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Exploring young women's experiences of teenage motherhood in schools: a
gendered perspective

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As the candidates Supervisor I agree/ do not agree to the submission of this dissertation

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NRF Acknowledgement

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my late mum, Thandiwe Mavis (Maganosi) Mcambi who taught me valuable lessons about life. She was my pillar of strength and my confidant. She left an indelible mark in my heart. Dlabazane.

Acknowledgements

ABSTRACT

A qualitative study was conducted at Oakleigh Girls High School which aimed at exploring the ways in which seven teenage girls from a single-sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiate the demands of schooling and parenting. Drawing upon the findings of the focus group interviews conducted, the study aimed to illuminate how these teenage mothers juggle their varied roles as mothers and learners and its effects for the educational outcome of young mothers at school. In this study I argue that even though the South African Schools Act (Department of Education 1996) regulates the support of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools, however teenage mothers still experience difficulties in schools. These difficulties range from fear of the parents' response, child fathers' response, as well as teachers' response, rejection from peers and teachers, ridicule from teachers and peers, lack of support from teachers, decline in academic performance as well as the inability to participate in school activities. However in the same study there were positive elements that also surfaced, in that some teachers, learners as well as a support group provided some kind of support to the teenage mothers even though it was very minimal. Working with teachers to support young mothers at school remains important.

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1.1 Introduction

This study explores the ways in which teenage mothers from a single-sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiate the demands of schooling and parenting. By focusing on the focus group interviews conducted with seven participants (all mothers) the study seeks to illuminate their varied experiences in being mothers and learners and the effects for the educational outcome of young mothers at school. Being a mother and a learner at school is not easy and compromises educational opportunities for young women in South Africa (see Panday et al, 2009). The South African Schools Act (Department of Education 1996) regulates the support of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools. This policy permits pregnant teenagers to remain at school, allowing for their re-entry as young mothers after giving birth (Bhana et al, 2010). Allowing pregnant teenagers to remain in school and to return after giving birth is considered to be significant not only in delaying a second birth, but also in offering young women improved opportunities to get an education and to increase their economic standing. Continued enrollment in school correlates with

better educational opportunities (Grant and Hallman 2006). Whilst this study shows that young mothers have the will to return to school and improve their educational opportunities, the study shows that being a learner and a teenage mother is not easy and it is difficult to strike a balance between the two identities and roles.

I have taught at Oakleigh Girls High School (pseudonym) for the past six years. Oakleigh Girls High School is a former white, single sex public school that is situated in one of the affluent suburbs in Durban. It is a fee-paying school and the school fee per learner is currently R6500. In the recent years, the school began to experience financial instability as more and more parents failed to pay school fees, mostly because of retrenchments. I have observed a constant increase in the number of teenagers who are becoming pregnant year after year. This growing trend has not only affected learners in senior grades i.e. (grades 10-12). In the past few years I have seen learners who are as young as thirteen years of age, and who are still in grade 8, becoming pregnant. Not only have I observed the growing number of teenage mothers at my school, but I have also observed pregnant girls in school uniforms even in my neighbourhood. To bring the matter even closer to home, even though I am not a mother myself, I have seen how four of my teenage cousins struggle to raise their children single-handedly

without the support of the fathers of their children. I therefore became curious to

know how these teenage girls juggle motherhood and schooling.

In the past five years, the school records indicate that the number of pregnancies

at my school has been more than seventy-five. The following statistics from

Oakleigh Girls High School are from 2005 to May 2010.

TABLE A

Year	Total Number of Pregnancies	Grades					Total Number of Pregnancies per race			
		8	9	10	11	12	Black	White	Coloured	Indian
2005	10	0	2	2	1	5	10	0	0	0
2006	10	0	0	2	4	4	10	0	0	0
2007	12	3	1	2	1	5	11	0	1	0
2008	19	0	2	1	9	7	19	0	0	0
2009	22	0	3	1	2	18	20	0	2	0
2010	19	3	5	2	4	5	19	0	0	0

The above statistics show an alarming increase in the number of pregnancies. For instance in the space of four years (from 2005 to 2009) the number has more than doubled. As pregnancy cannot be viewed in isolation, these figures also signify the significant number of teenage girls who will be somewhat negatively affected by their new roles as mothers.

Not only did I observe the growing number of pregnancies in my school, but also I have observed and continue to observe that these young mothers face difficulty when trying to cope with their roles as mothers as well as their curricular demands. Chigona and Chetty (2008) state that though the girls are allowed to return to school after becoming mothers, they face many challenges in trying to balance motherhood and the demands of schooling.

These are some of the observations noted over the years from young mothers at my school: a high absentee rate, high rates of late coming, incomplete tasks, and at times no assigned tasks done, drowsiness during lessons as well as low self esteem. Young mothers mostly find themselves out of favour with their fellow learners and some of their teachers because of these factors. I therefore decided to explore the experiences of becoming a parent, from the perspectives of young teenagers at a South African high school.

There is a great deal of literature on teenage pregnancy and the factors that lead

to teenage pregnancy abroad and locally (see Beutel, 2000; Chevalier &

Viitanen, 2001; Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001; Lutrell, 2003; Pillow, 2004;

Fields, 2005; Mkhwanazi, 2010). However there is not much literature about the

actual experiences of teenage mothers in South African schools (see Chigona &

Chetty, 2008). In exploring the experiences of becoming a parent from the

perspectives of young school-going teenage mothers, the study attempts to find

out how teenage mothers experience schooling

According to Zondo (2006) it is a difficult challenge to raise a child while trying to

maintain academic excellence, especially if no assistance is given to the teenage

mothers. The information gathered from this study could be useful to teachers

who might also find themselves having to deal with teenage mothers in their

schools. These teachers would be able to better understand the experiences

teenage mothers go through and hopefully help to support them. Through

exploring the gendered experiences of school going teenage mothers, this could

provide the platform through which teenage-parenting programmes could be

launched by various stakeholders such as the Department of Education and

parents as part of an endeavour to assist school going mothers to cope with their

added responsibility of being mothers. Such collaboration could be further utilised to empower school going teenage mothers to speak up about their experiences as parents, thus conscientising their peers. This intense exchange of information between teenage mothers in schools and their peers could also be instrumental in alleviating the stigma that is associated with being a school going teenage mother. In turn, this could therefore lead to the full actualisation of all the learners' potential in schools.

Having introduced the study, I proceed by giving a personal reflection on my experiences as a teacher who taught and continues to teach girls who are mothers. There have been many instances where I have dealt with girls who are mothers at my school. There were instances where I had to intervene when teenage mothers got involved in arguments with their peers, and instances of fist fights, incomplete homework, or homework not done, drowsiness during lesson time, seeking advice, noticeable alienation and other reasons. However there is one instance that still lingers on my mind to date. In 2006 there was a learner who was in grade 10 who became a mother. Before she became a mother she had been performing well in her studies as she was always among the top ten learners in her grade. She also participated in almost every activity that was

taking place at school. Her peers and teachers liked her. When she became pregnant things started to change. After assuming her studies post childbirth she faced alienation. What contributed towards her alienation was the fact that she had lost weight and was constantly absent from school. One day she approached me in tears stating that she found it virtually impossible to carry on with her studies as there was no one to look after her child while she was at school. She also stated that there were learners who were spreading rumours about her saying that she is HIV positive because she had lost a lot of weight. She eventually dropped out of school.

Through this experience and many others, I have come to a realisation that the experiences that some of the school-going teenage mothers go through determine their future. For some teenage mothers carrying on with their education becomes a distant possibility. For those teenage mothers who are privileged enough to be able to carry on with their schooling after childbirth, it becomes a strenuous journey because of the challenges that are intrinsic in their new roles as mothers. The motherhood role comes with a whole lot of changes, most of which are negative and which are bound to affect their studies negatively.

1.2 The context of the study

This study is situated in a former all white school for girls which later (in 1992) had its first intake of black students. The school is surrounded by big beautiful homes, some of which are still in their original state (with red brick walls) and some houses have been modified to recent trends. There is a lot of development in the area surrounding the school. There is a shopping mall, businesses such as Internet cafés, conference centres, block of flats and other amenities. Even though the school is multicultural it has a strong grounding in the Christian religion as all assemblies and events are Christian based. The school has always been a single-sex school for girls. The neighbouring high school mainly catered for boys up until recently when it became a co-ed school.

As a past learner of Oakleigh Girls High School who matriculated in 1994, I have watched with interest how the school has gradually moved from being dominated by white learners to having black learners who now form the majority of the population.

1.3 The research site

Oakleigh Girls High School is forty-one years old. It is situated in one of the affluent middle class suburbs in Durban. This school currently has an enrolment

of one thousand two hundred and thirty learners and has fifty-four teachers. The school has 71% black learners, 14% Indian learners, 11% White learners and 4% Coloured learners. There are thirty White teachers (all females), seventeen Indian teachers (fourteen females and three males, five black teachers (four females and one male) and two Coloured teachers (both females). The school is divided into junior and senior school. The junior school is made up of grades eight and nine and the senior school is made up of grades ten to twelve. There are six grade eight classes, five grade nine classes, six grade ten classes, six grade eleven classes and six grade twelve classes. In all grades learners are placed according to achievements in Mathematics and English. There are a number of clubs that form part of Oakleigh Girls High School. These clubs have different focuses. Clubs like the Hospice Club, the Peace Forum, the Leo's Club, Teenagers and Teachers Against Teenage Pregnancy (known as the T²ATP Club) and the Animal Action Club, which collectively focus on instilling the values about taking care of our environment, other people around us and animals. Other clubs such as the Maths Club, Science Club, Maths Club, Poetry Club focus mainly on helping learners improve their academic performance in different learning areas. There are clubs that also focus on culture and religion such as the Tamil Club, the Student Christian Association and the Dance Club.

Oakleigh Girls High School is known in the area for its good results, as the school has been able to achieve a 100% pass rate for the past decade. This school is also known for instilling good values to its learners. Teachers address learners as 'Ladies' and learners are also encouraged to address each other as 'Ladies'. Respect for self and others, humility, peace and love are some of the values that are promoted at this school. The school also promotes public speaking. Learners participate in public speaking contests nationally and internationally. Lady-like behaviour is also promoted through beauty pageants which are a constant feature in fund raising activities at the school.

The management structure of Oakleigh Girls High, at the time of the study consisted of five female Heads of Department (four of whom are White) and one male (Indian) who holds a position of being the Head of Department (Languages). At the end of 2010, a black male (who is in an acting position) replaced the White female principal. The school's governing body consists of ten members (five Blacks, three Indians and two Whites). There is an equal representation of males and females on the governing body.

Oakleigh Girls High School is a well-resourced school, with a big library which also has a section with computers where internet can be accessed. Besides well-

maintained classrooms, there are two computer rooms, two art rooms, gym, two

video rooms, two dramatic arts rooms as well as a counselling room. Learners

are encouraged to make full use of the available resources in order to achieve to

their full potential.

Learners at Oakleigh Girls High School come from a range of socio-economic

groups. There are those learners that come from affluent areas such as

Woodlands, Westville, Woodhaven, Yellowwood Park and Glenwood (Garmin,

1999-2006).

MAP A

MAP B
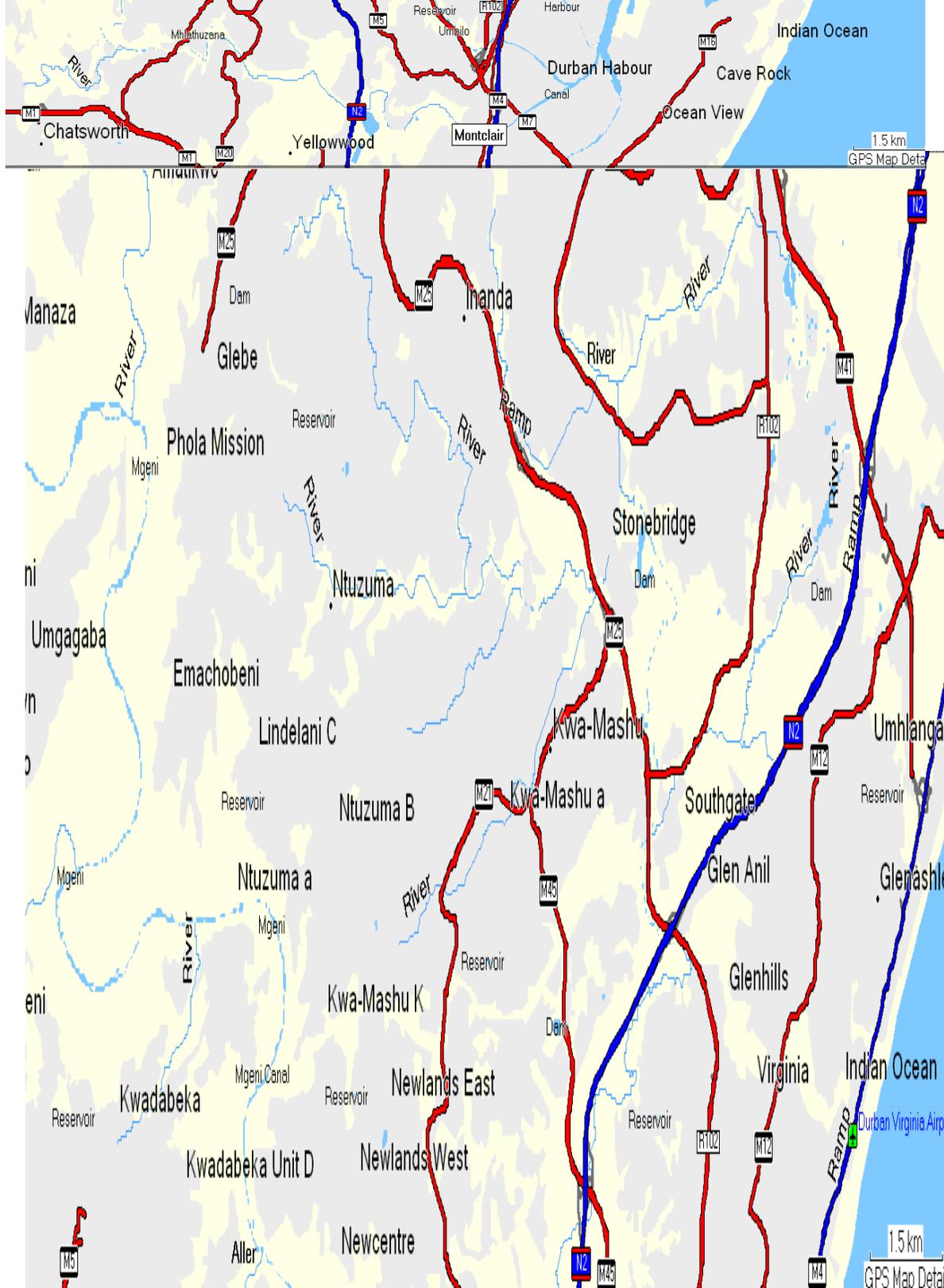
The majority of learners are from the neighbouring townships such as Ntuzuma

(23.9 km), Umlazi (21,8), KwaMashu (23,2 km), Inanda (24,4) Chesterville (14

km), Bonella (12,4 km), Cato Manor (9,6 km), Lamontville (13,6 km), Lovu

(23,1km) and other townships. Most learners depend solely on public transport such as taxis and buses to get to school, as some parents do not have their own means of transport. There are learners that group themselves together and arrange some form of transport such as taxis which take them to and from school everyday, and they are charged a monthly fee for this service. This arrangement takes away the hassle of having to depend on public transport that is sometimes unreliable. Some learners are brought by their parents to school. The majority of these parents work in the governments departments such as the Department of Education, the Department of Correctional Services, the Department of Health and other government department. There are also parents who work in Industrial factories in and around Durban. However, the recent recession affected some of the parents at our school because they ended up jobless because of retrenchments.

The majority of black girls group themselves into cliques. These cliques are always in constant conflict with each other. Each of these groups has a special name to identify it. For instance there are GG's (which is an abbreviation for "glamour girls"). Members of this group are famous for dating boyfriends with fancy cars and their neatness, as well as for being unfriendly to other girls other than those in their clique. There is another group known as 'Amagilikidi' who are

known for being rough, rude towards teachers and fellow learners. Members of each of these group would compete about things such as which group has members that are most fashionable and trendy when it comes to fashion items, boyfriends, cars that boyfriends drive, hairstyles, spending money and so on. None of these contests are about academic achievements or school-related activities. These fights are usually about boyfriends and gossip-related issues such as accusing each other of wearing 'fake brands' of clothing, spreading gossip about each other through social networks such as 'Mixit', Tweeter and Facebook.

Even though a general overview of the school has been given, however it is paramount to state that, out of the population of one thousand two hundred and thirty learners, the focus of this study is on seven teenage mothers. The following table provides the biographical details of the girls who participated in this study.

1.4 Biographical details of the participants

Sibongakonke

Sibongakonke is a 16-year-old girl from Westville. She came to Oakleigh Girls High School four years ago (in grade eight). She is in grade eleven. Sibongakonke has never repeated a grade. She is the youngest of four children.

Both her parents have stable jobs. Her mother is a nurse in one of the provincial hospitals in Durban. Her father works for the provincial Department of Public Works as an infrastructure manager. Two of her teenage cousins are mothers and also attend Oakleigh Girls High School. None of her older siblings has children. She has an eight-month-old daughter Lunga who has a fulltime nanny.

Ntwenhle

Ntwenhle is eighteen years old. She is in grade twelve. She came to Oakleigh Girls High School when she was in grade nine. Prior to that she attended a Coloured school in Newlands West. As a result of her family relocating, she had to move to Oakleigh Girl High School. She stays with her mother who is a teacher, her father only comes home at the end of each month as he got another better paying job in Kimberley. Ntwenhle has an older brother who is employed and no longer stays with them and a younger sister who is in grade nine. Ntwenhle's son Qiniso is fifteen months of age. Her son attends a day care centre during the day and after school Ntwenhle has to take care of him as they do not have a nanny for the child. When it is exam time, Ntwenhle's maternal grandmother usually offers to take care of Qiniso.

Desiree

Desiree is eighteen years old and is repeating grade eleven. She stays with her mother, her two aunts, her uncle, her granny and four cousins in Lamontville township. Her mother is a single parent and she is unemployed. They are dependent on Desiree's mother's disability grant for survival. Desiree also receives a monthly child support grant to support her child as the father of her child abandoned her when he discovered that she was pregnant with his child. Her father was killed in a taxi violence when she was very young. Desiree's son Thuthuka is eleven months old. MaMzimela (Desiree's granny) takes care of Thuthuka and also takes care of Desiree's cousins' children when they are at school.

Nonjabulo

Nonjabulo is a seventeen-year-old mother of one. She is in grade 11. She stays in Umlazi township with her younger brother, who is in grade 7 in a neighbouring primary school, under the strict guidance of their aunt Thembakazi who runs a hairdressing salon in town. Thembakazi does not allow Nonjabulo to socialise with any of the girls in the neigourhood as she believes that it was through their bad influence that Nonjabulo became pregnant. Nonjabulo has a daughter Nzulu who is 6 month old, and who stays with her paternal grand parents during weekdays. She stays with Nonjabulo only during weekends and during holidays.

Nzulu's financial needs are mainly taken care of by her paternal grand parents. Thembakazi takes care only of Nonjabulo and her brother's needs.

Malaika

Malaika is sixteen years old and in grade 10. She came to Oakleigh Girls High School in grade 8. She resides in Mobeni Heights (a former Indian township) with her parents. Malaika's mother is unemployed and her father owns a construction company. Her daughter Enhle is 13 months old and attends a day care centre. Malaika's father takes care of all Enhle's financial needs because Enhle's father denied paternity of the child. Malaika has two older siblings who are married. There is a full-time nanny who takes care of Enhle.

Angel

Angel is fifteen years old and in grade 10. She stays with her maternal grand mother, together with eight other cousins. Her mother passed away when she was in grade 5 and she has never known her father. Her grandmother is a pensioner who supplements her pension grant by selling chips and sweets in one of the primary schools in Ilovu township. Angel's daughter Ntandokazi is 8

months old. Angel takes care of Ntandokazi with the money that she earns from her weekend job as a packer at a local supermarket.

Hazel

Hazel is eighteen years old and in grade 12. She stays in Chesterville township with her mother and a younger brother who is still in primary school. Her daughter Tiara is looked after by an old lady from her neighbourhood whom they pay at the end of each month. Tiara's father Melusi is a teacher in one of the high schools in Chesterville. Melusi takes care of both Hazel and Tiara's financial needs and has promised to help Hazel to further her studies after she has completed her matric.

After noticing and dealing with teenage girls who are mothers at my school it became important to me that I explore the experiences of becoming a parent from the perspectives of young teenage girls at Oakleigh Girls High School. Therefore the critical question that is guiding this study is as follows: What are the gendered experiences of teenage girls who became mothers while at school?

In answering this question, the two secondary questions (Maree, 2007) will be answered:

1. What are the experiences of teenage mothers at school?

2. How do teenage mothers manage schooling and being a young mother at school?

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have described my motivation and I have also justified the need for exploring the experiences of becoming a parent from the perspectives of seven young teenage girls. I focussed on the varied experiences that these teenage girls go through, which mostly have a negative bearing on their learning, thus interfering with their academic success.

The following section provides the structure which will be utilised to organise this study.

Chapter 1 has provided an overview of the study.

Chapter 2 will focus on the literature review used in this study.

Chapter 3 will focus on the research design and method that has been used to conduct this study.

Chapter 4 will look at the data analysis.

Chapter 5 seeks to recommend ways and means by which school-related challenges experienced by school-going mothers can be minimised. In this final chapter limitations of the study, recommendations and suggestions for follow-up research will be declared.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Having a baby is a difficult process, which brings along a number of changes in a person's life. For young women who are still at school these changes come with various consequences (Parker, 1997). Teenage pregnancy is highly gendered with negative consequences for young women. Young women who become mothers before the age of 20 are often seen as agents that promote disorder in the society (McDermott & Graham, 2005). The society does not approve of teenage mothers because they are viewed as a cause of a disturbance of the

order that has to be maintained in the society. Mkhwanazi (2010) notes that becoming a mother while still a teenager not only does it delay the teenage mother's success socially, however it also brings a financial strain as well as a physical strain to the mother and her child. Furthermore since being a mother is associated with being an adult (Schofield, 1994), teenage mothers are therefore seen as a group of people who do not fit in the society and who even lack skills of taking care of their own children.

In many sub-Saharan African countries there are pregnancy policies that guide the education systems of those countries to reduce the level of teenage pregnancy (Chilisa, 2002). Contrary to what happens in countries like Liberia, Mali, Mozambique and Nigeria, where pregnant girls are expelled from school (Chilisa, 2002), the African Charter on the rights and welfare of the child explicitly recognises the right of the pregnant girl to an education (UNESCO, 2003, p.4). Section 29 of the Bill of Rights the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA), Act 108/1996, affirms that everybody has the right to basic education. The implication is that it would be unconstitutional to expel pregnant girls from schools in South Africa. According to Nyambura (2000) it is stated that the Kenyan Ministry of Education publicly encourages schools to allow teenage mothers to come back to school after childbirth and carry on with their schooling.

Shaningwa (2007) reports that the Kenyan government has a policy of allowing

the re-entry of girls to schools after giving birth. According to Shaningwa (2007)

the aim of this policy is to increase girls' participation in schooling. Kaufman, de

Wet and Stadler (2001) state that in contrast to circumstances in many other

developing countries, where school girls who become pregnant are expelled from

school and are not allowed to return to school even after they have borne the

child, in South Africa the Schools Act (Government of South Africa, 1996)

prohibits the expulsion of pregnant girls from school. This policy permits pregnant

teenagers to remain at school, allowing for their re-entry as young mothers after

giving birth (Bhana, Morrell, Shefer & Ngabaza, 2010). In this way, these young

mothers are afforded another chance in life of completing their high school

education, which will then enable them to get better jobs later on in life.

According to Shaningwa (2007), in Namibia the teenage pregnancy policy states

that a girl who becomes pregnant is allowed to be at school until she is about to

deliver. According to the policy as stipulated in the Namibian Ministry of Basic

Education, Sport and Culture (MBESC) (2001c) after delivery and provided that a

social worker is satisfied that the baby will be taken care of by a responsible

adult, the teenage mother then has a right to be readmitted at the same school

within twelve months of the date on which she left school, regardless of her age.

The teenage pregnancy policy further states that a teenage mother has the

option, within the same period, to be enrolled at another school provided there is

space available. However, even though there are such progressive policies and

laws that are in place, that does not by itself ensure that pregnant girls and young

parents remain in school or experience as little disruption to their studies as

possible (Bhana et al, 2010). There are a whole lot of other contributing factors

which make schooling for teenage mothers unmanageable. Based on the report

by the Parliamentary Monitoring Group (2009) there are concerns from teenage

mothers that there are schools that shy away from the stipulated teenage

pregnancy policies that are in place and deny them access to education by not

allowing them to attend classes because they are mothers. Therefore it is of

paramount importance that we seek to understand how teenage mothers

negotiate parenting and schooling.

Mkhwanazi (2010) cites previous studies on early child bearing that indicate that

apart from the financial delay as well as the social harm that is linked to raising

and taking care of children, these teenage mothers are more prone to being poor

and thus becoming unable to meet the financial demands that are associated

with being a mother. As a society we need to emphasise the value of education

and ensure that teenage mothers stay in schools so that they would be able to

acquire knowledge that is key to guaranteeing them space in the workplace.

Teenage mothers continue with their schooling because they consider academic qualifications as a ticket that will enable them to participate in the labour market for better paying jobs, so that they together with their children will not live in poverty (Chigona et al, 2008). Dlamini, van der Merwe and Ehlers (2003) support that argument by stating that teenage mothers need to be educated so that they can be able to make their lives better as well as the lives of their dependents. Teenage mothers have a belief that if they are educated, they would be able to break the chain of poverty and thus become able to live better lives.

Even though over the past fifteen years the overall rates of teenage pregnancy have declined, however early childbearing has continued to be more common in black and Coloured than amongst white and Indian South African communities (Mkhwanazi, 2010). In the light of that my research therefore seeks to explore how seven black mothers in their teens (between the ages of sixteen and eighteen) experience parenting.

Although the total rate of fertility in South Africa is much lower than that of other countries in the sub- Saharan region of Africa, the number of teenagers who are becoming parents is high and it still remains a concern (Mkhwanazi, 2010). The number of teenagers who are becoming pregnant in South Africa show that one

out of five eighteen-year old women have given birth (Grant & Hallman, 2006).

What this implies for schooling is that there are disruptions for these teenage

mothers who will still need to complete their schooling. The society needs to

come to a realisation that the way it perceives the roles and responsibilities of

mothers puts an these mothers under a lot of pressure (Magwaza, 2003). This

study aims to gain insight and further illustrate how teenage mothers negotiate

mothering and schooling. Furthermore, my study sheds some light on how the

experiences of teenage mothers who are schooling are socially located and

bound by the social context from which they emerge (Jewnarain, 2008).

The Department of Basic Education recently published its School Survey

(Department of Basic Education, 2010), which indicates the alarming statistics of

the number of learners who became pregnant in South Africa in 2007 and in

2008. The following table summarises the statistics as provided in the Survey

(2010).

TABLE B

Year	Total Number of Pregnancies per Grade			
	9	10	11	12
2007	7728	2005	12141	9415
2008	7804	12465	12220	9427

From the above table it is clear that there are teenage mothers whose life

circumstances as well as their schooling circumstances have been affected and

continue to be affected by their new roles as mothers.

2.2 Defining Teenage motherhood

Many contributions have been made to the literature about the societal

perceptions of teenage motherhood (Yardley, 2008). The problem of early

childbearing is defined by the society from which these teenage mothers belong

to (Furstenberg, 2003). Silva (1996) states that becoming a mother at a young

age causes a lot of reactions in the society as it affects the society morally,

politically as well as financially. The issues that are related to having a child at a

young age are impossible to view in isolation without reflecting at what happens

in the society as a whole. Schofield (1994) posits that having a child while still a

teenager is often seen as letting go of the opportunities that the teenage mother

might have benefited from before she assumed the responsibilities of becoming a

mother. McDemmott et al (2005) also state that it is the society that defines what

good motherhood is, and according to the society teenage motherhood is not

within the perimeters of what good motherhood should be. Yardley (2008) states

that teenage mothers are often viewed by the society as a group of girls who

have not yet reached a level of maturity and who are still dependent upon their

parents for survival, thus making them not good enough to raise their children. Even though there is literature that suggests that becoming a mother marks the important aspects of proving your femininity and fertility which are seen as important foundations in becoming an acceptable woman (Preston-Whyte & Zondi, 1989; 1991; Richter, 1996). However more recent literature suggests the opposite. I have observed that there is definitely a shift in the way in which having a child at an early age is viewed even in the black communities as it is accompanied by a lot of emotional and financial implications.

We live in a highly gendered society and teenage motherhood is located in this. Magwaza (2003) states that it is unfortunate to note that the ideologies that are related to mothering are currently patriarchally inclined. For some school-going teenage mothers motherhood is not what they desire for themselves as it occurs prematurely and unplanned. Girls rarely wish to become pregnant at an early age and they often endure traumatising situations such as being coerced or raped, or even both, before they become pregnant (Kaufman, de Wet & Stadler, 2001). Some teenage girls have little or no choice in choosing their sexual partners. They find themselves in awkward positions where they are forced by their male counterparts to engage in sexual activities. Jewkes, Morrell & Christofides (2009) further posit that the existence of gender power inequalities limits young women's

sexual choices thus finding themselves coerced to engage in unprotected sex. Bhana et al (2010) further suggest that being pregnant as well as becoming a mother are major experiences for any individual, let alone for a teenager who still has the intentions of pursuing her studies.

Dlamini et al (2003) state that the various stakeholders that make up the society such as the parents, the health workers, teachers, church leaders and the community as a whole are unable to equip teenage mothers with the knowledge as well as skills which will make them better mothers as well as prevent unplanned future pregnancies. Throughout this study, I argue that the experiences of teenage mothers in schools are socially embedded and therefore cannot be viewed in isolation.

Teenage motherhood has a negative effect both on the teenage mothers' social life as well as on their studies. The same sentiment is echoed in the study conducted at Arlington Public School (2004), where it is stated that being able to look after your child properly and devoting enough time to school related tasks proves to be a difficult task for young mothers. Bhana et al (2010) state that without back up structures both in and out of school, teenage mothers are left with limited resources to navigate the world of learning and parenting. The next

part of this study is therefore going concentrate on the experiences of teenage

mothers in schools which are supposed to be institutions of support.

2.3 Schooling experiences for young women at school

Grant & Hallman (2006) state that although being pregnant and becoming a

mother does not always disturb a teenage mother's academic journey in South

Africa, however these new responsibilities somehow affect their lives as they

affect the decisions that they are going to make in the future which might pose a

risk in their educational success. McCauley-Brown (2005) states that the

difficulties that pregnant teenagers as well as teenage mothers face when trying

to finish school are complex. Not only do teenage mothers find themselves

having to compromise their education because of the expectations and

responsibilities that are associated with motherhood. Teenage mothers often find

themselves confused, alienated, stigmatised and subject to prejudice. They

experience confusion as a result of having to negotiate their new roles as

mothers and having to deal with and fulfil the requirements of their studies at the

same time. How much more is the level of difficulty and confusion if motherhood

and schooling have to be dealt with side by side?

Teenage mothers like everyone else have dreams that they wish to realise. However some school-going teenage mothers have to let go of these dreams because they encounter situations that are not conducive to optimum learning. Bhana et al (2010) suggest that teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood are perceived as morally related problems that are associated with sexualities and being young. For some teenage mothers, teenage motherhood continues to be an undesirable life path that is heavily associated with stigma (Yardley, 2008). The alienation and stigmatisation experienced by teenage mothers in schools is not only from fellow learners and teachers. Kelly (1997) states that alienation and stigmatisation is also from the society. Thus the negative messages of alienation and stigmatisations are filtered both in schools and in the society, causing teenage mothers to feel excluded wherever they are.

Zondo (2006) rightfully states that the teenage mothers' learning is loaded with problems that usually impact on the relationship formed by the teenage mother with herself, peers, teachers and other significant people. Some teenage mothers are even exposed to violent assaults. McCauley-Brown (2005) reports an instance of a teenage mother who was assaulted on the school grounds. As a result she stayed out of school for a year during which she suffered depression. "The above-mentioned points to serve to illustrate how young mothers are

vulnerable in school environments which are not supportive and are

consequently are at risk of not completing their school" (Shaningwa, 2007, p. 12).

If there is a disjoint in any of these links which are fundamental in the schooling

life of a teenage mother, that might be one of the contributing factors towards

their lack of interest in their school work. Not only does alienation have a

negative impact on the schooling life of teenage mothers. Chigona et al (2008)

supports this notion by stating that the repercussions of alienation of teenage

mothers in schools leads to them feeling out of place tend to have low self-

esteem, which, without intervention through proper counselling, can lead to

teenage mothers dropping out of school prematurely.

Apart from the fact that young mothers are viewed as an 'at risk' group in the

society (Mitchell & Green, 2002), they are also frequently viewed as 'a risk' to

the society. There are those parents who do approve of their children and more

especially their daughters being seen around with teenage mothers because

these parents have a strong belief that teenage mothers might influence their

daughters negatively. As teenage mothers are perceived as 'a risk' to the society,

thus they become alienated (Mitchell & Green, 2002). This alienation is as result

of what Pillow (2004) defines as the "discourse of contamination" which is

derived from the perception that the immorality of the teenage mother would set

a bad example to student body at school, hence contaminating fellow innocent girls.

Mcambi (2007) suggests that at times, it is the pregnant girls as well as teenage mothers that avoid spending time with their friends at school because it becomes difficult for them to be part of the group they belonged to before they became pregnant. They stay away from their friends because they feel ashamed about the fact that they have now become mothers at young age, and thus they see themselves as misfits within the group.

There is also an element of fear that is experienced by teenage mothers in schools. Sometimes teenage mothers are fearful of taking part in class discussions, especially during lessons where topics such as teenage pregnancy are discussed, as they become uncomfortable that everybody is about to find out about their situations (Chigona & Chetty, 2007).

Bhana et al (2010) state that schools are meant to be spaces of where sexually related issues are not discussed and further state that many teachers are unhappy with the challenge of dealing with a policy that brought to an end the idea of schools as sexually free environments. It is such stereotypical beliefs of

teachers that continue to contribute to the negative experiences of school-going

teenage mothers that echo in the relevant literature. Not only do teenage

mothers experience confusion, alienation and stigmatisation in schools, but they

also experience prejudice from teachers and fellow learners. Pillow (2004) states

that countries like USA are able to offer their teenage mothers an opportunity of

being able to attend separate schools, and there are counselling services offered

to them. However there are teenage mothers have to share space with their

peers, which sometimes cause a strain in the way they relate and treat each

other.

Pillow (2004) state that teenage mothers are normally perceived as "poor

students" or "incapable students". This prejudice is highly dependent upon the

societal perception of teenage motherhood which is frowned upon and which is

sometimes associated with name-calling. For instance Chilisa (2002) reports that

in countries like Botswana, a girl who conceives before getting married is labelled

a 'Motsetse'-meaning the one who has given birth and is associated with being

unclean – and is subjected to being punished and ridiculed.

According to some teenage mothers, there are those teachers who show no

interest in them. According to the study by Chigona and Chetty (2008) teenage

mothers felt that there were those teachers who did not care about their feelings

and they were expected them to achieve like their peers. In the same study, it

was noted that teenage mothers are sometimes embarrassed while in the

company of their peers especially when they have failed to achieve according to

the expected standards. Teenage mothers had a feeling that their teachers and

classmates put them under enormous pressure without even taking time to get to

understand what they go through as teenage mothers.

Some school-going teenage mothers are at risk of being in classes where they

are frowned upon and not welcome. Bhana et al (2010) cite that many teachers

regard the presence of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in their

classrooms as a threat to the overall academic performance of the class because

these teachers question the ability of pregnant teenagers and mothers to cope

with the school's academic demands.

Some teenage mothers lack support from their teachers. For instance in the

study that was conducted by Chigona and Chetty (2008) the findings were that

the lack of support from teachers was evident when two participants who are the

Life Orientation teacher and the principal, respectively, stated that teachers in

most cases were not willing to go through the lessons which the girls (teenage

mothers) had missed due to motherhood. They stated that it was the girls'
responsibility to consult their friends about what they have been learning when
they were absent. It was also stated that most teachers do not feel sorry for a
teen mother when she misses lessons because she was busy with her baby, as
she is facing the consequences of her behaviour. However, according to the
findings of the recent study conducted by Bhana et al (2010) it emanated that
there are 'caring teachers' as many teachers in the study demonstrated the will to
care by offering understanding of the circumstances under which girls become
pregnant. The teachers in the above-mentioned study are also sympathetic in
their understanding of teenage mothers as they negotiate schooling and
parenting.

Mothering can be very challenging for teenagers especially those who are still
schooling as they find it very challenging to juggle between the responsibilities
that are associated with being a parent as well as their school-related tasks.
Mkhize (1995) cites that many teenage mothers perceive mothering to be very
difficult because they usually lack mothering skills which will enable them, to
perform mothering-related tasks and therefore have to depend on adults for
norms of parenting and preparation for child care, thus making it even more
difficult to transit to motherhood. Not all countries are like the USA which is

somewhat able to provide counselling services for their school-going mothers (Pillow, 2004). There is paucity of literature that suggests the availability of counselling services which enable school- going teenage mothers to adapt to their new roles as mothers.

Shaningwa (2007) states that various studies and reports from different countries seem to emphasise the enormous challenges faced by teenage mothers. Chigona and Chetty (2008) note that teenage mothers somewhat feel unprepared when they want to resume with their studies after childbirth, because there is no counselling to help them to prepare for motherhood and schooling.

The socio-economic status of the family (Chigona & Chetty, 2008) also plays a crucial role in the experiences of teenage mothers' schooling experiences. According to the above-mentioned study, if the teenage mother comes from a family that is financially challenged, they might not be able to send the baby to a crèche or to employ a babysitter who will look after the baby. This makes it the teenage mother's responsibility to look after her own baby when she comes back from school so as to give a break to the relative who looked after the baby while the teenage mother was at school. This has a negative bearing on the teenage mother's schooling, as she might not be able to do her school work properly. A similar sentiment was reiterated in the study conducted by Bhana et al (2010)

where many teachers believed that issues around child care, child related

illnesses and financial issues were significant barriers to school attendance for

teenage mothers, particularly in poorer school contexts.

Due to the pressures that are associated with motherhood and schooling, some

teenage mothers opt for dropping out of school. The responsibilities that are

associated with being a teenage mother, the pressure exerted by the peers to

teenage mothers as well as what takes place in schools make it difficult for

teenage mothers to cope with schooling (Chigona & Chetty, 2007). However

there are conditions that determine whether or not a teenage mother is able to

proceed with her schooling after she delivered her baby. These factors are

dependent on the teenage mother's ability to manage the finer details and

financial needs associated with becoming a mother and a student at the same

time. Grant & Hallman (2006) emphasise this point that by stating that there are

those households that are unable to sustain their daughters' education due to

economic constraints.

This study has noted that even when teenage mothers are allowed to carry on

with their education after becoming mothers, they are faced with massive

challenges that are socially constructed, which make them unable to enjoy

schooling while parenting. Yardley (2008) states that teenage motherhood is

problematised by the society and is often accompanied by stigma. Major and

O'Brien (2005) argue that stigmatised individuals are seen to possess attributes

that act to devalue their identities in a particular social context. Phelan (2001)

argues that the stigma that emanates from the society manifests itself through

components such as labelling, stereotyping, separation, status loss and

discrimination. Through such components from the society, teenage mothers find

it difficult to carry on with their schooling without nay hindrances. Teenage

mothers' relationships with other stakeholders such as their peers, parents,

teachers and the society become weakened. Some teenage mothers end up

alienating themselves and being alienated by their peers and teachers in

schools. Due to the overwhelming demands and the logistics that are associated

with teenage motherhood, some teenage mothers are often absent from school

and thus end up having difficulty in catching up on their schoolwork. According to

some literature, there are steps that can be taken in order to help teenage

mothers manage their dual roles of being mothers and scholars. Therefore the

next section is going to look at what literature suggests about the latter.

2.4 What can be done to help school-going teenage mothers cope with motherhood and schooling

Teenage motherhood is a gendered process and we need to address these gender inequalities. Since teenage motherhood is a social problem, therefore it just cannot be automatically resolved. It is important that all stakeholders that are the contributors in the schooling of teenage mothers, like the government, society, schools and parents all work together towards a common goal of enlightening those who are in the dark about the complexities of being a teenage mother and a student at the same time, in order to find ways and means of helping teenage mothers in schools. Dlamini et al (2003) state that the solutions to the holistic problems cannot be found in the activities of a single individual or service. The solutions can be found through the co-ordinated effort of the multi-disciplinary and intersectoral team.

Chilisa (2002) states that there are continuation policies in countries like Cameroon, Madagascar, Namibia and Sierra Leone which are 'girl-friendly' and which take into consideration the personal development of the teenage mother and her academic, physical and physiological needs as well as that of her offspring. In the same study it is cited that in Cameroon, for example, girls can negotiate with their schools on the duration of maternity leave and can arrange for extra classes to be organised so that they do not fall behind their classmates.

It could be very beneficial if such continuation policies could also be adopted by those countries that do not have them, as that could be of great benefit in assisting teenage mothers in making their schooling experiences as hassle free as possible and thus affording them another chance in life. Dlamini et al (2003) concur, stating that since the children are in the company and care of the teachers for the largest part of the day, the teachers should make the most of the opportunity to educate and support teenagers in school by, among other things, motivating teenage mothers to go back to school immediately after delivery.

While it may be assumed or even expected that the teachers are in a position to assist teenage mothers cope with their new responsibilities, however these teachers themselves are not properly trained to offer such guidance and support to teenage mothers. Teachers may need some form of coaching as to how they can assist teenage mothers cope with their new roles (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Bhana et al (2010) also posit that while pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers are accorded the legal status to attend school, the teachers highlight the difficulties in addressing the needs and concerns of teenage mothers, as they express the view that they were operating without policies at the level of the school. Chigona and Chetty (2008) suggest that the state must provide teachers with more professional development around policy and develop guidelines to

assist pregnant teenage girls and teenage mothers in schools. Apart from the

provision of professional training for teachers, Bhana et al (2010) propose that

there also needs to be a change in the teachers' attitudes towards pregnant and

young mothers in order to put to an end the harmful views that lead to their poor

schooling experiences.

We live in highly gendered societies which dictate that it is the mother's role to

raise and nurture a child, thus placing a great deal of pressure and high

expectations even on our teenage mothers. Chilisa (2002) makes this point,

stating that from an analysis of the ideology of motherhood, it is clear that an

ideal mother is the one who is always available for the child, nurturing and caring

for the child. Chilisa (2002) further states that it is also clear that pregnancy and

confinement, irrespective of the time involved, restrict the movement of the

teenage mothers and their life chances. Zondo (2006) states that every teenage

learner needs to know some basics about being a good parent. Bhana et al

(2010) suggest that supporting pregnant and teenage mothers can only be

successfully achieved by promoting gender equality and by understanding that

currently the burden of taking care of children is unfairly distributed between men

and women. According to the same study by Bhana et al (2010) it is stated that

thus the interventions in schools also need to challenge the broader gender role

stereotypes and traditional expectations of men and women in families and society.

Parents can play an important role in trying to curb teenage pregnancy and in helping teenage mothers deal with their schooling. Singh (2005) states that parents need to face the reality that each year children are becoming sexually active at a younger age and parents need to realise that withholding vital information about sex has not prevented teenagers from engaging in sexual activities in the past and is not likely to do so in the future. Therefore the above-mentioned author suggests that there should be genuine communication between parents and their children, as parents can no longer afford to keep quiet about sex.

We need to make the learning environment of teenage mothers socially welcoming (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). Panday et al (2009) also posit that schools need to limit the impact of teenage pregnancy on young learners and to provide an enabling environment which involves providing support with parenting skills, health services, access to catch-up programmes as well as sexuality education. Dlamini et al (2003) state that the health services can play a major role in the

prevention of pregnancies and in facilitating motherhood among teenagers. This could be done through offering counselling to teenage mothers about contraception as well as by teaching them about the proper skills of parenting. They can also assist by organising clubs for teenage mothers where they could be given a platform for them to share their experiences and where they can together come up with solutions to their problems.

Another way in which teenage mothers might be helped to cope with their schooling is through the provision of crèche facilities for teenage mothers within the school premises (Chigona & Chetty, 2007). Dlamini et al (2003) also stress that idea by stating that the community members can build crèches inside the school premises so that the teenage mothers can be able to feed their infants and attend school at the same time. The Government should subsidise such childcare facilities to the ultimate benefit not only of the teenage mothers and their children but also for the benefit of the whole society.

In order to deal with the ridicule and prejudice from teachers and fellow learners Chigona and Chetty (2008) recommend that there should be professional counselling that is readily available to them. Through this professional counselling, teenage mothers could be assured that they are still capable to pick

up the pieces and carry on with their schooling which will later benefit them, their children and the greater society.

School-going teenage mothers are often faced with challenging situations in their daily school lives. These girls are usually marginalised due to the discourses about teenage pregnancy and motherhood which have developed in societies (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). However Bhana et al (2010) state that there is hope for teenage mothers in schools as there are teachers that are willing to lend a hand to teenage mothers so that they can cope with the daily challenges of motherhood and schooling. Various studies also suggest ways and means of making the schooling of teenage mothers more manageable

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I have looked at what various literatures suggest about how teenage mothers experience motherhood and schooling and how the society dictates how teenage mothers should be treated. In this chapter I have also discussed that even though there are policies in place that are meant to protect and promote education of teenage mothers in schools, however some teenage

mothers still experience difficulty in trying to attend school because of the

difficulties that they are faced with on day-to day basis.

In the next chapter I discuss the research design and method that has been used

in this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD

3.1 Introduction

This study explores the ways in which teenage mothers from a single-sex,

predominantly middle-class state school (Oakleigh Girls High School) negotiate

the demands of schooling and parenting. To achieve this, my study embarked

upon qualitative research methodology where data was collected mainly through

the use of focus group interviews. In using qualitative research methodology

where focus group interviews were incorporated, enabled me as the researcher

to solicit information from the participants about their experiences of juggling

between motherhood and schooling, as I believe that it is with such information at

hand that relevant stakeholders in the education system such as the department

of Education, teachers, parents and learners themselves can be able to develop

plans and strategies that can be helpful in improving the lives of teenage mothers

in schools.

The critical question that is guiding this study is as follows: What are the

gendered experiences of teenage girls who became mothers while at school?

In answering this question, the two secondary questions (Maree, 2007) will be

answered:

1. What are the experiences of teenage mothers at school?

2. How do teenage mothers manage schooling and being a young

   mother at school?

In the next section of this chapter, I elaborate further on the qualitative approach

and its relevance in this study.

3.2 A qualitative approach

Since this study came about as a result of my observation of the increasing

number of teenagers who were becoming mothers at my school (Oakleigh Girls

High School) over the past six years, I therefore became curious and wanted to

explore how these seven teenage mothers juggle between schooling and

motherhood. Due to this curiosity and many unanswered questions that I kept on

asking myself about the experiences of teenage mothers at my school were

reason enough for me to want to commit myself and be confident enough to

proceed with the study and involve myself as the research instrument

(Jewnarain, 2008). As a researcher, I also had no intentions of interfering with

and manipulating my participants in this study.

Banister, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) state that qualitative research is

conducted in natural settings where the researcher is the one that is responsible

for collecting data and analyses it. Holloway and Wheeler (1996) also affirm that

qualitative research typically studies people or systems by interacting with and

observing the participants in their natural environment (*in situ*) and by focusing

on their meanings and interpretations. By researching these participants (who

are learners) in their natural setting, which is a school, I was able to freely

navigate and observe their daily interactions with their teachers and peers.

Patton (1990) states that qualitative methods allow the researcher to study

selected issues in depth and in detail. Therefore in this study, which aimed at

exploring the experiences of seven teenage mothers who are still at school, the

use of qualitative approach was relevant.

"The researcher is the primary research instrument in this study" (Jewnarain, 2008 p. 63). In this study I decided to use myself as a research instrument which was going to be used to elicit data from the participants because I had a strong conviction that since my interest about this study was evoked by my observation of the growing number of teenage mothers at my school (the research site). Therefore being the research instrument would enable me to be present at every point of the development of the study. It will also enable me to see beyond spoken words, which are the verbal responses of these teenage mothers, but also to be able to comprehend the mood and the tone of everything that was by the participants. Furthermore, having been at the school for more than six years enabled me to build a relationship with most of the learners at the school. I felt that the participants would be able to openly talk about their experiences of being teenage mothers while at school without any inhibitions, rather than they would have with any other person. In this way the participants were made to feel that I had an interest in what was taking place in their lives more especially what they at school as teenage mothers.

3.3 Locating the study: the interpretivist paradigm

This study is located in the interpretive research paradigm. At this point it is necessary to justify the particular use of the interpretive research paradigm, as opposed to the positivist research paradigm, and its suitability to my study. Bertram (2004) suggests that the interpretive approach is set in such a way that the truth is momentary, depending on a particular setting at a particular time, located in a particular context, situation and time. As a researcher in this study that aimed at acquiring "thick descriptions" (Henning, 2004) by exploring the experiences of seven teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School, I engaged myself fully aware of the fact that the findings of this study are only a reflection of what happens in this particular research site, at the particular moment of study and could not generalised as the experiences of other teenage mothers in other schools.

In the next section of this chapter, I will elaborate on the research site in which this study was conducted.

3.4 The research site

This study was conducted in a single sex former Model C school which is situated in a middle class former white suburb in Durban. I refer the reader back to the introductory chapter where I described the research site in detail

While there are two other high schools in the vicinity of this research site, I purposefully opted to conduct my study at the current site because of the following factors:

Firstly, this site (which is a school where I teach) is where I noticed the growing number of teenage pregnancies, which triggered my curiosity and interest in wanting to explore how these teenage girls who are mothers manage schooling and motherhood. Jewnarain (2008) rightfully states that the familiar surroundings meant that she could navigate her way around the school, choosing sites which she thought would be most comfortable and conducive to conduct interviews in. It is also for the same reason that my work place was an ideal place in which to conduct my study.

Lastly, conducting my study at Oakleigh Girls High School (pseudonym), meant that I would be able to have constant contact with my participants and also be

able to set up focus group interviews with the participants, thus making data

gathering relatively hassle-free.

3.5 Sample used

The sample for this study consisted of seven participants who are all teenage

mothers and are also learners at Oakleigh Girls High School. All seven

participants are black. The reason for using these seven participants in this study

is that they were willing to be part of this study and they were willing to share

their experiences of juggling between motherhood and schooling.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

> "The quality of a piece of research stands or falls not
>
> only by the appropriate methodology and
>
> instrumentation but also by the suitability of the
>
> sampling strategy that has been adopted" (Cohen et
>
> al, 2009, p.100)

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of the participants as it had to be

participants that befitted the category and were suitable for the study that

intended to explore the experiences of teenage mothers who attend school at Oakleigh Girls High School. Ball (1990) states that purposive sampling is mostly used to access people who are 'knowledgable' about particular issues based on a variety of factors such as power and experiences.

In this study, purposive sampling was done with a specific purpose, which aimed at soliciting relevant data about the experiences of teenage at Oakleigh Girls High School.

3.7 Data collection method

For my study I had to make careful considerations as to which data collection methods to employ that would yield more fruit in terms of data production while at the same time not causing harm to the research process as a whole. It is for this reason that I decided to use focus group interviews to collect data. The following section is going to focus on the latter.

3.7.1 Focus group interviews

According to Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) focus group interviews enable the participants to feel free to self-disclose in a group which is supportive of them. Therefore in this study, which comprised of seven teenage girls who happened to be mothers and attended the same school, focus group interviews was an ideal method through which data could be collected. Not only did focus group interviews provide the participants with the platform to freely disclose their experiences with each other, but focus group interviews also promoted a dialogue between my participants thus enabling me as a researcher to probe for more clarity where necessary in order to gain more insight around the topic of research. Throughout the focus group interviews, the participants were very much at ease with each other in such a way that there were instances where their experiences of juggling motherhood and schooling were so similar that they sometimes completed each other's statements without being aware of it. Through the sharing of their experiences in the focus group interviews, the participants came to a realisation that their experiences were a common thread that ran through each of their lives regardless of their age and family backgrounds.

During focus group interviews, both Zulu and English languages were used by me (the researcher) as well as by the participants. Since all the participants as well as the researcher are the first language speakers of Zulu language. We

made an agreement before the study commenced that we were going to use any language between the two so as to ensure the freest possible communication between me as the researcher and the participants.

3.8 Data sources

The following participants (Ntwenhle, Desiree, Nonjabulo, Malaika, Angel, Hazel and Sibongakonke) were the main sources of data in this study. I have provided the biographical information of the participants in chapter 1.

3.9 Examples of questions asked

In this study most of the questions that were asked were open-ended questions. Through the use of open-ended questions, the participants were able to respond to the questions in a manner, which enabled them to be comfortable and free without the feeling of being expected to answer in a fixed way. Examples of questions asked:

- How did you react when you became a mother?
- What was the reaction of your peers at school when you became a mother?
- In what way did you educators react when you became a mother?

- Has you relationship with your educators changed since you became a mother? If so, how did it change?

- What about other learners at school? How is your relationship with them?

3.10 The research process: focus group interviews

There were two sessions of focus group interviews that were conducted with the participants. The first session was planned in such that it would be time where all the participants and me as the researcher would sit together and would orientate the participants about the intentions of the study as well as give the participants a chance to ask me questions about the study itself. This time was also used to put the participants at ease about my role in this study. I used this time to inform the participants that the information gathered in this study would not be in any way used against them by me or by any member of staff as it will be treated with the utmost confidentiality that it deserved. I also informed the participants that none of the teachers not even the principal will have access to the information gathered through the focus group interviews. Participants were also informed that a dictaphone would be used to record the interviews and I will also have a notebook with me which I will use to jot down certain things should there be a need. Learners have always known my first name, however they were not allowed to address me using my first name because of my position as the

educator at the school. However, I thought that it would make them relate better to me if they addressed me using my first name. Therefore I granted them permission to address me using my first name. It was during this first session that I urged all the participants not to divulge any of the information that was discussed in our session. Some of the participants made mention of the fact that they were not used to calling adults with their first names, however they informed me this made them feel special because they have always been scared of me.

I had also requested permission to use one of the secluded venues (a boardroom) at the school for our interviews so as to avoid any disturbances from the learners and educators. During this first session, I was the first one to introduce myself and give the participants a bit of information about my family background and myself. In this introduction I divulged information about myself which I would have otherwise considered private such as my age, where I live, things that I used to do while I was still a university student. This was deliberately done in order for the participants to see that I did not become part of this study as a judge but rather as a person who just came to seek knowledge about their experiences as teenage mothers at the school. All the participants were then given a chance to introduce themselves to the group and giving a bit of background about themselves and their families. Before the focus groups

commenced, the participants were informed that they were free to respond in any of the two languages (English and Zulu). Because of the time constraints I could not go through all the questions that I had planned for the first session. At the end of the first session, the participants were informed about the next session that we were going to have.

I had planned that the sessions were not too far apart from each other as that would cause a delay in the process of data gathering and might even dampen the spirit that had been built during the first session. The second session focussed mainly on the questions. The participants were still able to relate to me and to each other the way they did during the first session. For most of the times, the participants spoke openly and unashamedly about their experiences of juggling motherhood and schooling. They were so comfortable with me as the interviewer and with each other to such an extent that they even insisted that I use their real names in the study. One of the participants made mention of the fact that being given a chance to talk about her experiences of motherhood and schooling made her realise that at least there are teachers who are concerned enough about them as teenage mothers to such an extent that they wanted to know how they cope with both motherhood and schooling. The second session

went relatively fast, and I had managed to go through all the questions that I had planned for this session.

Taking into consideration that both focus group interview sessions were going to be conducted during second break and the participants would not have had time to go to the tuck shop to buy lunch. I brought sandwiches and fruit juice for us to share during this session. I made sure that all of us took sandwiches from the same platter and poured juice from the same container. In that way I wanted to show them that I am in no way an authority figure in this process of data gathering through focus group interviews.

At the end of the second session, I thanked the participants and informed them that there was last more session to do with them. During this session I had planned to show them the transcripts of the two focus group interviews conducted previously for them to endorse. I had also secretly planned to give them appreciation gifts for being part of the study. I had bought each one of them a photo frame with the names of their babies engraved in them and had organised small gift bags with baby stuff such as baby lotion, wet wipes, cotton wool and ear buds. The reason I gave the gifts at the end of our interview

sessions was I did want to participants to feel as if they were bribed to be part in

my study, however I wanted these gifts to add some value in their lives and to

know that I appreciated the fact that they sacrificed their free time in order to be

part of this study.

3.11 Data analysis process

Data was analysed using the Tesch's method (Tesch, 1990). As the participants

responded in both English and Zulu, because of my bilingual ability I was able to

translate all the responses that were in Zulu into English. In the next paragraph

Tesch's eight steps of data analysis are going to be summarised.

After I had transcribed all the data, I read it over and over again in order to

familiarise myself with the data (step 1). After having read through all the

transcripts, I discarded all the data that was not relevant to my study, that is data

that was not going to help me answer the research questions (step 2). Being

guided by the third step according to Tesch's steps of data analysis (Tesch,

1990), I developed a classification system according to the responses of the

participants to different questions. I then formulated themes based on the

categories of the responses of the participants (steps steps 4 and 5). I then

sorted all topics under relevant themes and then recorded data on paper (steps 6 and 7) and I finally checked data that I had recorded on paper (step 8).

The themes that emerged from the data analysis process are as follows:

- Fear of the parents' response, child father's response, teachers' response and the teachers' response

- Rejection by peers

- Ridicule by teachers and learners

- Lack of support from some teachers ("flies on the wall")

- Decline in academic performance

- Inability to participate in school activities

- Support from teachers some teachers, peers and support group

3.12 Ethical considerations

I was aware of the fact that the topic of teenage motherhood was very sensitive and thus dealt with it with utmost care.

Prior to my study I had to seek permission from both the Provincial Education department as well as the principal of Oakleigh Girls High School. This was done

in a form of a letter which clearly stated the aim of the study. (See appendix 2 &

3)

After finding the participants for my study, I made time to talk them through the

research process and alleviated their fears by ensuring that all my participants

were informed about the principles of autonomy (getting consent of every person

to be part of the study), nonmaleficence (doing no harm to the participants) and

confidentiality (where all participants are assured that the information they have

provided will be kept confidential (Bertram, 2004). As a researcher I respected

the autonomy of all the participants in the study. I informed the participants that

they would not be harmed during the research process and that their identities

will be protected during and after the study as they will be given pseudonyms.

The participants were informed that they are free to withdraw their participation in

the study whenever the need arises. Babbie (1990) argues that anonymity

implies that it should be impossible for any participants to be identified by anyone

reading the study, including the researcher. In this study, the participants as well

as the parents and the guardians were informed that the identity of each

participant to be kept anonymous by using pseudonyms. The participants were

also urged not to discuss any details of the study with any other person other

than the researcher.

Beyond the ethical factors that were taken into consideration in this study, I

deemed it important that I inform the parents and guardians of the participants,

as well as the participants that were involved in this study, that under no

circumstances was this study done for monetary gain but it was done as one of

the requirements towards obtaining my Masters degree and therefore I stated it

clear that there was no compensation (monetary and otherwise) that was to be

offered to the participants.

3.13 Limitations of the study

In this section of my study I will discuss the limitations that I had when I gathered

data for this study.

Even though all the participants in the study had agreed to participate in the

study without any hesitations, however initially the participants were viewing me

as their teacher rather than the researcher. It was only after the participants were

assured about the fact that they could address me using my first name as well as

being continuously assured that the information gathered during the two focus

group interview sessions will never be used against them by me or any other

teacher and that the information gathered was going to be strictly confidential that they began to loosen up and talk freely about their experiences as teenage mothers who have to juggle between motherhood and schooling.

3.14 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I discussed in detail the research design and methodology that was used in this study. I argued for the suitability of the qualitative approach, which utilised the interpretive view as a lens to answer my research questions (Ramdutt, 2010). I explained why focus group interviews were used in this study as a data collection method. In this chapter I also outlined the limitations that I encountered while I was carrying out this study. The use of Tesch's method of analysing data was discussed in this chapter. I outlined the ethical considerations that were taken into consideration in this study. The next chapter will focus on data analysis and it must be noted that in analysing the data, I have only used the translation of all the statements that were made in Zulu. All the statements that have been emboldened (bold) are direct quotations of the participants and all the statements that are in brackets are statements translated from Zulu to English.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This study investigates the experiences of being a teenage mother in school and explores the ways in which seven teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School juggle mothering and schooling and the gendered effects of such experiences.

Being a teenage mother is a highly gendered experience. Despite the dramatic change in educational policy which guarantees gender equality in schools, schools do not follow the law as it is intended and make very small or even no changes to accommodate teenage mothers (Panday et al, 2009). Ensuring that young mothers remain in school, complete matric and further their education is crucial for their life chances and economic independence. Ensuring that young

mothers remain in school is in part dependent on a supportive school environment (Chigona & Chetty, 2008). In this chapter the ways in which young mothers experience and juggle the demands of schooling and mothering are discussed and analysed.

4.2 *Fear*

A major theme than ran across the responses from the young mothers in this study was fear. Such fear was in relation to adults (including parents and teachers) as well as the fathers of their children.

Fear of parents' response

Mkhwanazi (2010) states that when a teenage girl suspects that she might be pregnant, she keeps the knowledge to herself for as long as she could. One of the reasons for a teenage girl keeping her pregnancy a secret might be that she is afraid of how her parents are going to respond to her pregnancy.

> *Hey I was very afraid of what my mother was going to say and how was she going to respond to this whole mess.*

Another participant also emphasised the fear of how her father was going to treat her after she became a mother.

> *I wanted to run away as far as I could. How was I supposed to face my father?*

Zulu cultural practices see fathers are as symbols of discipline, power, order and authority and are perceived as providers in the family whose role is to bring financial stability in their households. Hunter (2005) also affirms that in the Zulu culture it is the responsibility of 'umnumzana' (homestead head) to support his family. The status of being 'umnumzana' is also associated with being respected by the people in the society (ukuhlonishwa). Therefore teenage pregnancy undermines everything that the status of being 'umnumzane' represents as the society believes that teenage pregnancy is also a reflection of poor parenting by the parents of the girl. From the responses of the participants in this study it was clear that they feared how their parents were going to respond to the news of their pregnancies. Their fear is mainly because of the realisation that they have brought an added financial responsibility for their parents to take care of and they have also tarnished the name of their family.

The fear of parents was also linked to the adult-child relations where teenagers are not expected to be sexual. For most parents, the issues of sexuality are 'shelved' far away from what they discuss with their children. Delius and Glaser (2002) state that while parents set firm limits for their children, notably even against pregnancy, however they are rarely involved in the day to day socialisation of their children about their sexuality. Lee (2006) cites that sexuality related issues are closeted in families and in communities because they are perceived as a taboo that should not be spoken about more especially in open forums such as schools and churches. "People are uncomfortable with teenage sexuality, particularly female sexuality, and pregnancy is an embodiment of that." Rather than deal with issues related to the teen mother, "what we retreat to every time is 'we just need to prevent teen pregnancy,' " Pillow (2004). It emanated from a study by Lesch and Kruger (2005) that sex was presented by parents as a dangerous activity and that therefore they resorted to not talking to their children about it.

In most families, children more especially girls are seen to be the 'flowers' and the pride of the family. In some black families some parents even go to an extent of naming their daughters with names such as 'Mbali' (meaning a flower in Zulu language), 'Naledi' (also meaning a flower in SeSotho language), 'Nobuhle'

(meaning beauty in Zulu language) just to show to the world how proud they are of their daughters. This cultural practice of 'ukuqamba umntwana' (naming a child) marks the beginning of hope for a better future that parents have for their children. It is also in names such as 'Ntombikayise' (meaning a father's daughter in Zulu) which show possessiveness and the close connection that fathers have with their daughters However, if a girl who is viewed in this light becomes pregnant, this brings a sense of anger and disappointment to her parents, more especially to their fathers.

According to the Zulu culture, teenage pregnancy is regarded as 'ihlazo' or 'ichilo' which means a disgrace. It is through initiatives such as 'umkhosi womhlanga' (the reed dance) where virginity among unmarried females and more especially among young girls is promoted. Young girls mostly in rural areas as well as in some townships are even coerced by their parents to go for regular virginity testing just to make sure that their daughters do not become mothers prematurely.

Parents are the symbols of authority, order and stability in households. For some parents, the pregnancy of their daughters shakes these fundamental foundations on which solid parenting is supposed to be built on. In the study by Chigona and

Chetty (2008) it is stated that some parents of teenage mothers distanced

themselves from their daughters and were reluctant to provide support to their

teenage daughters because they felt ashamed that the community would look

down upon the family because of their actions. In the same study by Chigona

and Chetty (2008) one parent stated that he was so shocked to know that his

daughter was pregnant at such a young age and that parent further stated that

sometimes he did not provide her with everything that she wanted because he

felt bitter with what his daughter had done. From this example it is clear that

teenage pregnancy brings about a variety of negative feelings for parents, such

as a feeling of being betrayed by their daughters whom they have looked upon

as symbols of pride, beauty and innocence. Teenage pregnancy also brings a

feeling of shame to the parents as they become ashamed of what the community

is going to say about their children's actions.

Fear of child's father's response

Kaufman et al (2001) suggest that even though many boys and girls describe

childbearing as a means of cementing a relationship, the advent of a birth,

however, usually brings with it little to fulfil those expectations. One of the

participants' response was the fear of how the father of her child was going to

respond to the news of him becoming a father. According to the study conducted

by Kaufman et al (2001), both boys and girls concurred with each other when

they stated that boyfriends of teenage mothers do not want to assume the

financial and social obligations of parenthood. In the same study by Kaufman et

al (2001) one of the participants (a young man from Soweto) was cited as stating

that most of young men deny it when a young girl says that she is pregnant,

further stating that they do not even support by buying one nappy. There are

various reasons that cause young fathers not to assume their responsibilities of

fatherhood. Kaufman et al (2001) suggest that young fathers are also afraid to

assume the financial and the social obligation of parenthood. This is because

these young fathers cannot afford to support their children financially as they are

still dependent on their parents to provide for them financially as well. Swartz &

Bhana (2009) cite that all the participants (young fathers) in the study stated that

they feared their parents' response when they discovered that they were going to

be parents, not only because it of the emotional stress that these news would

cause, but also the enormous financial implications for their families. In the same

study by Swartz & Bhana (2010) it is further stated that there would be 'damage'

payment for the actual pregnancy as well as the added burden of a payment for

transgressing the codes of 'ukuhlonipha' (respect) and 'ukudliwa' (which is a fine

that is paid by the father of the child for being guilty of disrespect because of

making a girl pregnant) followed by the traditional practices of negotiations. From the above examples it is clear that the financial implications that are associated with being a father are indeed enormous.

It is often the case that in denial the boys will not want to assume responsibility because they accuse their girlfriends of promiscuity and having multiple partners and thus claim that the baby is not theirs. Hunter (2005) concurs by stating that according to the Zulu culture, in the eyes of many men the 'ihlazo' (disgrace) of having a child before marriage or being seen as 'isifebe' (loose woman) position woman as lacking 'inhlonipho' (respect) and therefore undesirable to marry, condemned to a low status in the society. Therefore once a woman has been categorised as promiscuous by her boyfriend, then the possibility would be that the father of the child would deny paternity of the child.

4.3 Teachers just delete you from the system

Bhana et al (2010) state that teenage motherhood and pregnancy are framed as moral problems playing on the broad anxieties around youth and sexualities. During focus group interviews some participants stated that they were afraid of how their teachers would react towards them after they have found out that they

were going to be mothers. Teenage mothers feel that some teachers do not empathise with them.

Whenever they (teachers) notice that sbanibani (a certain person) is about to become a mother they start acting funny.

Some teachers stop talking to you. Some do not even think that you exist.

None of them ever said anything about it.

Miss, they (teachers) never say anything when this thing happens. They just pretend as if nothing has happened.

Miss, you do not know anything about these teachers. Some of them just delete you from their system. They completely take you out of their minds. They pretend as if you do not exist any more. They stop talking to you. They sometimes don't even look towards your direction. They just cannot hide their disappointment in you. It's hard. It makes you think twice about coming to school.

Motherhood seems to be a lonesome journey for some teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School. There is a sudden feeling of the 'lack of belonging', which emanates from their new roles as mothers, as the majority of teachers distance themselves from the teenage mothers. According to a study by Dlamini et al (2003) in Swaziland, teenage mothers realised that they need educational qualifications to improve their own lives as well as those of their own children, however they envisaged problems in achieving these educational qualifications because they were no longer accepted by their peers or by their schoolteachers and they had an extra burden of caring for their babies.

Pillow (2004) said that in some schools, the old understanding that "when you show, you go" is still in effect – at least in practice. In some larger school systems, pregnant students are encouraged to attend alternative schools, but the quality of these schools is unclear.

Some teachers explicitly and unashamedly decide to ignore teenage mothers and pretend as if they are non-existent. One participant stated that some teachers even decide to 'delete you out of their system' which she further explained to mean that those teachers decide to think of teenage mothers as non-existent and also think of them as people who do not require any attention

and support. One of the participants in the study by Dlamini et al (2003) stated that teachers scold and despise pregnant girls, throw them out of school and expel them for good. In the study by Bhana et al (2010) it is stated that pregnant teenagers incited anger and hostility in schools, were framed as sexually immoral and were censured. In the same study by Bhana et al (2010) one of the participants, a teacher, suggested that pregnant teenagers should not be in school as it allows the other girls to do the same.

There is also some conflict in the roles that teenage mothers play in their daily lives. The main theme that surfaced from the teenage mothers in the study by Rolfe (2008) was that, when asked about motherhood, they mentioned the discourse of 'growing up and being responsible'. At school they are treated like children whereas as soon as they get home they are expected to assume their positions as care-givers. This dual-role play causes a strain on teenage mothers.

Even before teenage mothers face rejection and ridicule from their teachers after child birth, they experience difficulty in trying to adjust their growing bodies while they are still pregnant. Pillow (2004) has numerous stories of pregnant girls required to squeeze themselves into constricted desk seats, or reported for tardiness or absences related to pregnancy or child care. She witnessed the

chair problem so many times in her research that "it just became this visual for me of how we are still sending a clear message to the pregnant teenagers that she does not fit within the school, she does not fit within education."

Schools are a reflection of what happens in the society. Bhana et al (2010) suggest that teachers use readily available meanings to associate teenage pregnancy and young mothers as social problems censured for sexuality, immorality and disruption to academic life.

4.4 Peers stop associating with young mothers

Zondo (2006) states that apart from the challenges that teenage-mothers face in the society at large, the school setting in which they find themselves in, poses new challenges to them. According to my observations, one of the challenges that teenage mothers face in schools is rejection from fellow learners.

There was a feeling of rejection from fellow learners that some participants raised during this study. This is contrary to the findings of Mcambi (2007) that pregnant girls and teenage mothers sometimes are the ones that alienate themselves from their peers at school as they find it difficult to be part of the group they belonged

to before they became pregnant. In this study, some participants stated that that

they felt rejected by their fellow learners. I have also observed this when teenage

mothers come back to school after having had their children. They mostly find

themselves without anyone to talk to. Thus they take a while to catch up on work

that was done while they were away.

Miss at the end of most lessons, we would wait and walk together before I

became a mother, (pause) but after that some would either walk fast or

slow(ly) trying to avoid walking with me. But there was this one girl who

told me straight that at home she was told to stop associating herself with

mothers. Miss I was hurt. Worse of all, this she said in front of other kids. It

would have been better if she said this while it was just the two of us.

Teenage mothers are rejected and stigmatised by their peers because they

represent the tainting of sexuality and sexual purity and the fact that in school

you are supposed to be a child not a mother. Bhana et al (2010) concurs by

stating that schools are expected to be spaces of sexual innocence.

4.5 Ridicule

According to the study by Chigona and Chetty (2008), teenage mothers felt that some teachers did not empathise with them and expected them to behave and perform just like any other learners in their respective classes. They felt that teachers and fellow learners put a good deal of pressure on them without really understanding what the girls were going through.

The following statement depicts how some of the teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School were ridiculed by some of the teachers

> *... there were two particular teachers who would just irritate the hell out of me. Whenever I was around, she would talk about young girls who sleep around with old men and end up being pregnant with children they would not even be able to support. The other teacher would always speak about how the government uses their money as taxpayers to feed children born to irresponsible brats.*

In the study by Chigona and Chetty (2008), some teenage mothers feel that they are sometimes ridiculed in front of classmates whenever they have not satisfied the class requirements.

According to the study by Bhana et al (2010) which seeks to interrogate the responses of South African teachers to teenage pregnancy and teenage mothers, it is argued that teachers use readily available meanings to associate teenage pregnancy and young mothers as social problems censured for sexual immorality and disruptions of academic life. Chigona and Chetty (2008) argue that owing to the embarrassment which the teachers cause teenage mothers through ridiculing them in front of their fellow and through the teachers' use of judgemental language, some teenage mothers get discouraged from carrying on with their schooling learners. The teachers' negative perceptions about teenage mothers are further manifested in one of the teachers' responses in the study by Bhana (2010), in which she described a situation where the presence of a pregnant teenager was seen as potentially leading to sexual anarchy among other women in schools. It is through this perspective that teenage mothers experience ridicule from teachers and are somewhat made to feel as if they do not belong within the school environment.

4.6 Why can't they leave me alone?

Chetty et al (2008) writes that teenage mothers as learners are also misunderstood and pressurised by their fellow learners. Lees (1987) states that

teenage mothers who are perceived as 'others' are verbally abused by their peers, their participation is seen as unwelcome, and they are sometimes ignored or ridiculed by their peers. Chigona and Chetty (2008) further argue that since schools are influenced by the cues from the society which in most cases have 'othered' the teenage mothers, thus teenage mothers are perceived as unfit schooling subjects. In the focus group interviews, there were those participants who reported how ridicule was not only from the teachers, but also from fellow learners. Fellow learners also interrogated them with questions that made these teenage mothers feel uncomfortable.

Some kids la (here at school) think that if you have a child, you are just stupid. I overheard some girls saying I have lost a lot of weight, (maybe I am HIV positive).

Apart from being stigmatised (Fulcher, 2002), The study finds that peers constantly interrogated some teenage mothers with questions.

(*Hey. School children love to interfere in other people's matters*). When they asked me questions I just told them to leave me alone and mind their own business.

These questions varied from being asked about private and sometimes

humiliating matters such as:

>…*they started asking me lots of questions about me and my baby. Like*
>
>*(they scared you off)... (Some of their questions) I had no clue (as to how*
>
>*I was going to respond to them).*

On one particular day, Zinhle (pseudonym of one of the teenage mothers in my

registration class) sat quietly during morning registration. I noticed that her eyes

were full of tears. When her friend went to her to find out what was wrong, she

started crying and after few minutes of trying to console her, she said she was

crying because she has been receiving rude messages on Mixit (social network)

about the way she looks since she came back to school (after having her baby)

and she stated that she was further humiliated by being asked humiliating

questions which she refused to disclose to her friend.

Another participant's response when asked about the types of questions they are

asked by their peers, responded by stating the following:

>*About my experience of (giving birth). They wanted all the details Miss.*
>
>*Some would even come to me during break and ask me irritating*

questions. One day Miss I just broke down and cried. (They were being a

nuisance). It never stopped. They would pry for my private sexual

information. They would just go on and on and on. They want to know

private stuff of the things that I do with my boyfriend. They want to know

about my sex life… I cannot discuss such things with them. Why can't they

just leave me alone?

The society still firmly believes that teenage pregnancy and teenage motherhood

is an unforgivable sin that needs to be fought from all frontiers. This belief is

evident even in the case of teenage mothers' peers who view them as deviants

who broke the rules as defined in the "society's code of conduct" by becoming

parents before their time, thus deserving ridicule and interrogation

4.7 Flies on the wall

Bhana et al (2010) rightfully state that formal recognition of the right of pregnant

teenagers and young parents to attend school is not an automatic recipe for

ultimate educational success. Teenage mothers' lives are inevitably and

constantly surrounded by challenges. There are teachers who strongly believe

that teenage mothers must take full responsibility for their new roles of

motherhood. In the study by Burdell (1996) it emanated that educators believed

that pregnancy and parenting are primarily the responsibility of the students, not the schools.

The majority of the participants in this study clearly stated that they did not receive any form of support from their teachers. Most teachers showed no interest in these teenage mothers. According to the participants in this study, they felt like they did not exist. However, both Bloem (2000) and Singh (2005) both argue on the basis of their studies that some teachers offer no assistance to pregnant learners and teenage mothers because they are not adequately trained and equipped to deal with teenage mothers and their situations.

> *Miss, there are those teachers who just pretend as if you are not existing, they just ignore you. They (teachers) conveniently pretend that we are just flies on the wall.*

There are teachers who still have a strong conviction that offering any form of assistance to teenage mothers is a stamp of approval that they had done well by becoming mothers at such a young age. They make no effort in trying to integrate teenage mothers back into the schooling system. Thus they do

everything in their power to down play any efforts teenage mothers make in trying to prove their seriousness about their schoolwork.

4.8 Decline in academic performance

Arlington Public School (2004) states that teen(age) parents face an overwhelming number of difficulties and managing to care for an infant and devoting adequate time to school work is a great challenge for the teen(age) parents.

Most of the teenage mothers interviewed in this study expressed their concern about the difficulty that they experience when trying to study or even do homework because of the time that they have to devote to their motherhood responsibilities. It also emanated that this has led to a decline in their academic attainment.

having a baby has definitely affected my studies. Sometimes (I feel like I cannot cope). My marks are not good at all. My marks are dropping. Sometimes teachers complain if there is some work that I have not done.

Another participant shared the same sentiment by stating the following:

My marks have dropped Miss, I just do not get enough time to do my own

things and to learn for tests.

As a teacher I have observed and continue to observe the negative impact

teenage motherhood has on their studies. In Bhana et al (2010) one of the

teachers confirmed this observation by stating that when you look at a learner's

performance before she became a parent, comparing it to after becoming a

parent, you find that the standard of her standard decreases. This results in part

from the increase in the number of days of absence from school. Chigona and

Chetty (2008) argue that the communities in which the teenage mothers live have

a big impact on their lives. Since the society does not approve of teenage girls

becoming mothers at a young age, thus teenage mothers receive minimal or no

support from their families and peers from school which makes it difficult for the

teenage mothers to achieve to their optimum level.

" Sometimes you need to be a student, sometimes a mother and to balance the two is a bit hard. But the mothering takes much of you because like when the child is sick you have to think about the child all the time and for me it's hard to keep the baby at the back of my mind when I am at school. So it's much more difficult just to break away from my child" (Chigona & Chetty, 2007, p. 7)

Teenage mothers are not the only people to observe these drastic challenges in teenage mothers' lives. One teacher was cited as follows:

"They do have challenges, especially with their children; some of them tell you they didn't sleep because the child is teething or they are worried that the child needs this and that or is someone going to give them money for this and that… if there is no one to look after the child the mother has to stay at home and look after her child" (Bhana et al, 2010, p. 6).

The participants in this study echo the same sentiment.

Sometimes I am seriously unable to attend school maybe because my child is sick, her transport to crèche did not pick her up on time or uma egula (if she is sick). Sometimes she becomes restless, and she would not want any other person to touch her other than me. Just imagine if I were writing a test the following day, I would end up not being able to study properly. What I do these days is that when I come back from school I try and do my homework while I also attend to her. As soon as she falls asleep which is mostly very late at night, I then take my stuff and learn for upcoming tests or exams. Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes when she wakes up in the middle of the night while I am busy with work. Some other days she sleeps throughout the night.

Other participants reiterated the difficulty of juggling motherhood and schooling by stating the following:

These kids are sometimes difficult to handle.

Besides (the marks) Miss (At home on weekends they tell me to look after my own child). I am constantly tired. School has become even more difficult for me. I am constantly expected to submit this project, do that

presentation and pass that test). (It is difficult to be a parent while you are

still a learner).

Teenage motherhood comes with a set of new directives in the lives of young

girls. Their lives become dictated by the needs of their children as well as by the

expectations of the society. The participants in study share the same sentiment.

One participant even suggested that besides having to worry about the marks

(implying academic achievement), even during weekends she is expected to look

after and take care of her child which makes her constantly exhausted. According

to this participant during week days she is expected to take care of her studies,

and this comes with its expectations such as submitting assignments and

projects and learning for tests. On weekends she is expected to give her full

attention to her child. She concludes by stating that juggling parenting and

schooling is difficult. It can therefore be deduced that motherhood brings

emotional as well as physical strain to teenage mothers.

4.9 Inability to participate in school activities

This year is my matric year, and I have always wanted to be a class-

captain or a prefect. When I was nominated to be a class captain at the

beginning of this year. My teacher told me that I could not accept being

nominated because the school policy does not allow learners who have

children to hold any leadership positions. I was very disappointed because

I have always wanted to be a class captain.

Another participant also expressed the same concern.

Both my friends are prefects and are also in other clubs at school. Mina (I)

can't be part of that.

Some teenage mothers are unable to participate in sporting activities of the

school that take place after school, as they have to rush home after school in

order to take care of their children. Macleod (2001) states that teenage mothers

see their friends as having fun and enjoying life without the added responsibility

of a child. Apart from the sudden feeling of loss and the feeling of missing out on

the activities that their peers partake in while the these teenage mothers are

taking care of their children, the stringent measures that are tabulated in school

policies further curb teenage mothers' ability to enjoy all the benefits of being part

of the school. Thus teenage mothers' academic mobility become further deterred.

The two teenage mothers in my study also bear witness to the by stating that

even though one of them was nominated by her fellow learners to become a

class captain, which was something that she has always longed for, because of

the fact that she had a child she was told that she could not accept the

nomination as the school policy does not allow mothers to hold leadership

positions within the school. Another participant in this study also conveyed a

sense of disappointment when she compared herself to two of friends who are

prefects, which is a position that she could never hold because of the fact that

she is a mother.

4.10 We care: Support from friends, teachers and support group

In this study, some participants mentioned that they somewhat receive some

form of emotional support as well as material support from their friends. Some of

the participants' friends fought for them when there were in threatening

situations.

> *They fought for me when people were saying bad things about me.*
>
> *It (questioning) never stopped. They would pry for my private information.*
>
> *They would just go on and on and on (emphasis). (But) there was this one*

friend Lolo (pseudonym) who would just tell them to give me my space.

(She would just say, leave her alone).

The emotional support that some of the participants received from their friends
was also in the form of assistance in doing schoolwork.

*Sometimes they do projects for me and hand them in as if I did them. But
that does not happen all the time. (As for me, I get help from my friends.
When I am absent from school. They notify me of what was done.)*

In this study the support that was expressed by one of the participants went as
far as a friend coming over to her home to help her study and do her work.

*Thank God (pause), my friend Zodwa (pseudonym) from school came to
stay with us when there were taxi strikes. She is still with us. What we do
is, we take turns looking after my baby. When I am with the baby, she will
read and summarise what she has read and when the baby is asleep I
then read her summaries. (My friend helps me a lot). When I am absent,
she brings me hand outs from teachers, takes down homework and
informs me about the things that were happening at school. If it wasn't for*

her, I would be in trouble. I was begging my friend not to go back (to her

home because I do not know what I will do because we are about to start

our exams).

There was also a participant who stated that she received material support from her friends at school.

They even bought me baby clothes. One day they organised a surprise

baby shower for me. Sho (sigh), I was very surprised.

Pearton (1999) states that teenagers are mostly too young and emotionally immature when they first become pregnant, thus they need tremendous support to support them with their schooling. From the above extracts it is clear that any kind of support plays a vital role in easing teenage mothers' burdens.

Even though there are some teachers like who believe that the society has become too permissive and lenient of their children's behaviour (see Singh, 2005), there are teachers who believe that teenage mothers do need support. Bhana et al (2010) also affirms this point by stating that contrast to the negative association between schooling and young women's pregnancy, there are many

teachers who demonstrate the will to care. It is also evident in this current study conducted at Oakleigh Girls High School, even though it is to a lesser degree. One of the participants stated that there is a teacher who has shown some signs of support to her by sharing words of encouragement.

Only Mrs Dexter (pseudonym) ever said something to me. She met me on the corridor one day and said to me, My child, what has happened has happened, just pull yourself up and carry on with your life. Miss, when she approached me I was very scared, but when she said that to me I became relieved. Whenever I see her I just feel happy. I just did not expect that from her. Since that day she has never said anything about it. But I know that she cares.

Another participant also had the following to say about the support they receive from a Life Orientation teacher.

Our Life Orientation teacher tries her best to help us sometimes. She would encourage us to come to her when we have questions; the only problem is that she is always busy. When you need her she is hardly in her class or busy with other girls.

In this study, there was very minimal expression of any form of support from teachers. Nonetheless Bhana et al (2010) suggest that teachers' support for improving the life chances and educational aspirations of young women is central to the long-term development agenda, promotes gender equality and mediates the negative consequences attributed to early pregnancy. Therefore it is clear that for teenage mothers to be able negotiate schooling and parenting successfully, teachers have a vital role to play.

There was also another kind of support that the teenage mothers of Oakleigh Girls High School spoke about. That was the support they received from a support group. Having attended three support group sessions at school, I noted that during these sessions, teenage mothers opened up to their peers and they were not even threatened by the fact that I was there as a teacher (the issue of power relations, they spoke openly about issues that affect them as teenage mothers at school and at home. Below are some of the responses about the kind of support they receive in their support group meetings.

It's the people from some church who come to our school every second

Wednesday to talk to us about church things and they also encouraged us

to form a support group for all the girls with kids.

We talk about the difficulties that we face with our school work and dealing

with being mothers.

They give us tips on how we can cope with school work. It's nice going

there because we also share our experiences with each other. Nobody

judges us there.

Yes, I enjoy it there. Those people listen to us. They always tell us that it's

not the end of the world. We can still make it life.

Sometimes we even play board games such as Monopoly and Snakes

and Ladders just to have fun.

There is a Zulu (language) proverb, 'indlela ibuzwa kwabaphambili', meaning

knowledge is acquired from those (people) who have walked the same path.

In this study, the participants stated that through the "We care" support group,

they are able to share experiences of being teenage mothers with other teenage

mothers as well as to make other learners aware about the demands of teenage

motherhood.

The people from "We care" encouraged us to share our experiences of

being mothers with other learners. So when they asked for volunteers to

do that during assembly.

We talk about the difficulties that we face with our school work and dealing

with being mothers.

They give us tips on how we can cope with school work. It's nice going

there because we also share our secrets and fears. Nobody judges us

there.

One of the participants in the study by Mkhwanazi (2010) also reiterated the

importance of sharing of information by the teenagers who were pregnant before

in order to alert other teenagers about the difficulties they had faced while they

were raising their babies, and also stated that parents should stop raising their

grandchildren so that the teenagers can feel the difficulties of raising a child and this will stop teenagers from becoming pregnant again.

In the same study by Mkhwanazi (2010), the above participant continued to state that she was ashamed to be pregnant at such a young age (16 years) mainly because the baby was not planned and, because of that she thought that the baby was a mistake but that now that she has her baby, she no longer thinks that her baby was a mistake.

Through such discussions a lot of information about the difficulties as well as the dangers of early motherhood can be disseminated, thus contributing towards the conscientisation of other teenagers.

4.11 Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed the results, which came about as a result of the focus group interviews that I had with the participants. In analysing the results of the focus group interviews, there were several themes that emerged which were: fear (parents' response, child father's response and teachers' response) rejection from peers, ridicule from peers and teachers, lack of support from teachers,

decline in academic performance, inability to participate in school activities as well as support (friends, teachers and support group).

According to the participants, the fear emanated from not knowing how their parents were going to respond to the news about their pregnancies, which surely is an added financial burden to them as well as the fear of knowing that these teenage mothers have brought their parents' names into disrepute by becoming pregnant before they got married. There was also an element of fear of how the fathers of their children were going to respond as that meant an added financial burden to them as well. The participants also feared how their teachers were going to respond to them now that they were parents.

Teenage mothers also highlighted the fact that they somewhat felt rejected by their peers who stopped associating with them now that they were mothers. The teenage mothers in this study also stated that apart from the ridicule that they experienced from both the teachers and learners, some of the teachers treated them as if they were non-existent. They did not offer them any kind of support and instead treated them like 'flies on the wall'.

Due to the pressure of trying to juggle motherhood and schooling, most participants in the study stated that they experienced a decline in their academic performance. The participants were also concerned that some of the rules on their school policy further exacerbated their problems as they were deterred from holding certain leadership positions such being class-captains or prefects. There were also positive elements that surfaced from this study. The participants stated that they received various forms of support from some of their friends and teachers as well as from a support group, which helped them to cope with their new roles as mothers.

The key features that kept on surfacing throughout the analysis of information in this chapter were the importance of breaking of societal stereotypes which promote the stigmatisation of teenage mothers in and out of schools. Chigona and Chetty (2008) state that because teenage mothers are not getting enough support both from school and their homes, it may be concluded that it is unlikely that these girls would successfully complete their schooling. Therefore the onus is upon each and every stakeholder involved in the education of teenage mothers, such as the policy makers in the Department of Education, teachers, parents and learners to work together in order to make sure that education for teenage mothers becomes hassle free. The next chapter will draw conclusion

from this study by giving an overview of the whole study and also making

recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter I will briefly summarise and present the essence of the four previous chapters that have been discussed in this study. Thereafter, the recommendations for future research will also be presented.

5.2 Overview of the study

The motivation for the study came as a result of my observation of the growing number of teenage mothers at the school where I teach (Oakleigh Girls High School). It was after this observation that I felt the need to explore the experiences that some of the teenage mothers go through at the school.

This was a qualitative study, conducted at Oakleigh Girls High School, which aimed to explore the ways in which teenage girls from a single-sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiate the demand of schooling and mothering. Focus group interviews used as data collection tools.

Purposive sampling was used in this study where seven participants who are all teenage mothers were selected with the aim of soliciting their experiences as school-going mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School.

The critical question that this study aimed to answer was:

What are the gendered experiences of teenage girls who became mothers while at school? In answering this question, the following secondary questions were to be answered:

1. What are the experiences of teenage mothers at school?

2. How do teenage mothers manage schooling and being a young mother at school?

5.3 Summary of the study

The next section of this chapter will focus on summarising the findings of this study about the experiences of seven teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School. These findings will be summarised according to the different themes that emerged. The themes were as follows: fear (parents' response, children's fathers' response and teachers' response), rejection from peers, ridicule from teachers and learners, lack of support from teachers, rejection from teachers which made them feel like "flies on the wall", decline in academic performance, inability to participate in school activities and, finally, the support that they

received from their friends, from their support group and from some of the teachers.

Teenage mothers expressed their fear of how their parents, father of children as well as the school at large were going to react towards them as mothers at the school. The teenage mothers in this study also reported that they felt rejected by their own peers at school because they were now mothers. Ridicule was another theme that emanated from the focus group interviews held with the participants. Teenage mothers stated that both teachers and fellow learners ridiculed them. Some teachers would sometimes ridicule them even in front of other learners. The findings also showed that some of the participants experienced total lack of support and interest from most teachers. Some teachers treated them as if they did not exist. Another participant even stated that they were made to feel like "flies on the wall" because they did not receive any support from some of their teachers. That had a negative bearing on their lives.

Teenage mothers feel pressured both at home as well as at school. The findings of this study also show that some teenage mothers during focus group interviews expressed their concern about the difficulty that they experience when trying to

study or even do homework because of the time that they have to devote to their motherhood responsibilities. It also emerged that this has led to a decline in their academic performance.

The fact that they were restricted by school policies from participating in school activities also contributed in teenage mothers' feeling of loneliness in their journey of attaining academic knowledge. However in this study, teenage mothers also expressed that they received both emotional as well as material support from some of their friends, from the support group that was initiated by the local church which provided emotional support and offered tips which helped teenage mothers to deal with their new responsibilities as well as schooling, and, to a limited extent, from some teachers.

Another theme that emanated from this study was the wish and the willingness of the teenage mothers to participate in the daily activities of the school, however some policies of Oakleigh Girls High School can be an impediment as these policies do not approve of learners who are mothers partaking in any of the leadership roles at the school. Some teenage mothers expressed that they were not even unable to participate in sporting activities of the school that take place

after school, as they have to rush home after school in order to take care of their children.

Having discussed the themes that emerged from exploring the experiences of teenage mothers in this study, I move next to focus on the recommended guidelines that can be implemented in order to improve the lives of teenage mothers in schools.

5.4 Recommended guidelines

I strongly believe that for education to be manifested in its entirety and for it to achieve what it is set to achieve, all stakeholders such as government, parents, learners, community based organisations, the corporate world and society as a whole need to come on board and contribute in whatever way will make education a success for all, including the teenage mothers. Therefore it is for this reason that the following recommended guidelines require the participation of all the stakeholders listed above.

In this section, valuable contributions from various literature sources as well as my recommendations will be utilised.

It is apparent from some literature that there are teachers do not know how to deal with sexuality related matters as well as teenage mothers in schools. Donovan (1998) states that teachers believe that their reluctance to teach sex education is often exacerbated by the lack of training that leaves many of them feeling unprepared to teach the subject. According to the above author, there are many educators who are inadequately trained to deal with sexuality related topics and thus many new teachers assume the responsibility of teaching this subject without in-depth knowledge. Thus those teachers who lack this kind of knowledge become reluctant to make an effort to teach sexuality education.

Chigona and Chetty (2008) writes that while it is assumed that the teachers would support and encourage the teenage mothers to deal with their situations as mothers, the teachers themselves might be in need of guidance or sensitisation with respect to how they can encourage and support teenage mothers academically. Chigona and Chetty (2008) suggest that teachers need some training on how to cope with teenage mothers, so that they do not make these students' lives worse because of their insensitivity.

Ridicule was another concern that the teenage mothers expressed in this study. "There are no strong policies to deal with any mockery, teasing or marginalizing of the young teen mothers in schools. These remarks may affect the comfort of the teen mothers and may force them to drop out of school" (Chigona & Chetty, 2007, p. 3). Therefore I recommend that the government must look into introducing policies which will punitively deal with the perpetrators of ridicule and mockery of teenage mothers in schools, so as to ensure that there is no discrimination against towards teenage mothers in schools from learners and teachers.

Chigona and Chetty (2008) state that South Africa does not have separate schools for teenage mothers and thus are expected to continue schooling in normal schools even after becoming mothers. It is with this concern in mind that I recommend collaboration between different stakeholders such as government, non governmental organisations, parents, learners and staff directed to a common goal of raising funds for building schools which will cater for the needs of teenage mothers.

It is vital that pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers are offered counselling in schools which will help them redefine themselves as well enable them to cope

with their motherhood roles. Chigona and Chetty (2008) suggest that not only must teenage mothers be offered counselling on their return to school, they must also be provided with child care facilities so as to lessen their challenges thus enabling them to concentrate and perform well in their academic work.

The participants in the study voiced out that they benefit a lot from the support that they receive from the "We care" support group that was set up by one of the churches in the area. I therefore recommend that the government, teachers, parents and learners themselves look into introducing support groups for all teenage mothers in all schools where they will be able to discuss their experiences as well as share ideas about how to cope with motherhood and schooling. These support groups can also include parents, non-governmental organisations, government departments such as the Department of Social Development, and other relevant stakeholders.

Another concern that was raised by the participants in this study was the difficulty that teenage mothers experienced in trying to juggle motherhood and schooling. In order to deal with this challenge, teenage mothers can be assisted by their family members and the society as a whole by providing them with some form of relief where they will ensure that they take care of the children during certain

times thus enabling the teenage mothers to do their school work and learn freely without any disturbances. Free boarding facilities can also be made available for those children whose teenage mothers cannot be assisted by their families in their homes.

In order to minimise further teenage pregnancies, teenage mothers must be encouraged to 'teach', 'warn' and share their challenges and experiences about the difficulties that they encounter on daily bases as parents. These experiences by teenage mothers can be shared through role-plays, songs, poetry, talks, school magazines, blogs, social network sites, radio programmes, television programmes and other available mediums in schools and around the community.

The government together with the teachers and learners can organise community gatherings where the broader society can be enlightened about the challenges that are faced by the teenage mothers in schools and in the society, so as to try and conscientise them about these challenges.

Furthermore, there are teenage mothers who have internalised their challenges and who look down upon themselves because of all the criticism, ridicule and stigmatisation that they receive because of their status as teenage mothers. The

government must ensure that such teenagers are identified and then provided

with necessary support and counselling which will enable them to regain their

confidence and give them hope that they can still make it in life even after

becoming teenage mothers.

As part of the curriculum, the government can introduce a learning area from

primary school level that deals mainly with the health related dangers that are

associated with early child-bearing such as obstetric-related complications

(Treffers, Olukoya, Ferguson & Liljestrand, 2001) and many more. By doing so,

the teenagers can be warned in advance about the risks that are associated with

being a mother at an early age. Hopefully this can be successfully used as a

preventive measure in trying to curb further teenage pregnancies that later lead

to negative outcomes associated with teenage motherhood.

5.5 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of this study was that only black teenage mothers were willing to participate in this study. The other teenage mothers of the other race (Coloured) declined to be part of the study.

Due to the fact that the participants were learners and were also mothers, they requested that all the interviews be conducted during breaks and not after school has ended or during holidays because that time was 'dedicated' to their school-work and children. So, interviews had to be conducted on Wednesdays where the school had longer breaks.

5.6 Recommendations for further studies

I would recommend that a similar study be conducted where the focus will not be on the experiences of teenage mothers in schools, but the experiences of teenage fathers in schools, so as to find out how teenage fatherhood affects boys that are still in school.

I would also recommend a study that will explore the experiences of children whose mothers are teenagers.

5.7 Conclusion

This study explored the ways in which seven black teenage girls from a single-sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiated the demand of schooling and parenting. The qualitative approach was utilised in my study, and focus group interviews as well as observation were used as data collection tools. There were several themes that emerged from the findings of this study. The themes were as follows: fear (of parents's response, of child fathers' response and fear of teachers' response), rejection from peers, ridicule (from teachers and peers), lack of support from teachers ("flies on the wall"), decline in academic performance, inability to participate in school activities as well as support from some teachers, friends and the support group. The last chapter of this study also suggested guidelines that can be followed in order to alleviate the pressure exerted by teachers, fellow learners and the community at large on teenage mothers. The limitations of this study as well as the recommendations for further studies were also stated.

APPENDIX 1: Request to the principal to conduct research at the school

Letter of consent

LETTER TO THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW TEENAGE MOTHERS AT THE SCHOOL

P.O. Box 1039

Pinetown

3600

The Principal

Sir

REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW TEENAGE MOTHERS AT THE SCHOOL

I am a student at the University of KwaZulu Natal. I am presently completing my Masters Degree at the University. I am in the process of completing my dissertation and request permission to interview three teenage mothers at your school. Any information divulged to me by the learners will be treated with the strictest of confidence.

Thanking you in anticipation for your help.

Yours Faithfully

S.J. Mcambi

Student Number: 206519919

I, the principal of --

hereby grant permission to Miss S. J. Mcambi to interview the teenage

mothers at the school.

APPENDIX 2

Request to the parents/guardians requesting their daughters/ wards to participate in the study

<div align="center">Letter of consent</div>

LETTER OF CONSENT TO THE PARENTS/ GUARDIANS REQUESTING PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW TEENAGE MOTHERS AT THE SCHOOL

P.O. Box 1039

Pinetown

3600

Dear Parent/s/ Guardian/s

PERMISSION TO INTERVIEW YOUR DAUGHTER/WARD IN REGARD TO TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD

I am presently studying towards my Masters in Education at the University of KwaZulu Natal. One of the requirements of the degree is to write a dissertation on a problem in education. At school I have noted that there are learners who are parents. It is for this reason that I decided to do my dissertation on "the experiences of teenage mothers in schools".

In order to complete the dissertation, I need to interview teenage mothers at school. The interviews will be tape recorded and analysed. All the information presented by the learners will remain confidential and will not by any means be used for any other purpose other than the purpose of this study. Learners who will be participating in this study will not be identified. Their real names will not be used. They will be given "false names" so that they cannot be identifiable. After the dissertation has been written, the learners will be given the opportunity to read and make adjustments to what has been written when there is a need before the dissertation is submitted to the University.

I hereby request permission to interview your daughter/ ward -------------------------
----

Thanking you in anticipation for your help.

Yours Faithfully

S.J. Mcambi (Educator)

_____

I hereby grant/do not grant permission for my daughter/ ward to be interviewed.

Yours Faithfully

_____

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

University of KwaZulu-Natal
Research Office
Govan Mbeki Centre
Westville Campus
University Road
Chiltern Hills
Westville
3629
South Africa
Tel No: +27 31 260 3587
Fax No: +27 31 260 2384
E-mail : naidoos4@ukzn.ac.za
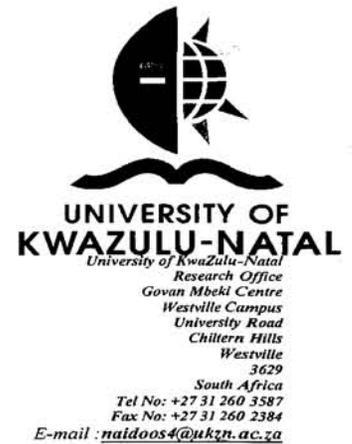
09 July 2010

Ms S J Mcambi
P O Box 1039
PINETOWN
3600

Dear Ms Mcambi

PROTOCOL: Teenage Parenting in Schools – a gendered perspective
ETHICAL APPROVAL NUMBER: HSS/0467/2010 M: Faculty of Education and Development

In response to your application dated 30 June 2010, Student Number: **206519919** the Humanities & Social Sciences Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol has been given **FULL APPROVAL.**

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

Professor Steve Collings (Chair)
HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES ETHICS COMMITTEE

SC/sn

cc: Professor D Bhana (Supervisor)
cc: Ms T Khumalo

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY TITLED: EXPLORING YOUNG WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF TEENAGE MOTHERHOOD IN SCHOOLS: A GENDERED PERSPECTIVE 1.1 Introduction This study explores the ways in which teenage mothers from a single- sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiate the demands of schooling and parenting. By focusing on the observations and interviews conducted with six participants (all mothers) the study seeks to illuminate their varied experiences in being mothers and learners and the effects for the educational outcome of young mothers at school. Being a mother and a learner at school is not easy and compromises educational opportunities for young women in South Africa (see Panday et al, 2009). The South African Schools Act (Department of Education 1996) regulates the support of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools. This policy permits pregnant teenagers to remain at school, allowing for their re-entry as young mothers after giving birth (Bhana et al, 2010). Allowing pregnant teenagers to remain in school and to return after giving birth is considered to be

significant not only in delaying a second birth, but also in offering young women improved opportunities to get an education and to increase their economic standing. Continued enrollment in school correlates with better educational opportunities (Grant and Hallman 2006). Whilst this study shows that young mothers have the will to return to school and Turnitin Originality Report

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CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW 2.1 Introduction Having a baby is a difficult process, which brings along a number of changes in a person's life. For young women who are still at

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 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHOD 3.1 Introduction This study explores the ways in which teenage mothers from a single- sex, predominantly middle-class state school (Oakleigh Girls High School) negotiate the demands of schooling and parenting.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS 4.1 Introduction This study investigates the experiences of being a teenage mother in school and explores the ways in which six teenage mothers at Oakleigh Girls High School juggle mothering and schooling and the gendered effects of such experiences. Being a teenage mother is a highly gendered experience. Despite the dramatic change in educational policy which guarantees gender equality in schools, schools do not follow the law as it is intended and make very small or even no

changes to accommodate teenage mothers (Panday et al, 2009). Ensuring that young

mothers remain in school, complete matric and further their education is crucial for their life

paper text:

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION OF THE STUDY 5.1 Introduction In this chapter I will briefly

summarise and present the essence of the four previous chapters that have been discussed

in this study. Thereafter, the recommendations for future will also be presented. 5.2

Overview of the study The motivation for the study came as a result of my observation of the

growing number of teenage mothers at the school where I teach (Oakleigh Girls High

School). It was after this observation that I felt the need to explore the experiences that some

of the teenage mothers go through at the school. This was a qualitative study, conducted at

Oakleigh Girls High School, which aimed to explore the ways in which teenage girls from a

single-sex, predominantly middle-class state school negotiate the demand of schooling and

mothering. Focus group interviews used as data collection tools. Purposive sampling was

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