boyfriend was the same. We had discussed possible ways to stop, and tried to, but we had failed. Up to today I do not

really know what stop means unless stop means only at a certain age.

All of us who are sexually active are threatened by the presence of HIV that leads many times to AIDS. If the ability to stop is such an easy practice why do we not just stop instead of devising condoms and other protection methods? At that time all the church people, parents, and teachers told us to stop but did not tell us how to stop. I am currently a parent and I am struggling with how to help my children to be able to stop. I suspect that as usual the information might be there but inaccessible to other users like teenagers, and maybe rural third world woman like myself.

The time to be discovered finally came. I think my mother was suspicious but did not have the strength to ask me. My Aunty just paid us a visit and the first thing she commented about was my increased body weight. I looked in her face and knew the pregnancy issue was coming. Out of nowhere, she asked me when I last had my periods. It is amazing how much I was lectured about how to hide that I was on my monthly periods when the first encounter came. And yet the same question of being asked whether I had had my periods prevailed all my life even long before my sexual encounters began. Of course I tried to lie but I was not successful. Tears rolled down my eyes and I said 'just ask me and get done with it'. She said that I knew what she wanted so I told my story.

It was around August when the truth finally came out. I was about two months from sitting for my final examinations. My parents went to consult with the school. The school said they could not keep me there and I was expelled or suspended. I was not allowed to sit for my examination at my school but I sat for them as a sort of private candidate. I say sort of because finally the papers still went to the centre where I had registered and this was my former school.

The principal of the school was sympathetic. She told us she had to obey the policy as given by the church since the school was not owned by them. She is the one who helped my parents to negotiate a different venue for me. For the two months I attended evening classes to keep in touch. I was lucky because they were also preparing for the same

examination. I sat for my examinations and passed well enough to get into university.

I still think that the support that I received from my family financially and emotionally helped me get through this very difficult time. My parents were not happy, but they also did not believe that I was a bad girl. Unfortunately the community members labelled them as happy and my mother used to tell me that it was painful.

I was thankful for what my parents did, but they had serious problems with my boyfriend's family. Both of them could not come to terms with what should happen. They did not ask us anything. My father boldly said that we had pleased ourselves so the time had come for us to sit back and do what they wanted. Both our mothers were under constant pressure from our fathers to keep my boyfriend and I apart. It was painful. My boyfriend wanted to be a father to his child but our fathers did not see eye to eye. It was like your boy fixed me by getting my girl pregnant so I will fix all of you and deny you access to the baby. We both knew that we were too young to marry but because of the constant denial for my boyfriend to see the baby we decided to elope and I took the baby and went with my boyfriend to his home. This caused a rift between my father and I but my mother supported me, though being careful not to be observed to be doing so by my father.

I did not go to the university the same year because my baby was sick, but he pulled through.

I have thought about my situation for a long time and have never stopped to wonder. Here are parents who bring me up to believe that the most decent thing to do is to get married. All right I break the rules and fall pregnant out of wedlock.

My boyfriend wants to be a proper father by giving me all the support. My father denies him the opportunity till I am forced to marry at that tender age. If I had had a choice I could have decided to be a mother but waited for marriage much later. But the circumstances were not allowing that. My father has shared that he was so angry with my

boyfriend's parents because my boyfriend and I planned all these things without seeking their permission. I have suspected that my father would have liked me to marry somebody else for his own personal reasons. My father has not quite accepted my husband, though he does not say it in as many words. He still wishes I were married to somebody else whose financial situation is more stable. I do not know what that means but I have now settled with my family and I think both my husband and I have good educational backgrounds, besides the fact that he completed his studies much earlier since he was not expelled from school or even suspended. Again, when I did not go to university he went straight to university, as I was to look after our sick child.

Issues of rights are still a problem area as I see it in this country. It is not just rights for pregnant teenagers that are problematic. I think our society is confused about what to keep from cultural values and what to throw away. Rights cannot go on their own without changes in other sectors of our lives. As a society we need to unlearn what we have learned about issues like young women's pregnancy in order to learn different ways of looking at young women's pregnancy. It amazes me how even some of the people I thought of as being highly educated react once there is young women's pregnancy in the home. The stereotypes regarding young women's pregnancy of one's own teenager seem to be far reaching.

7.6 Young women's pregnancy story number four – Mpho

Mpho is a girl who fell pregnant while schooling. Her boyfriend was an unmarried but more mature boy in the same village as her. She came from a family with an abusive father who became worse after discovering her pregnancy.

I was born from a family of three, I am the first and only girl in the family and I was a disgrace to my father since my birth, because according to him, he needed to have an heir as the first child in order to be a real man. At the age of fifteen I was used to my family setting. I grew up being mother's friend who was the only one to talk to. Mother, despite the difficult life she led, of being married to a promiscuous and abusive man,

loved me and supported me fully.

Mother released all her miserable life in a church, where she was both a member of the church choir and the Mother's Union. Her life revolved around her children and the church, until I was older. The setting of the house was not that difficult because father was still working in the mines of S.A and he rarely came home, thus the problems we encountered were more or less money related problems. The retrenchment of my father from the mines brought a very painful and critical turn to the whole family and a lot of anger. The frustration of being jobless was the worst for us as a family.

My father later joined the world of politics and became an electorate in his constituency but left us back at the house. It did not take long for father to disempower me, his firstborn, on the most important assets of the house. He used to say I was a tramp to be married, and even my schooling was a mistake and a waste of money that could be put to good use by educating the boys. I had begun my secondary education and I was already following my mothers' footsteps as a member of the youth church choir.

Father restricted me from being with friends. I was always told that I had to take care of the family and work intensively after school. My movements were timed so much that my father discouraged some school activities. This marked a scar in my upbringing because it was only in church that I mixed with people and enjoyed the timely freedom of being in church.

Our house was situated in a rural urban area. One evening father came home late and drunk. Since we were used to his rude behaviour both my mother and I sat quietly trying by all means to get out of my father's way. Easter came and most people at church prepared for midnight prayer filled with music and blessings. With reluctance he gave us permission to go. We left for the church service in a happy mood. Mother went to sit with her friends; most of the youth were left inside the church.

She left me with strict rules and regulations not to be late and not to misbehave. Among

the youth there was an older guy who went by the name Kamohelo, that night he promised me that he would make sure that I got home safely and intact. Kamohelo was a mature man and trustee in the church as he was also on active conductor of the youth choir. Kamohelo's family was quite well off and the richest of the families in the village. He was the only child in his family and an apple of his father eye. Kamohelo's father and aunt raised him and always told him that he must marry a girl of his standards, someone from a rich family like his, and that he should marry from his family. Kamohelo himself did not finish his high school and took to farming.

The service ended very early in the morning and it was still dark outside. I trusted him like a brother. Most people say that love is blind but trust is also blind. He told me that he loved me and he wanted to marry me but first he had to take my virginity away. He told me that he loved me in a special way. I protested that I was not ready to do anything not expected of a girl. He promised that we would wed so whether we had sex now or later it didn't matter. He said that most people, especially in church, were already doing it.

A small voice whispered in me that I should not do it but trust overcame me. My request for him to stop was useless. It took me a few minutes to be a woman and within the following minutes I felt dirty and untidy. I got a little consolation from the thought that I would at least marry; it was my chance to flee and leave my miserable life.

Two months passed since the Easter celebration and no marriage proposal came from Kamohelo. Kamohelo had not even tried to approach me. My mother was witnessing some changes in my behaviour, she said I was a little withdrawn and spent most of my time alone. Father's attitude did not change, it got even worse. His attitude towards me brought a big rift between my mother and him. One day I became very ill and my mother's worry increased.

My mother suggested that I visit my aunty but I declined. She felt I needed some change of environment. The same morning she left for her sister in law's place for advice

because they close. That day I could not bring myself to finish the school day. I felt heavy at heart and I could not stop crying.

My mother is a 'Mosotho' woman who was brought up in 'Sesotho' traditions. I am sure she loved me and saw in me a bright blue future and someone who was joyful. She felt that I was suffering the pain of being protected by a big bad wolf. She decided then to take me to hospital. She did not know what to expect from the doctor, mainly because of her trust and belief in me. The news that I was pregnant brought pain that I could see. She asked me "How could you do this to me, you of all the people in my world?" My mother wondered aloud about what my father, the neighbours, and the church would say?

It was late in the evening when my father arrived. He was drunk again; he was cursing and singing at the top of his voice. I started sweating and fear gripped me. I felt like running away to a place where nobody would know or even recognise me. I wished my heart could just stop beating, I was afraid that someone might hear my heart beat. I listened to every word that was spoken by my parents. Suddenly someone called my name. My father shouted insults on top of his voice. In shouting at me he even threatened to kill my mother if she continued to plead for me. He further accused my mother for encouraging me to fall pregnant. My mother had not done anything to encourage me. My father demanded to know who was responsible for the pregnancy. I was stuck, how could I even mention Kamohelo's name while the past month he had not even looked at me, he barely acknowledged my presence. I had wondered about what had become of the marriage proposal. As I mentioned his name I saw horror in my parents' eyes. Both my parents were speechless.

The visit to the doctor proved a disaster in itself. My mother was unable to look me in the eye and told me that she was following my father's command, but her manner said it all. I understood the whole meaning behind my father's stern warning – "she has to dispose that". The little life she was carrying had been planned to be killed by the woman doctor, who asked a nurse to tell me that the procedure was not that painful. On seeing tears roll

down my face the nurse asked how old I was.

My feelings had never been listened to, heard, nor been acknowledged by my parents. They never even asked how I felt about the whole dilemma. I had been betrayed first by Kamohelo, whom I trusted like an elder brother. I had never felt so alone. My parents talked about me like I was not there. I wanted to share my pain, especially with my mother, but had never had the chance to confide in her whom I used to tell my secrets. I was frightened to utter a word to my best friend at school.

I was afraid because a similar incident had once happened to another girl at my school. A fellow class-mate had made her pregnant. I was among many students who assembled at the hall when the principal announced that the school is for boys and girls and those who chose to engage in sexual acts before their maturity, would be expelled. I remembered the day very vividly, like it was only last week when the expulsion occurred. The principal had warned us he does not entertain any mistakes in the management of the school. He said the school was good and reputable and he wished to keep it that way. "My punishment, therefore to those who try to tarnish the good reputation of the school is very harsh. They should go."

It happened to me, as I had feared. At the assembly the principal began his harsh talk. I heard whispering around me and I heard one girl tell the other that I was pregnant. My thoughts were cut short by the headmaster's booming voice "from today onwards she shall cease to be a student in this school because she is now going to be a mother. I told you earlier that the school is for boys and girls only. I thought the situation and treatment of the girl was unfair. The girl was ordered to take all her belongings the same day and leave the school premises.

Back in class my class teacher shed more light on the situation "you see what happens to you girls when you misbehave, you are the ones that face the consequences alone. Your friend, who was just expelled, has been one of the prefects, but you know what happened to the boy. The principal only demoted him and he was given a chance. He is

going to continue with his studies in this school. While your lady friend will be at home looking after an unplanned child. If there is nothing wrong with her you know life is quite difficult with a pandemic like HIV/AIDS in place.” The class was listening so attentively but one girl voiced the unfairness of the punishment for the girl. The teacher was adamant ‘what would you do, yourself, send the boy home for what? Nothing is going to hinder his studies, he is not the one who got pregnant’ this should be a lesson to you girls, you must stop running after boys, because you shall face the consequences alone”.

I did not utter a word but I felt sorry for the girl and what infuriated me was the way the headmaster had treated the issue, even at the assembly the teachers and students did not expose the boy to any ridicule. Unlike the girl who was robbed of all her dignity in front of the whole school, the boy was only demoted from his duties as a prefect and that was nothing compared to the poor girl. A friend and I discussed this on our way home and we promised each other we would not fall prey to the likes of the boys, and endure the unfair treatment. That posed such a challenge to us. Little did we know my fate. It was the same girl who took me home while I was sick. The friend asked if I would like to share any problem with her and I denied that I had any problem. What made me deny was the promise we had made together, I was also afraid of how she would take the problem. I shuddered with fear when I thought of my teachers, for I was one of the best students in my class.

When I thought of my school environment, I was not sure whether to runaway or to go to school and face such hostile attitude from my peers and teachers. My body felt strange and numb and I was very aware of the weight gain. I was always praying that I would sleep and find the nightmare gone. I had always pushed the thought of Kamohelo at the back of my mind, to me he was someone who had robbed my innocence and left me to fend for my self, but I was also afraid to see his reaction if and when I tell him I was pregnant. After the way he had been treating me, I did not have the courage to face him.

My thoughts dwelled on the other members of my church; their attitudes towards me had been good because of my humble manner that had always made me a favourite and

respected member of the church. Now it was difficult to go to church, how was I going to face them? My father's concern was with how his neighbours and friends were going to take the news. I was already disheartened by how this was going to affect my fragile and poor family. I was more concerned about my poor mother who was trying to make her marriage work and raise us children at the same time. I felt so guilty when I thought of the times when my mother had tried to talk to me. I now wished she would be everywhere with me so that I could hear her soothing voice and understanding manner. I still could not bear to talk to anybody about the dreadful events of that Easter night when I was deflowered. I felt that I had to tell my mother and ask for forgiveness. I needed to talk to my mother alone, without my father. I told her that I knew I hurt her and I asked for forgiveness. I knew I could not change or reverse the situation, but I asked her to please forgive me for ruining her life.

My father reluctantly agreed to pay the boy's father a visit on the following morning. Father says he was welcomed well by the boy's father and his aunt, but the moment they heard the meaning of his visit, their behaviour changed. Toti related the story of their son and his daughter about the relationship that has led to pregnancy and how the boy had promised to provide security through marriage.

On leaving, my father went to report the matter to the chief, who promised to summon Kamohelo's family. My father was allowed to choose a suitable day for the hearing. He arrived home in a foul mood. He looked at me with such hatred. In his eyes he showed anger and in a menacing voice he asked whether I was going after the same boy who denied ever knowing me. He did not allow me to answer anything, I was ordered to go back home and never to leave my house.

My father arrived home and when my mother offered him something to eat he refused and told her how much he had been humiliated by Kamohelo's family. He told us that the family told him that he wants to hand over his responsibility because he wants their wealth. My father was breathing heavily while pacing the floor. He told my mother to prepare me for the court session tomorrow. I was to be taken to the local chief. My father

was suing that man and his son. My mother was against the idea and pleaded with my father not to go to court, but he insisted. My mother tried to say that my father should give me an opportunity to say how I felt about going to court. My father would not hear of that. He was not willing to talk to women is what he told us.

I never felt so humiliated in my entire life. The first pair of eyes that fell on me were that of Kamohelo and the hatred and hostility in his eyes made me shiver with fright. I felt all the eyes burning at my back, all very accusing.

What followed after was the most crucifying scene; I was to remember for the rest of my life. I was instructed to narrate my story in a very explicit manner, and to call a spade a spade. The questions that were posed to me were both vulgar and very unreasonable, because I had innocently told my story. I was asked numerous times to explain what role I played in the whole incident, I was asked to tell whether I was passive or active. I tried to explain how I tried to stop Kamohelo, and that it was futile because he was too strong for me. I felt worn out, rejected, and angry with God for allowing something like this to happen to me. How could I be humiliated and undressed like this in front of all the people. I cried and ceased to talk, but the incident was still in progress. I thought I was dreaming but the moment I raised my eyes, I met Kamohelo's steel gaze that brought me to the reality of the whole episode. At the end I was asked why I did not report the incident earlier to my father or mother, like the following day. They did not try to understand my fear and uncertainty. They asked again if I did not participate willingly. Kamohelo was like a brother to me and I fully respected him. After all these questions I was told to sit down, and wait for the final decision after hearing the side of the defence. I had prepared myself fully for my story but the immediate confrontation with Kamohelo and his family disorientated me totally and made me lose concentration and confidence.

My father became very angry with me afterwards. He accused me of colluding with my boyfriend and his family by refusing to talk. He interpreted my fear to talk as refusal to talk. As a result he told me that he wanted nothing to do with me. He drinks even more heavily now than he used to. His abusive nature has become worse for my mother and

me. He has even become physically abusive to my mother.

I feel guilty that I have made my mother's life hell. Life has changed so much for me generally. My friends are indifferent and I am isolated. Some of the parents do not want their children to be near me. They fear that I will be a bad influence on their girls. The villagers look at me as a gold digger who wanted to save her family's poverty by claiming that a rich man's son offered her marriage.

Worst of all, my mother and I have stopped going to church. The rich family is rich even in church. People sit with my boyfriend because he is a leader in the youth choir. They think I lied about him. Though we do not go to church, we pray very much at home. But our total happiness was to be in church. Nobody expelled me either from church or school but I knew that the two go together. The school treats pregnant girls in the way the church wants. The words about us taking care of ourselves are the same. We girls have always been told that if we do not take care of ourselves we shall be expelled. At church we might not have been expelled but we might have been victims of ugly gossip. The gossip was strong in the village and the same villagers are the church members. So we kept to ourselves. I do not have any hope of being in school again. If I would get an opportunity though, I would use it well and get my education.

My baby was born at a hospital and he is well. I look at him and wonder what kind of child he will be. I am afraid of how he is going to grow up with all the hatred around us.

I was lucky I enjoyed good physical health. I have been well and I was lucky not to get any sexually transmitted infections. I know this because they checked us at the clinic. I am not sure though if the tests included HIV testing. But I have known people who I have heard died of or are ill because of HIV infection. If the tests at the clinic did not include HIV then I have not been tested anywhere. My baby is only four weeks old and we have not yet gone back to the clinic for a check up. But to me the child looks healthy. Even if he was not maybe I could not recognise any problems.

7.7 Young women's pregnancy story number five – Thato

She is currently a lawyer working for the Lesotho Government, especially working during her free time to assist pregnant young women to realise their potential with issues of being represented in courts of law.

Falling pregnant when I least expected was one of the few things that robbed me off any sense left in me. This is caused by the fact that the support which I expected from certain individuals was shunned by the shame I brought to them. With others it went away soon after, but the relationship has remained stormy with some of them and may stay like this forever.

I began my primary education with no love affairs with anybody. The situation persisted until my high school level. Despite this situation most of my close friends were boys, my parents even send some of them away from my home when they came to see me, the suspicion was that they were lovers and not friends. However, as these relationships continued my parents realised that the relationships were harmless and they finally accepted them, some of those relationships exist even today. I received some of the most needed support from those male friends.

Before completing my secondary education I got involved with a boy. I was in Form D while he was in form E. The relationship was so innocent even though it was widely gossiped that the boy was a playboy. I was always afraid that he would want to have sex with me but he did not bring up the issue of sex in our relationship. I suspected that he had experienced sexual intercourse with some of the girls who were initiating the gossip. He completed his studies in that school, leaving me madly in love with him. He left the country and joined his parents who at the time worked in the Republic of South Africa. This relationship continued without us engaging in sexual intercourse until I was in my last year of High School. It was a relationship affected by long distance and failing to see each other often, therefore I thought the affection had simply ended.

At another high school, one of my closest two girlfriends had already had a child while at another high school. Due to our intimacy I was at an advantage and I could ask questions. I discovered that she had a child even before enjoying the experience of being sexually active. She also told me her experiences of the misery that followed her experience as meetings between parents took place to determine the future of her child. In the end she was defeated by the family court case and lost, so she had to raise the child on her own although her parents supported her.

What I have related above only drove me to open a part of me that said "I do not want that to happen to me because of the type of people my parents were". I figured they would kill me if I got pregnant at that time. I do not mean kill me literally, but I thought they would be angry beyond any reasonable behaviour.

As I grew up, I learned the wishes of my parents through remarks that they passed now and then about what they valued as doing good and what they devalued as bad. My family set up was one where my mother stayed at the home village most of the time, except for a few visits into town where my father and I stayed. My father's job involved being transferred to different district camps where he worked including Maseru town, which is the capital of my country. Despite this arrangement my father attended to all family responsibilities at our home during the weekends when he was around.

My father is a very frank but sympathetic person, he is loving but very strict, all in all he is a disciplinarian, but one who always preferred happy and relaxed atmosphere. My father is one person who, if he is away, his absence really feels like a vacuum. But I never wanted to cross paths with him when I had done wrong because I knew that when he reacted to that, I would dread the day he became my father.

My mother on the other hand was the opposite of my father. She was a blunt person who cared less about feelings. I talk about her in the past because she passed away. I figured that her only interest was for her to voice her opinion even with words that could inflict pain. I figured if words could cause physical wounds, my mother would have rubbed in

salt to make the pain more severe.

I come from a family of six children. Both my parents believed in us getting a good education, and they did their best to see to that. Despite this interest for us to get education, my mother also encouraged me to get married so that I could leave her alone with her husband. Though I talk about me alone, the situation was for all us girls and not just for me.

At my home there was so much work to be done, like house chores, that there were no opportunities to visit or have leisure time. The only chance to interact with other children was to do so while I was sent to run errands for my parents.

Mother encouraged us to attend traditional celebrations when we were invited. This included weddings, to accompany the bride to the groom's home or at times to accompany the new mother with her baby when she finally goes back with the baby to her in-law's home. There is also a common practice in my village and that is to welcome initiates coming back from the initiation school. The practice involves celebrations that extend to other neighbouring villages.

My village is highly religious, with the country's Seventh Day Adventist church's main centre or mission in it. The centre comprises of a church, a primary school, a high school, and a medical clinic. The church in the area instils strict ways of life's day-to-day operations among the villagers and the practices filter through to the household level. In the vicinity there are also two Catholic Church centres, also made up of churches, primary schools, and one of them has a convent and a seminary. The position of my village indicates how I was exposed to both the traditional set up of initiation and push for tradition and marriage. On the other hand there were the demands to live according to religious norms even though the ideologies of the two churches might have been different.

This was very confusing for me at the time.

I have always felt like the relationship with my siblings is not very positive and that is the way I have felt. Our way of thinking has always been different from each other's and by virtue of that difference I have always experienced offensive treatment.

Now back to my high school life, I was involved in my studies without major challenges. My other friend was involved seriously in a love affair and by the end of the academic year, I was also going out with another boy in what I thought was a very steady and settled relationship.

This time around in my relationship, I got sexually involved with my boyfriend. I had experienced friends who I thought had loving relationships with their boyfriends and yet when the girls got pregnant the boys rejected them. But even that did not stop me from being sexually active. I made all the efforts to get myself protected from any pregnancy by using contraceptives. Getting the contraceptives was very difficult for me. I had to hide from anybody that I knew and I lived under the fear that somebody might see me at the clinic and inform my parents. Even worse, my parents could discover the pill.

Besides the hiccup, in general life was good. I was determined to enjoy life and go on having fun but I was alert that pregnancy at that time would spoil my fun.

For a very long time I dared not even mention my friend's pregnancy at home and my parents only learned about the pregnancy after my own child was born. During the last year of my high school studies, I fell pregnant. What puzzled me is that what I had always expected as the sign of pregnancy, which is missing my periods, did not happen in the first three months of my pregnancy. One day I felt very sick and I went to see the medical doctor in the area and the diagnosis pointed to conditions other than pregnancy. Then my mind was at ease and I forgot to think about pregnancy and my fears. I continued to feel un-well; as a result I consulted a gynaecologist since there was a lot that my body was saying which I still could not comprehend.

The doctor explained that I had a baby growing inside my tummy and five months had

already passed since the little being was conceived. This doctor knew my father well as we had been neighbours for a long time. He told me to go back to school, as he would call my father and break the news on my behalf. The doctor did as he had promised and my father immediately went to see me at the school and to say he knew what had happened and it was okay.

I thought that when my father came he would be mad at me, but he was protective. He promised to be with me all the way. The pain came when my father and I had to discuss issues around the pregnancy. My father wanted to know the baby's fathers' name. He was shocked to hear who the father of my unborn baby was, because it was somebody he knew well.

My baby's father received the news but, as I came to learn, his actions contradicted his words. At first my partner had no problem and he showed that he still had to report to his parents, which he did, but as to what the decisions were, I just inferred from the actions that followed.

Both our parents met and negotiations were to take place about the relationship and what action was to be taken. The parents of my boyfriend refused to accept the baby and me. They did not wish me to marry their son.

While trying to negotiate further, my father one day went to see my boyfriend's mother at one of the relatives' home. They noticed my father's car from a distance and the lady went outside to hide. Unfortunately she was seen by one of my sisters who had travelled with my father. When my disillusioned father went to the car, my sister informed him what she saw. My father went to where my sister directed him and found the lady kneeling down and facing the other direction as my father approached from behind.

As she realised the presence of the man, she confided in him that a father whose daughter says her son has made her pregnant pestered her. "ntata ngoanana ea reng ngoana oa ka o mo emarisitse."

They exchanged a few words and my father told her that he would sue the family for the boy's denial of responsibility. When she heard the news about court, she said that her husband would only be back at the end of the month. It was after this incident that my father decided to go to the local court to claim payment of six heads of cattle for damages according to the Sesotho custom. I had to appear as the key witness in the whole drama. Yes I say drama because I felt like it was all an act. Me being pregnant with my best man's child, him denying it and us in court disclosing all those well-guarded secrets in front of everybody. I wondered where my parents, other grown ups and in fact everybody else would be when I discuss sex openly. I was very troubled and ashamed.

My father told me that I would have to testify in the local court. I was the key witness in the case.

I saw the pain in my father's eyes though we did not talk about it. I did not exactly know what caused him the pain and I wished I could know. I could not ask, especially at the time and under the circumstances. But because I knew how strong the relationship between my father and myself was, I still think he experienced the pain on my behalf. Even at that time I felt he was hurting because he knew I was badly pained. The thoughts that crossed my mind were that he must have been wondering about what the future held for me after the baby and maybe even after the court case.

My father explained to me that I needed to go to court in order to prove that my boyfriend is the father of my child. He further pleaded with me to be brave since it is very crucial that the real story should come from me. You will realise that I have not talked about my mother in relation to the pregnancy as yet. My reasons are simple; I told with you that nothing ever came from her tongue besides fire. This time I had got a lot of those flames and she felt I deserved them. It was painful but did not matter much. I was almost used to her painful way of talking. My mother was not very impressed about the decision to go to court. She concerted with my brother, her eldest and only son that I should go to my boyfriends' home, as at that stage the only solution open to them was for me to marry my boyfriend. They said they were worried that if I did not marry, the baby will not have a

proper family to belong to. This brought the most serious controversy because I had to report to my father the other view to the whole problem. My father was very angry with anybody in our family who thought that being forced into marriage would solve my problems.

My father was very clear that my pregnancy should not be the only reason for my marriage. He assured me that he was prepared to raise the child provided I continue with my studies and see what I could do to regain my life back on my own to feet, and to see to new challenges of life.

My mother and my brother evidently showed that they were not concerned about the raising of my illegitimate child. My brother snubbed me and treated me like I was worthless. Whenever our eyes met, I thought he could equate me to filth and nothing else.

He had never approved of anything good I did. My other siblings' positions fluctuated about the whole issue, sometimes they were resentful and at other times they were receptive. But evidently they also had an attitude problem towards me. I was a sinner and they did not want to associate with me. At times they were sarcastic and would say really unforgivable words. They said they wondered how daddy's best girl got herself pregnant. They said they thought high school books could always provide sufficient information on baby making. They observed and told me that I had embarrassed every family member rather than to endure the embarrassment I caused them. They said that I should have read books rather than embarrass them the way I did.

All these episodes in my life made me reach a decision that even though the pregnancy was unplanned the product was my love child and I had to portray that and nothing else. It taught me to love my daughter more. For me my child was not a mistake but a love child, although the father had denied her, I did everything to show and portray that I loved her.

In her later life, I told her all she needed to know about her father.

That fateful day in court, I faced the court president with confidence and not with arrogance. My boyfriend was now married to somebody else. I read that as a statement for me. The decision not to get married to me was reinforced. It is always expected in the community from which I come, that a boy that gets a girl pregnant whisks her away and marries her. He does not just marry the others who are not pregnant. I won the case and my boyfriend's father was ordered to pay six heads of cattle. My father assisted me with the arrangements to claim maintenance from the magistrate's court after the child was born. My father taught me that it was an important step to take because I would physically raise the child, so the child's father had to contribute financially for the upbringing of the child. I did go to the magistrates' court and he was ordered that he pays a little amount of money every month towards maintenance of the child.

The child's father however defaulted and never contributed a cent towards the maintenance order which led to a written execution being served upon him. I close the chapter on him, as this was the last contact with him. The last time I heard about him was when my child was three years old, the man took his own life by shooting himself.

My daughter grew up surrounded by so much love that she never even had time to ask the puzzle of calling her mother her aunt (paternal) or sister as is a habit or part of a culture in Lesotho. Children who were born out of wedlock, the way mine was had to hide who their real mothers are because the mothers are not married. That is how bad the illegitimate child is in some families. The child also grows up not knowing who the real mother is except from gossip, I see the reason for my daughter being raised differently as a result of the power my father had over everybody in the family. He made the decisions and I enjoyed his support throughout my encounter with young women's pregnancy. That is why I was able to go back to school, though I did go to a different school. The management at my former school did not allow me back. When I was discovered to be pregnant I was expelled and I was also told not to come back, even after the birth. I was told it was the school policy and I obliged. Again for me it was a blessing in disguise. I wanted to reconstruct my life, to start all over. Being pregnant as a teenager in communities like mine carries with it a lot of stigma and I wanted to be among people

who would not judge me. But what that meant was that I had to be discreet about my having a baby. I lived a life full of contradictions. I loved my baby and yet many times depending on whose company I was in I had to be careful not to disclose her presence. This was like denying her, and it was painful.

I went on with my education though I was somehow late in comparison with my former classmates. I worked hard, in fact much harder than I had worked before. I had to prove to many people that I was a worthy person. I also had to prove to my brother, sisters, my mother and my boyfriend with his family that I was not a failure.

I maintain up to today that what I feel worked for my situation was the support that my father has given me. For me that is the pinnacle of my story. Girls are human beings, they need to realise that they are loved and supported even when they have made mistakes. My father is my pillar of strength. His job as a police officer also contributed to the battle of getting my baby the right to be raised by her father through the courts of law. I might have matured late because of the pregnancy but I have learned many things through it. Support, especially coming from a person I regarded as highly as my father helped me pull through. That worked for me even when the other family members objected.

I have really talked, haven't I?

Relationships have improved in the family also. The rest of my sisters have also accepted that, and the most amazing thing is that now my brother claims rights over my daughter and addresses her as "ngoana'ka" meaning "my child".

7.8 Young women's pregnancy story number six - Celina

Celina is a twenty two year old girl who I met through one of my daughters who is her friend. When she got information about the study she became interested to share her own story.

I am currently studying at the university and finishing my bachelor's degree in Science.

When I was 17 years old I fell pregnant. I was in Form three. My boyfriend at that time was a 19-year old form five guy. He had arrived late at school and was the cutest boy in class. So one could imagine the happiness I felt when he choose me to be his girlfriend. We had been dating for two months when things started to change in the relationship. I stayed at boarding school. The thrill of being away from home and being able to do as I pleased was too much for me. I come from a very wealthy family. I was the only girl surrounded by two brothers. I was my fathers' little girl and the apple of my mothers' eyes. I lacked nothing. To others I might have appeared to be spoilt. But at that time I did not care. I had the world beneath my feet and loved it. So you can imagine the shock I had when I fell pregnant.

My world came crushing down around my feet. In high school there were classes on sex education and I had being warned at home that sex was for married people only. Not only had I broken the vows I promised my parents I would uphold but I had also had the consequences to prove it. My father was a very religious man. He took part in church activities and I would listen to him brag of what good kids he had.

When one does not expect things to happen to them they don't think about them. One day, on the playground, I had an accident and I broke my arm, so I went to the doctor to get a cast. I went to the x-rays and suddenly the doctor looked at me and asked when I last had my periods. I told him last month and he asked if he could perform other tests to check for other injuries that might have occurred.

I was told to come back later on Friday to check if the cast had been placed correctly. My breast became swollen and very sore especially when I touched them. I thought the reason was that I was due for my periods. When I got there on Friday I was called to the doctor's office and he checked my cast and told me that it looked fine. He told me that the tests he had taken confirmed that I was almost a month pregnant.

I was shocked; I went for my arm check and came back with the shocking news. I was scared of my parents but also of hell. Now I was guaranteed to go to hell. I was also

scared that my boyfriend would not approve. I recalled my parent's words when they heard that our neighbour's teenager was pregnant. My father said that if it ever were his own daughter he would disown her. That he could not live with the scandal. He said that it would shame him to call that girl his daughter. My mother said that if ever I fell pregnant I would have to leave home and fend for my self and the baby since I was woman enough to make one.

The doctor asked what I was going to do. He told me the options that I had; I remember hearing him speak but not understanding him. When I got back to residence I cried myself to sleep and when the matron asked what was wrong I claimed I was not feeling well. One thing I knew I could not stay in bed forever. I knew that I would have to face the music later. So during checking time (when boys visit girls at the specified time) I told my boyfriend and I remember him staring at me and not saying a thing. I told him how far long I was and told him of the options I had. He walked away from me and I ended up with sleepless nights and I contemplated suicide. The June holidays were only a month and three weeks away and I had already made up my mind not to go home. I had told myself that I was going to call my parents and tell them that I was visiting a friend.

I thought of killing myself but every time I tried I was too much of a coward to do it. Three days later my boyfriend came to me during break. He told me he was not ready to be a father. That his parents had plans for him and the plans had no baby in them. I had lost weight and was not eating right, any way the food did not stay down. I would wake up very early so that should I suffer from morning sickness nobody should be aware. My roommate who was my best friend asked if I was pregnant. I denied it. I felt like the whole school knew my dark secret and I was ashamed. I felt like they were gossiping behind my back.

After the day my boyfriend came. We continued to see each other but things were no longer the same. I could not stop crying and he could not even look at me. I started to put on my jersey trying to hide. I could not handle it any more and told him that I would like to have an abortion. I also felt like he was with me because he felt guilty. So when I was a

month and a half pregnant I had an abortion. The doctor requested a written permission from my parents so we forged their signatures and wrote the letter ourselves.

During that process we encountered problems. One I could not just leave from the residence without a phone call from my parents so we called the head master and we asked my boyfriend's brother to imitate my father. He told the head master that I was needed back home for my brother's wedding, just for the weekend. I was given permission to go home and we had saved and borrowed money for the abortion.

I remember getting to the hospital on a rainy day and checking in. My boyfriend did not leave but he was so cold towards me, I wished him far away from me. I got the abortion and afterward felt empty inside. I felt my stomach go cold and become empty. I had not accepted the fact that I was pregnant but I had to and now I was not. When I think of it now I don't regret my decision but I regret not involving my parents.

I went back to school against the doctors' orders and had a relapse at school. I was rushed to the hospital and my parents were called. When they got there they were told that I was pregnant but had gone for an abortion and the reason that I had the relapse was because I was not well enough to go back to school. I remember my mother crying loudly and my father's sobs. When I was lying there all I could think about was the shame I had brought them.

My parents spoke to the head master though I am not sure what they said and I went home early for the June holidays. A few days passed and that subject was brought up and my parents asked why I had not come to them for help. They wanted to know why I had not come to them for help. That day the relationship changed between me and them and I have had to work hard to earn their trust again. Even now I am not sure if I have fully earned that trust. There are situations when I feel I have been totally accepted back and yet there are times when I sense that the mistrust lurks somewhere in the relationship. Back at school, after the holidays, it was a known fact that I had an abortion and I broke up with my boyfriend. He went to fulfil his plans and I went my way. I would be labelled a

liar if I say that there are some days that I think about the baby and wonder how he or she would have looked like. Yet at the same time I don't regret my decision. My baby would have been five years old this year.

I do not regret the decision I made because if I had kept the baby I knew the rules, I would have been expelled and that would have been the end of my education. That would have meant that I would only get back to school much later because I would have to be able to be with my child. If I got back to school early, I could have also burdened my parents with raising a baby which could be even worse, because they were not happy that I was be a parent. The decisions were difficult to make since I could not share with just anybody.

Life at school was different in many ways when I got back. My friends did not want to be seen with me. Many would not want to be in my company. Some of the staff members made comments like "she is indeed poison to the other children". Both male and female students were not welcoming. But also there were those who would approach me privately, late at night when I was in my room to give me their support. They came privately because they feared rejection that might have been targeted at them for associating with me. The school environment was not ready for a woman who had a baby, but I think the knowledge of the abortion also shocked the school further. Other girls had abortions and as long as one succeeds and it is not discovered life continues.

The teachers were also not welcoming. Though I left the school for my peace, and myself I realised that some of my teachers had also changed. Like in class they were away, I felt a different distance between them and me. I knew that the situation affected the class in general. One of the teachers called me and talked to me privately to suggest that I was better off in a different school.

I had to have this abortion because I had witnessed the girls at my school going away because we all did not treat them right. I had witnessed teachers talk about pregnancy very negatively especially at a time when there was a rumour that a girl was pregnant. I

was not the first girl to fall pregnant in this school. I had observed some of my friends being heartbroken when even their closest friends did not want to know them. I changed schools as a way to hide my shame and to cover my past for my family's sake. As a family we knew the truth but also for me it was important that fewer people knew the real story.

7.9 Young women's pregnancy story number seven - Tumi

Tumi is the youngest of the interviewees. I came in contact with her through a neighbour who is a member of a local peace-making committee. A neighbour who was concerned about the ill treatment that was happening to Tumi had reported her parents to the committee. Her mother was at first reluctant to allow me to talk to her daughter, but she finally agreed.

I am thirteen years old now. When I had the baby I was twelve. My mother and I moved from the mountains to come to Maseru so that she can be able to work for us in town. We are four in the family. I am the first born of the family; I have two brothers and one baby sister. My father left us alone in the village; this was a long time ago, though I do not know how long. In town we stay with my stepfather who has been looking after us. He is the owner of the shack where we stay. I was going to the local school when I found out that the teachers at the school had called my mother to say I was going to have a baby.

Life has always been very difficult for us and getting food for us is also a struggle. I went to school together with one of my brothers. He is the one who was given a letter together with a neighbour's son to say my mother should go to the school. My mother went to the school and brought me home after I was called into the principal's office where I was asked if I had had sex with anybody. I knew I had sex, but I did not know what it was they wanted to know.

I had sex with a neighbour who is an elderly brother. Because we only have one room that we use many times my mother sent me to sleep in the man's house. He had told me that what he was doing was good for me. He also told me it was a secret that I should

keep to show that I was a big girl. He did not beat me to be quiet but we both kept this secret. So I could go and sleep with him in his room and I did not tell anybody.

One day he suspected I was telling my mother while I was not. That was the first time that he told me that if I disclosed our secret he would beat me. He reminded me that he is the one that gives me food while my parents just get drunk. So I kept my promise and did not tell anybody.

I did not know that I was pregnant but my mother and the principal at school told me that I was. I did not think I was pregnant. I also did not want to have a baby. I wanted to go to school with the other children. My mother took me to the clinic and I saw the doctor who also said I was pregnant. I was afraid because my mother was very angry. I was worried what my father would say when he got home. I wanted to run away but I did not know where to run.

When my father arrived, I could hear them exchanging bad abusive language. They did not talk to me but they talked about me and I knew they would fight again. My father complained about providing food for my mother's children and that I were bringing another one. He said I am as careless as my mother and demanded to know whom I had slept with. My mother was trying to ask him to cool down but he was even angrier. He hit my mother and as she ran out carrying her baby on her back the three of us ran out with her. We ran to a neighbour's house and were left to spend the night there. We came back the following morning and my parents made peace.

From that time life has become more difficult for me. It was before the baby was born and it has continued up to now. I seem to be at the centre of everybody's anger. Now it is also the child who faces anger. Both parents insult the baby and me too. My father the other day blamed me for bringing hard luck into the family. He even asked my mother to leave with her children. When my baby makes my father angry, my mother turns to me to air her anger.

I was sent to the committee with the family because my mother at times holds the baby's head and threatens to break the baby's head with an axe. I get very frightened when she does that because I think she will kill my baby. I was afraid this time because she had been drinking heavily and I thought even by accident the axe could have dropped on the baby's head. That is when I ran out to call the neighbour. My mother is very angry with me for calling for help. She does not talk to me but talks to other family members. I think my mother does not want the baby and at times I fear for the baby's life. The baby is mine and I love her very much. I am poor and I am not able to have any job but as I grow older I will do any work so that I can take care of the baby.

I do not know where the baby's father is. I never saw him after I had told him that my mother said I should report to him that I was pregnant. I did not see him again and I have not asked anybody. Having this baby is difficult. The baby can be heavy to carry when I do housework. Again I would have liked to play with the other girls but my parents and their parents do not like it. The girls' parents shout at them harshly when they play with me. My mother says I will teach the other girls to be bad like me. My life is difficult and I miss school.

I do not think I will ever go to school again because I have to take care of my baby. If I could be allowed, I would go to school and that would make me happy. I have lost my friends, which makes me feel lonely. I keep myself busy by doing housework, playing with my baby, and cleaning for my other brothers and sister. Many times I feel the pain and I cry when I do not know what to do.

I have heard that people have AIDS but I do not really know about it. I just know that if I have it I die. I have also heard that many people nowadays have the disease. I have not been sick and I have not gone to the doctor for any disease lately.

7.10 Young women's pregnancy story number eight - Neo

Neo is a young girl who I met through her mother. The mother attended one of the

meetings through which I approached people to participate in the study. Neo's mother has been a participant in the parent interviews that I held. The mother is an unqualified teacher in one of the local Primary Schools and she places much value on the education of the children.

I was a high school student doing form 4 at the age of 16 when I discovered that I was pregnant. We were both students at my school. My boyfriend was 24 years old at the time. I was afraid even before I knew I was pregnant. Just the thought that I had had sex with this man troubled me. I knew it is not proper. I am a Mosotho girl and I had been taught not to misbehave. My mother told me about pregnancy though we did not get into the details. I was also taught at school and more importantly in my church. When I later looked at what I had done, I nearly fainted. I would have preferred to be dead instead of alive and pregnant.

Then I realised that something was not right when I did not get my periods. I shared this with my friend, a friend I had confided in even after the sexual encounter. I did not know what to do. I did not know whether to tell my boyfriend or not. We had never discussed the possibility of me being pregnant. I could not talk about what had happened between us without crying. Now being pregnant was something else.

I shared the fears I had with my friend, we talked about the matter many times and finally we agreed that my boyfriend had to know. I did not want to tell him because I did not want him to think that I wanted him to marry me. To be honest I would have felt better if I had known that he would have wanted to marry me and I also learned that my parents would have felt the same, as I will share later.

I did not feel comfortable discussing the pregnancy with my boyfriend as I have indicated. So I wrote him a letter. I was not free to write the letter, as I was afraid that he would share it and I did not want anybody to know that I was pregnant. I wanted this to remain a secret as much as I could afford to keep it that way. I felt ashamed and I could not bear to look at people's faces and realise they knew the truth. I felt that I should have

taken care of myself. I should have refused to have sex, in fact I tried to but my boyfriend somehow managed to get me to do it. I forgot that when the pregnancy came, the onus would be on me and like other girls who were not careful I had to face the consequences.

Giving him the letter was a struggle. He did not want to take the letter because he said he did not understand why I should write to him and not talk. I tried to talk but I failed. Tears rushed down my face and I could not control my crying. The only comment I remember from my boyfriend was that he hoped I was not pregnant. With shaky hands he took the letter and tore it open. I saw him read it and I could see his facial expressions change. Till now I do not know if what I saw was anger, frustration, sadness, or hate but it was a feeling of that kind. He stormed away from me without saying a word and left me there alone. Somehow I got the feeling that we would not talk about the pregnancy since I felt sure that I would not meet him again. I had a feeling that he would not want to know me anymore. What kind of woman was I? I asked myself many questions. I wondered how I had sacrificed the warmth of my family by having had sex with this man, and to crown it all I came out pregnant.

I had to make decisions and make them fast. I could not let any more people know that I was pregnant in school. I had to runaway but I did not know how to and where to run to. I was sure that my home was the last place I would go to. I could not face anybody in the family and in the community. I could sit down cry and pray for some saviour to be with me. For the first time I envied girls who could afford to have abortions. I had heard rumours around school about how some girls had abortions. I also realised that one needs money to be able to secure someone to assist with an abortion. I was also very afraid because I knew it was not safe because some people have died from having one.

I wanted to die one minute and when death was possible by abortion I was not ready. Something was also happening to me. My baby had started moving inside me and the feelings I experienced were confusing. I loved this baby one moment and wished it dead the next. I had to stop myself from thinking about abortion because it was a sin. I had committed a crime already by being pregnant and now killing the baby would be a

dreadful sin.

I had to make plans to leave, as I could not be at school forever. My other classmates had started making cruel jokes and I thought everybody realised that I was pregnant. I was right in thinking that talk had gone around as the letter I wrote to my boyfriend was shared among friends.

Then one afternoon I was called to the principal's office. I had not been to this office in my whole life in the school. The fact that I was being summoned at this time made me suspicious about the nature of the meeting. As I arrived in the office, my class teacher was in attendance. I was invited in and the principal was open and to the point. I was asked if I was pregnant and I denied it. I wanted to be honest and tell the truth but I was afraid. I figured they would lose all respect for me as a girl that has had sex; I did not want them to judge me. Again I did not want to be asked questions that might embarrass me. As a girl you do not discuss such matters with the elder people. I did not want to talk about the pregnancy. I wished I could trust them and talk openly but I was afraid. They got angrier which resulted in me being more frightened. I went out of that office without telling the truth but the truth was obvious and they looked at me knowingly.

I had been told in the office to go home and to bring my parents to school the following day. I did not understand how they expected me to bring my parents to school. Whenever parents are summoned to school they know that their child is in trouble. The kind of trouble I was in was not suitable for my parents' ears. I felt really dirty and soiled. How could I have done this to them? My parents had worked hard to get me to school and I had wasted money they could have saved to build themselves a house. I heard my father's words in my memory as if he was saying them now. He always told me in his own words not to fool around with boys by saying "le ithute le tlohele ho inehella bashanyana". For the first time the sentence weighed heavily on my shoulders. I felt like I was carrying a very heavy load on my shoulders and that I was about to collapse.

The rumours in the school among my classmates were getting worse. Some of them

approached me to ask me why I was summoned. I did not tell anybody anything but one look at me told a story.

Some students were sympathetic while others were not. I was blamed for being loose and letting myself get pregnant. I was helpless and could not defend myself. How could I claim to be a good girl and yet be pregnant at the same time? I have known pain, confusion and betrayal but not in the way I experienced with the pregnancy. Being a pregnant teenager causes real pain.

I arrived home and the situation was more than tense. I had to tell my parents the truth because I could not bear for them to be told by complete strangers. My mother took me aside and promised to support me through whatever ordeal I was facing. My father was arrogant and verbally abusive. I spent a sleepless night and prayed that my mother would go to school with me instead of my father. My father said he wanted to take me to school to ridicule me in front of everybody. Somehow my mother convinced him not to go. As I left my home that morning, I made up my mind not to go back. I could not bear to see my father and listen to the language he used to describe me. I pitied my mother and was afraid that she would suffer through my own mistake.

The school meeting was shorter this time. My mother told them I had shared with her that I was pregnant. The school rules were clear on this issue and I was dismissed despite the fact that I was not heavily pregnant yet. I could have sat for the final examinations if they had allowed me. But the principal made it clear that they could not keep me, as I should have made the choice between education and pregnancy. My mother inquired about what would become of my boyfriend. The principal said nothing would happen because sometimes girls cannot be trusted. Girls have a tendency to patch fatherhood on the wrong men and since there is no evidence that he was responsible for the pregnancy he would remain and continue with his education uninterrupted.

My father and I had a trusting relationship and I saw that crumble because of the pregnancy. I went back home with my mother despite the decision I had taken to just run

away from home. I told my mother that I did not want to go back. She advised that I go back and then later disappear because my father would suspect her and torture her if I left before going back home. My mother and I made arrangements. I spent one day at home and then left to live with my aunt in the mountain districts. My mother suffered abuse on my behalf but persevered. She works and she was able to send money privately so that I could go back to school. My baby was born and I moved further into the mountains to another district so that the community would not know that I had had a baby.

Life at this school was difficult. I missed my baby and I felt bad that I had brought her into this world. I missed my family and pitied my mother for the kind of troubles I had brought her. I wished for my father's forgiveness and would have done anything to make it right. Many times I thought about how boys can get lucky. I understood why my class teacher used to call them black sheets. This was because no stain would show on them while my stains were there for me, and others, to never forget.

I have continued with my education through those difficult times. My father is still angry even after all this time. But there is hope that things will get better as he has agreed that I could go back home but he has said I couldn't bring my child. I am not happy that things have gone this far but I have no control over the situation. I am prepared to go and talk to him and I sincerely hope he will forgive me.

I have never thought of having any relationship with a man. I am hurting and I would not want to hurt anybody in return. I am in school and I am sure I will pass well because I work hard all the time. I have to be the best in everything I do. I have to show my child, my mother, and my hurting father, that, after all, I am not as soiled as I sometimes feel. I have wondered how one parent gets so supportive while another throws you out. I have promised myself that I will give support to people when they need me. Being without support from my school, my friends, my boyfriend, and my father has been a terrible experience

7.11 What now?

In the first part of this chapter I have presented the stories of eight women who participated in this study. The construction of womanhood and mothering and schooling has been portrayed and placed according to the telling and analysis of each one of the participants. From the stories that the participants told, I bring together the issues that emerge as I draw conclusions for the chapter.

7.11.1 Feelings

As the stories indicate there are feelings of helplessness as participants indicate giving up on themselves and the challenges for future plans. The pregnancy is regarded as an end to a life. The feeling of anger was expressed towards self for letting pregnancy happen, towards boyfriend for manipulating and towards God for not intervening so that the pregnancy does not occur. Feelings of hate of self, partner and unborn baby also emerged. In addition participants shared acceptance in the form of surrender as they asked themselves: What can I do? They surrendered to the fact that they have sinned and deserve to be punished.

7.11.2 Plans for the future

One of the common feelings that have been expressed by the women is the desire for education. Some have gone through the struggles to get back into the school system and they have succeeded while others express the desire to get back into the schools. The girls have at times had to change schools as an effort to hide their shame. Generally, the girls in the study are unhappy about the treatment they have received.

7.11.3 Acceptance of the social construction

Some feel they deserve to be treated in this manner because they are guilty. They put emphasis on the wrong they have done by admitting that they have sinned. Somehow the

girls are not angry that they now have children but rather the consequences of having the babies are what troubled the girls.

The stories, in general, are an indication of the dominant stories that are told around young women's pregnancy. From early ages girls have been told how to behave in relation to their male partners and their sexuality. The girls get stories from different sources like the parents, siblings, church authorities, and schools (through both teachers and classmates). The acceptance of the dominant expectations is communicated through the phrase "I am a Mosotho girl." The kind of language points out that there is an ideal Mosotho young woman against whom the pregnant young woman compares herself. This ideal woman is not sexually active, and does not get pregnant, before a certain age. The notion is not true; there exist Basotho women who become sexually active at early stages in their lives.

7.11.4 Exclusion

The experiences of the young women indicate issues of exclusion from major societal functions and operations. Women generally get excluded from making major contributions in life, but women who get pregnant as young women experience exclusion of an added degree.

Friends might be a different story. Having a baby separates the teenage mother from her former friends, whose interests are now radically different. It is often assumed that this causes resentment and jealousy, making young women's motherhood yet more difficult - but as is so often the case, there is no research to test this assumption. The girls do say that they miss their friends and have a sense of loss with respect to their social life. Giving up your social life is something that all parents must do to some degree, but perhaps this is especially hard for a young woman.

7.11.5 Who to tell

Naturally most parents react negatively, expressing anger and disappointment. Parents experience embarrassment and shame about their daughter, and worry that there will now be another mouth to feed.

The experiences of women have been documented as being different from those of men. The school experiences of female students are also different in many ways (Leach et al. 2000). These experiences may differ due to the context in which they take place. The school environment has been understood to be a replicate of relationships within the larger society. As a result, the hierarchical nature of society, as placed by patriarchy, is observable from all spheres of life. Singh (2000) suggests that the social construction of young women's pregnancy in the Lesotho context is an image of the multiplicity of challenges that women face socially, historically, and culturally. This idea further points to the importance of the inclusion of women's experiences as data.

With this study, I have pushed to construct together with pregnant young women, the personal experiences that they have had to endure and live through. The testimonies we give evolve around our lives as women in the societies from which we come. We begin at different phases of our lives as we find fit and important for our purposes. We touch on our lives before, during and after the label of 'pregnant young woman.' Young women's pregnancy stays with us like femaleness, like blackness, like disability, and, lately, like being HIV positive. The hopes with which this study has emerged, carries the opinion that the voices of the women in this study will be listened to and that ways of intervention will be devised by the relevant authorities so that the experiences of pregnant young women can become fair and just. The study offers an opportunity for individuals to try to apprehend the struggles of young women who get pregnant. Storied experiences are gaining ground in research today and things have started to benefit women. The change is observably faster in some geographical areas than others and in some areas of concern than others. The pace is somehow slower than the way we anticipated, but it is happening.

Part Two: Focus Group Interview findings

7.12 Inception of the focus groups

At the commencement of this study I did not plan for any focus group sessions: I had wanted to get narratives of individual persons. As I began to identify individuals interested in the study, I became overwhelmed with the numbers and I could not simply disregard the individuals who had responded. The reason that there were two focus group interviews is that, after the initial group interview, there were many more women who wanted to participate. The women were self-selecting in terms of who was able to attend the focus group discussion and who was to go for the one to one interviews (whose stories I have used). The definition of a focus group mentions the number between seven and ten. In this study however I had two much smaller groups of five and six members. I could not combine the groups of girls as of they were restricted by availability. Some of the young women who had promised to come did not attend; as a result, both groups were continued despite the low numbers. As I have indicated in the methodology chapter, I analysed the focus group data differently. The analysis I present here emerged from the data of both groups.

7.13 Participants

The group members were between the ages of seventeen and twenty one years. The groups were made up of different participants from the ones who participated in the in-depth interviews. The rest of the selection criteria of the group have been extensively justified in the research methodology chapter. As a result, I will not do that again here. What I intend to do is to capture the questions that initiated responses together with some of the responses. The section presents interviews from both groups jointly.

Focus Group interviews have been identified as being valuable in social research contexts. The benefits of the use of focus groups for sensitive topics such as sexuality and

HIV/AIDS have been pointed out by Gallahan (1983) and Reinharz (1992). The women in this group were important for they had personal experiences of young women's pregnancy while being at school.

The presentation I make does not in any manner cover all the issues that transpired in the group sessions. I present clips and parts of some of the information together with my input and understanding of what the participants gave. What I present is also limited to particular questions in relation to the study.

7.14 Venue

In the methodology chapter of this study, I pointed out that all interviews were conducted at the interviewee's place of choice. The only exception was with the two focus group interviews where I had to negotiate for the use of a classroom at my workplace, this was convenient due to its size. Another reason for the choice was that some of the young women said they would prefer a place where they were not known and they felt my workplace would be more welcoming.

7.15 Experiences

In general the participants in the group shared about the challenges and problematic nature of being pregnant as a young woman and while schooling. They realised the lack of support from all structures and acknowledged that with some support pregnant young women can be reinstated in the school system. Participants realised that young women should not be encouraged to get pregnant but also observed that pregnancy does happen to girls. Girls have been, and continue to get, pregnant so the idea to prevent pregnancy among girls is still a problematic one.

In the part that follows, I present the actual questions together with sample answers in the form of direct quotes.

What was your life like before you got pregnant?

In response to the question of what family life was like before the pregnancy, many young women observed that they enjoyed the lovely environment. The corners from which they approached the question encompassed the following:

- 1 “My parents and sisters loved me.”
- 2 “My father and brothers used to buy me clothes and give me presents.”
- 3 “I was famous with lots of friends even at school.”
- 4 “I thought my boyfriend adored me.”
- 5 “I was the best netball player and the school-mates gave me a lot of support.”

The young women’s responses to the question were framed in the past tense. They all agreed that in the past they felt and experienced love as indicated by moral support and material gifts. To me this is an indication that things had changed. Pregnancy had interfered with the family and friendship relationships.

What were your experiences of young women’s pregnancy at home?

- 1 “Everybody just changed from loving to hating me. It all started with my boyfriend. As soon as I discovered I was pregnant he told me straight in the eye that he could not face his parents. I hate to face my parents alone and that nearly killed me. I was terrified but I had to tell my mother who was so hurt that I have not forgiven myself for inflicting that pain on her.”
- 2 “To explain the fear as fear is not sufficient. I somehow had felt funny like around my tummy and there was this strong urge to vomit and indeed one day I did vomit and my mother saw me. She believed I was just not feeling well and advised me to consult a doctor. My close friend and I had already shared about the possibility that I was pregnant and that the nausea we had shared might have been as a consequence of the pregnancy.”
- 3 “I just wanted to kill my self, as I wanted nothing more. If I had a way I would have actually killed the baby and myself. I never felt so frightened. I had let my family down.”
- 4 “I was afraid but I was also lucky in a way. When I disclosed to my boyfriend he

consulted with his parents. Both our parents discussed but the burden of having to face my parents alone would have made me mad. I say I was lucky because I have shared with other girls how frustrated they have been as their partners jilted them.”

The young women expressed a strong fear of pregnancy as evidenced by the above statements. The young women have expressed their fear of individual people in their lives. None of the young women has expressed the fear for physical damage to their bodies and disadvantages to the physical development of their babies. This is surprising since almost all the literature and teachings from the health framework point to the physical hazards of pregnancy (Mohai et. al., 2002 and Motlomelo and Sebatane, 1999. I am compelled to argue in this study that fear of people supersedes the fear for physical impact on the young women in the study.

What were your experiences of young women’s pregnancy at school?

- 5 “I cannot imagine any feeling that was as painful as the discovery that I was pregnant. I was at school and each time I looked at the school children and the teachers I was afraid that they knew. And when I discovered that indeed they did know, I became even more scared. I realised that whenever I walked past this particular group of boys, they would laugh at me and say ‘how many are they? Are they twins?’ This brought a lot of fear to me and I made a decision to run away from school because I knew that I would be expelled anyway. So I felt it was better to go before everybody ridicules me.”
- 6 “My problem at school was initiated by my rapid weight gain. Somehow I gained weight and there was this particular female teacher who would comment about my weight in class and in the presence of the students. She would say in my language “ *e se n’o ba le ee le be le kokotletsa*”. That was sufficient to tell me that she suspected that I was pregnant. After class I followed her to disclose that I was pregnant and at the end of that same week I was expelled from school. They gave me a letter to say I had broken school rules so I must go home.”

- 7 “The school where I went was a different one from the experiences shared here. I discovered I was pregnant and the principal gave me a lot of support. The principal is the one who talked to my parents who had insisted on withdrawing me from school but the principal begged them to allow me to stay. In my school there are others who have been pregnant, this is why our school is nicknamed ‘*Matekatse*’ school by other people. Through the support I received I was able to complete my studies.”

The experience of intimidation, discrimination and the use of inappropriate insulting language from students, teachers, and family members were communicated in the group interviews. The ‘*Sesotho*’ word ‘*kokotletsa*’ explains the sound made by a chicken when she expresses a desire to lay an egg. The baby in the pregnant girl is therefore equated to the egg. The use of this kind of analogy in the context is degrading especially between a human being and an animal. The analogy would not normally be used with ‘respectable married women’. The observation I make here is further driven by the statement being made public and in the presence of class-mates. Another point that comes from the experiences is the labelling that comes from the community aimed at a school for their policy to support pregnant young women. ‘*Matekatse*’ labels the school as a school for promiscuous girls. It is a word that is rarely used to refer to male promiscuity.

Now that it is after the pregnancy, what plans do you have for the future?

- 1 “I have gone back to a different school. I do not even know if they know that I have been pregnant. I am to write my final examination soon. My studies and my baby are the most important aspects of my life. I do not have any love life. When any man approaches me, I feel like I need to run away in case another baby will be on the way.”
- 2 “I am still at home and I do not attend school. My father has told me that he has no money to educate ‘*mosali*’. He told me that husbands pay school fees for their wives. So if I want to go to school I should get myself a husband. I wish I could go to school because that is the only way in which I can assist my family and my daughter.”

- 3 “I went back to school. I have never worked so hard in my life. I see young women’s pregnancy as a red mark on my life especially an x. I do not want to see that mark on my test books that the teachers have marked. I am sure I will pass well. Then my father’s child can realise that I deserved his attention after all. I am going to further my education if I pass well which I am sure I will.”

The information indicates that young women do have ‘brains’ if they get presented with opportunities. They are capable of making decisions about what they wish to achieve and how they wish to get where they want to go. The young women express a mature side of their life as they convey their need for education. They add to the idea by mentioning their financial responsibility to their children and saying they work hard to be able to give their children support. The young women do not take advantage that some of the parents are giving financial support; they express their need to assist their parents. They feel that their being pregnant forces them to work harder. As one of them expressed, she wants the father of her child to see her succeed in life. All these are contrary to literature that constructs young women as irresponsible, lazy, arrogant, useless, happy only on welfare, and so on. The father’s use of ‘*mosali*’ indicates removal of childhood in a sexual way. The way in which ‘*mosali*’ is used would have meant a married woman. In the case of an unmarried woman the word is used to illustrate a sexually active female. When applied to a young woman it is demeaning and insulting.

What was the happiest moment in your interaction with the experience of young women’s pregnancy?

- 1 “My boyfriends’ acceptance of responsibility for the baby and me.”
- 2 “Holding my baby in my hands. All of a sudden every pain I suffered had no meaning.”
- 3 “Getting support from my parents especially giving me permission to get back to school. My first day back at school was my happiest.”

The young women’s happiest moments seem to centre on the acceptance of them and

their pregnancy by boyfriends, parents etc. The point that the happiest moments in some instances are characterised by holding the baby indicates that untimely and unplanned pregnancy does not necessarily result in unloved and unwanted children. Getting back to school features as one of the happiest moments for some young women. The loss of the opportunity to be accepted back in society and back in school can be devastating to the young girls.

What was the unhappiest moment in your interaction with the pregnancy?

- 1 “Holding the baby in my hands and knowing the difficult life that awaited us outside. At that time I wished the baby had died and not survived only to come to all the humiliation I had already tasted. But all that has changed now and I am afraid even to remember that I felt that way. But it is true.”
- 2 “When my boyfriend told me he was not going to take responsibility for the pregnancy.”
- 3 “When my mother, my only hope for support, rejected me; maybe God is punishing me.”
- 4 “The day I was expelled from school was the worst for me. I had wronged my parents and my God.”

The young women expressed that their worst moments were the moments in which they lost support, especially from people who mattered for them like their boyfriend, mother, and institution like school. The young women expressed the philosophy that God does not like pregnant girls as their worst fear. The preaching of that philosophy portrays God as a being who gets wronged and punishes. Some of the girls even believed that all the rejection they face might come from their sin of having babies out of wedlock, at school, and in their young women's years.

7.16 Conclusions to focus group interviews

As I interacted with the respondents and the data that we have generated, certain issues

rose above others. At an age where issues of people's rights are like a song that is sung almost everywhere, as in documents, television, on radio and in music, the pregnant young women do not even mention the issue of their rights. They talk about begging for mercy to be allowed back in schools. Something is amiss here and further investigation of the relationship that exists as international legislation interacts with local practices needs to be carried out. The young women express a need for support from significant others. The young women's cry for acceptance is strong in all the cases. By this observation I move to argue that the way in which the young women define themselves is highly related to what other people have set as standards for them. The most significant areas of support seem to come from mothers and very rarely young women mention fathers in their support seeking. I guess fathers are parents also. In these cases fathers have been portrayed as the ones who know last about the pregnancy. One father was verbally abusive to the daughter. Some of the young women expressed the fear of the mother's victimisation by the father as in the case where both of them were expelled from the house.

The focus group data has signalled to distinct stigmatisation of the pregnant young woman. This is even expanded to schools that are seen to be condoning young women's pregnancy by allowing students back in school. Some schools deal with the situation by not readmitting young women who have been pregnant. Even as the girls are readmitted, they live under constant fear that they will be discovered as having been pregnant. Young women are subject to strict observation of bodily changes: her body is constantly watched both at school and at home. Girls are under constant surveillance for possible pregnancy. The women have no private sphere and adults and the young alike feel they can discuss their bodily changes without any hindrance. Whatever these people feel they know seems to make the knowledge available for public consumption. Harassment of young women in this manner has been indicated as it occurs both in the family and at school.

The focus group signals to the shame, discrimination, intimidation and insults that are related to young women's pregnancy. The total lack of formal support structures to push for the young women's right to education and fair treatment in all spheres of her life

come out clearly. I argue through this focus group data that the total pretence that partners of the girls exist is not an accident. The lack of push for fathers to accept their responsibility is a cover for power relations as structured within wider contexts. The school system is built on the indifference that exists in the society to pretend that pregnant young women fell pregnant from air. And the role of the school in this regard is to perpetuate expected and accepted behaviours.

7.17 Conclusion to the chapter

With this chapter I have observed the young women as a missing link and therefore I strengthened the study by bringing in their experiences. The stories of the women are stories, they are not complete and they were never intended to be. But from stories such as these we can learn much. All we need to do is to create an ear for listening. With this chapter I have presented the struggles of young women's pregnancy through the experiences of eight women. The conflicting nature of young women's pregnancy discourses has been illuminated as the pregnant young women negotiate their daily battles with life. The turmoil of feelings they have struggled with came to be told. In the next chapter I share my personal experiences of young women's pregnancy.

Chapter Eight

Who feels it knows it

8.1 Introduction

In Chapter Seven I presented the stories of young women in two parts, namely, Part One and Part Two. The first part presented the testimonies of eight pregnant young women as elicited through the one to one interviews. I presented precepts and narratives together with analysis that participants made of their experiences. In this chapter I will present part of my life: I bring myself to share parts of my life that I view as being related to my experience of teenage pregnancy. However, I cover aspects that are wider than just the pregnancy itself. With my story, I push to indicate that, like other life experiences, teenage pregnancy sits at the centre of, and within, discourses about being a woman. With this story I wish to point out that individual experience does have an effect as well as gets affected by the wider context. I must add that the experiences I share here are not in my view isolated as experiences of teenage pregnancy.

8.2 Feminist autobiography

The inspiration to approach this part of the study in the line of recent work on autoethnography comes from Muncey (2005). The article that appeared in the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 4 (1) March 2005 seemed as a God send. When I first got hold of the article, I was grappling with the question of how best I could share my story in this study. The decision to use my subjective experience as valid knowledge for the study was made about four years ago. I struggled with finding a form of representation that fit with my views and I kept changing from one form to the other. As I shared my struggles with my supervisor, she asked me if I had come across this particular article. As soon as I laid my hands on it the attraction of it all fit snugly into

the ideas I had already established. Or rather, the work I had already done fit into the article in many ways.

When the study bases its main form of data in memory and remembrance of issues, questions are asked around the effects of time on the story that is told. The telling bears possibilities of lies or untruths. Since validation and rigor of research are such pertinent issues for knowledge claims, the way a story gets told becomes crucial (Muncey, 2005). It is in this light that the study I have referred to above makes a major contribution to the knowledge I share. The application of the picture, metaphor, the expedition and artifacts is a breakthrough for my study.

In this study I use autoethnography to relate the telling of my travels and toils with teenage pregnancy up to where I am in the present. The literature I use to strengthen my arguments may use different terminology for example autobiography (Griffiths, 1994); or intellectual autobiography (Singh, 2000 and Stanley, 1991).

In feminist research, autoethnography is a good method that kowtows to principles that qualify quality research. As I discussed earlier, autoethnography is laden with challenges. It focuses on individual experience and yet benefits can be stretched to the researcher and the readers of the study (Griffiths, 1994). Autoethnography involves and forms an inherent portion of research. In the use of autoethnography, the researcher lays bare issues of “prior views, experiences and beliefs that are part of the way to look at the world.”

I therefore invite the reader of my autoethnography to read it with caution. I invite the reader too to acknowledge that meanings are made differently and that indeed time may have had its effects on my story. I extend this invitation to allow interested parties to interrogate my autoethnography through their lenses. This autoethnography is as true as any story can possibly be true (Kendall, 1995). The reader of this should be informed that the story ‘is’ as a result of whom ‘I am’. “But this raises another important dynamic: Autoethnography as knowledge can be highly problematic. It is more multifaceted than

simply the writing of one's history; it is clearly more challenging and demanding. When writing autoethnography, one selects what she considers relevant material. The material then undergoes selection, ordering and moulding. The process runs between the self as perceived here and now and the self from a past remembrance of journeys of life. So, the following autoethnographic account needs to be viewed as a deliberate choice for a specific intention. The autoethnography should therefore be confronted on the basis of interpretation and meaning instead of being falsified by a lack of some form of 'truth' (Singh, 2000).

By using autoethnography as in the manner that I have in this study, the social space that I occupy becomes the basis for my telling. The language I use to reflect on my experiences is also influenced by what I have learned to say. What I have learned to say is also controlled within how I have been socialised to see the world and make meaning of it. This autoethnography is an account that follows and is typical of the characteristics I have shared. Parts of it will reflect the feminist researcher emerging in me. On the other hand, some parts may indicate me in my social occupancy that has been controlled and cautioned to date. The fluid nature of my identity is embedded in this autoethnography. This is summed up neatly by reinstating that:

Thus, an exploration of the language and the meanings women use to articulate their own experience leads to an awareness of the conflicting social forces and institutions affecting women's consciousness. It also reveals how women act either to restructure or preserve their psychological orientations, their relationships, and their social contexts

(Anderson and Jack, 1991:18)

The use of autoethnography avoids simple descriptions of experience. This account formulates a way in which I make sense of my life and my activities 'to work out where I stand in relation to others' (Weiner quoting Maclure 1993:331). The nature of feminist autoethnographic accounts is a commitment to articulate 'a self-consciousness about

women's identity'. The events lead to an autoethnography that entails a political agenda aimed at queries about women's lives (*ibid*).

I took up the urge to include and present as data parts of my life in the way that I do. I took seriously the opinions and advocacy of feminist research when allowing the researcher and participant space to feel. The things that came to my mind and how I felt are infusions in this study. I must warn the reader that I wrote this autoethnography in relation to what I remembered each time, As such, it may lack coherence in the conventional sense. And that is how I intend to present it, without a set format. I have in this autoethnography allowed myself to feel in ways that may not be regarded as conventional by some researchers (Anderson and Jack, 1991). Here, the personal is indeed the political.

8.3 My story - Me

My story as told here unfolds and unpacks some aspects of my life and my interactions with the engendered world in which I was born. I now realise that it was never an innocent world that was ready to accept me with my ways of doing but I had to fit into structures that were thickly plastered to keep me prisoner in the not so innocent walls of patriarchy. My interactions with teenage pregnancy, how I constructed it then, how those around me constructed it and how I make meaning out of them now constitutes the whole essence of this study. The interpretations I give are not removed from the world that does everything to condense power only in one powerhouse in the way that patriarchy does. The patriarchal nature of the family into which I was born, the village where I was bred, the social institutions like the church and schools, the whole government system and the organised crime of patriarchy within and between countries of the world have indeed dominated and blurred my thinking.

The way in which I have chosen to write my story may seem strange for people from a different context, especially the way I have chosen to write the autoethnography. My story does not follow any logic and it has been as a result of many different months of writing it and shifts may be observed to mark that. The writing within here may change

with the day's mood but all the same it still represents me. The use of English language in this text may seem awkward and this is not because I am not aware of the requirements of good grammar. It is documented in the way that both the first and second language users of English will benefit. I have tried to use the everyday language that my people understand better and I sometimes use the national language 'Sesotho' on issues where I feel any other language would have blurred the intensity of the message I wish to share. This outlook on the way I interrogate my self in this narrative, I am provoked by the varied and diverse targeted readership for this study. If I expect change to occur, then I must submit to using everyday language which policy- makers will be able to understand and make meaning of. It defeats the course in which I believe to use scientifically accepted language in this regard, as I feel it is the same language that has hindered change in and around issues of importance to me. I am to justify the way I have used language in the study as a deliberate move to defy the accepted ways of telling. For me, the challenge is for this piece of work to be usable by using a language that does not intend to exclude others in the way that the accepted language of research does.

8.4 'Sebueng'

I have always been comfortable to say and talk about issues that other women have not had the courage to speak about. For many of the individuals who have known me for longer periods of my life, it was not a surprise that finally I settled for a study on teenage pregnancy using feminist approaches. The habit to disclose my status continued despite the documented unwillingness of women of my country to discuss sexuality issues. As a result, many who have spent time with me are not surprised that I share my story together with the stories of women who have been pregnant teenagers. I have always surprised myself and continued to ask myself exactly what it is that made me so comfortable to discuss the issue of my pregnancy as a teenager. I do not know if it was comfort or the need in me to say to the people that I met "wake up, things can be done or seen differently". Some years after I got married I was expected to hide the illegitimate child that I had had five years ago, as many of the women who have been pregnant as teenagers continue to do. I could not bear to, in my own understanding of my life, the

denial of that birth would have been to allow the world to cut away and off pieces of my body and my soul which make me to be me.

8.5 My relationship with my daughter

I learned at a very early age, at those very first months after my daughter was born, that I had to protect her from the arrogance that children born of teenage mothers experience. I learned as I say to expose her to reality about how the world would views her long before she could understand and live the pain that is caused by being constantly reminded of one's illegitimate birth status. Since babies and other children cannot quite communicate verbally, it is from the mouths of adults that the dirt of describing individuals according to their birth status is common. One day a neighbour of ours shouted as the children played with each other, my child among them, "Oho hle bana bawona ba le bona ke ngoana enoa ea se nang ntatae". This translates to: "Oh Lord! Our children are getting ill treated by the fatherless child". As I got ready to rescue my child from the verbal abuse, the neighbour ducked into her hut. It was too late for her reaction because the words had been received and used in my mind and I knew exactly what to do for my child's sake and mine. As a strategy I had to start by throwing stones before anybody threw stones at us to hurt us. So I learned that her birth was an abnormality that my daughter and I had to accept as such. Life seems to like bringing to the open those issues that the people concerned would like to hide like teenage pregnancy in the context of the village in the rural area of my country. Unlike many teenagers in my situation in the area, I learned to talk as a coping strategy.

I now look back and think of that life as the contribution that my village people made to the world of knowledge and research that I am engaged with, within and inside today. Had they not reacted to my giving birth to the illegitimate child in the way they did, the other girls (even my illegitimate girl) who have gone through the mist of bringing illegitimacy in this world would still have their voices silenced. Finally I am able to further tell the people what I went through with the other women of my calibre through sharing of my autoethnography. To share my own experiences and how I hope the

experiences can be used to make the world a better place in which one will not be judged by a single step and condemned for life. In addition, I wish to draw to the world of knowledge that the people of the communities who interact with teenage pregnancy, do not act in bizarre ways for themselves. Instead they act solely on the demands that are made on them by the dominant systems that influence their total becoming and seeing. It is these dominant ways of doing that I wish again for the study to question and allow re-addressing issues around what informs them.

8.6 How I felt

At first having been a pregnant teenager was painful and tears used to come to my eyes as I wondered how much I had wronged the same child that I had brought to this world by having her at that age and out of wedlock. Talking about wrong quickly reminds me that there is right, and this further provokes my thinking to remember that there are standards in use here. Though teenage pregnancy may be viewed in some areas as a sole business of the pregnant girl, the shots about its rightness and wrongness are called from somewhere. The somewhere is indeed strong, from the strong arms of patriarchy and the strong hands of the world of men and other dominant groups. I used disclosure as a coping mechanism and it did work for me. I am not willing to question the how of the talking about at this stage but the benefit of getting used to discussing my giving birth to an illegitimate baby girl has been valuable to me, and I do hope as I share my story in this study other women will get to reflect and build on their personal experiences and find their own means to cope.

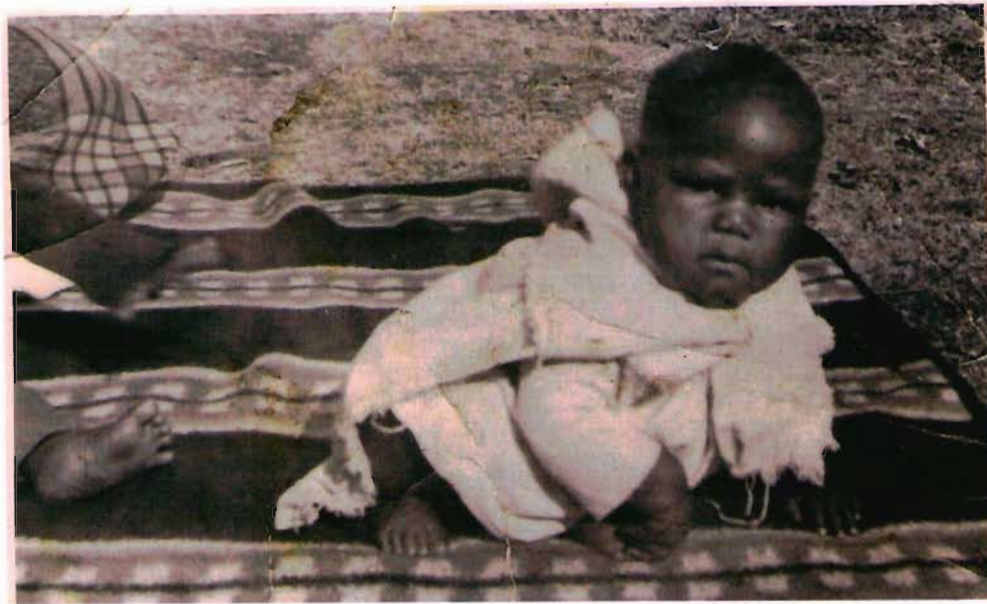


Figure 1: My Daughter as a small baby

8.7 I shared

As I shared my experiences with my research advisor and revealed to her the subject with which and from which I decided to do my research she asked me if I would be comfortable to discuss my own experience like that and I said that if it is acceptable that was what I wanted to do. From that day on my telling intensified, especially after the meetings and sharing that has happened between my fellow colleagues and me about the study.

I did all that to break the silence that is so typical of the oppressed groups. My analysis and synthesis of silence in women was evoked many years ago, silence especially from a woman to me is data. I came face to face with this troubling deduction that very deeply rooted silence is sometimes a message to convey deep pain. I learned that silence could be a cover to conceal the deepest felt pain by watching my mother fight her own battles with domination by men in our family.

To my father and my other male relatives a woman is not a human being, what she feels has no meaning and does not matter. It is the inheritance they got through the generations. I saw it happen to my paternal grandmother, and to my father's sisters too. They would just keep shut but I watched the way they swallowed their saliva. They swallow hard and with a lot of effort when they were troubled, quiet as they were. But their pain was there obvious in those wet but not watery eyes, which they also had to conceal by bowing their heads in case the masters discovered they were complaining. Those for me are political moments and I propose political moves to question those same unsaid words, those unquestioned moments of pain and torture. It is this 'not telling' that makes me uncomfortable as I believe telling is valid and deserves a gendered analysis. As I continue to argue my case in this study I again fight this political battle with silence as data, especially silence of and from the oppressed.

8.8 How on earth did I get here?

I hold two birth positions in my family. Firstly I am the second child in my family of four children. The first child is a boy. Then after me there is a boy and a girl. Secondly we are six children since I have two elder step- brothers. As I use stepbrother I shake, in my family the word was never used. In the second arrangement, I am the fourth child though the first girl, the fifth is a boy while the sixth and the last born in my family is a girl. It is imperative to restate the importance of male/female children as I did in the context in chapter two.

Unlike in many families where baby boys are regarded as more important than baby girls, my family had started craving for a baby girl after the birth of their three boys. Therefore my birth into the family brought with it lots of happiness. But now I know that it also heightened the experiences of my life in many ways. Because of the Christian family background that exists in my country and family, my parents had started to pray for a baby girl. No wonder when I was born I was named "Karabo", a name that translates to "reply" or "response". My parent's prayers were answered at last. The

birth of yet another boy after I was born in my family intensified my already important status in the family ladder.

As far as I remember, I was always a very 'important' person of almost every family member, such that ways of doing for good girls became heavier on me. I was pumped and fed with information on how good girls are supposed to behave. In particular I got to learn how bad boys and men can be since they had the ability to get me pregnant. My expression of my sexuality as a woman, female and only girl in the family was under question and constant surveillance from that early age. Almost all of the family members had the habit to protect me from everything that would be observed as unwanted or dangerous.

I was my father's pride and love. I say my father specifically in this regard because he was not one to show emotions easily, but when coming to the relationship we shared, emotions could not be concealed, I was an apple of his eye. Coming to my mother's side of feelings, to date I am not certain of her opinions for anything and any particular person. She took the construction of a good woman as reserved and silent seriously, as a result she has been a very passive observer. I now know and understand better how the men around her prescribed her behaviour. What any member of the family desired has always come before my mother's own needs. There exist few times in life that I have seen her show any emotions, and not just for me instead for everything else. I had seen my mother literally take orders from anybody in the house especially the males. I thought I was imagining that she was overworked as she took care of us all, with very little time to take care of her self.

8.9 Growing up in the Matelile village

Because of my status in my family, I did not grow up like an ordinary 'Mosotho' girl in a rural or semi-rural village of 'Matelile' where I was born. The situation of my unique upbringing was complicated by the fact that the particular village was different from the others in the neighbourhood in that it was a central place for the area. Most essential

resources in the area are located here. At this village there are services like the police station, health centre, school, church, mill, local court, agricultural station, several shops and transport to and from Maseru the capital town and Mafeteng the district town, both accessible from my village. This facility renders the village more advantaged and privileged.

Life here would be different depending on the family status also. Unlike other girls in my village, I did not get the opportunity to get involved in the basic activities of a girl who grew up in this village during my time. The normal chores included gathering of firewood, wild vegetables, field residues and animal droppings for fire making I missed. As a result of coming from a comparatively advantaged family background, I missed even the games that are played by boys and the girls who get to go out together as groups. I lived a very protected life. Since my brothers were much elder than I was, my male age mates could not play games with me, I was not to be touched by anybody because the boys feared my brothers. What this means is that I never got any chance to negotiate my way with boys, never learned how boys other than my own brothers would relate to me as a girl and how I would also relate to boys without always being watched.

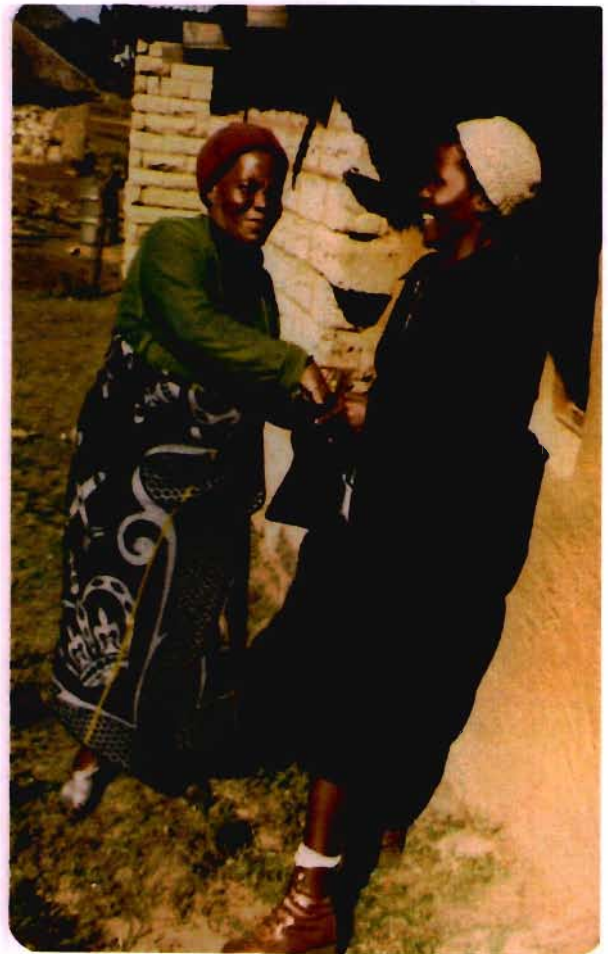


Figure 2: My mother and I

I sailed through my primary education without any problems at all and I was one of the learners who performed well and my father more than any other person was proud of me.

He encouraged me and always emphasised to me the need to work hard. He also pointed out to me that I should not allow the boys to outperform me in class. It was this type of upbringing that taught me through my own experience that boys and girls alike are capable of good performance in whatever they set out to do.

8.10 My after primary School years

Time came for me to leave my home village and the protection of my family to go to high school. Guess what I found there. More protection followed, in fact even worse protection where I thought I would take care of myself, as my brothers were not at this school. The school was a mission school with boarding facilities. This school was not a normal Christian school. It was of a kind that was very different from the type of Christian schools I was used to at home. People here were “saved” and the way they interpreted their lives and our lives as students was guided by their understanding of what saved meant for them and for us all.

The particular notion of “saved” showed itself in many aspects of life there. The typical classroom sitting arrangement was such that girls would sit on one side of the room while boys would be on the other half. This was supposed to be a mixed education school where both boys and girls could learn from each other and yet there were clear demarcations as to male and female interactions. So my knowledge of whom and what boys are got even more limited. So a typical school situation gets constructed according to some preacher’s interpretation of what relationships should mean. I now know it was all with good intent to keep us pure for our future husbands, just like everybody else did.

From the mission school I went to a junior college. The college was an equivalent of senior high school in many ways. The student population was almost the same ages here as in the High school. There was not much difference between the Form D's and E's in high school and myself. The place was very different from home and my former high school. The major difference here was that for the first time nobody watched over the way I related to men. The college also had boarding facilities with a maximum of two

occupants per room. For the first time I had the freedom to my own place in the sense that here was this room I had a key to.

Nobody locked the outside door. I was also confronted with a situation where, for the first time, I could go out to dance without even having to ask for permission to do so. It



was at this place where I had an opportunity to get to be with men at close range and men who were not my relatives. There was no guidance and the familiar protection from family and church that was so much a part of my life was absent and I was in a position to make my own decisions. My college mates also did not help much with coaching one into the life of men. Maybe we all figured that we are knowledgeable in the game. I was not willing to disclose my ignorance in the games of boy girl plays. As a result, within a few months I had myself a boyfriend.

Figure 3: My junior college years

8.11 My boyfriend

At the time I felt very much at home and comfortable with my boyfriend. I trusted him fully and did not imagine what life had always been like without him. Love him? Now I am not so sure anymore if what I felt then was love but I remember very well how the feeling that I described for myself as love had me convinced this man was all I wanted at the time. My feelings for the man were very strong, so strong that I forgot all the

messages I had received throughout my childhood. Messages that I was confronted with had urged me to keep my virginity for my wedded husband. Good girls do not lose their virginity before marriage and I had sworn to do exactly that. I wanted everybody, my parents, my brothers, people in my community, my school mates and my church people to be able to congratulate me one day about my achievement in being a virgin till marriage. I lost my virginity because I had sex with this man. The loss of my virginity made me feel devastated especially when I had learned that once lost virginity could not be regained. Because of the emphasis put on virginity and future marriage prospects, I became angry both at my boyfriend and myself for the loss of my virginity. I was angry and disappointed and yet I could not even be able to share with my partner. When I later discovered that I was pregnant at the age of sixteen I just wanted to die and disappear from the face of the earth.

One day I gained the courage to inform my boyfriend about my pregnancy and he was honest with me, the man I put all my trust in was not ready to be a father. And he did not say it in those words. All he said was that he was not responsible for the pregnancy and that was that. I was left with the unplanned and untimely pregnancy a situation I come back to later in the chapter.

8.12 Being found out

One of the most threatening possibilities was to be found out and the pregnancy being discovered. It was painful for me to try and hide the pregnancy. I found it hard to believe that I was pregnant and I blamed God for letting me be pregnant. And that scary moment did really come. In the college, I do not know for what reason really that time, but I suspect that the time had come for the routine spot check ups to maintain women students' discipline as a way to curb pregnancy. A group of twelve girls was selected, I do not know the criteria for that day's selection but I was one of those girls. We were taken to the local hospital where we got subjected to pregnancy testing. So that is how I confirmed my worst fears that I was definitely pregnant. The state I had been in even without the pregnancy was devastating. The pregnancy added to that feeling and even as

I write I lack the proper vocabulary to express the feelings I experienced from within me. The battles that I fought with myself are more than words can tell.

At the time I decided therefore to lock all that pain away, suffer in silence and endure all the punishment that was due to me. Silence became my refuge. I learned to bottle up severe pain and many people I came across interpreted my silence in their own way. Nobody asked me anything much, even those who tried were confronted with the silent me. It is from this very personal experience that I reaffirmed that silence does not always mean without an opinion or a contribution to make. Silence for me at that time was a way to communicate very deep pain. For me pregnancy at that age, outside marriage and in schooling was the deepest wound in my heart. The only way in which I can tell how I felt that day would be best interpreted by bringing in the picture of several people that I interacted with in my life. My pregnancy was a torture to me especially as it interacted with and related to the people around me. Being pregnant made a remarkable shift from who I had always thought I was and who I had just become. It mattered so much that critical others accepted me as my identity was centred on their approval of me. But I knew I was to lose the belonging to some of the people and institutions like school, family, marriage and church around which pregnancy for a teenager was always negotiated.

The first feelings that came into my mind were of how much I had let down people who mattered in my life. The first one who came to my mind was my father, that man who had all his hopes about a good education for me. I felt terrible and felt I was a traitor. My thinking of my father first now indicates the hierarchy that existed in my family. My father's approval and disapproval of me would automatically dictate my acceptance or non-acceptance in the family. My mother was important in some ways but her position in the family hierarchy placed her further down. The experience I share here has nothing to do with how I felt for and about my mother. I sort of understood the blame she was to carry as a bad mother who had not instructed her girl well about issues of good behaviour.

My fears were directed by the existing politics of male dominance in the family unit, where aspirations and desires of women matter very little or do not matter at all. How on earth could I have done this to them? It was every body else that mattered besides me, after all I had brought it (the pregnancy and all the pain I felt at the time) to myself. The indoctrination of self- blame had been woven into my system and was the very part of my breathing and my blood circulation and it was life for me. I felt so guilty that I did not know what kind of judgement and sentence I should pass on myself to pay for the crime of being pregnant. I was of the wrong age, in school and out of wedlock so I should not have been pregnant. When the time did come for me to finally go home, how would I be able to look at everybody in the face?

8.13 Sharing the test result

At the time one of the people who were closest to me was my friend who I shall resort to call by the nickname 'Moshana'. After I was given the information about my pregnancy test by the hostel Matron, the first person I shared with was 'Moshana'. She was shocked, she expressed her sympathy about what had befallen me and we walked the sad path of life that faced me together. She became supportive and understanding, most of all helped me with making some very critical decisions in my life. We both agreed that there was no choice and the only way to deal with the problem was to go home and inform my parents. I did not trust my boyfriend anymore because the relationship I felt was no more as strong as it used to be in fact it vanished with the knowledge that I was pregnant. Since I had more severe structures to struggle with for acceptance, rejection from my boyfriend became just one drop of grain at that moment. By this I do not mean to underplay the pain that his rejection caused me but as feelings are fluid and change with situation and time at this time there were more important issues to battle with.

Time came for the college to close for Easter holidays. I went to my brother's place where I always stayed during the school holidays. The first person to whom I revealed my status was my sister in law. She advised me to go to my parents' home so that she can tell my brother during my absence. My brother is not a very easy person to approach even in

normal circumstances. The dominance that goes with the expression of masculinity ranks very high in him like other members of my family. Men like him who have been brought up to demand recognition and authority especially from women behave in similar patterns. Both my sister in law and I resorted to him being told during my absence because we foresaw a situation that was going to explode and we could not even imagine what he would do to me. My brother and me were close and he had always been very protective of me and I was sure the pregnancy would bring trouble to me.

8.14 Pregnant and back in Matelile

I therefore left my brother's house to go to my father's. I had the longest trip I had ever taken to my home. I was confused, hurt and frustrated because I had let down people that I cared about so much. As I was in the bus ideas came to my mind. All of any ideas that I remember surfacing were like maybe the best option for me would have been to commit suicide. The reason behind my choice of suicide emerged from the thoughts that my parents especially my father was going to kill me anyway. I therefore did not wish to put the responsibility of my death in his hands but my own. I had left this village where I was very highly regarded and used as a role model in families that attempted to encourage their girls to gain education. I came back different as one who has brought shame and my feelings about myself webbed very low. I felt I was worthless as people like me who throw away trust are not worthy.

I got off the bus and everything around me seemed so old, forsaken and abandoned. The lovely scenery that had always attracted my mind especially when I finally got home after being away for long was just not there this time around. I walked to my father's house with a bowed head because of the shame I was carrying in me and with me. As I got to my home, the first person I met was my father who I had hoped would be the last one to see me. Just like my village he looked so old and poor. As soon as I saw him, tears welled in my eyes. Again I asked myself why I had betrayed him the way I had done. One look at him confirmed that there was no way I could tell him how I went to college to become pregnant instead of studying. I did not allow the tears to drop but I could guess my father

was surprised at the way I greeted him which was too cold for me and him. But he did not say anything. My mother was not home when I arrived. She came some time after I had been in the house and had kept myself busy with some household chores. By the time she came I was settled and had made myself as comfortable as I could be under the circumstances.

I was with my family for some days without them suspecting that I was in any kind of trouble. However when I found the time to be alone I would cry heartily and pray for a miracle to happen such that the next pregnancy test would be negative. I wished for a miracle to occur such that I would no more be pregnant. I overworked myself with the hope that I would somehow loose the baby. During the days that I spent at my home, I did not breathe a word to any body about my pregnancy.

Two days after my arrival at home, the secret of my pregnancy came out. I was doing my housework as usual as I saw somebody walk towards my home. The person was my brother and the cross and stern look on his face could not be mistaken for anything else other than anger and hurt. My brother, a young man who usually walked straight and tall seemed to struggle to raise his legs. He struggled to lift his body and make movements that allowed him to cover the distance. I looked at him once and I could tell that he knew that I was pregnant and was here to discuss with my parents. Since lately I had the habit to pray for miracles, this time I prayed for something. I prayed for yet another miracle in the form of anything that could have the power to make me just evaporate and not be visible to anybody, even to myself.

My bother arrived home, spent some time with my father who called me to come to them. I was so afraid and felt so alone that instead of proper acceptable greetings I managed to mumble something. I stood there in front of both men without looking anyone of them in the eye. My father told me that my brother had just informed him that I was pregnant and wanted to know if that was true. I gave him a positive answer. My father had other questions like who is responsible for the pregnancy, did you have an intention to marry which all sounded very confusing and hurtful. I do not remember how I answered the

questions but I was instructed by my father to go back to Maseru with my brother who would in turn do as my father had instructed him. I did not know what the instructions were, and I did not make an effort to find out. I was determined that I will do all that they would want me to do. My mother was not home so I made arrangements to leave to go to Maseru and was ready to go within a short spell of time.

As my brother and myself were about to leave, my father said the words that gave me the courage that I would ever need in my whole life as a pregnant or having been pregnant teenager. He called my brother by his name and said "...u tsamaee hantle le ngoana eo oa ka. Ho se ke be ha etsahala letho le tla hlaba pelo ea ka ka eena. Moo u thatafalloang u mo khutlisetse ho 'na." My father, the man who I felt I had hurt most, still refers to me as his child. He went further to instruct my brother to treat me well, and in addition said that if things get tough I should come back home to them (my family). So this meant my father would not forsake me. This moment touched my heart very much as I did not expect to get any love and care from anybody let alone my father. That was how I left my father's house that day.

8.15 The journey

We took a mini bus from my village to the city. I was seated near my brother. I could sense that he was very angry with me. We did not talk to each other from the village to his home that took about four hours. As I got into the house my sister in law signalled to me that my brother was very angry. He got busy with his work and I got an opportunity to be alone with my sister in law who confirmed how angry my brother was about my pregnancy. The night came without my brother and I talking. The only communication that prevailed was the look he gave me with anger while I would look elsewhere each time my eyes accidentally met his. The following day my sister in law informed me that I was to go with my brother to the doctor's surgery to confirm the pregnancy once again. This we did still silently.

After the doctor's place, my brother decided that we go to the college that was in the same town. It is on the way to the college where my brother asked me some questions. His first question was "How many times did you have sex with the boy who has made you pregnant?" I mentioned some number and he said, "you are not telling the truth, how can you have been pregnant only in those few encounters?" Then I got very confused. I now knew that the significance of figures to indicate truth gets applied in diverse situations.

So the fact that I was pregnant to my brother and his type of or some people, meant that I had had sex many times. I do not know what many may have meant in the particular instance but it was shameful for me to have had sex let alone to have had it many times. My brother and the people around me would have been the last people I would have liked to discuss my sexual activities with. I felt very humiliated even to talk about sex and me together. The details that he wanted to get from me embarrassed me even further. I felt dirty and wondered to how many people I would have to answer the type of questions my brother asked me on that day. I do not know why, but there is a statement that comes back to my mind from that day's discussion with my brother. "Hantle linyonyofelana tseo le ntseng le li etsa, le re li tla holisoa ke bo-mang?" Nyonyofelana is a child but not just any child. It refers to a child who is despised unwanted and hated.

So there it was coming out, my brother despises my unborn baby. He already expresses a feeling that the baby will be a financial burden and wondered whose responsibility it will be to bring up or raise the child. So this was where the whole problem was with my brother as I perceived it at the time and as I analyse it now. He did not want to be responsible for bringing up my baby. The idea hovered around me for a long time and it showed itself in my determination not to let my child to be anybody's financial burden besides mine. In order to honour the wish not to turn my child into anybody's financial burden, I did every odd job that I could lay my hands on and I never asked for financial assistance.

My brother and I went to the college where I was still a student and met with the Boarding Master who was an overseer in most of the college occurrences. The man was a very fatherly figure. He was somebody that I respected to an extent of never being able to lie to him. As we found ourselves in his presence, he informed my brother about the pregnancy and advised about the rules and regulations. The college demands that every girl who has been in "privacy" with a male should be expelled from college.

The practised policy in the institution was such that if the boy accepted responsibility of the pregnancy, they would marry, the boy would continue with his studies while the girl would go away on maternity leave after which she may return much later. This was a common practice such that majority of girls that found themselves pregnant while in the college married their college suitors. No wonder my case became unique in that I was not to marry the father of my child. The master therefore advised that I get back to college after the Easter vacation so that the college authorities can intervene on behalf of my family. The intention was to confront me with the issues of my pregnancy and question me about who the father of my child was. Then when I have mentioned who he was we could both go through a mini court case. Both my brother and the boarding master agreed on this issue and I went back to my brother's home where I spent the rest of the days waiting for the day that college would reopen.

Life in my brother's house was full of challenges and torments on my part. I did not want to be with any people. I wanted to be on my own to chew and swallow the state that I was in. I do not remember making any definite plans about my life and the state in which I found myself. I cannot call all thinking that I went through plans, because everything I thought about ended up being like crumbs of bread. The ideas were little pieces that could not feel anybody's stomach to get rid of the hunger unless they could be bound together into a much bulkier form. Ideas bounced in my mind but almost all of them lacked meaning because I failed to complete them. I continued to think about suicide but I did not know what kills a person and exactly how I will access the means to die. I perceived suicide as the only way in which I could hide my shame. I felt death was the best option because it would take both my already unwanted child and me to a different

place. The idea of a different place after death also scared me. Because of my Christian upbringing I could not bear the idea of taking my own life. At this time things were even more complicated because there were two lives involved here, that of my unborn baby and mine. The idea of suicide also seemed unfair because my father had assured me of his love no matter whether I was pregnant or not.

College reopened and I went back to school. As I looked at people's faces I knew that my pregnancy at this time was common knowledge. I wanted all issues about my pregnancy to get settled as quickly as possible so that I do not stay in the place any longer. It was in this place that I got pregnant and memories of all what happened to lead me to my current status were held in the place. 'Moshana' like other college students came back. We had been communicating by letters and we both had shared our feelings about the pregnancy. She was determined to give me all the support that she could be able to at the time.

The physical problems associated with pregnancy started to emerge more strongly. My major problem at the college was that somehow food had started tasting and smelling funny, so much that some of the food would just not stay in my tummy. I had problems of serious nausea and I felt like not eating at all. I blamed the feelings on preparation of bulk food; of course I had to find something else to blame besides the pregnancy. The pregnancy also started advancing and I gained weight fast around my mid area. This caused my always-normal uniform to get too tight to an extent that I could not button my dress anymore. It was becoming obvious that before long almost every soul will realise that I was really pregnant.

8.16 I had a dream

To date I do not know what dreams are, I do not know what makes one to dream of certain things and at certain times. But I do have respect for a dream that I had one time as I slept during the pregnancy. The dream came the night before one of my mates had made arrangements and organised for me to go and have one of the home brewed type of

abortions. I still do not know exactly where the abortion would be performed and I have no idea even how and exactly by whom the operation if it qualifies to be labelled operation would be carried out. All I know is that a mate of mine who did not want me to go through life as a mother who brought into this world an illegitimate child, was ready to save my situation. At the time if I had been asked which person loved me more than any other in the world, I would have mentioned the particular lady. Is that not what I wanted at the time? Remember how I have already mentioned my desire for a miracle, and I said any miracle that would get rid of the pregnancy was welcome. At the time the pregnancy was just something in me, it was not a baby in my mind, or a human being who had the right to life or any of those arguments. Back now to the dream of that night. I dreamt seeing myself in a coffin, dead, both my parents were in their house together with my coffin. There were other people in this house but I do not remember who they were. I remember only my parents because they are the people who were most important in my life then.

Figure 4: My Father



Both my parents were at different corners of the room and I realised how they each fainted, made efforts to get up but could not keep themselves balanced as they fainted again and again. Of the two parents my father touched me emotionally more than my mother. He had always been so strong and yet in the dream there he was showing signs of weakness especially when the signs were similar to my mother's own whom I had accepted as weak. My identity that had seemed stable after my father's reassurance shifted again in the presence of my school -mates. I got convinced that the best thing at the moment was abortion but the dream

threw me back to being my parents' daughter and to consider their feelings. Then I made a decision based on the dream, I decided to stay pregnant.

This dream made me change my mind about the planned abortion and any other abortion plans. Whenever the word abortion was mentioned in my presence, the dream of that night came back to my mind and I made up my mind with the help of my friend 'Moshana' that I will not consider abortion as an option for myself. I never tried the idea of abortion again and I am glad today that I removed abortion from my mind.

I had come back to my learning institution and instead of being happy that I was to be together with my boyfriend. Instead the biological father to my child made me uncomfortable as things went sour between us. One look at his face told me things were different and the look he gave me told me that he did not want to have anything to do with the pregnant me. As a result we both pretended nothing was to be discussed. This made me frightened and afraid of him. As a result I did not mention my pregnancy until the day before the mini trial that was to be held by the college authorities. I had to meet him and tell him because one of my female teachers asked me if I had informed my boyfriend and when I said no she asked me to let him know. I requested one of my classmates to call my boyfriend for me. He came and as I told him I was pregnant he asked him what I wanted him to do. He asked me why I told him and I said because you are the father and I remember him saying that he was nobody's father.

The response I got from my partner told me a story, to me it said woman you need to wake up because you and you alone has the responsibility to bring up the baby you are carrying. And it is at this point that I realised that I had to work doubly hard to replace the father that my baby will not have and yet at the same time remain a mother to my baby. It is with that spirit in me that life held a different meaning. I expected every person that I came across in life to be against me and this birth and I had to be armed to respond to the world but be prepared to shelter my survival.

The following day my trial day came fast. I was waiting just to formalise my dismissal from the college; as there was no doubt about the particular issue. Girls had been pregnant before me and I knew the punishment was expulsion. I was scared though I received support from my colleagues. I was going to be alone in the room, without their arms to hug me. I was afraid that I might not be able to handle the case the way I would have wanted to. I had received many ideas from some of my acquaintances; based on what we thought would be the direction of events in the small court that was to discuss the fate of my baby.

8.17 The cane chair

The authorities sent somebody to say I had to report to the office of the college principal. My heart raced and beat fiercely as if the heart would leap and jump off my chest. I was now seriously scared and afraid. My 'Moshana' held my hand and walked with me for some distance and when we were close to the office we held hands, now very tightly, looked into each other's eyes and tears that came as if they were electrically fuelled just rolled and rolled. I did not remember at the time that tears could produce a stinging effect in the eyes but that day I tasted the sting of my own tears in my eyes and on my face. Tears at a time like that were different in a way, they came from an unimaginable depth in my heart to symbolise the depth of the pain I felt that day. As usual I prayed for a miracle to happen, but the miracle that I prayed for had changed since I talked to my boyfriend. The request was for God to protect, harden and strengthen my unborn baby and me so that we go through any hiccups that we shall meet in life without getting harmed. And I made a promise to God in exchange of my gift, I promised to be a good girl, the best in everything that I set out to do if only I get through the illegitimate baby ordeal unharmed.

I then opened the door to the room that I had been summoned to go to. As I entered there were three adults. They were the boarding master, matron and my teacher and my head of department. Now was the time, I could not reverse any moment. They were all seated and there were three other empty chairs and I was asked to take one and sit down. I did

as I was asked. The feeling inside the room communicated to me a sense of seriousness, an atmosphere that was like a balloon being filled with air, stretching and stretching with expectations of those who looked on to hear the big and sound that it would make as it breaks. The look on the faces of everybody in the house was threatening for me. I could not interpret what I saw in those faces at the time except to say the situation presented itself much later when people could not keep their feelings inside them any longer and cried with me.

As I was settled then the questions started. I cannot remember very clearly what the order of the period's events were. I am not even going to make an effort to do that as long as I am able to share what went on in that room that touched my life in fact the rest of me too. I remembered the experience with my brother in relation to the discussions or to be more specific the telling from him. Here are the adults before me and we are going to talk about my pregnancy that automatically translates to my sexuality and sexual activities being placed under scrutiny. With pregnancy there are no other alternatives, I am pregnant so I have had sexual intercourse and nothing else. So this was the time where my sexual activities, which were at the time a guarded secret even from myself, would be revealed in front of all the people. My brother's reaction to my pregnancy made me understand something. And that is some of the people for whom I have to unpack my saddlebacks have preconceived ideas and imaginations of the type of relationship that I must have had in order to get pregnant. If he asked me how many times I had sex with my boyfriend and I gave him a number to which his response was "you lie" then it means there was a number he was looking for and because mine was different I had to be telling a lie. According to the construction, for a teenager to be pregnant there is a specific number of sexual encounters. This is contrary to my learning in Biology.

I got asked questions about my relationship with my boyfriend. The adults wanted to know whether I had informed my boyfriend and wanted to know the response. I gave them as much details as I could afford to give at the time. I did not try to protect any information, so I told all I knew in relation to what I could remember. It is difficult to remember all the details because when I travelled lover path with my boyfriend, I never

knew that some day I would be asked to reveal all and tell as things happened. So I had not kept a record that I would share later. The questioning was comfortable, different from what I had imagined it would be like, especially different from the encounters I had with my brother.

Then my boyfriend got called in to join us. He seemed to be comfortable and forced some relaxed feeling on his face, but because I knew him I could sense that all was not well. He was also questioned about our relationship and he told his side of the story. He denied having had any sexual relationship with me and said the relationship we had ended a long time ago. Because of his denial about the relationship I was asked to bring more evidence to prove my claim of an existing relationship.

I was asked if anybody else knew about the relationship. As I mentioned people's names I wondered how anybody knows for sure that any two people have a sexual relationship. But I continued to give names. I was a human body and soul that operated like a machine that has been programmed to specific task taking. I could not raise any arguments to say what I was comfortable with and what I was not in agreement with. I mentioned girls only because I was confident that they would support me. The girls whose names I mentioned got called in one by one and they all confirmed that they knew we had a relationship. They each told different stories of where they had seen us together and how we had looked like lovers.

A question that I still remember was how and why did you think they were lovers? One girl's response to that question made more evidence to be sought in a way that has always remained in my mind. The girl disclosed how she had found us (my boyfriend and I) seated on a cane chair. I still have a clear picture of the chair in my mind. It was a half circular chair in which everybody in the small court wondered how two people fit. We were both asked to sit in that chair as we sat that evening as explained by the girl. None of us moved towards the chair to sit. As I looked at my Matron some type of understanding occurred and I moved to get seated in the chair. I fit perfectly well alone in that chair and no space got left for my boyfriend. Anyway he did not even make an

attempt to sit on that chair which we had shared so many times under different circumstances.

So the questions asked were around why anybody would have forced himself to share that chair with a girl that they were not lovers. Clearly the point was just to say to my boyfriend that even if you are not willing to take responsibility, there has been a relationship. Replicas of that chair are many and every time I see one I get reminded of that day as I struggled to convince people that the man in the room was responsible for my pregnancy. It was like I had to search for the father for the child and the finding was not an easy glide on clay as I played as a young girl back in my village.

The whole exercise took many hours of that day and we broke for lunch while the issue was still not completed. The dining hall, the place I had come to hate because of my discomfort with the food, was my destination from the college court. People looked at me knowingly and different messages were communicated by the looks. Some mainly were interested in what had transpired in that room. I suspected that some of the girls, who had been called in to bear witness to the existence of the relationship between my boyfriend and I, had shared their versions and people wanted to know my side of the story. I did not feel like there was much to be shared, because of the need for girls to be witness to the relationship was an indication that my boyfriend denied the knowledge of the relationship.

8.18 The lunch hour

I am a music lover. Music plays a very important role in my life, there are words that people gifted in singing select to portray meanings and paint situations, the particular words are powerful. On that day and at that lunch hour a number by Dolly Parton, Just because I am a woman played on the big college machine. It was a song I had listened to many times before this time. But today it was like the words had changed their meaning. The song replaced the one that had been my boyfriend's favourite which was "Baba no Mama ndiya ethanda le ntompi, eowe baba no mama ndiya e thanda le ntombi " which

translates to “Mum and Dad I love the girl”. As usual ‘Moshana’ was waiting for me at the doorway and we sat for lunch together. I shared with her what I could remember of the courtroom. We both resigned to my ordeal to face bringing a fatherless child to this world.

We all reconvened after lunch and finished up whatever business was incomplete. As the authorities released us, we both knew that we had broken the college rules by being in “private” at odd times and as such we had been informed that we are to get formal letters of dismissal for our parents. As the college was a little out of the town we were informed that we should be ready to be taken by college transport to the main bus stop where we could travel to our different homes. I had been packing my belongings into my suitcases and bags. Packing has never been more painful for me. As I packed the bags, it was like I was packing my whole life and my education too in the bags. The following morning I did collect a letter of expulsion from the administrator’s office so that I could give it to my parents on my arrival home. The letter was sealed and that disappointed me very much because I was eager to read the contents.

8.19 The journey home

As I travelled to my home then thoughts about life at home and ahead of me ran through my mind. I had not had any communication with both my parents since I left home except once. I had been able to write this one letter to my parents to say I was sorry and asked for their forgiveness. But I had not been with them face to face. I was afraid of my parents, everybody and everything that would remind me of my peaceful protected upbringing. I figured how innocent I was when I left my village and now saw myself as dirty and contaminated or even poisoned. I was still determined to work hard in order to protect my baby from any harm, but I did not know exactly what it was she would need protection from. I have so far related stories of my relationship with one of my brothers, and this is because he was the only one that we had met with since the discovery of my pregnancy. I was now to get home and meet the rest of the family.

As I got off the bus more tears whirled in my eyes. How on earth am I going to face everybody and every thing? As I get off the bus, I realise that there is life around my house. I saw smoke drifting through the hut and I conclude that that is my mother's work preparing the evening meals for the family. My mother, the woman who has taught me many things I know about life. She never taught me to go to school and have babies, but here I am I have taken the step into baby making. The suitcase was heavy, I could not carry it all by myself, and so I had to walk to my home that is a few kilometres from the bus stop. But before I could reach home, my brother who comes after me ran towards me pushing a wheelbarrow on which we were to carry my luggage. Then we carried the luggage and approached home. As I got home I found my mother who immediately went inside and one look at her told me that she was crying. I joined in the tear shedding that was to help both of us and brought us even closer in the battles that we were to face together as mother and daughter who share the stigma of an unwanted pregnancy in the family.

As we cried we shared many things. This came as a result of me trying to tell my mother how I know that I had hurt them as a family and I asked for her forgiveness. She promised me her support but advised me that mistakes of that nature are not to be repeated. Through my pregnancy, I relied heavily on my mother's support. But her elder sister became the best friend that I ever had. My mother comes from a family of two girls and mother is the youngest. The two married men from the same village and had their houses within a short distance of each other.

In my language I would have called my mother's sister "Nkhono" that would translate to grand- mother. Nkhono and I shared a special relationship that became strengthened by my pregnancy. Nkhono was a very strong woman. She was not like my mother at all in the way she handled problems. She would battle and voice out her opinions even if hers were different from those of the rest of the people. Though my father was a harsh and fierce man, Nkhono was always able to tackle him and give him her opinion. My father never used to like the confrontations he received from my Nkhono. At the time I did not know but the analysis I make now is that my father had to protect the powerful position

he was born to be in as a man. Father was uncomfortable because Nkhono challenged and refused the domination of the male in the form of my father. Thus the two of them saw the world from different angles. Because they could not agree hell used to break loose. The strain of their relationship became even more intense with my being at home and pregnant. I had a feeling of total relaxation and comfort when I was with Nkhono, so I spent more time with her. My father did not like the idea much, but later he gave up on trying to separate us.

It is acceptable for pregnant women to be given some funny, mocking names like Mokhachane, Mofumahali that go well with marriage and babies. I remember this particular aspect of my life because as a single pregnant girl I wished people did not even realise my condition, but pregnancy cannot be hidden for a long time. Soon the physical changes were be observed and people started calling me by the same teasing names as if it is all right for me to be pregnant. That used to be painful for me. Nkhono was always with me and in my advanced stage of pregnancy people would laugh at her and mock her about how I am bound to deliver in her presence alone. Some would ask if she was not afraid to deliver babies because she seems to always be with me even at places where there would be no midwife to assist. But she was not afraid and with her I enjoyed the protection against people who would have treated me badly. She was always ready to jump in and help me fight the battles that I met with. I spent most of my pregnancy period in the valued care of Nkhono. She gave me courage even in my most low days and those were many.

The lowest days that I spent during the period were sometimes caused by the visits that I received from some of my college colleagues. The colleagues would be on official duty to man the local Agricultural Research plots and they would come via my home to say hello or at times I felt that they came to check on my progression so that they can have stories to share about me and my condition. As I learned in my condition, people take advantage and enjoy the pains of others. At my village I became the object of laughter, some people rejoiced at my pain. As my bulk of a tummy grew bigger and bigger, people did not need to be told that I was home because I was pregnant, they could see that for themselves.

And there were days and periods where I wished I could tell or instruct the pregnancy to disappear so that I look 'normal' and then when the situation passes my luggage can comfortably crawl back into me. This business of the pregnancy staying with me even during times when I would have wished it away disturbed me. Indeed the feeling of entrapment made me uncomfortable.

8.20 Future plans

At the time something else happened to me. As my pregnancy progressed I made plans for my future and the unborn baby's. I remember sharing with my mother that as soon as the baby was born I would take it to the father's parents' house because he did not have a personal home. My mother told me that the relationship that a mother has with a baby is so strong that I cannot bear to leave my child and abandon the baby at any doorstep as I told her I would. I felt the love for the stranger I was carrying and yet the resentment of the circumstances that brought the baby into my womb were overwhelming. I could not bring myself to hate the baby though at times I wished I could. I would hug my pregnant tummy to protect it whenever I found myself in a situation where there was possible danger for the baby. Even the desire to abort the baby had long left me. Nkhono too taught me about how important life is, she showed me many reasons why my life should go on, she assured me of their love to me as parents and said how much they needed me. The baby had sort of interfered in my plans especially plans to do with school or education.

8.21 Skirt length

As I went through my life at my home there were other politics that affected me as a pregnant teenager who was unmarried. These politics were politics of skirt length. You see during those days the length of a woman's skirt told the woman's marital status. With current trends in the fashion world the status is impossible to judge by the skirt length though in some corners this is still important. Wearing skirts that are above the knee was expected of single girls while married women's skirts had to go below the knee. If I am

pregnant then as a teenager I could not place my skirt length. In my mind I was a girl so I qualified for the above the knee length and yet because of my pregnant status I would not qualify to go above the knee. Women in my area would call me names and say I am a bat, which interprets me as neither a mouse nor a bird, meaning I was somewhere between. In fact in some families pregnant girls were forced to lower their skirts.

Figure 5: In my short skirt



My family did not get into the skirt issues so I made my choice and took the option to go above the knee. I broke yet another accepted rule and people would be offended and interpret my intentions to attract single men and trap them into marrying me without knowing that I have had a baby. You see this baby thing even complicates future relationships because in some circles I was expected to date married men while in others I was expected to date single men. The status as a pregnant teenager always placed me somewhere between man-made boundaries. It made me to never really belong here nor there. May be this is why even today I am not

comfortable to deal with a life that places me in a box of some kind. It is not surprising therefore that even my choice of research methodology indicates my desire not to be in any box. I am quite aware of the expectations and norms to belong to and therefore abide by the set rules, but the real me can not quite fit as a result the boundaries are forced to expand and allow themselves to reshape in order to accommodate even the oddest of the shapes like mine.

To me research methodology seems to have become a pure leather shoe. Somehow this kind of shoe has a tendency and ability to allow all sorts of feet shapes to fit in. It is

normally the shoes that bend and twist to fit in all the different kinds and shapes of feet. One looks at the same size six after different feet fit into each of them, it is very difficult to believe that those shoes were once identical. The shapes show the different foot shapes according to who owned which shoe. But most of all the shoes, the entire lot have done what they were set out to do which is to cover, contain or even protect the feet. This is how I observe research methodology. Remember the shoes end up being different colours, sizes and designs also.

8.22 Desire for further studies

At my village there was no place where I could do anything about my studies and this frustrated me. My desire to get back to school grew even higher. The need for education and the hunger in me mounted even higher. I needed this education for many reasons more so at this point, to show the world that because I have been a pregnant teenager, that does not make me intellectually deficient and immoral too. Almost all my nights were filled with dreams about me with colleagues studying somewhere. I try to remember the word that one of my PhD colleagues used just the other day to describe pregnant teenagers, 'promiscuous' she said. Though she wanted to change the word later that is what she sees pregnant teenagers as and people called me that too. I wished to prove by going back to being a student and working well in my studies and whole life that I am valuable. When my colleague withdrew 'promiscuous' to search for a better word, I understood. She did not think I could have been a pregnant teenager; according to certain beliefs, pregnant teenagers do not get to where I am. Pregnant teenager and PhD do not seem to partner. Even though I was determined to make it in life, I did not have an idea how many doors exist in life even for pregnant teenagers who get given opportunities to further their education.

My mother shared with me much later what transpired between her and her sister on the first day that they learned I was pregnant. She tells me they spent about three quarters of the night in each other's company talking about how unfortunate they area as parents. They shared about what people would say about me, my family especially them 'mothers'

who should have taught me how to behave. My mother would escort Nkhono towards her house only for Nkhono to escort my mother back. She said they talked slowly and in low tones to avoid being overheard by passers by and in the process they prayed. They prayed that God keeps me well and hoped that my boyfriend would be willing to take responsibility. His taking responsibility would have been accepted if he married me. As I arrived home from college after I was expelled, and it was obvious that there was no marriage coming my way from my baby's father the hopes of the two ladies that supported me through out were shattered. They now prayed for different things to happen to me. These included getting a normal baby, an easy birth and the ability to get the baby grow fast enough to allow me to go back to school. The issue of getting back to my education was emphasized in my family by both my parents. We did not know what or which institution I would go to but we all had hopes that someday I would be back in a classroom and studying.

8.21 My encounter with my current views

I finally went to the same institution and this was two years later. The gossip was strong but I got a lot of support from the staff members. I worked hard and I passed well. I was a dux student for my year. The names of dux students are written on some permanent board and displayed. My name has been there since 1998 when I finally completed. The achievements in class boosted my morale and downplayed the efforts of anybody to torture me. Because of passing well, I received a scholarship to study in Kenya even there I worked well.

I am aware of how a biography may be given meaning as just one adventure of a single person who comes out as a hero. Even as I write mine I have reflected on issues that have been a part of my life. I do not intend in any way to use it to say I have won. But I use this biography to say it has been my life.

I went on to pursue a Master's Degree in Science Education and Development. One of my tutors especially in the development courses evoked a very long buried feeling in me that things and what we think we see is not always just that but other meanings can be made from the same situations. I had opportunities to question the relationships between nations. Later this led me to drag the ideas from the very international relationships throughout to the personal. Teenage pregnancy is from one mirror a personal encounter, but the meanings around it are varied according to who looks at it when and how. Like other issues that surround women it is not innocently constructed but is fashioned in certain ways as a means to maintain power where it has always been pushed to through patriarchal systems.



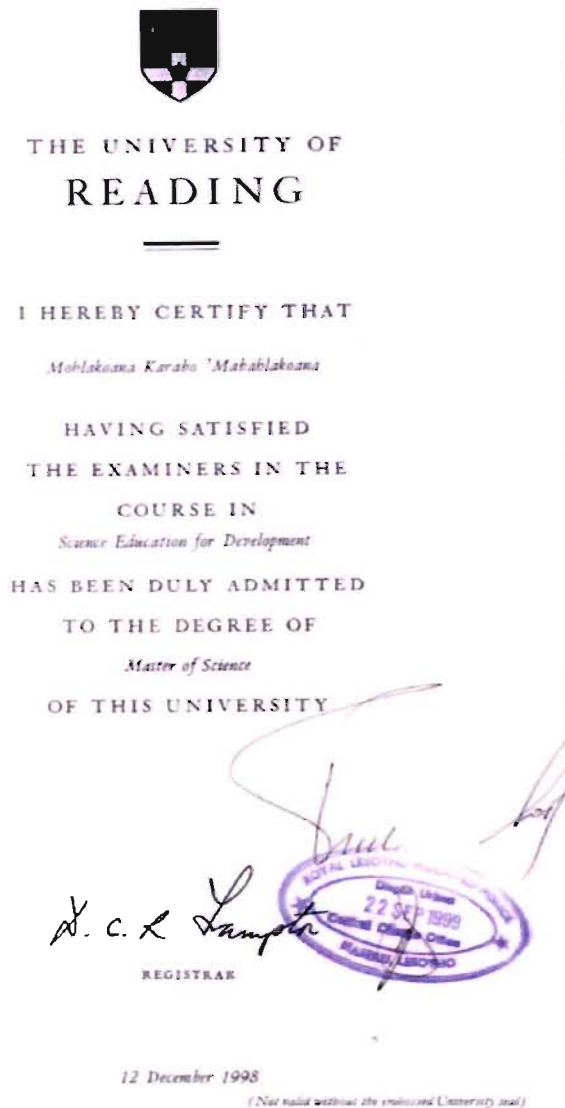
Figure :6 Graduation

My work at Masters looked at participation of girls in Science and Technology and my eyes opened. I began to view work of authors who shifted from questioning what was wrong with girls such that they do not take certain subjects at school to what was wrong with the subjects such that the girls did not do them. This encounter marked a period in my life where I shifted my focus from what is wrong with them but to look at what is wrong with the systems.

The exposures and encounters made me want to do something and I knew that I had to take action though it was not clear what kind of action to take. I felt there were too many practices that should be discontinued and yet I did not know how to get involved. In my own little encounters with individuals and groups I took an opportunity to share. I felt

though that I needed to be powerful to include my voice in pointing out things that I felt needed attention.

Figure 7: Msc Certificate



I was from a field where one cannot say "I" in writing or doing research. Thus further studies were not my idea of claiming the "I". The way I viewed academic work was influenced by the same systems I intended to question and rearrange in a way that voices of all can be listened to. I just knew that I had to have this PhD, so that after it, then I could be in a position to question from a more powerful position the unjust world in which individuals are born. I had not been exposed to feminist work per say and I do not even know if I would have been comfortable

claiming my position as feminist at that time. As I made an effort to gain that power which would come with my doctoral studies, we shared in the support seminars what we intended to do. I never shared what I was interviewed to come and do my research on. In those seminars I discovered that even without a doctorate I could pursue my dream to gain audience for the voices that have always shouted just because they did no use the

right language. I had been and I still am one of these voices. This is why I am claim my rightful position to share my story as data and experiences of the participants in the study to share the meanings we make of our lives as lived.

As I got back to my country, I started to question the position of the practices that when I shared, people found me mad. My eyes were open enough to allow me to deviate from the accept meaning making processes to my own way of looking at issues and situations. I got involved in many ways especially with relationships and issues of school going women in a predominantly male field of professional agricultural science. What a world, farming is supposed to be dominated by women but once it becomes professional, men call the shots.

My travels in the field of acquiring education can bear witness to my intentions to work with and for women's emancipation. My professional upbringing was in the sciences. The idea of research with control groups was the way I was initiated. I could not last, as my spirit is too free to be locked in some kind of container. I moved from that field because I missed involvement with human beings. No wonder I moved to train as a teacher. I missed people and as a result I did something about it. When one moves from the Science subjects to any social sciences, in some areas there is the feeling that you are running away from something. Reactions from friends and colleagues were Oh she is now running away from the core courses. It seems like I am one person who is meant to run away, but for me it is not running away from 'difficult science' to 'simple science'. My running away is always to get closer to people where I can make a direct contribution to change people's lives and mine for the better. May be my involvement in all women activities in my community helps tell my story. At my village of Khubetsoana, I am known because of my involvement with my people on several issues, I have learnt much from this encounters and I have grown as together with people that come to me, we search for ways to solve problems. Everything does happen for a purpose, the people that I see at my home are always women and may be it is because they know how much they touch my heart. I have not refused men to come to consult but I always feel I would rather consult for those who

cannot pay for anything (they are unable to because they are poor) and to negotiate services that are cheap or free for them.

8.22 Mama Ngina hall

As my anxieties mount, about how similar my supervisor and I are in many ways, the fear to be completely swallowed by her approaches gets higher. I have done things with women and at times for women for things to get better but I have never thought of it as feminism. I remember studying in one African country as a foreigner. I stayed in a hostel where women of all ages and calibres were housed. The door would be locked every evening at ten o'clock p.m. to protect the women. I never succeeded in finding out from the management exactly what we were to be protected from.

By the entrance to this building there was an old generator that kept the hostel lit. The old generator would at times throw up sparks of light or is it fire and threatening sounds of something about to blow up would be heard from a distance. We all used to be frightened since there was no other opening through which we could go out of the building, as the windows were also burglar proofed. I was one of the women who had to fight very hard for the entrance to be left open or any means by which we could escape be created so that we are not in danger in case the generator finally blew. I still remember this case well because my situation and as vice chairperson of the women representatives in a foreign country nearly sacrificed my education. My president, a local woman with whom we used to fight the women battles did not complete her studies. She turned victim of a local strike where I could not participate. Because of diplomatic immunity all foreigners were drawn away from the battlefield so I got out of trouble. I have always felt that the authorities were eager to get rid of the women who said enough was enough and they did with this particular girl, my dear colleague and friend Rajan.

I do get back to what my supervisor said as I began sharing with her the intent of my study. That nothing happens to anyone without a purpose. Yes I am chosen in my own way. I was chosen by my being pregnant at the age of sixteen, chosen for the opportunity

to continue with my studies, chosen to be interested and willing to be involved in issues of women and now to finally say yes I have been a pregnant teenager and now I am strategically situated to contribute in knowledge making. I feel that I am the best-placed individual to do this study as researcher and research instrument.

Yes indeed things that happen to us happen for a purpose. I then remember those hard days when I discovered that I was to give birth to an illegitimate child. Things were rough and yet some power kept me going and gave me the strength to carry on. I believe I have reached where I have for a purpose and I believe that this involvement in knowledge making is one giant jump towards the direction of my calling. As I visited one home for the girls who have babies out of wedlock, the caretaker told the girls that my visit was valuable as it was different. The visitors who had been there as visitors, were outsiders in the field of teenage pregnancy while I was an insider. The girls said they were more comfortable talking to me, as I understood their problems through my personal experience. They were surprised that a woman like me had also been pregnant as a teenager. I am happy that I have been and as a result I can relate to the girls without passing judgement.

I took this opportunity to observe my own study on teenage pregnancy as I observed with realization how differently I always come up in thinking about it. Ever since teenage pregnancy happened to me that many years ago my own views have always been different from the views of many others. Yes I do mean happened to me, as I had sent no invitation for the pregnancy to come my way. I have always known that I did not bring the 'problematic' pregnancy to my self, as many times those around me had wanted me to believe. I expect some people to shudder and display shock for my use of the words happened to me because the general opinion is that women of my kind brought it to themselves. I cannot talk for the motives of every pregnant out of wedlock girl. But I can say for my part and the likes of me there are issues deeper than what a normal eye can see in the whole game. And it is that same deep seeded feeling that prompted me to undertake the study. Some other 'things' were responsible for the way I was viewed and treated. And I have always been determined to find out the relationships and issues that

contributed to my circumstances and those of the girls in the same kraal or circle with me.

As I am at this stage of my just writing I pause to remind myself of what prompted me to set aside other parts or activities for my dissertation to now concentrate on the meaning that I have made from and through the encounters with others. And I revisit my own life where I left it that long ago. I take the walk through my experiences, especially to look at and think about the issues more critically in feminist ways of questioning what has always been accepted as normal. In the sharing sessions during my last week seminar session one of my supervisors pointed out that theorising may be difficult for my study. That pushed me to work at it and see how I move on. I have not even checked on whether I am on the right track, as lately tracks of any kind seem to disturb me. I have come to view the tracks as handcuffs that restrict my hand's movements and I am not comfortable about that. In urging me to go on and not to loose hope the same supervisor said 'write, just write and write' and like a fighter and struggler I have come to be that is exactly what I did. It is no more about structures but about what I believe in and what I am ready to struggle to push to the end. Even if the pushing means destroying the beliefs and values of others about my type and I, I am still ready.

For me teenage pregnancy has been a painful experience and transcends any explanation I am able to put in writing. Who feels it knows it. Dobby Grey.

8.23 Finally

Now that I am at the beginning of the many diverse challenges to complete the chapter I feel the need to reflect. The idea to use pictures, metaphor, the expedition and artefacts has worked for me. I shared the pictures and artefacts as a way to mark that the narrative of my life expedition has been. The expedition works well for me as it interacts well with the toils and challenges of travel through rugged mountains of Lesotho. I go for the expeditions often to free my soul. At times I go alone but most times I am in the company of young men and women. I look in their faces and wonder what their personal

expeditions are like. And then in my heart I vow to make things better for all of us as I am now better situated.

As I reflect on the young people I observe the patterns of paths marked by human movement through the mountains. I am always amazed at how I fail to tell which path begins and ends where. There are intersections, circular turns and some shapes that fail to fit my limited language knowledge. The narrow winded paths are so dangerous to tackle even on foot. The surefooted Basotho pony tackles the paths best. The ponies of the breed have gotten fewer and efforts to breed the horses move slowly.

Getting back to the paths, I know they did start somewhere and they lead to marked destinations. Unlike the mountains and paths, I feel I finally have found hold on where I began and I have pointers of my destination. On those windy days up in the mountains, unlike before I have warm clothing and I am prepared to fill my lungs with the fresh healthy air for life. I am not just warm, I am also on the back of a sure-footed horse, and I feel strong and ready for many more of those winding paths on my expeditions with life.

8.24 Conclusion

This chapter has served to portray one of the pieces that make up my life history. I have shared and allowed the reader to journey with me while I experience teenage pregnancy. I have taken opportunities of the feminist ways of knowing to value this experience as data. I have further taken the opportunity to tell it myself. The experiences I have shared in this chapter illuminate my struggles as a woman within a wider society. Society that is dominated by patriarchy and struggles of power those are typical of the system. This biography is personal. But in many ways it gives a picture of some of the struggles that women of childbearing ages are confronted with. The personal experiences I have shared in this chapter get their construction from the wider political context. The autobiography indicates the complex nature of relationships within a Lesotho context. The emphasis of my life as I make meaning of it is at the centre. But the influence of my identity in

relation to those around me also shapes the way I make meaning of the same experience. In the next chapter I bring the study to finalisation.

Chapter Nine

Packing suitcases?

9.1 Introduction

As I finally park my suitcases to begin another part of the research journey, I realize how this study has sent me out to unknown destinations. Despite these unknown destinations, I apprehend I have to pack and get around beginning new journeys and completing the ones I have begun. In this chapter, therefore, I bring together all the work I started in chapter one through to chapter eight to wrap up this particular journey. As I bring the study to closure, I will firstly consider the findings of the study, limitations and strengths of the study. Secondly I will present the journey I have undertaken in the study and, thirdly, I will present what I figure to be the way forward for activities in young women's pregnancy, particularly in the area of research.

9.2 Findings

The study was to respond to the critical question that is:

What are the experiences of young women's pregnancy in Lesotho, how are they shaped, and what effects do they have in the young women's education?

In the introductory chapter for the study I foreground the study by pointing out that the language used in young women's pregnancy is regulatory and posts the issue as a problem. I pointed out in the same chapter that the area of research is dominated by bias ways of knowing which ignore, silence and fail to consider the involvement of the subjects and the personal experiences that go with being a pregnant young woman in Lesotho. It is in the chapter that I proposed the move to use different frameworks to investigate young women's pregnancy. This is an issue I revisit later in the chapter.

As I scanned the literature in my area of enquiry it made sense for me to present the context of the study. Since experience is bound and tied to the context, I found it imperative to present the political, economic, structural and socio-cultural aspects of the site of the study. With the contextual issues I established the evidence for the political climate that is in one hand willing to better life for all citizens of Lesotho as indicated by several legal and policy adjustments. On the other hand, some more legal adjustments are still necessary to harmonize the political climate further. The experiences of participants in the study are indicative of and reinforce observations that the political climate alone does not bring change. The finding, reminds us that lives of women in Africa are situated within historical structures as critical theorists argue. The observation also points that despite the changing legal environment in Lesotho, subjects do not change their practices. It can be concluded that the life experiences of subjects are given particular connotations regarding diverse procedures through which they are understood and challenged.

The review of literature for this study was done with awareness that the dominant research in young women's pregnancy has been biomedical and more quantitative in nature. The review of global, regional and national studies conducted in the area of young women confirmed the hesitation of even feminists to undertake studies in young women's pregnancy. The literature confirmed the regulatory nature of the language in young women's pregnancy even in research. The prominent observation is that of engagement with theories that have held the individual solely responsible for pregnancy. The amalgam of frameworks I allude to in chapter one refutes the solo nature of pregnancy by observing the issue through feminist post structural theory, feminist critical theory and feminist theory. The theories raise concerns about the role played by the wider structures and larger environment in dictation and construction of subjects. The theories further interrogate by how power interacts with wider structures and the subject. Through the literature review it can be concluded that the state through agents like health facilities, family, church and school are powerful in the experiences of young women's pregnancy. The agents maintain the practices that hold young people responsible for pregnancy and insist on children as sexually pure and innocent.

The amalgam of frameworks I have alluded to earlier in the chapter I acknowledge as a breakthrough to change the pattern in young women's pregnancy discourses. By engaging poststructuralist theory I have interrogated how discourse functions, where it is located, ways in which it gets produced and regulated and how it affects subjects (Bhana, 2002). Through the stories from different players in this study, I established that once discourse is normalized, subjects have difficulty in acting outside or against the standards that operate and are functional within the particular space and time. The testimonies and parts of some of the testimonies work to reproduce the dominant discourses and sometimes invent new ones. The power that is heavily entrenched in subjects, gives opportunity for some members to point to certain ways of knowing and doing as the 'only way' in life.

It is important though to view power in a slightly different manner. The contradictions and different versions that I observed in the study from participants and myself are indicative of the poststructuralist notion of power as not possessed but working out in ways that produce and reproduce imbalances in the interaction of variable and fluid relations. In reinforcement of the poststructuralist theory for this study, critical theory served to remind us that the lives of women in Africa are located inside historical construction of patriarchy and fiscal disparity. Both critical theory and feminist theory contribute to unease about the connection between the individual subject and an oppressive social structure. It is important though to appreciate those social structures, what we think we know, our experiences and selves are socially constructed and therefore open to questioning and alterations.

The encounters with the study I have presented and the kind of data I had to collect warranted that the feminist methodology be employed. The methodological considerations were guided by feminist information on ethical issues the way to engage with tools for data collection and analysis. The engagement in the manner taught me the interactions of theoretical perspectives and practical aspects of what it means to do research in the manner. I revisit the issue later in the chapter.

The engagement with data from different participants required varied methodological approaches. Data comprised of narratives from pregnant young women including my own experiences with pregnancy and members of the wider society who might have had information to share. From the experience of interaction with the data it may be concluded that the data that is to be gathered needs to inform the tools, procedures and processes to be engaged.

As I interacted with data from participants, some major dominant of young women's pregnancy emerged and were reproduced at different levels. The participants including the pregnant young women reinforced the idea of sexual innocence of the young woman while the men were accepted as free to choose whether to be a father or not. The dominant discourses reinforced the theories that observe individuals as responsible for their experiences. The emphasis on young women to behave in certain acceptable ways in order to be identified as good women dominated the findings in the area. The idea that good *Basotho* young women should be virgins till they marry was mentioned and implied throughout the study. Men responsible for pregnancy on the other hand are accepted as absent from the young women's pregnancy. From the observation it could be concluded that any young woman who does not conform to the standards as set by society gets an identity of bad woman. While on the same note responsible men can choose to be or not be fathers.

Not much has altered in the approach of adults in their outlook of gender apposite behavior. The home and the school are all not responsive of the institutionalized prejudice that is prevalent to Lesotho. The observation confirms most feminist scholarship in the area.

The intolerable backdrop of the comprehension of children especially young women as sexually wholesome is dubious as indicated by experiences of young women in the study who were clearly guided and warned against pregnancy but still got pregnant. To a large extent the data in the study affirms the role of parents in training of young people in character construction. The construction in the manner does not accept that roles according to biological attributes are flexible and can be changed. The case and

experiences of pregnant young women in this study has proved that gender is not the only bloc of supremacy but issues such as sex, age, race, sexuality, economic status, level of education, place of residence and class also play an important part.

9.3 The game of research

Research is never a neat and tidy undertaking. What appears in the last reports, as linear step-by-step processes, does not portray the actual activities and decision-making processes before the final product gets presented. The experiences of doing this study are indicative of winding twists and turns around the way the study progressed. In designing and implementing the study I was confronted with challenges of who the research participants in the study would be.

I was clear that experiences of young women's pregnancy would come best from those who have been pregnant. The observation, therefore, warranted that I identify young women from whom I could get school experiences of pregnancy. The idea became impossible within the time limitations of this study as the idea to find school based experiences in itself assumed that young women who are or have been pregnant are in schools and are openly known to all to have been pregnant. Some schools that I visited revealed a different observation. Pregnant young women are in schools before the pregnancy is observed. Once the young women, parents, or school community notice the pregnancy, the pregnant women vanish in many ways from the schools. Even where the data covers school -based experiences, I need to note that it is difficult to directly relate to young women's pregnancy as that becomes the best-kept secret. Some experiences have come from rumored and suspected pregnancies. There are participants who are back in school though the schools do not officially know they have been pregnant. The women fear they may be expelled if they were found out and a school principal confirmed the occurrence in her school in chapter six.

During the design I also became aware that, in response to some questions on finding out about the views on the presence of pregnant young women in classrooms, I would require

individuals other than pregnant young women. Since I had to find out beliefs and values that inform decisions around young women's pregnancy, I had to add more participants.

In adding to the participants I might have left out some individuals who could have been useful resources in this study. The complication also came about as more pregnant young women came forward to participate. Then we had to decide to have two focus group sessions that were not part of the initial plan. As I view the additions positively, I appreciate that the study benefited by the employment of multiple methods and techniques of data collection. The use of both focus groups and one to one interviews with pregnant young women was advantageous as both have been helpful in the exploration of work on sensitive issues such as sexuality, HIV/AIDS and young women's pregnancy. The participants in group sessions and one to one interviews shed light to some of the experiences. I was cognizant of the group interactions as beneficial in provision of dissimilar experiences. This observation has been emphasized by the data and synthesis that I presented in chapter five.

The use of interviews with participants in the study poses questions on how much influence I have had on the outcome of the sessions. I was more known to some participants than others. My disclosure about being a pregnant young woman on its own may have altered the participants' views about the topic. While on the other hand, participants might have thought they knew what I wanted to hear and gave me that despite their real views. Here I am, a former teacher, teacher trainer, and school inspector conducting research on teenage pregnancy. I suspected that many participants might or might not buy into the objectives of the study as I shared them. I have also reflected on how many responded with thoughts that I currently work for an institution that gets involved with policy issues in government including education. All the spaces I have occupied and continue to occupy surely have had either positive or negative influences on the data.

In addition to the career, issues of age, gender and social status might also have had an influence on the study. Women may have felt the need to open up to me as a woman. On

a different note, males may have shared better with a male researcher. How much impact all these have had on the study remains an unchallenged terrain for me.

9.3 The Journey

In this chapter I aim to present some of the elements of my research journey as I realize it is important. I also bring together the meaning I make out of all that transpired through the journey.

Doing research in the way I have done in this study, in some instances, opens a whole can of worms. I have already been labeled as a woman who brings foreign ideology because of my undertaking this kind of research. It has been taken by some as a move to encourage young women to get pregnant. How can I do that to any young woman? Me who knows how rocky that route is through personal experience, as I shared in my autoethnography?

Some people, though, have encouraged me and wondered about the courage to undertake research in this way. It may be one of the beginning efforts to do research in a liberating manner. The courage to do research matches the courage of the women and men who have tried to liberate in their own known ways. I am excited about the prospects for this study and yet I am also aware of how vulnerable I am and how much I have opened pregnant young women in my country to debates. Some debates on whether previously pregnant young women should be allowed back in school have already started on one of the call in programs on one local radio and newspapers. I appreciate, though, that even with the kind of movement, doing research like this is a challenging undertaking.

The lack of support within existing research structures in my country exposed me to the truth of how alone I was in the presence of so many people. The women who I felt wanted to give me support felt inadequate. I was doing a doctorate and they felt that their experiences that bulk of knowledge they have accumulated is not sufficient for them to assist. This goes to show how much the oppressed are made not to accept credit even during times when they deserve it. It is in acknowledging the pressures that the research world can exert to exclude, that I bring issues like this one in the open. The challenge to

complete this study has been pushed in addition by other factors, by the need to claim my position as a knower, as a woman whose identity has been under constant reconstruction and how that has interacted with the way young women's pregnancy was and is viewed in my community.

It is imperative for me to reflect as I have done throughout the study. I am at the stage where I can now look back and acknowledge that the journey has been a long, tough and sometimes painful one. The challenges have been many and I have felt the test of my commitment to use myself as a research instrument. I am now tracing how that life I have shared in this study interacts and is intertwined with lives of participants in this study. Our lives have touched each other and we do hope that the lives of those who will come into contact with us in this study will understand that these are our lives and that this is the way we make meaning out of them. These lives do not bear absolute situations and people are free to subject the stories that we tell in this study to other lenses.

9.4 What meaning do I make out of the journey?

The presence of young women's pregnancy has been observed and documented in many countries. The lack of research in the area of young women's pregnancy, its interactions with power and power relations in the Lesotho context, have also been raised and pointed out. By using the feminist approach to establish the status of the pregnant young woman, I have added to the knowledge that exists so sparsely in research. And it is that knowledge that has shown that as pregnant young women we can bring change because power is productive. I have moved to use pre existing qualitative and statistical data from studies that utilized frameworks other than the one I have used in this study to widen the understanding of the young women's pregnancy discourses. But I have subjected that same data to a different framework to indicate how different meaning can be made out of the same situation by engaging a different lens.

Through the belief that change is possible, I have used the story method to illuminate that the possibility does exist for women and other oppressed groups to make sense of their own lives. As I started out with the research and as I reflected, I wondered at how much

stereotypes can influence our ways of thinking. My interactions with women who are much younger than I am opened my eyes to recognize that age and gender, or any other variable for that matter, should not be used to discriminate. Age and gender need not be used as tools to isolate and deny opportunity to participate fully in life. The way age and gender with other hidden attributes, has been constructed in societies as mine situates this group to nothingness, brainless, and any other word to which we can add the suffix ‘-less’ as a demonstration of without. I have indicated by use of the women’s life history and mine that the battles and challenges faced by a pregnant young woman are a reality and that they are indeed different from many groups and sub groups in our communities. As Singh (2000) points out, issues do not disappear just because we do not talk about them. The lack of research in the area of young women’s pregnancy in and around schooling indicates the silences that surround issues of discrimination. By sharing our stories we theorized in the language of stories as we told our situation as we understood (Singh, 2000).

In the forums where I have shared, colleagues have asked me if I am blind to all the efforts that the people of Lesotho have made to address issues of exclusion of women in general. And I have reacted by pointing out that I am aware of interventions at policy level with the Gender policy 2002 that is specifically saying that pregnant schoolgirls and teachers should not be expelled from school. These have been efforts that have been structured and built around experiences of women who have battled with similar struggles and those have been used as data to inform clauses as the one I have shared into policy.

I recognize also Lesotho’s signing and ratification of international conventions of Human Rights, CEDAW and CRC. I attest though that despite these policy interventions the people still tend to turn a deaf ear. Some institutions, like some schools, still do not uphold the commitment to stop the discrimination of pregnant girls, for example, expelling or pushing them out of schools. Members of society, the young women included, have not come to reconcile their daily-lived experiences with the laws and policies at an international or national level. The situation manifests itself in young women and society not questioning any irregularities. They have been socialized to

believe that young women's pregnancy is a shameful state, how can they even start to relate that to issues of Human Rights? In that context, rights to school are for children and in Lesotho the moment a young woman gets pregnant she renders herself adult and automatically forfeits her right to school. A surprising contraction and contradiction occurs here considering that adults are still seen at schools in the country. This brings me to question the way societies construct identities and the way that meaning making shifts to maintain the stand they want to push forward at a particular time.

The issue of young women's pregnancy then shifts from the issue of age in schooling towards something else. The complexity of the situation of the pregnant young woman in Lesotho emanates from many institutions due to the tensions between what is and what should be. I need to remind us that, according to the *Lerotholi* laws that are still functional and at par with the British Dutch law; a sixteen-year-old girl can marry and, when this sixteen year old gets pregnant, we celebrate. This indicates, therefore, that young women's pregnancy operates as just another tool of the oppressor to inhibit the women from education, a different tool that can make them knowledgeable and confident to ask the necessary and relevant questions about what society describes as constituting right or wrong.

9.5 The complacent attitude

In agreement with the complacent attitude I have referred to, research, the tool of the powerful, does not give opportunities to examine the research that is generated in the country to gender sensitive research approaches. The regulatory language has indeed infiltrated the world of research. The non-existence of school-based research by the teachers and pregnant young women is disturbing. The possible problems that are anticipated are drawn from assumptions. These assumptions themselves are constructs of bias, prejudice and judgments within societies. As a result decisions to expel or not expel are based on whims of the day and individual feelings of the moment. The issue indicates itself by the vast differences amongst the reactions of school principals and other people in authority, even at the family level.

The policies that have been developed do not match the practice at ground level where school and pregnancy interact. The casual manner, in which the total lack of issues about young women's pregnancy in school policies is addressed, as established by both principals and the survey I undertook, is shocking. There is no innocence in the way the oppressors conduct their business. The total lack of policy therefore allows for decisions to be moralistic rather than well investigated.

The school policy is not just an issue of the principal. The tripod nature of school ownership points at other stakeholders too. There are other structures within the country that are even more powerful than the principal. Teaching has been indicated as having a majority of the workforce as educated women. Some of the women are school principals and yet they do not have power or a say in policy issues. His or her role is to implement policy as dictated from somebody else above. The principal who shared about how she has tried to hide pregnant young women, admitted young women who have been pregnant to the school and yet the priest would come and kick out the students. This is indicative of how powerless some principals can be in some situations.

In the Lesotho context, the churches are powerful as they own more than 90% of schools. The church globally has its own doctrine to drive. The moralistic nature in which we make meaning has been traced to our church and religious beliefs. The church has been identified as one of the many ways in which discrimination of women has been portrayed. In this instance, the church pretends that the injustice suffered by a pregnant teenager in the school is deserved. This is indicated by punishing the mother by cutting her off from her chosen way of worship in church as was indicated by the parents. In some churches teenage pregnancy punishes the teenager herself and further punishes the mother as if the fathers have ceased to exist. The world of power and discrimination is an amazing one. The women are minors in the eyes of the law and yet when another minor in the family commits a crime the 'head of the house', the father, does not get punished.

The Government, through the Ministry of Education, also has a role to play. The inspectorate, among other duties, investigates schools to make sure that policies exist and to check what kind of policies are in place. Another role of the inspectorate is to advise

government on policy and advocate for new issues to be included at national level. The officers in the inspectorate work to link between proprietors, community and government. These are the officers who can ascertain that the policies and legislation from the government do filter through to the practitioners. During their school visits, inspectors can verify that policy gets translated into practice. But all this can happen only if the inspectors center gender in the way they operate. It is a wonder how different situations are viewed with different lenses. It is during my days as a school inspector that I realized that the school climate continued to be hostile towards women. This study of young women's pregnancy is just one of the many that need to be carried out to ensure that the school system is rendered woman friendly. This can only be achieved if inspectors, and the authorities to who they report for changes to be effected, are willing to deliberate in a gendered manner. I know the situation from personal experiences, as I have been an inspector of schools.

The last people in the policy issue are the parents. Parents of schoolgirls are not any different from the parents in church and in government institutions. I have pushed throughout this study how the ways in which we do things is determined by who we are and the way we are expected to behave and act in the particular context. Statements like "what kind of parent would want a pregnant girl in class with other children?" immediately determine for parents a side to take, though I appreciate that they have a choice. I have trouble also with that choice as the choices that we make are also informed by and within the confines of what society prescribes. How far we carry this idea depends on whether we oblige or transgress.

Parents are supposed to be the third party in school ownership. In Lesotho, parents have been constructed as passive when it comes to politics and questions about school issues. They tend to leave the issues to the experts. This persists even to teachers themselves. Once their child is in a different school from the one he or she teaches in, their role as teacher diminishes at school meetings and the parental voice speaks. It is surprising how talking with a parent's voice can be different from talking as a teacher or any other identity. It is not a wonder therefore to learn that the policy to expel pregnant girls in

certain schools was a joint undertaking between parents and school management. It brings me to wonder about what transpired in that meeting.

The electrically charged currents of power relations that I have observed in teacher parent meetings may have prevailed and it may have squeezed the less powerful into some corner, such that their voices are never heard. I concur with the opinion that policy ends up being the voice of the powerful. As ideas are negotiated sometimes the less powerful decide not to make a contribution. After all, their experience is that the final documents never bear their opinions anyway. I would be interested on seeing a policy statement produced with input of parents who have had their girl get pregnant while in school against the one of parents who lack that experience. The politics of how the personal can be political are observed in the way we make decisions. This is why experience as a tool for research has to earn the respect of the research world.

I asked principals how the school policy was developed and all of them did not mention students. This is despite the fact that they have prefects and other school committees. Children have not been consulted in the policy development process whether written or verbal.

As I made a decision to undertake this research, I never imagined even in my dreams that the intent to further my studies would challenge me so much beyond my own limits. In the road that I have traveled in this research, even as I sit down to put pen to paper and document, I am confronted with the type of world in which I am doing research and that in doing it in the way I chose to, by the use of feminist approaches, I have tested and interrogated my own life.

The intent to do research was a stage in my life, an advancement of a career. I never anticipated how much that undertaking would touch my life. I never imagined how close this study would bring me to the issues that really matter to me. These are issues around subordination and prejudice. The total lack of direct impact and relationship of research to acquire a qualification seemed far removed from teenage pregnancy and girls as a lived reality. Studies that point out to this challenge observe how the studies may seem not to

have any direct relationship to the participants. There have been arguments about the existing relationship between the theories of each subject with practice (Hooks, 1994, Singh 2000). In adding to knowledge making in the area of teenage pregnancy, I move that the ideas contained in this work will assist practitioners to put in place what has been added in terms of theorizing their practices.

9.6 Packing suitcases

In this thesis I have argued that the language used to portray young women's pregnancy is regulatory and controlling. This kind of regulatory language has infiltrated the world of research and therefore gets perpetuated. I have argued that the language used in this regard has penetrated the world of research such that in research we get blinded and stop before looking beyond the language. And I further argue that silences around the area in research are also a direct result of unequal power relations.

The way young women's pregnancy and schooling are perceived in the Lesotho context is as a result of the social constructions existing around the area. I argue that the power relations have so far seemed to continue to reproduce the ideas as constructed.

9.7 Future directions

Research as one of the tools that influences policy needs to be directed to the relevant bodies and participants. The research world should therefore drive the intent to engage novice researchers. The researchers who get appointed in this manner should be trained to be able to indulge in research that differs from the traditional research paradigms. The research community should avail support structures for the upcoming researchers so that issues such as gender and age are at the center of research.

Capacity building for research has to be grounded in the reality that the process of gendering in most contexts radically skews access to self-worth. For men, a group in one cultural context that may mean that self-worth is rarely questioned. For women, in another cultural context, it may mean that speaking one's mind, with a sense of its value, is an act of arrogance. Research capacity building programs for women need to consider

carefully the implications of connections between self-esteem and the readiness to identify research questions, appropriate methodologies, analyze data and to write.

In undertaking this research I experienced the existing lack of personnel who have been instructed in doing research in ways such as utilizing the feminist approaches. This is a clear observation of the existing kind of structures that control research. The research fraternity needs to open itself to making a deliberate effort to engage individuals with different research interests to allow for diversity in issues of methodology. Even the existing researchers should make efforts to learn the upcoming ways of knowing. The issues of participation are discussed in many forums and yet the research that is about individuals still does not offer the opportunity of the researched as a knower. The effort to re-train or train should be given a priority on institutional training plans.

International, regional and local networks should be formalized in order to ensure continuity. Networks developed in this manner become stronger because they have a wider membership. The membership may alter from time to time because of the mobility of individuals, but the formal set-up will be maintained. Individuals in groups are able to attract more attention than one to one relationships. In Lesotho, women have many associations and these are some of the strongest tools the women use to do things together. The idea of women cooperating is not new and can work as a stronghold of research. I mention women more in this regard as the literature reviewed indicates the low numbers of women researchers doing research for women. Again, in the Lesotho context, women are the most educated and can therefore have a strong team to carry out research.

In Lesotho women have been mobilized to do development work by different projects. Some mobilization occurs from the legal side like FIDA and WLSA. These efforts, and any I have not mentioned here, need to be strengthened and expanded to other areas of women's lives. I especially move for cooperation that targets gender discrimination within the family, the community, the church and the school. Schools are agents of change and through the involvement of educators, students, and policy makers in the education system; the issue of gender discrimination can be handled. Different groups of

society can be targeted and educated on issues of Human Rights and their strength to influence research as knowledge makers.

Institutions of higher learning should offer courses in Gender Studies. Some departments can offer modules through the department so that each student that has gone through the system has basic knowledge about gender relations in relation to their field. The program should be designed such that individuals from other fields of study can get support to further their studies with, or do research within, the department. As it is now the National University does not have a program specifically for gender studies. The present centers should expand to allow for more activity in the gender aspects. The centers, through libraries, would be strong points for reference materials on feminist and additional research methods.

Many novice researchers meet with huge challenges in trying to publish the work they have written. The centers could work in this regard to train the researchers in ways to write for publication. The papers that are proposed for publication could first be presented for critique in a homely non-threatening environment in the center. The presentation skills that make up so much of a conference paper presentation can also be built into these centers.

Money for research just does not seem to be forthcoming. Even where there is money there seems to be too little to allow individuals to be as creative as they can afford to be. The amounts currently available discourage interested parties to participate in comparison to money from other sources. The money becomes even more of an issue if and when it is tied to the terms of reference which do not allow the researcher flexibility to research according to her convictions.

Parents and teachers as adults who work closely with young people of all sex should be guided to desist from training young people for dissimilar roles. The training and guidance should include awareness of sexist ways of doing and talking both in the home and at school. The nonsexist way of being should be driven do discuss sex issues openly

with young people. The open discussions should include campaigns for and encourage pregnant young women to be permitted back in schools.

In concluding this study, I point out that I offered a review of the dominant discourses around young women's pregnancy. The main case is that the dominant discourses of children, young women in particular, as sexually innocent and pure, has to be abandoned as it will lead to better experiences of pregnancy. By connecting with different frameworks such as feminism and post structural gear I have attracted concentration to and interrogated commonsensical arguments around children, sex and sexuality. By doing so I have tried to fill an existing gap in the young women's pregnancy in Lesotho that has left no explanation of how subjects produce and reproduce discourses.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF DURBAN WESTVILLE



University of
Durban-Westville

TELEGRAMS: UDWEST
TELEX: 6 23228 SA
FAX: (031) 204-4383
☎ (031) 204 4111

Cliff Malcolm
Professor of Science Education
Director, Centre for Education Research,
Evaluation and Policy

April 17, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:

Re: PhD studies, Karabo Mohlankoana

This is to introduce Karabo Mohlankoana, who is a PhD student in her second year at the University of Durban Westville. She is conducting research into *Teenage pregnancy and schooling in Lesotho*. Her research is being supervised by Dr Sue Singh, with further support from me.

Dr Singh and I would be grateful if you can assist her in this work, in whatever ways are possible. I am confident that the research will make an important contribution not only to the research community, but to policy discussions in Lesotho and elsewhere.

If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact me in Durban, on 031 – 204 4584.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Cliff Malcolm".

Cliff Malcolm

**APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INTRODUCTION FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF
DURBAN WESTVILLE**



University of
Durban-Westville

PRIVATE BAG X54001 DURBAN
4000 SOUTH AFRICA
TELEGRAMS: 'UDWEST'
TELEX: 6 23228 SA
FAX: 031 204-4383
☎ 031 204 4171

Cliff Malcolm
Professor of Science Education
Director, Centre for Education Research,
Evaluation and Policy

April 17, 2002

To Whom It May Concern:


Re: PhD studies, Karabo Mohlankoana

This is to certify that Karabo Mohlankoana is a PhD student in her second year at the University of Durban Westville.

She has completed her research proposal, on *Teenage pregnancy and schooling in Lesotho*. Her work is being supervised by Dr Sue Singh, with support also from me.

Her proposal has been accepted. She is currently developing her research instruments and refining her methodology.

Yours sincerely,


Cliff Malcolm

**APPENDIX C: LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION REQUESTING PERMISSION TO UNDERTAKE
THE STUDY**

Institute of Development Management
BOX 1318
Maseru 100
Lesotho

6th September, 2002.

The Principal Secretary
Ministry of Education
Maseru

Dear Sir

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND
EDUCATION IN LESOTHO**

I am a doctoral student at the University of Durban Westville in South Africa.

My research topic is teenage pregnancy and education in Lesotho. I therefore observe that some of the participants in the study will be situated within the schools while others may not be. I humbly request your permission to conduct research within those schools that I may need to contact.

In addition I request you to introduce me to schools that I may need to work with. The support of your office in any form will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely

Karabo 'M'abahlakoana Mohlakoana

**APPENDIX D: RESPONSE FROM THE PRINCIPAL SECRETARY OF THE
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**



**THE KINGDOM OF LESOTHO
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION**

11th November, 2002

ED/S/4

Mrs. Karabo 'Mabahlakoana Mohlakoana
Institute of Development Management
P.O. Box 1318
MASERU

Dear Mrs Mohlakoana,

**REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON TEENAGE PREGNANCY AND
EDUCATION IN LESOTHO**

We acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 6th September 2002, in connection with the above subject.

You are hereby informed that you have been granted permission to conduct your research in schools as you requested. However, you should communicate with the respective school authorities directly, in order to agree on the modalities.

This letter should also serve as a letter of introduction to the school authorities. Therefore, we believe that they will accord you their usual cooperation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Moshapane'.

C. MOSHAPANE
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY

**APPENDIX E: LETTER OF APPROVAL TO SEEK PARENTS' OR
GUARDIANS' PERMISSION FOR CHILDREN TO PARTICIPATE**

Institute of Development Management
BOX 1318
Maseru 100
Lesotho
30th September 2002.

Dear Parent/Guardian

I am a doctoral student at the University of Durban-Westville in South Africa. My study is on the experiences of teenagers who get pregnant while schooling. The way I collect data involves talking to some of the teenagers who have been pregnant and some siblings. The study is of a sensitive nature in that interviews with children will discuss all experiences they are willing to share. Confidentiality will be highly guarded depending on the choice of each individual pseudonyms will be used. The participants' permission to audiotape all interviews will be requested and I will personally transcribe and translate each interview. It is important that your child gets full autonomy in relation to participation in this study. No coercion, threat, manipulation or force should be used to make the child participate in the study.

All the materials that have been part of the study I will keep safely and will not use the interviews for any other purpose without prior permission from yourself and the teenager. The teenager may withdraw from this research anytime and may decide to terminate the agreement anytime. The teenager is not obliged to answer any questions that he/she is not comfortable with. Even after the story has been written the participant and I will agree on whether the material that is written is what they agree with. If the participant is uncomfortable with any part of the story, the material will be removed.

If any changes are required during the study period in relation to this agreement, those will not be implemented till permission to do so has been granted by you or any person appointed by you. Even after you have given your permission to continue, the child has a choice to decide not to participate and that will be granted.

Your child fits the criteria set for this study. I realize that your child is under age and therefore requires parental consent to participate in the study. I therefore request you to give me permission to work with the child. The way to show that permission is granted is for you to sign the attached consent form that I shall collect from you. If you do not allow your child to participate, you need not sign the form.

I am thankful that you have taken your time to contribute in making this study a success.

Yours faithfully

Karabo 'M'abahlakoana Mohlakoana

**APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORM TO BE SIGNED BY PARENTS OR
GUARDIANS**

CONSENT FORM

I... the parent/guardian of... give permission to my child to participate in the study on young women's pregnancy and schooling. I have read and understood the conditions about the nature and purpose of the research. I am comfortable with the information I have been given and therefore grant permission for my child to participate.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: ETHICAL CLEARANCE



RESEARCH OFFICE (FRANCIS STOCK BUILDING)
HOWARD COLLEGE
TELEPHONE NO.: 031 - 2603587

28 APRIL 2005

MRS. K MOHLAKOANA (200101540)
EDUCATION

Dear Mrs. Mohlakoana

ETHICAL CLEARANCE:

I wish to confirm that ethical clearance has been granted for the following project:

"Teenage pregnancy and schooling in Lesotho"

Yours faithfully


.....
MS. PHUMELELE XIMBA
RESEARCH OFFICE

PS: The following general condition is applicable to all projects that have been granted ethical clearance:

THE RELEVANT AUTHORITIES SHOULD BE CONTACTED IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE NECESSARY APPROVAL SHOULD THE RESEARCH INVOLVE UTILIZATION OF SPACE AND/OR FACILITIES AT OTHER INSTITUTIONS/ORGANISATIONS. WHERE QUESTIONNAIRES ARE USED IN THE PROJECT, THE RESEARCHER SHOULD ENSURE THAT THE QUESTIONNAIRE INCLUDES A SECTION AT THE END WHICH SHOULD BE COMPLETED BY THE PARTICIPANT (PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE) INDICATING THAT HE/SHE WAS INFORMED OF THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT AND THAT THE INFORMATION GIVEN WILL BE KEPT CONFIDENTIAL.

→ cc. Faculty Officer
cc. Supervisor

APPENDIX H: GROUP INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PREGNANT YOUNG WOMEN

Begin with personal Introductions

Who are you? Where do you come from? How old are you?

1. How old were you when you became pregnant?
2. How did you discover that you were pregnant?
3. How did it feel like?
4. Did you consider abortion?
5. Who was the first person you told?
6. What did they say?
7. How did the other people know?
8. How did they react?
9. What happened when the school found out?
10. How do you feel now?
11. Recall an experience that occurred while schooling in relation to teachers, other kids, learning, other schools etc.

12. What was your relationship like with the child's father?

13. Remember any peaceful moments you encountered at the time.

**APPENDIX I: ONE TO ONE INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PREGNANT
YOUNG WOMEN**

Individual interviews:

Background babyhood (where did you grow up?)

What was life like for you?

Can you tell about your discovery as a pregnant teenager?

Who did you tell about the pregnancy?

How did they react?

What have been your thoughts about the issue of being a pregnant young woman?

How have you experienced life in the home, school and anywhere else?

What are experiences like with family members, teachers and other students?

What is your relationship with your child's father?

Have you had any experiences or thoughts of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections?

What do you do currently and what career plans do you have for the future?

What would you like to see happen around young women's pregnancy?

APPENDIX J: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRINCIPALS

I wish to request you to give me information about the practice that takes place in your school in dealing with pregnant girls and continuation of education. I would like to assure you that all information that you will provide in this document will be kept confidential. The information will not be used for any purpose other than the research that it is intended for without prior consent from you. I have enclosed an envelope for you to return the questionnaire to the address in the letter I have written to you. Should you have any additional information that you would like to share with me, feel free to use a different paper and attach to the questionnaire.

(1) Do you have any girls that drop out of your school?

Yes
No

If yes, have you had any girls that dropped out because of pregnancy or pregnancy-related issues?

If yes, what happened to the girls?

(2) When was the most recent case of pregnancy in the school?

(3) What happened to the girl/girls who got pregnant?

(4) How did they leave the school if they did?

If they did not leave school, what happened to them?

(5) Does the school have a policy on student pregnancy and continuation of education? The policy may be written or not.

(6) Do you have a written policy?

(7) How was the policy developed, (whether written or not)?

(8) Who participated in the formulation of this policy?

(9) What are the reasons for the policy?

(10) How have you dealt with the issue of girls who fall pregnant in the school?

(11) If the girl has to leave school, at what stage does it happen?

(12) Can the girl come back to your school if she chooses to return?

(13) After how long can she come back if she chooses to do so?

Would you support the girl's entry to another school if she requests you to do so?

(14) If yes, why would you?

(15) If not, why not?

(16) How do you deal with partners of the pregnant girls if they happen to be in the same school?

(17) What can you say about performance of girls who have continued with schooling after pregnancy?

(18) How is their relationship with other learners, teachers, principal and other members of the school community?

(19) Are you aware of the National Policy on pregnancy while in school?

(20) If you are aware, what does the policy say?

(21) One issue that comes up in media is the conflict between right to education and right to be pregnant, what is your opinion about the issue?

(22) What is the basis of your opinion?

(23) Please give any additional information that you would like to give in relation to pregnant girls in school and continued education.

APPENDIX K: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Tell me about encountering young women's pregnancy in your school.

Tell me about experiences as a principal in relation to admissions, readmissions, transfers, support, and the expulsion of pregnant young women.

Does the school have a policy on young women's pregnancy and schooling?

Does the Government have a policy on young women's pregnancy?

What informs the decisions you take in relation to pregnancy in schools?

Please relate to me some of the things you have heard regarding young women's pregnancy and schooling.

Describe to me some of the experiences you have had with pregnant young women in the school.

What is the performance level of the young women in relation to their peers?

APPENDIX L: LETTER TO SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

Institute of Development Management
BOX 1318
Maseru 100
Lesotho
28th September 2002.

Dear Principal

Re-conducting research

My name is Karabo Mohlakoana Mokobocho and currently a student at the University of Durban Westville. My study is on the experiences of teenagers who get pregnant while schooling. I would like to work with you in my research project. If you are willing to work with me please fill in the attached questionnaire and return it to me.

Please find enclosed, self addressed stamps and envelope.

Yours sincerely

Karabo Mohlakoana Mokobocho

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARENTS

As co owners in schools, what are your opinions about young women's pregnancy and continuation of education?

Do the schools have a policy on the issue?

Are you aware of the government's stand on the issue of young women's pregnancy?

Relate to me some of the things you believe regarding young wpmen's pregnancy and schooling.

What influences you as part of school management to take decisions in relation to young women's pregnancy?

What can be done to ensure succesful implementation of the national policy on young women's pregnancy?

APPENDIX N: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR PARTNERS

Are you aware of the policy on teenage pregnancy?

How old were you?

What was your reaction when you found out that your partner was pregnant?

Did the pregnancy change the way you felt and looked at her?

What grade were you in when the pregnancy occurred?

Were you expelled from school?

Did you take any responsibility?

Where is the child now?

How is the relationship between you and the mother?

What was your parent's reaction?

How did the pregnancy affect your life?

Would you do thing differently now?

APPENDIX O: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SIBLINGS

How old were you when your sister fell pregnant?

How did you feel?

Did you understand what was going on?

Did any body tell you anything?

What did your friends say about it?

Did it affect your studies?

Did your life change after that?

How did it affect your life?

Is it still affecting you?

Do you know Lesotho's policy concerning teenage pregnancy?

What did you do to make the situation very tolerable?

How do you feel when some of the girls are expelled from school when they are pregnant?

APPENDIX P: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR CHURCH REPRESENTATIVE

What do the laws and policies say about young women and pregnancy in schools?

State to me the stand of your church and its schools in relation to young women, pregnancy and schooling.

How do national policy relate to school practices in the area of young women's pregnancy?

Are you aware of the practices by schools in relation to the matter?

Who gets involved in developing the policies for pregnancy in the schools?

What influences the decisions you make as school management in relation to young women's pregnancy?

What do you think can be done to change the influence of the church on the schools in relation to young women's pregnancy?

**APPENDIX Q: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR OFFICIAL OF THE MINISTRY
OF EDUCATION**

State how the Ministry of Education ensures that schools and school authorities implement policies that are formulated.

Share your experiences of school implementation of the policy on young women's pregnancy and schooling.

Do schools observe the policy?

What do you think influences the way schools deal with pregnant young women?

Have you as a ministry had experiences that have come up for your consideration on issues of young women's pregnancy?