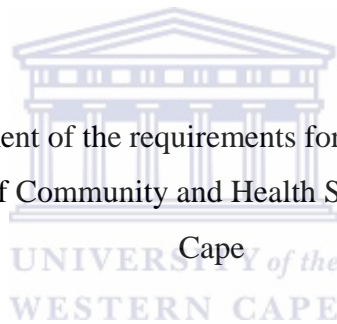Construction of motherhood and the impact thereof on the lives of married mothers
in full time paid employment

Hazel Roberts

Student Number: 8948564

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Research
Psychology in the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences, University of the Western
Cape

October 2008

Supervisor: Ms Maria Florence

Declaration

I declare that the *Construction of motherhood and the impact thereof on the lives of married mothers in full time paid employment* is my own work, that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university, and that all sources have been acknowledged**.**

……………………………………..
Hazel Roberts

Date:……………………….…………

UNIVERSITY *of the*
WESTERN CAPE

Abstract

The study aimed to examine how motherhood is constructed by married working mothers and the impact thereof on their working lives. This qualitative study explored the individual experiences of 7 working married mothers with preschool aged children who reside in the Western Cape, South Africa. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted and analysed using thematic analysis. The study was situated within a social constructionist theoretical framework which holds that it is through our interactions with others that we create, maintain and verify our ideas and perceptions of the world. The literature revealed that despite the advances made by women in society, the notion that women are still the primary nurturers and care-givers is still in existence. This view is largely dictated by the social and cultural expectations in society and further perpetuated by images portrayed in the media. The results of this study revealed that the social and cultural context of the participants holds a view of motherhood that is gendered, comprises ideals of a caring, nurturing and ever-giving mother and links motherhood to womanhood and the female identity. It is this view that framed how the participants perceived and made sense of motherhood. The analysis revealed the tensions and ambivalence experienced by the participants as they negotiated between the social and cultural expectations of motherhood and their personal reality in meeting the demands of motherhood as working mothers. In their struggle to meet the social and cultural expectations of motherhood, they placed tremendous emotional and physical stress upon themselves which manifested as guilt, physical exhaustion, psychological stress, physical illness and a desire to leave work notwithstanding the value attached to it. Although the participants challenged these expectations in various ways, the underlying nuances, when they recounted their experiences, remain embedded in these societal and cultural expectations. However, in voicing their experiences, it was clear that they were not just accepting the status quo but challenging it in their own way and thereby, deconstructing the myths of motherhood that existed in their social and cultural contexts. This study revealed that motherhood is a complicated construct as women have such diverse experiences which are impacted on by many factors. These factors include: their personality, religious context, influences of their mothers and friends, their history, social and cultural contexts, the communities in which they live; and in South Africa, the racial divides that still plague our society. The context of this study did not explore this diversity sufficiently. Further research could be conducted to encourage women to share and validate their diverse motherhood experiences thereby providing them with an opportunity for reflection and to challenge those motherhood myths which cause tensions in their lives.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the following people:

To the women who participated in this study, who without hesitation, shared their experiences and thoughts with me. Thank you for your willingness to share your stories.
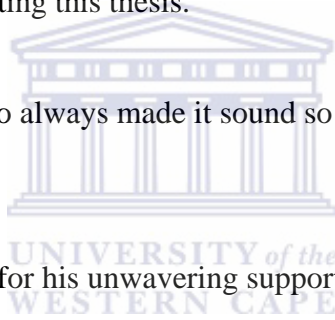
My supervisor, Ms Maria Florence, for her constant, gentle reminders and encouragement. I am grateful for her guidance and support.

A special thanks to Dr Nicky Roman for her assistance, support and constant motivation throughout the process of writing this thesis.

Professor Kelvin Mwaba, who always made it sound so simple and easy. I wish to thank him for his encouragement.

To my family: My husband, for his unwavering support, encouragement and for sharing the nurturing responsibility. My mother, for her unending willingness to assist when called upon. My daughter, for her understanding and love.

The students of the 2006 Masters Research Psychology class, for their vibrancy, friendship and encouragement. I could not have wished for a better group to share that year with.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   Background

The entry of women into the workplace, whether voluntary or due to economic reasons, has

created tensions for women in terms of coping with the demands of work and those of

motherhood. In South Africa, for example, the percentage of employed women increased

from 16% in 1995 to 33% in 2001 (Statistics South Africa, 2002). Generally, working

mothers have to contend with managing employment, childcare and a household. They

may experience role conflict in trying to juggle the various roles of being a mother, worker

and wife (Kushner, 2005). Tensions are created when they devote attention to one role,

making it difficult to attend to another role which may also be demanding their attention.

These tensions are inevitably tied up with the social expectations and assumptions

regarding the role of women as mothers (Kushner, 2005; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993).

The concept of becoming a mother is linked to the biological aspect of a woman's anatomy

(Miller, 2005). It is *how* this biological determinism has been embroidered upon in order to

serve particular social, cultural and political needs of society, which has informed the

debates and much of the research around the issue of being a mother. Ultimately, the

biological deterministic approach has led to the oppression of women, leaving them without

a voice.

Miller (2005) draws a distinction between mothering and motherhood. She defines

mothering as the actions performed by women as they take on the obligation and nurturing

of their children. She defines motherhood as the environment in which this nurturing and

obligation occurs and is accomplished (Miller, 2005). Furthermore, Walker (1995) notes

that the concept of motherhood is also determined by the morals and beliefs that constitutes

a good mother in a particular society. In addition, the concept of motherhood is determined

by the perception of mothers themselves which is shaped by membership of the particular

group they belong to. Nicolson (1993) elaborates on the influence of context and culture

on the definition of motherhood. She notes that the role of mother has not emerged outside

of "culture and free from ideology, but has been socially and historically constructed

within a patriarchy through a complex set of power relations which ensure that women

become mothers and practice motherhood" (Nicolson, 1993, p.204). Thus, motherhood

cannot be divorced from the social, cultural and political contexts, as these aspects shape

and construct the meaning that individual women attach to motherhood and how they

define it for themselves.
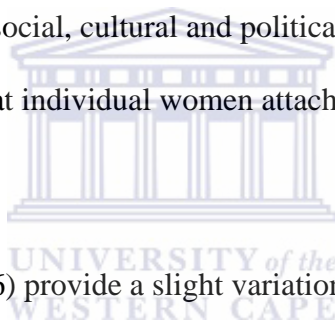
Oberman and Josselson (1996) provide a slight variation to the experience of motherhood.

They state that the experience is one of "dialectical tensions" in the change over from an

independent self to a mother (Oberman & Josselson, 1996, p.344). This change creates

tensions for the mother as she interacts with the role of motherhood. For example, the

tensions are experienced as: a sense of maternal power and the burden of responsibility; a

sense of loss of self due to self sacrifice and self expansion in the deep emotional

attachment to the child; and the life giving aspects of mothering may be undermined by

feelings of anger, hostility and frustration (Oberman & Josselson, 1996). How these

tensions are experienced and balanced is determined by the cultural construction of

motherhood in a particular society. Instead of only viewing motherhood in terms of

women's biological abilities, the influence of the social, cultural and historical contexts in

which they live their lives should also be considered (Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; Walker, 1995).

1.2   South African context and rationale

Miller (2005) notes that most of the literature concerning motherhood has been based on the experiences of white middle class women within a western context, especially within the United States. Within the South African context, Kruger (2006) contends that not many studies on motherhood have focussed on the subjective and diverse experiences of mothers and have ignored the impact of class, race and culture. For example, a number of studies (Brown, 1999; Christierson;1997; Clowes, 1994; Geldenhuys, 1989; Jeannes, 2002; Kruger, 2003) that have dealt with the role of motherhood or aspects thereof, have focussed mostly on the experiences of white South African women with only a few linking motherhood and work (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Taljaard, 2000; Wallis & Price, 2003).
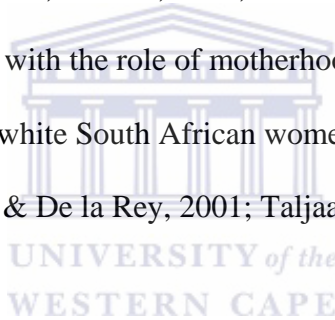
The impact of race, class and culture remains an important issue in the South African context. A report regarding the participation of women in the South African labour force highlights the challenges faced by women, especially African women. The authors of this report, Van der Westhuizen, Goga and Oosthuizen (2007), note an increase in the employment of women for the period between 1995 and 2005. They point out that it was mainly African women entering the labour market in unskilled and low-paid employment. In addition, discrimination by gender and race is still very prevalent when the gains of employment are measured. For example, disparities in earnings still remain between males and females, and racial groups. It is these subjective and diverse experiences of women that need to be considered when examining motherhood in South Africa.

3

The paucity of literature within the South African context regarding motherhood in general, the construction of motherhood and the link to employment from the perspective of mothers who are not white, and my own experiences in meeting the demands of mothering and work, provided the impetus for this study. The meanings and understanding that mothers attach to motherhood within their specific social and cultural contexts were explored together with how this understanding impacted on their lives as full-time paid workers. It was hoped that this study would provide an opportunity for its participants to reflect on how their reality is shaped by the ideologies that contest for their attention. It was also envisaged that those who read it, particularly women, would look at themselves from different perspectives in order to challenge that which impacts negatively on their lives.
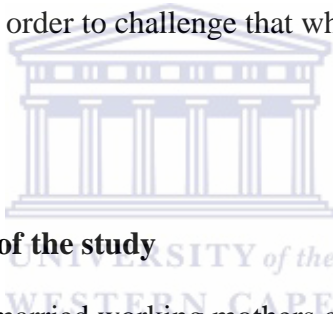
1.3   Aims and objectives of the study

The aim was to explore how married working mothers construct motherhood and the impact thereof on their lives within the South African context. The objectives in this study were to explore:

- how mothers construct motherhood within their particular social and historical contexts and;

- how this construction impacts on their experiences in balancing the demands of work and the role of motherhood.

1.4   Theoretical framework

This study was located within a social constructionist framework which implied that mothers would construct their own perception about motherhood within their social and

cultural contexts. This perception would in turn be influenced by the dominant belief system of their particular social and cultural context (Burr, 1995). As noted, women have not been provided with a voice in accounting for their own experiences as these have been narrated by the hegemonic powers within their political and social contexts. Thus, this study simultaneously viewed the construction of motherhood within a feminist epistemology which focuses on how gender, as a social construct, impacts on women's lives; and explores women's experiences from their own point of view (Lather, 1991).

1.5   Research methodology

Seven married women in full-time paid employment and who had children in preschool, participated in the study. The participants were selected by the principal of a pre-school facility using purposive sampling. Semi-structured interviews were conducted at a place that was convenient for the participants. The interviews were transcribed and analysed within a qualitative framework, using thematic analysis. A qualitative framework was best suited to this study as the focus was on providing a space for women to voice and share their experiences of motherhood. The emerging themes were not only analysed or interpreted for meaning and understanding, but also for how the meanings were constructed and deconstructed.

1.6   Outline of chapters

The present chapter provides a brief overview of the study. The thesis is structured as follows: Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature pertaining to motherhood; and motherhood and work. This chapter offers insights into how motherhood is socially and culturally constructed, the influence of existing ideologies of motherhood and the impact

thereof on the lives of working mothers. Chapter 3 provides an account of the methodology employed in the study which is located within a qualitative framework. Chapter 4 reflects the results of the study, which were analysed using thematic analysis as well as a discussion of these results. Chapter 5 concludes with a summary of the research findings, limitations of the research and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

"To deny one's own experiences is to put a lie into the lips of one's own life. It is no less than a denial of the soul". Oscar Wilde

2.1   Introduction

This chapter introduces motherhood as a gendered and socially constructed reality. It sets out how the knowledge about gendered behaviours in society is taken for granted and constantly constructed through social practices of observation, instruction, imitation and even coercion. Motherhood, which is situated within a gendered discourse, is examined as a socially constructed reality impacted upon by the socio-cultural, historical and political forces embedded in society rather than through a biological lens. An overview of the traditional ideology of motherhood as the nurturer and carer, and the challenges posed by feminist literature is presented. The chapter further discusses the experiences of mothers who are engaged in paid work. An account of their experiences of constantly having to make sacrifices and tradeoffs in order to meet the demands of work and the requirements of the appropriate gendered norms and cultural expectations of motherhood is provided.

2.2   A gendered and socially constructed perspective

This study views motherhood within a social constructionist framework. It subscribes to the view that gender is socially constructed and motherhood is framed within these constructed gendered social arrangements (Aveling, 2002; Brickell, 2006; Deutsch, 2007; Glenn, 1994; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004; Teman, 2008; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Social constructionism is primarily concerned with explaining the actions which people

employ to make sense of the world they inhabit (Gergen, 1985). According to social constructionism, it is in our everyday interactions that our knowledge is constructed and this takes place through the day to day exchanges among individuals (Burr, 1995). The way in which knowledge is conveyed is what Burr (1995, p.6) refers to as the "conceptual frameworks and categories" which are already in use by people in a particular culture. As language acquisition occurs, these 'conceptual frameworks and categories' are internalised and replicated daily by all in a society who adheres to the same traditions, customs and language (Burr, 1995). It is these categories which create pockets that people may fit into, or in which they may be positioned by others (Parker, Georgaca, Harper, Mclaughlin & Stowell-Smith, 1995). The social world develops as its participants interact with each other through social practices such as observation, instruction, imitation and verbal communication which in turn creates and transmits meaning (Brickell, 2006; Lorber, 1994). Gender as a social construction is constructed through these social practices rather than as an entity which emanates from genital organs (Gergen, 2001; Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987).

West and Zimmerman (1987, p.137) contend that "doing gender means creating differences between girls and boys and women and men which are not natural, essential or biological". Lorber (1994) asserts that once these differences are allocated, the social practices ensure that the appropriate attitudes and activities for males and females are adhered to. As we enact the gendered norms in society, we continue to construct differences between males and females. This in turn provides credibility to the ongoing existence of these differences and is viewed as normative behaviour (Brickell, 2006). Hence, it is in our everyday interactions that knowledge about gender is reproduced and directs how women and men

should act. Through our interactions with others we create, maintain and verify our ideas and perceptions of the world. In examining the construction of motherhood in this study, the gendered expectations of society which shape the conditions of women's lives and set out the appropriate roles and behaviours for mothers, was explored and uncovered.

The differences created by gender have implications for the roles assigned to males and females. With regard to motherhood, women are still generally viewed as the primary caregivers as a consequence of their reproductive ability (Everingham, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Hattery, 2001; Ireland, 1993; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004; Rich, 1986; Richardson, 1993; Weaver & Ussher, 1997). If one takes the view that motherhood is socially constructed, then how mothers perceive or make sense of their motherhood experiences will be informed by and immersed in the social and historical contexts within which these experiences are created (Brickell, 2006). If mothers view motherhood within the context of the values and expectations of the dominant culture, it will dictate their views and beliefs (Kruger, 2006).

These values and expectations are further upheld and reinforced by social institutions and the media. For example, Hadfield, Rudoe and Sanderson-Mann (2007) reveal meaningful insights into the social construction of motherhood by the British media. They highlight the example of women who do not uphold traditional motherhood standards. These women are subjected to criticism and scrutiny from the media due to exercising choices regarding the age at which they become mothers, fertility, contraception and abortion. Aveling (2002) points out that even if these choices are available, they are situated and exercised within a particular social and cultural context and are therefore not neutral choices. In

9

principle, it appears as if mothers may have choices, but these choices are directed by the powerful ideologies at play in that specific culture. However, women themselves assist in shaping and constructing the meanings they attach to motherhood within the available discourses in their particular social contexts. As Gergen (2001, p.38) notes "identities produced within social interactions, not prior to them and once accepted, influence the manner in which one conducts oneself". This is reflected in studies highlighting mothers who found it difficult to voice their experiences about motherhood if these were contrary to the prevailing dominant ideology in their societies (Ireland, 1993; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993). The literature that best illuminates the social construction of motherhood is that which examines voluntary childlessness, infertility and surrogacy (Lewis & Nicolson, 1998; Sevon, 2005; Teman, 2008; Zucker, 1999) as it highlights the lack of alternative discourses. This will be discussed further in subsequent sections of this chapter.
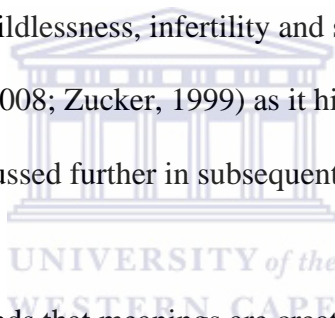
Social constructionism contends that meanings are created, modified and actioned as we engage with the world in our social interactions, rendering it a dynamic process. Deutsch (2007) points out that it is this dynamism that should be examined as a source of change. Therefore, this study will view the experiences of motherhood through the lens of feminist epistemology which focuses attention on bringing about a change in women's social reality and challenging boundaries. Feminism questions and challenges the dominant ways of understanding gender relationships and the effects of patriarchy on peoples' lives (Glenn, 1994; Harding, 2001; Hattery, 2001; Hill, 1994; Letherby, 2003; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O' Reilly, 2004; White, Russo & Travis, 2001). Moreover, feminism highlights how the perceptions about gender, which are seen to reinforce women's subordination, can be challenged by women. Letherby (2003, p.4) notes, that "feminism is concerned with the

political commitment to produce knowledge that will make a difference to women's lives through social and individual change". Allowing women to reflect upon and voice their experiences of motherhood could provide an opportunity for motherhood myths constructed within specific cultural, historical and social contexts to be exposed within the wider social structure. Harding (2001) draws attention to the importance of uncovering information about women's lives that had previously been ignored. However, she cautions against the failure to scrutinise the embedded gendered and socio-cultural forces, which create and in turn, maintain women's experiences.

Locating this study within a social constructionist framework, highlighted how women's perception of motherhood is shaped by the dominant belief systems embedded in the societies in which they live. Allowing mothers to provide an account of their own motherhood experiences exposed and challenged the traditional frameworks which produce knowledge about themselves (White, Russo, & Travis, 2001). The following section will discuss studies on the construction and perception of motherhood, the challenges to the biological deterministic construction of motherhood, and highlight the social arrangements that uphold the discourse of traditional motherhood ideology.

2.3.   Construction of Motherhood

Recent studies on women's perception of motherhood focussed on their individual experiences, how they construct the concept of motherhood and how this impacts upon their working lives within the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they live (Everingham, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Hattery, 2001; Hill, 1994; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O' Reilly, 2004). There is much more to motherhood than just the biological link.

Motherhood is multilayered, diverse, and continuously shaped by the particular historical, social, cultural and political needs of the society in which women mother (Glenn, 1994; Hattery, 2001; Ireland, 1993; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004; Weaver & Ussher, 1997). Our society informs us of what it means to be a mother, how we should mother and what behaviours are appropriate. The dominant ideology put forward in western culture espouses a universal truth about a natural, forever self-sacrificing, good, sensitive, caring, and nurturing mother (Arendell, 2000; Everingham, 1994; Glenn, 1994; Hattery, 2001; Ireland, 1993; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004; Rich, 1986; Richardson, 1993; Weaver & Ussher, 1997). This ideology regards motherhood as a woman's destiny which will provide the ultimate fulfilment; thereby creating unrealistic expectations. In the process of espousing a universal truth, it engulfs a woman's identity and femininity.
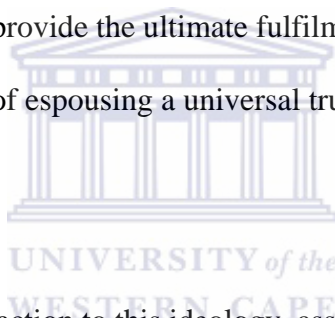
Initially, feminists, in their reaction to this ideology, assumed a universality of this experience for all mothers (Glenn, 1994; Miller, 2005; O'Reilly, 2004; Rich, 1986). They later realised that there are many different positions which can be occupied within the domain of motherhood. Assuming that all mothers experience motherhood within this dominant ideology, disregards the lived social realities of women (Glenn, 1994). The power of ideology can ultimately never be underestimated, as it is a powerful tool which can be used to conceal and obstruct the realities experienced in our everyday lives. (Rothman, 1994). Rothman (1994) describes ideology as the manner in which groups view and coordinate their thoughts about the world. These groups, when in power, are given more opportunity to advance their viewpoints and beliefs. Moreover, these viewpoints are often sanctioned by the state and its policies and become institutionalised. It may even

influence the behaviour of those in the group who do not subscribe to these dominant viewpoints and beliefs. Hattery (2001, p.20) notes that "it is this power that affects personal individual behaviour as it defines what exists, what is good and what is possible". In this way, behavioural expectations are created by setting out the roles that individuals should play in society.

Feminist writers have located this ideology, which provides us with a particular vision of motherhood, as being natural while simultaneously blocking alternate views within patriarchy (Glenn, 1994; Nicolson, 1993; Rich, 1986). Kirkpatrick (1983, p.933) defines patriarch as "one who governs his family by paternal rights". The corresponding term patriarchy which refers to "being under the authority of a patriarch" (Kirkpatrick, 1983, p.933), is the underlying base in western society where power is seen to be held. The implication is that power in patriarchal societies is located within male domination which is held in place and supported by a complex set of ideologies, one of which is the motherhood ideology. Glenn (1994) notes however, that mothers may experience patriarchal control differently. The power of this dominant ideology of motherhood and the extent to which mothers' lived experiences of mothering are still constructed by this ideology, will be examined below.

2.3.1 'Intensive mothering'

Miller (2005) describes the perception of motherhood emerging out of the western world (mainly the United States and Britain) as rooted in women's biological ability to give birth. Central to this notion is that motherhood is instinctive and that it is the destiny of women to become mothers (Glenn, 1994; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly 2004; Rich, 1986).

The implication is that a woman's destiny is linked to this biological birth giving ability

and that motherhood should be a woman's only objective and origin of fulfilment (Glenn,

1994; Miller, 2005). Motherhood defines the very being of women. In this model, all

responsibility for childrearing rests on the mother which is considered to be the most

important job during the child's development years. Choi, Henshaw, Baker and Tree

(2005) adds to this the image of a mother who has inherent knowledge to take care of the

baby instantly and who finds contentment in the role of self-sacrificing care giver. Hayes

(cited in O'Reilly, 1994, p.5) refers to this model as 'intensive mothering' which is based

on the following assumptions: the mother is the "central caregiver"; that mothers are

required to unselfishly bestow unlimited amounts of "energy, time and material resources"

on the child and that the "mother regards mothering as more important than paid work".

Nicolson (1993) adds to this perception of motherhood by pointing out the influences of

psychological theories to further entrench the above ideas. These theories specified the

negative effects on children if mothers do not mother according to their recommendations.

Nicolson (1993) notes especially Bowlby's attachment theory and Winnicott's notion of the

'good enough mother'. Both these theories present an image of the mother who is

submerged and totally absorbed in the mother and child relationship. Bowlby's attachment

theory which warned against the negative effects of maternal separation came about as a

result of the emotional and physical deficiencies which he observed in infants as a result of

being separated from their mothers. In this theory, the mother and infant relationship is

viewed as unique, exclusive and the most important factor in normal development (Hrdy,

2000; Kaplan, 1992; Nicolson, 1993). However, later investigations revealed that the

emotional and physical deficiencies could be as a result of not being able to form close

connections with people and a lack of other incentives, rather than just being apart from the mother (Silverstein & Phares, 1996). Winnicott's notion of the 'good enough' mother who knows instinctively what her child requires, expects that the mother should provide an environment which will facilitate the infant's acquisition of a healthy sense of self (Nicolson, 1993). Hattery (2001) also alludes to the psychological models of child development as proposed by Freud, Erikson and Piaget and notes that these models also influenced the ideology of intensive mothering by proposing that nurturing is the responsibility of the mother. For example, while Freud and Erikson pointed to parents to guide children through a series of conflicts that must be resolved; Piaget stressed the important role that adults could play to facilitate the development of cognitive skills (Hattery, 2001). Viewed within an intensive mothering discourse, an assumption could be made that this pressure to engage the child would inevitably fall into the domain of the mother.
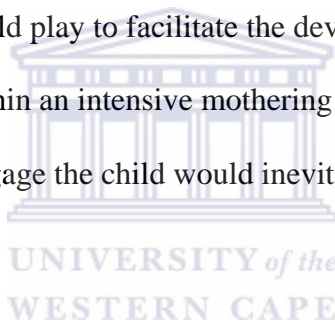
The offerings from the field of psychology (Bowlby, Erikson, Freud, Piaget and Winnicott) have an influential impact on motherhood ideology. Everingham (1994, p.16) notes that "psychological theories are in themselves regulatory and they construct a world view which governs mothering activity". It provides impetus to the belief that the mother is the one who is responsible for the child's development. Furthermore, she is the only one who is capable of providing an emotionally healthy environment for children to grow up in (Nicolson, 1993). In addition, these psychological theories reinforced the notion of the ever-giving, ever-sacrificing and intensive mother. Rich (1986) refers to the intensive mothering notion as one of the features that is harmful to mothers. These discourses, if dominant enough, discourage and repress any challenges by marginalising those who

15

practice alternative forms of mothering. Bowlby's description of a woman who failed to mother in terms of these theories was that "nature's gifts were lacking" (cited in Richardson, 1993, p.48). The emphasis on inherent and intuitive feelings of the mother towards the child in the theories put forward by Bowlby and Winnicott, created unrealistic expectations for women as they found it difficult to live up to these expectations. Hrdy (2000) notes that it posed a dilemma for mothers who wanted lives outside of the motherhood role, but who also wanted to raise psychologically healthy children. The 'good enough' mother was the yardstick whereby mothers and society determined the competencies of mothering. Since any alternative views were frowned upon, mothers found it difficult to voice their feelings about motherhood if it did not endorse the dominant view espoused by the 'good enough' mother (Ireland, 1993; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993). This hesitance in expressing their feelings upheld the illusion of the ideal mother. For example, negative feelings of anger, frustration and resentment are not viewed as maternal. Nicolson (1993) contends that these offerings of scientific and psychological advice accommodate the requirements of patriarchy and it is these offerings that ultimately instruct the day to day functioning of women.

Similarly, Kruger (2006) contends that motherhood occurs against the background of dominant ideologies. Mothers will raise their children in accordance with the values and expectations of the dominant culture. People will look to the dominant ideologies which will dictate their cultural views and beliefs, and will accept these as natural, normative and the right thing to do. It is precisely these cultural views and beliefs that make motherhood such a taxing experience (Kruger, 2006). Ruddick (cited in O'Reilly, 2004, p.6) noted that mothers are policed by the "gaze of others". The oppressive nature of motherhood wrought

by these ideologies of an all encompassing mother manifests as follows: constantly being under the gaze of others; pathologising and marginalising those who do not or cannot practice intensive mothering; denying and repressing the mother's own selfhood in that it inhibits women from living their own lives outside of motherhood; and denying the mother the authority or agency to determine her own experiences of mothering (Glenn, 1994; Ireland, 1993; O'Reilly, 2005). Glenn (1994) contends that it becomes oppressive when women are solely described in terms of their mothering role. In this ideology of intensive mothering, mothering is constructed as natural, universal and unchanging in that all mothers should and do mother in this way. Nicolson (1993) reminds us that the role of mother has not emerged outside of the social and cultural contexts in which women live their lives. Motherhood cannot be divorced from the social, cultural and political context, as these aspects shape and construct the meaning that individual women attach to motherhood and how they define it for themselves. O'Reilly (2004) adds to this the notion of the fluidity of motherhood in that the understanding of motherhood is dependent upon the time and setting, and is constantly reshaped in reaction to fluctuating social and economic contexts.

2.3.2 Competing ideologies

Feminist scholars, such as Chodorow (1978), have challenged the notion that women are born to be mothers and have sought theories other than that which locate motherhood within biological reproduction. She sought to demonstrate how being mothered transmits and reinforces a pattern of mothering. According to Chodorow (1978), girls identify with their mothers, as mothers are the primary caretakers. It is because of this continuous identification and attachment with and to their mothers, that girls acquire the ability to

become mothers themselves. The mother in turn, treats the girl child as an extension of herself which reinforces the connection, but excludes the male child in the process. Consequently, the male child does not develop the ability to mother. Chodorow (1978, p. 209) writes

> Because women are themselves mothered by women, they grow
> up with the relational capacities and needs, and psychological
> definition of self-in relationship, which commits them to mothering.
> Men, because they are mothered by women, do not. Women mother
> daughters who, when they become mothers, mother.

Kaplan (1992) notes that this theory assumes that the biological mother of the child has the necessary altruistic qualities which deems her to be a suitable person whom the child can identify with. Therefore, the child does not need to create an alternate maternal object. In this view, motherhood is an essential aspect in the creation of gender differences. Since women are committed to mothering through identification with their mothers, they reconstruct, transmit and reinforce gender differences in their own lives and in society (Gerson, 1985; Kaplan, 1992).
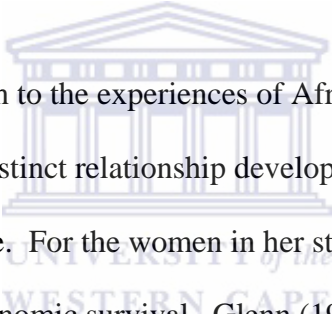
Chodorow (1978) has been criticized for advancing a theory that universalizes women's experiences. Her theory presents an image of women as universally nurturing and oriented toward motherhood and depicts a world in which women are and want to be like their mothers. In presenting this essentialist account, the diversity of experiences and the impact of power structures within social contexts which frame mothering, are not considered. Neither is there an explanation for non-conforming behaviour and the assumption is that the individual has no agency in the construction of social and cultural arrangements (Arendell, 2000; Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005; Gerson 1985; Glenn, 1994; Kaplan, 1992).

Gerson (1985) notes that the view advanced by Chodorow (1978) does not investigate the various ways in which people may experience and interact with their culture and feel that they want to do things differently. For example, women may want to live their lives differently from their mothers. Kaplan (1992) found that the women in her study did not present themselves in terms of the close connections with their mothers. Instead, they constructed an alternative image of the good mother that was in direct opposition to that projected by their own mothers.

Feminist writers have criticised motherhood theories that have essentialist leanings Glenn, 1994; Harding, 2001; Hattery, 2001; Hill, 1994; Letherby, 2003; Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O' Reilly, 2004; White, Russo & Travis, 2001). They have focussed on mothers' lived subjective and diverse experiences and how motherhood infringes upon women's lives rather than accept the biological and universal notion of motherhood. In this process, the behaviours and experiences defined for mothers by their social and cultural contexts have been unravelled and revealed (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005). In allowing mothers to speak about their identities as mothers, their experiences of motherhood can be explored from the point of view of the mother thereby breaking down the myths and assumptions surrounding motherhood (Weaver & Ussher, 1997).
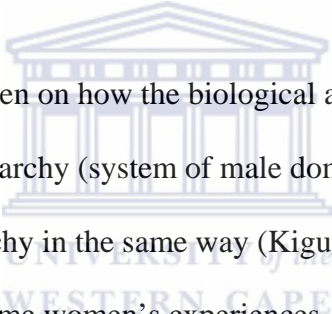
Miller (2005) draws attention to these varied constructions of motherhood. She notes that the notion of the mother who stays at home and devotes herself to child-rearing or who experiences guilt as a result of having a job and being a mother, have been based on the experiences of white privileged women. In the western context, ideas of motherhood do not appear to recognise the diverse experiences of women's lived experiences. Issues of

class, race and culture manifest differently in various communities and ethnic groups and should not be ignored when examining the construction of motherhood (Miller, 2005). For example, the life and work experiences of racial and ethnic minorities are often different which leads to constructions of competing motherhood ideologies. Koniak – Griffin, Logsdon, Hines-Martin and Turner (2006) further state that concerns about socio-cultural and economic factors may inform constructions of motherhood. They note that often such constructions of motherhood would reflect the importance of economic contributions to children's well-being. This view presents a challenge to social constructions of work and family as separate entities.

Hattery (2001) draws attention to the experiences of African-American women and notes that as a result of slavery, a distinct relationship developed between motherhood and participation in the work force. For the women in her study, the role of motherhood was intertwined with work for economic survival. Glenn (1994) and Koniak – Griffin et.al. (2006) note that shared mothering has been a part of African-American communities since slavery and that learning and performing the role of motherhood is a communal task in the communities which were studied. Similarly, mothers of Mexican and Caribbean descent viewed their employment as part of their role as mothers as they deemed economic support to be necessary (Hattery, 2001; Koniak – Griffin et.al., 2006; Vincent, Ball and Pietikainen, 2004). Although they took on multiple roles as a result of economic constraints and motherhood, they did not view the motherhood role to be all consuming and many did not feel guilty that they had to work. These mothers balanced work and motherhood by integrating the two roles. They viewed having to provide for their children through paid work, as part of mothering.

Miller (2005) highlights the situation of mothers in third world countries, where the day to day survival is much more of a concern than the focus on individual constructions of motherhood. Johnston and Swanson (2003) note that dominant ideologies construct a pattern of motherhood that does not reflect the actual social realities of women. For example, regardless of the notion suggested by traditional motherhood ideology that mothers should not work outside the home, privileged mothers utilise the services of working class mothers to take care of their children. This implies that there are alternative or competing ideologies that exist alongside the dominant ones which cannot be overlooked when examining the construction of motherhood.

Although the emphasis has been on how the biological aspect of motherhood was exploited to further the interests of patriarchy (system of male domination), it cannot be assumed that all women experience patriarchy in the same way (Kiguwa, 2004). This may border on marginalising or excluding some women's experiences. This point is further emphasised by Hassim (2005) who draws attention to post-colonial countries whereby focussing on the concept of patriarchy as the only explanation of women's oppression, effectively ignores a large part of women's experience. Class, race and colonial forms of domination along with patriarchy, impact on women's experiences and cannot be excluded. In South Africa, for example, the oppressive apartheid policies based on racist practices informed the dominant ideology for people who were oppressed. In this context, the earlier notions of motherhood were politically tied up with fighting for racial equality (Walker, 1995). Under the banner of African nationalism, women were provided with an opportunity to add their voices as members of a nation in opposing racism (Hassim, 2005; Walker, 1995). However, it emphasized women's maternal role (epitomised as 'mothers of the nation') as the basis for

21

participation, thereby maintaining male dominance within the movement structures (Hassim, 2005). In this instance, it was difficult to separate motherhood from the broader political agenda. Clearly, mothers experience mothering differently. We cannot continue to subscribe to dominant motherhood ideologies that postulate a universal, essentialist truth of motherhood. Rather, the historical, political, social and cultural contexts and ideological images and theories that impact on and construct the experiences of mothering should not be ignored.

2.3.3   Upholding the myths

As mentioned previously, studies regarding motherhood have begun to shift the focus to analysing the experiences of women as constructed by themselves (Choi et.al., 2005, Jeannes, 2002; Kruger, 2003; Miller, 2005; Weaver & Ussher, 1997). These studies have concluded that although women struggle to resist the dominant ideologies of motherhood, their narratives and stories constantly make reference to it, implying that ideologies relating to good mothering, still persist. Reference is also made to the fear of failure experienced by first time mothers in that they did not instinctively know how to mother. They found their experience of motherhood to be different to their expectations and felt that if they talked about it, they would be labelled as not being good mothers. Miller (2005) contends that it is the cultural context in which motherhood is embedded that makes it difficult to reveal these experiences. In this context, they received instruction relating to what they should be, do and feel in their daily lives by the inferred or declared expectations of other people (Hatrick, 1997).

Koniak-Griffin et.al. (2006) point out that the , regardless of mothers' personal choices and constraints, may result in mothers blaming themselves and may lead to self doubt in their mothering ability and affect their self–esteem. Mothers were therefore reluctant to be seen as having failed as this would threaten their sense of self and identity as women. Instead they took up the discourses of the perfect woman who can cope and who does not need help (Choi et.al., 2005; Fowler & Lee, 2004; Koniak – Griffin et.al., 2006; Miller, 2005; Weaver & Ussher, 1997). In a study concerning why Chinese women are reluctant to seek help, Chiu (2004) highlighted that this sense of failure was very much located in their gendered role. She noted that the women internalised what society deemed to be inadequate mothering and womanhood. Furthermore, the greater a female's self-perception of personal inadequacy and failure, the more resistant she would be to seek help (Chiu, 2004). Seeking help would result in the cultural stigmatization of being an inadequate mother or woman (Chiu, 2004).
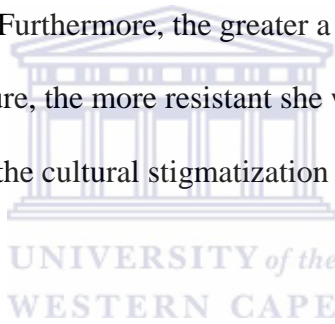
In wanting approval, the women in these studies (Chiu, 2004; Choi et.al., 2005; Fowler & Lee, 2004; Koniak – Griffin et.al., 2002; Miller, 2005; Weaver & Ussher, 1997) participated in the dominant discourse and subsequently turned away from defining who they are and voicing their experiences. In this way, they reinforced cultural norms which served to restrain alternative positions that they could adopt to make sense of their experiences. Rather than voice these feelings, they worked harder at upholding the image of the good mother embedded in their societies and did not challenge the myths of motherhood and the gendered nature of the role. Weaver and Ussher (1997) found that in their study which explored how mothers' lives have changed since motherhood, women

upheld the intensive mothering discourse with self sacrifice being the most pervasive theme. Motherhood was seen as being inevitable and entwined with a positive identity.

Cowdery and Knudson-Martin (2005) in their examination concerning the construction of motherhood as an interpersonal interaction between mothers, fathers and children, found that mothers' beliefs in their natural child-care abilities tend to uphold the notion that mothering falls within the domain of women only. They noted that this assisted in explaining how gender inequality persists. Mothers responded to motherhood within the frame of the traditional motherhood ideology which locates child-care within the domain of the mother and reinforces gendered notions of child-care. As the connection between mothers and children intensified, mothers took a step forward, while fathers took a step back, thus maintaining the unequal workload of parenting. Cowdery and Knudson-Martin (2005) concluded that parents have to make a deliberate effort to counteract existing motherhood ideologies in order to transform gendered notions of child-care. This implies that fathers should also share the responsibility for mothering thereby moving away from the gendered notion of motherhood.

Dominant ideologies about motherhood are further entrenched and perpetuated through the media. For example, in South Africa, there are a number of television and radio food advertisements (Kentucky, McCain, Pie City) that depict mothers as being naturally responsible for everything concerning their family, especially producing meals. These advertisements flag particular meals that can take some of the strain off mothers. In this way these advertisements are further entrenching expectations that society has of mothers. Johnston and Swanson (2003), in an examination of the image of motherhood portrayed by

magazines in America, note that the image of the ideal and self-sacrificing mother was upheld in the media thereby entrenching and perpetuating the myths surrounding motherhood. They contend that the way mothers are represented in these magazines may "serve to undermine the confidence of mothers through either negative or lack of representation" (Johnston & Swanson, 2003). For example, the image portrayed of the stay at home mother confines her to the domestic arena. This could possibly play a role in determining the level at which she would engage in the public arena in which gendered behaviour and social change are debated.

Dobris and White-Mills (2006) examined the "What to Expect" series of books on child birth and childrearing authored by Eisenberg, Murkoff and Hathaway and concluded that this series contributes to the patriarchal vision of motherhood. They note that strong cultural and gender stereotypical assumptions are used to promote idealisations of motherhood and childrearing. These assumptions reaffirm middle-class as the norm and couches pregnancy in stereotypical images of the traditional nuclear family setting. In addition, the assumptions that most women want children and seek pregnancy voluntarily and that they will perceive it as a highpoint in their lives, are upheld. A further recurring theme in these books emphasises that only those who have the knowledge and who view parenthood through a patriarchal lens can provide the proper advice and guidance for women who become parents (Dobris & White-Mills, 2006). The mother, in turn, is presented as being inept in the process of mothering as her contributions are not taken seriously and deemed to be invalid. Choi et.al. (2005) note that perhaps it is the absence of alternative discourses in constructing motherhood experiences that result in mothers

engaging in stereotyped actions affirmed by their social and cultural narratives. This allows for the entrenchment and perpetuation of the ideal and self-sacrificing mother.

2.3.4   Alternative discourses

Cultural expectations regarding motherhood have limited the choices available to women. Women who act outside of the traditional mothering cultural expectations, are severely penalised in that they are stigmatised, pathologised or criminalised (Friedman, Weinberg & Prins 1998; Ganong & Coleman, 1995; Gillespie, 2000; Lang, 2005; Teman, 2008; Wager, 2000). Gillespie (2000) highlights the difficulties that women face who choose voluntary childlessness given that a woman's identity and femininity is framed and situated within social and cultural discourses about motherhood. She argues that despite the advances made by women in terms of increased autonomy, increased choices, and changing gender roles, disparaging discourses regarding voluntary childlessness still persist. Women who choose voluntary childlessness challenge the cultural discourses which construct motherhood as central to a women's identity and they are viewed as being different, outsiders, deficient or selfish (Woollett & Boyle, 2000). Similarly, Gillespie (2000) notes in her study on the experiences of women who have chosen voluntary childlessness, that their decision is treated with skepticism and disrespect by others. Wager (2000, p.394) calls for a recognition of other identities of women when she notes that "every woman is a potential mother, biologically and socially, but it is not our only potential, there are many more". The challenge posed by the choice of childlessness points to the emergence of an alternative discourse which aims to construct an identity for women which is detached from motherhood (Gillespie, 2000; Wood & Newton, 2006).

Lang (2005) looks at the extreme impact that motherhood can have on women's lives and argues for a reconceptualisation of motherhood which takes into account the absence of choice experienced by women who do not want children. She uses the example of infanticide in the United States and notes that to some extent it is a reflection of the lack of choice presented to women who do not wish to become mothers. She notes further that women feel compelled to follow the route to motherhood as a result of deeply entrenched historical, social, political and cultural pressures that are exerted upon them (Lang, 2005). Many women succumb to these pressures and then struggle in these roles and for some, a desperate measure is infanticide. These mothers are then pathologised and treated as criminals. Yet Lang (2005) contends that they are not deviant, but mothers who experience their motherhood as being negative and who have no alternatives as women who do not want to mother. Similarly, Zucker (1999) notes that the pressure exerted on women to reproduce, does not leave space for the experience of abortion, miscarriage or infertility and the only discourse available to them is that of pathological terminology. Sevon (2005) contends that the choice not to become a mother is not an available alternative as reproduction is construed as a mark of womanhood. Ireland (1993, p.123) emphasises this point further in her comment that it is "impossible to think of a woman who is not a mother without thinking of something absent, lacking or missing, so prominently is motherhood woven into the social construction of the female adult identity".

The issue of surrogate motherhood is another way in which women have constructed an alternative to the traditional motherhood ideology. Teman (2008) notes that research on surrogate motherhood is still constructed within gendered assumptions and disregards women's personal experiences. She notes that the cultural assumptions that 'normal'

women do not bear children in exchange for money and that they form a natural connection with the children they give birth to, frame the research on surrogate mothers. Surrogacy challenges conventional assumptions that view the birthmother as the central nurturer and confronts the influence of psychological theories which warn against the negative effects of maternal separation. Teman (2008) contends further that surrogacy presents a direct challenge to cultural constructions of traditional motherhood and family and highlights the cultural dilemma in accepting that women who choose surrogacy are not pathological. Teman (2008) points out that the surrogate woman's choice is depicted in the literature as either being due to financial reasons or related to pathological behavior. She notes that by focusing on the choice of surrogacy as diverging from 'normative' motherhood, it justifies that such a choice would not be made by a non-pathological normal woman. Acknowledging that all women do not share the same reality of motherhood requires that alternate ways of living be recognized without any stigmatization.

Lewis and Nicolson (1998) draw attention to the link between postnatal depression and the pressures that the popular discourse of motherhood placed upon mothers, especially portraying it as a happy event. They note how many mothers in their study experienced disappointment, loss of autonomy, identity and independence and struggled to make sense of this experience and to give voice to their feelings. These negative feelings were subsequently pathologised and explained as depression in medical discourse and were then constructed as a medical problem (Lewis & Nicolson, 1998). In focusing on the individual's pathology, the social and cultural arrangements in which these experiences and meanings were narrated were not taken into account (Lewis & Nicolson, 1998).

Friedman et.al. (1998) found in a study on sexuality and motherhood that the more sexual a woman is perceived to be, the less she is seen as a good mother and consequently stigmatized. The non-sexual mother on the other hand was perceived as an overall good mother who took care of her children's needs, gave them attention and never viewed them as a burden (Friedman et.al., 1998).

Overall, it appears that traditional motherhood stereotypes as defined within the traditional nuclear family are viewed more positively than mothers who do not meet conventional standards, for example, teenage, single, working and lesbian mothers. Together with mothers who do not want to mother, who cannot have children or choose surrogacy, they are often classified as problematic, deviant or pathologised mothers (Ganong & Coleman, 1995; Zucker, 1999). Thus, the dominant ideology of intensive mothering stifles the life choices of women, leaving them no alternative discourses in which to express themselves.
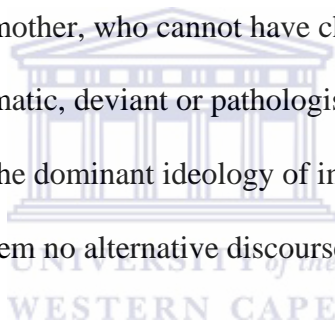
2.3.5 Motherhood in South Africa

The studies by Kruger (2003) and Jeannes (2002) were conducted in South Africa and also refer to the dominant ideology as that which espouses the image of the good, self sacrificing mother viewed as fixed and unchangeable. However, Kruger (2006) notes that not much has been published in South Africa regarding motherhood despite the increase in research at an international level. Instead, much of the research has focused on mothers and children who are at risk, for example, teenage pregnancies which is viewed in a negative light and considered to be problematic. Within South Africa, this area appears to be well researched (Macleod, 2001). In an overview of the studies conducted with teenage mothers in the South Africa literature, Macleod (2001) notes that the concept of good

mothering is used in a similar context as that used in the literature emerging from Britain and the United States. If there is no conformity by teenage mothers to the requirements of the ideal or good mother, they are viewed as deviant or as the "pathologised other" (Macleod, 2001, p.493). Similarly, Wilson and Huntington (2005) in a literature review of teenage motherhood in United States, United Kingdom and New Zealand, found that teenage mothers continue to be stigmatised and marginalised through social exclusion and welfare dependency.

Kruger (2006) notes that most of the research relating to motherhood conducted in this 'problem motherhood' framework does not sufficiently take into account the impact of race, class, gender and culture, or the subjective and diverse experiences of mothers. Rather, it makes assumptions on what constitutes good mothering in terms of western motherhood ideology.
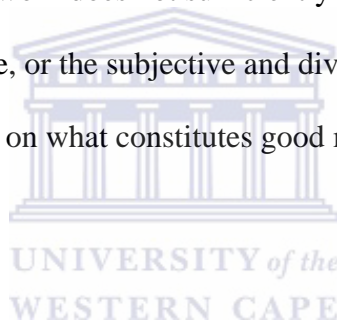
2.3.6 Entrenchment of dominant motherhood ideologies

The literature reflects that despite the challenges to the biological deterministic construction of motherhood, the dominant ideologies around good mothering have not changed. Miller (2005, p.54) contends that even though current living arrangements and social relationships have changed, ideologies around good mothering still persevere as "motherhood continues to be the central way in which women are defined by others and to their perceptions of themselves". Women have to accommodate the existing notions that they have the inherent knowledge and qualities to perform the role of mother in order to avoid being demeaned, stigmatised or pathologised, and to claim positions of power. In doing so, they justify and reinforce the gendered nature of society where men and women have different, but unequal

roles. Buttrose and Adams (2005) point out that mothers are challenged by society's expectations of them, and are tired of constantly striving to meet these expectations, thereby denying their own experiences. Instead, women have become active agents in constructing and reconstructing their roles as they make their imprint on the social order by establishing their identity outside of the motherhood role. Paid employment is one example where women have exercised an alternate identity outside of motherhood. However, trying to balance the demands of paid employment and family commitment is a central challenge in women's lives, especially when viewed within the cultural expectations of gender roles (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The following section examines the impact on women's lives in simultaneously having to meet the demands of work and the cultural expectations of motherhood.
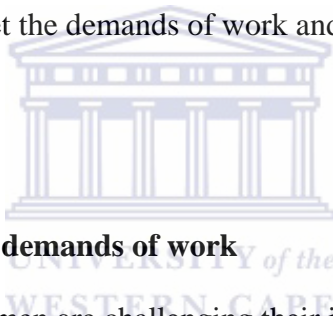
2.4   Motherhood and the demands of work

One of the ways in which women are challenging their identity as that of mother is through paid work. In doing so, women are finding different ways to assert themselves by seeking affirmation of who they are outside of the home and motherhood. However, working outside of the home and motherhood, should be viewed within the cultural expectations of gender roles (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). The impact of the demands is not the same for men and women as these roles are gendered. There are specific obligations and behaviours set out for each gender and these are the guidelines that each gender measures themselves against in terms of how successfully they are meeting those obligations (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). For example, the cultural expectations of the good mother and the all giving mother, coupled with the social position of women in society that affords them less power and control, may result in women making more sacrifices and trade-offs so that work and

family runs smoothly. Consequently, gendered roles and traditional motherhood ideology appear to be in conflict with paid work. The result is that mothers are stressed and feel guilty. A number of studies have highlighted the challenges faced by working mothers whose perceptions of motherhood are informed by the dominant ideologies and cultural gendered expectations (Aluko, 2003; Aveling, 2002; Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Newell, 1996; Tang & Tang, 2001; Wallis & Price, 2003).

2.4.1   Negative health consequences

Psychological stress, role conflict and role overload were identified as some of the challenges which employed mothers face as a result of trying to comply with the gendered role expectations and traditional motherhood ideology (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Wallis & Price, 2003). Vincent et.al. (2004) in their study relating to how women respond to the emotional and physical labour required of them as workers and mothers, found that adults were not challenging the traditional understanding of families. This understanding is defined as that underlying ideology that emphasises a unique and exclusive mother and child relationship and in the process, marginalises or excludes men (Vincent et.al., 2004). As a result psychological stress increased for women as they did not have enough time to complete their paid work due to their efforts to accommodate their family role. This manifested in the strain of working a double day in having to face the challenges of childcare and household responsibilities; and problems in the workplace (Hughes & Galinksy, 1994; Wallis & Price, 2003).

Aluko (2003), in a survey of working mothers in Nigeria, found that working mothers' perceptions of motherhood were also informed by the dominant ideologies and cultural
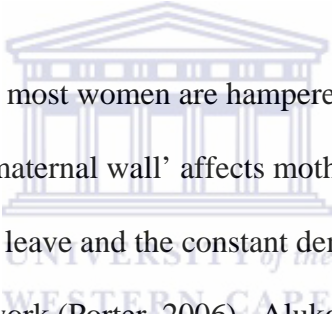
gendered expectations. Although having to work for financial reasons to care for immediate and extended families, these women still viewed themselves in terms of wife and mother in the family, by expending extra effort to cope with housework and work outside the home. Similarly, Milkie and Peltola (1999) found that employed mothers with young children, struggled to balance work and family life as a result of the cultural expectations of motherhood. These mothers viewed themselves as the sole care giver and nurturer and experienced emotional distress when away from their children. However, Milkie and Peltola (1999) point out that men in the study did not have similar experiences.

Newell (1996) notes that in carrying excessive responsibility for child care, women have to explore various coping strategies in order to combine work and motherhood. These strategies may result in negative health consequences. Though employed women reported psychological benefits in the form of greater life satisfaction from work, these benefits are offset against the double burden imposed by work and home responsibilities. This could result in role conflict, role overload or lead to symptoms reflecting stressful daily routines which manifest in illness (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994; Newell, 1996). Role conflict refers to the situation where the execution of one role is frustrated by involvement in another role (Wallis & Price, 2003). Role overload refers to the inability to perform all role expectations in the time available, which necessitates a compromise in some roles (Naidoo & Jano, 2002).

In a study with married women managers, Naidoo and Jano (2002) found that despite the reliance on household assistance these women were still experiencing tensions in their home and paid work role. This was as a result of wanting to succeed in the work place

while continuing to carry the major responsibility at home. In their situation, the compromise was made to the detriment of their personal lives as they did not have the psychological or physical energy left to invest in themselves. Despite their struggle and the subsequent compromises, they attached more value to their home and family role than their work role. Naidoo and Jano (2002) note that perhaps these women found the home and family role more fulfilling and satisfying, as opposed to work, where their prospects for career advancement appeared to be frustrated. Since motherhood is portrayed as being fulfilling and satisfying and seemingly a way to claim status and privilege, undoubtedly these mothers would find more rewards in their home and family roles.

Porter (2006, p. 56) notes that most women are hampered by career development because of the 'maternal wall'. The 'maternal wall' affects mothers in various aspects of their work because pregnancy, maternity leave and the constant demands of child-rearing inevitably cause them to be away from work (Porter, 2006). Aluko (2003) contends that this results in employed mothers being reproached on two fronts by gendered cultural and social expectations. They are labeled as aberrant, firstly as mothers for not performing the ideal mothering role, and secondly as employees for not being committed enough to the paid work role as it conflicts with the fulfillment of the ideal mothering role expected by society. Thus, Hughes and Galinsky (1994) note that because women's employment is so susceptible to the needs of the family, it is often only partially realized.

Tang and Tang (2001) explored how gender role internalization influences the relationship between multiple roles and psychological distress among women in the paid workforce in Hong Kong. They found that the greater extent to which women have internalised gender

role messages, the greater the psychological distress. The extent to which women have internalized gender role messages will impact on their health and the way they perform the roles of paid worker, wife and mother (Tang & Tang, 2001). However, although a choice is implied, there are negative consequences for each choice in not conforming to the gendered role. They may be stigmatized, which can lead to social and psychological consequences, while at the same time, complying with gendered expectations may also have negative health consequences.

2.4.2 Guilt and choices

Guilt is another challenge faced by working mothers whose perceptions of motherhood are informed by the dominant ideologies. Porter (2006, p.79) states that the "enemy is our own guilt", while Pillay (2007) notes that it is the ownership of nurturing that is the cause of the guilt. Many working mothers experience guilt because they feel torn between the conflicting demands of family and career. The literature highlights the following possible reasons for the guilt experienced by mothers: not being able to spend more time with their children; thinking about whether they should rather be full-time mothers; having to pay others to look after their children; taking time out for themselves; the responsibility of managing and finding child-care; and that as mothers, they are not at home to see their children grow up (Buttrose & Adams, 2005; Porter, 2006; Vincent et.al., 2004). Attention is also drawn to those women who felt that if they had a choice; it would be made in favour of their children rather than their careers (Aveling, 2000; Milkie & Peltola, 1999; Vincent et.al., 2004). Women are expected to perform the role of motherhood to perfection and when they dare to express their own needs and desires first, and things go wrong in terms

of societal and cultural directives, guilt and feelings of failure follow (Buttrose & Adams, 2005).

Aveling (2000) points out that even women who felt, at a young age, that they were active agents in constructing their own futures and that their gender did not control their destinies, felt the impact of combining motherhood and work. Instead of easily being able to combine careers and the demands of small children, a more practical solution was to place their jobs on hold. Furthermore, these women made their choices in terms of the social and cultural messages about what it meant to be a woman. These messages implied that it was natural to have children and women were primarily responsible for mothering. Ramsay and Letherby (2006) point out that the choice not to be a mother is also affected by the ideology of motherhood as maternal ideologies continue to shape women's experiences at work. Whether non –mothers or mothers, women continue to be viewed through the motherhood lense. They are expected to abide by the traditional expectations of motherhood and this in turn, shapes the roles that are assigned to them in the work place (Ramsay & Letherby, 2006).

Marks and Houston (2002), in a study on part-time, full-time and stay at home mothers, found that even those mothers doing paid work agreed that motherhood was more important than work. This was despite the mothers doing paid work having the view that work was an important part of their self identity and that they found motherhood to be boring, exhausting, stressful and an isolating experience. Hattery (2001) differentiates between various categories of mothers in her study on how women balance work and motherhood. The categories ranged from mothers that totally conformed to the ideology of

intensive mothering (conformist) to those that refused to conform (non conformist). She

concludes that "material conditions, opportunity structures and social location did not

predict employment outcomes as for many mothers the best predictors of employment was

based on their beliefs about motherhood" (Hattery, 2001, p.173). If mothers held a strong

belief against the dominant motherhood ideology, they would remain employed and pursue

their own interests. She further notes that despite the various choices exercised by the

different groups, stress in balancing work and family roles was a dominant feature of all the

categories.

2.4.3   Self-sacrifice

In a South African study on coping strategies used by successful women in balancing work

and family demands, Brink and De la Rey (2001) found that women appeared to be coping

with work-family strain. However, in doing so, they were assuming total responsibility for

negotiating the strains which resulted from combining family and work responsibilities. In

negotiating these strains they often had to make trade-offs which included personal

sacrifices (Milkie & Peltola, 1999). They may be successful in balancing work and family

life, but this could be at the expense of their personal time as they regularly sacrificed time

for themselves, for example, sleep, leisure, relaxation or self-fulfillment. Arendell (2000)

notes in an overview of the research on motherhood, that assumptions and expectations

associated with the dominant ideologies of motherhood impact on the working lives of

mothers in that the act of mothering and responsibilities thereof intrude in the workplace.

Mothers are faced with the following demands: taking charge of household duties;

assuming the overall emotional responsibility for child-rearing which manifests in loss of

sleep; anxiety, fatigue, curtailed leisure time; and feeling overloaded and stressed. In

addition, working mothers are often expected to assume most of the responsibility in family emergencies and are more commonly interrupted at work by children seeking contact, child-care or illness. Thus, mothers experienced greater work strain than fathers as they had fewer options in moderating this strain because of gendered and cultural expectations of their role as mothers.

2.4.4   Motherhood and family/public policies

With women entering the paid work force, the traditional family context has been challenged and replaced by the dual worker family, that is, where both partners work. Women are now facing the challenge of juggling employment and family responsibilities resulting in the emergence of new patterns of conflict within families and around public policies. It appears that public policies are having difficulty in creating alternative patterns of family work and life that takes this into account as noted by Guerrina (2002) in the European Union (EU), Kushner (2005) in Canada and Sundtröm (1999) in Germany, Italy and Sweden. They draw attention to the influence of institutionalized policies in influencing attitudes and which assist in maintaining gendered norms of power relations in society. Guerrina (2002) notes that within the EU where the concern has been raised over the declining birth rates, increase in life expectancy and the impact on the labour market, there has been an increasing focus to assess the role of the EU in family policy. However, Guerrina (2002) points out that these policies which attempt to reconcile employment and family responsibilities, are still framed within traditional assumptions about gender roles and division of labour for family responsibilities. Women are still perceived as mothers and primary care givers rather than independent paid workers in their own right.

Kushner (2005) notes a similar position in Canada where, despite a shift towards gender equality and neutrality in public policies, the traditional view of motherhood (selfless caring and individual responsibility to family well –being) is still entrenched in the formal structures of social institutions. For the women in her study, it was the main point of reference for their experiences. The entrenchment of this view of motherhood pressurizes employed mothers to continue to make concessions between paid work and family demands more often than fathers (Kushner, 2005). Guerrina (2002) notes that as long as these family policies target women as the primary care givers, they will fail. It is important to focus on the power of gender relations in society rather than merely framing these policies in gender neutral discourse as this does not indicate a disappearance of gender relations (Guerrina, 2002; Kushner, 2005).
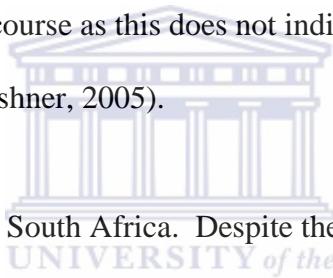
A similar situation prevails in South Africa. Despite the advanced constitutional stipulations which entrenches political, legal and human rights and which has provided the context for the advancement of the status of women, there has been very little transformation in gender relations in South African society (Albertyn, 2005; Hassim, 2003; Hassim, 2005; Meintjies, 2005). Meintjies (2005) highlights a similar reason as that promoted by Guerrina (2002) in that the cultural, social and political dominance of men in society is not being challenged. This is because the focus has been on empowering women and women's rights rather than the gender norms that structure gender relations in society. In this way, women's secondary status and subordination within traditional social relationships are maintained (Meintjies, 2005). Therefore, it is not enough to concentrate only on the structure of institutional development, for example, by incorporating more women and focusing on their rights. Attention should also be given to the gendered

patterns which operate within institutional cultures and discourses (Hassim, 2005). As Kushner (2005) points out, it is through these institutional cultures and discourses that society and women continue to accept and reflect in their behaviour and expectations within the dominant motherhood ideology which flourishes in western society.

2.5   Conclusion

In concluding the literature review section, it appears that the dominant ideologies of motherhood continue to propound that the role of the mother is essentially to meet the needs of others at the expense of ignoring the needs and requirements of women outside of motherhood. The literature illustrates the influence of these ideologies on the lives of working mothers and how it presents a challenge to these mothers. This perception of motherhood impacts on the lives of working mothers creating role strain and feelings of guilt. Mothers want to find fulfilment and satisfaction in their role as mothers and workers but simultaneously have to invest all of themselves in the development of their children and meeting family demands. These demands can generate interpersonal conflict within families and greater emotional distress for mothers, thereby affecting their psychological and physical well-being. However, women are not passive recipients of this ideology and they do make choices about whether to become mothers or not, when to become a mother, whether to remain a working mother and how to balance work and motherhood demands. These choices are, though, situated within their particular historical, social and cultural contexts and would be influenced by whatever the dominant ideologies are within those contexts. The next chapter, Chapter 3, will focus on the research methodology employed in this study.

Chapter Three

Research methodology

3.1   Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology used in this study. The research aims and objectives are presented followed by a clarification of the qualitative research framework in which this study is located. Details of the participants who were selected are depicted together with an account of the selection procedure. A description of the data collection technique and an explanation of the method used to analyse the data follows. A reflection on my role in the research process which is an important consideration in qualitative research is provided. A discussion of the role of validity and reliability in qualitative research is presented and the chapter concludes with the ethical considerations that were applied in this study.
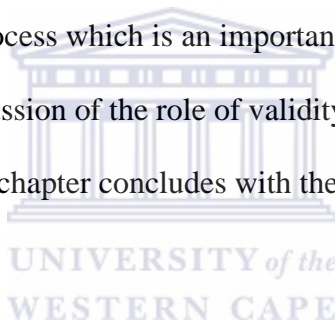
3.2   Research aims and objective

The aim of this study was to explore and understand how married working mothers construct motherhood and the impact thereof on their lives as mothers in full-time paid employment within the South African context. The focus was on understanding the mothers' individual lived experiences told from their own point of view and the meanings they attach to these experiences. The objectives of the study were to explore:

- how mothers construct motherhood within their particular social and historical contexts and;

- how this construction impacts on their experiences in balancing the demands of work and the role of motherhood.

3.3 Research Framework

Since this study was aimed at exploring and understanding the individual experiences of motherhood and how it impacts on the demands of work, it was conducted within a qualitative research framework. This framework is concerned with describing and understanding human behaviour in its natural setting, with an emphasis on understanding and interpreting from the participant's perspective. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p.271) describe this process as entailing descriptions of "the actions of the research participants in greater detail and attempting to understand these actions in terms of the actors' own beliefs, history and context". Thus, qualitative research aims at providing a deep and in-depth description and understanding of the meaning individuals provide for their behaviour, in a specific context and from the individual's point of view (Aluko, 2006; Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Willig, 2001). In this process, qualitative researchers investigate meanings from within an empathic understanding in that the researcher has to immerse him or herself in the topic being studied if the inner meanings and depth of the topic are to be uncovered (Willig, 2001). Although this study is concerned with exploring and understanding the individual experiences of motherhood, the meanings attached to these experiences and how it impacts on the working lives of married mothers, it also aimed to understand the ways in which these mothers participated in the construction of motherhood. Consequently, an examination of how these experiences originate from and are transmitted back into the societal and cultural narratives was also undertaken (Terre Blanche & Durheim, 1999).

3.4   Participants

Research participants were recruited using purposive sampling according to the following criteria: female, married, have children in preschool (ages 5 to 6) and in paid employment. In choosing the pre-school age criteria, it was felt that this age group was more demanding and dependent and therefore required more concentrated care than older children. The ages of the participants ranged from 34 to 45. Three of the participants had three children, three had two and one participant had one child. Two of the participants had children who were older than 20 years of age in addition to younger children. Overall, the ages of the younger children ranged from 4 months to 8 years. In terms of employment, three of the women were educators, two were nurses, one was an education curriculum advisor and one investigated fraudulent activities in a large retail company. The children of the participants all attended the same preschool.
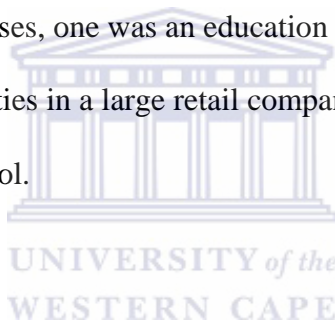
3.5   Selection Procedure

The participants were selected from a preschool facility that is considered to be multi-racial and multi-cultural. Purposive sampling was used to ensure that participants, who were selected, would be willing to participate in the study and to talk about their experiences thereby providing in-depth information that could be explored thoroughly (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). The principal of the preschool identified women who met the criteria and who were willing to participate in the study, and issued letters outlining details of the study. Eight women indicated that I could contact them. I telephoned them to introduce myself, provided some background to the study and to arrange the interview. One of the women changed her mind as she did not feel that she wanted to talk about her experiences.

3.6   Interview Procedure

Interviews were conducted with seven participants. The participants chose the time and location of the interview. Four of the interviews were conducted at the homes of the participants, one at the preschool centre and two at their place of work. All the interviews were conducted in English and one participant responded in Afrikaans. At the start of each interview, I provided brief introductory comments about myself and information on the study. I explained that I would be recording the interview and requested their consent. During the interview process, I followed an interview schedule (Appendix C) which had three broad focus areas that I wanted to explore. As the interviews proceeded, probing questions were added to explore particular experiences further. The interviews ranged from one to two hours in duration and were audio taped for the purpose of transcribing and analysing.
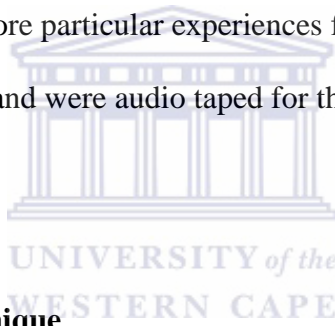
3.7   Data collection technique

In this study, the individual lived experiences of mothers, the meanings they attach to these experiences and the impact thereof on their lives were examined using the semi-structured interview method. Fontana and Frey (2000, p.645) note that "interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings". In a qualitative framework, the interview method can provide an in-depth description of participants' beliefs and how they construct their lives in the narratives they tell about themselves. Babbie and Mouton (2001, p.289) point out that the semi-structured interview involves a process "where a conversation is established in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation" without having specific questions that are required to be asked in a particular order. The interview is therefore guided by research questions or

headings that serve to inform and direct the purpose of the interview. The respondents are allowed greater flexibility to express their views, influence the direction of the interview and are perceived to be the authority on the topic being researched (Crotty, 1998; Popadiuk, 2004; Smith, 1995). This study was concerned with making sense of the individual lived experiences of motherhood, the meanings that mothers attach to their experiences and how these experiences are constructed as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Therefore, this interview method was considered suitable for this study as it was important to provide a flexible context and space in which the participants had ample opportunity to freely express their views (Crotty, 1998). In addition, since it was conversational in nature, it allowed me to listen and explore the participants' experiences by following their lead.

Silverman (2000) highlights the importance of audio recording and transcriptions in that they are not merely an item to start with, but that they can be replayed, it allows for easy review and more importantly, it is part of the analytical process. Smith (1995) adds that understanding the meanings of the content and complexities of individual lived experiences can only be gained through continued interaction with the transcripts and process of interpretation. However, the interview method is not only a means of collecting data about people's lives, experiences and perceptions but the interview process itself shapes how the stories or narratives are told (Crotty, 1998; Elliott, 2005; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Popadiuk, 2004). Fontana and Frey, (2000, p.647) note that "interviews are interactional encounters and that the nature of the social dynamic of the interview can shape the nature of the knowledge generated" in that the interviewer and the participant are jointly generating knowledge. Hence, the interaction between the interviewer and participant is an important part of the research process that adds to the data collected.

3.8   Data analysis

The method of analysis used in this study was thematic analysis. McMillan and

Schumacher (1997, p.533) describe thematic analysis as

> the specific and distinctive recurring qualities, characteristics, subjects of discourse,
> or concerns expressed. The researcher selectively analyses aspects of human
> actions and events that illustrate recurring themes. The complexity and the
> interrelationships of the events and human lives are emphasized. The themes
> provide an explanation of the situation(s).

The transcripts in this study were analysed for themes relating to meanings embedded

within the lived experiences of the participants, underlying values and social and cultural

conditions that shaped their lives, their constructions of motherhood and the impact thereof

on their working lives. The analysis of the data was conducted within the theoretical

framework of social constructionism. This framework holds that identities are not fixed,

but are always in the process of being created in relationships with others. Therefore,

identities are socially created in our lives and are influenced by history, culture, gender,

sexuality, class and the broader relations of power (Parker, et.al., 1995). We should take

into account the many ways that people negotiate their lives and explore the history of this

and what it means to people. Through the process of thematic analysis, the set of

behaviours and experiences that are defined for mothers by their cultural contexts were

uncovered and deconstructed. Deconstruction refers to "the process of reading which

unravels the way categories are used to suppress different perceptions and behaviours"

(Parker et.al., 1995, p.4). In this study, motherhood and gender were identified as such

categories. In the thematic analysis of the experiences of the participants, the underlying

assumptions that hold these categories in place were revealed.

Boyatzis (1998) describes the process of thematic analysis as involving firstly, the observation of a pattern in the information provided and being able to make sense of it. Secondly, defining, or describing the pattern, this is the classification or encoding process; and thirdly, the process of interpreting or analysing the pattern. The guidelines used in this study are described as becoming immersed in the data; listing emerging and recurring themes and analysing emerging themes.

Becoming immersed in the data

Smith (1995) notes that the meanings of the content and complexities of the research topic are not transparent from the transcripts. Rather, the researcher has to maintain a close interactive and interpretative engagement with the transcripts to understand what the participant is saying. Immersing myself in the data by reading and rereading through the transcripts many times was an important part of the analysis process. During this reading process, I made notes and noted emerging themes or items relevant to the study which Boyatzis (1998, p.4) refers to as "seeing something notable and making sense of it".

Listing emerging and recurring themes

The next step involved listing those words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs which stood out as meaningful and developing these into possible themes or patterns. This process entailed searching across and within the transcripts for items that stood out as meaningful, which were recurring and could be sorted into themes. At this point the data was read again and the transcripts were re-examined for material relating to each theme and themes were further refined if necessary. Themes were colour coded and then extracted from the transcripts so that all occurrences of each theme could be put together. During this process,

Silverman's (2000) cautionary note about the disadvantage of grouping items together into categories which could avert attention away from uncategorised activities was noted. Thus, information that fell outside of the themes that were identified was explored in terms of whether it could further add to the depth and richness of the analysis.

Analysing emerging themes

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

3.9 Reflexivity

Willig (2001, p.10) notes that self reflexivity

> "requires an awareness of the researcher's contribution to the construction of meanings throughout the research process and an acknowledgment of the impossibility of remaining outside of one's subject matter while conducting research".

Researchers are people with their own responses, values, beliefs and prejudices and the researcher's way of viewing and making sense of the world is influenced by her/his particular social and cultural contexts (Letherby, 2003). Therefore, the subjective nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants within a particular social context needs to be acknowledged. This subjectivity is influenced by the participant's wider social structure and the meanings that are created through the interaction between researcher and participant; and may influence the analysis of the data (Andrews, 2006; Letherby, 2003).

Quinn (2004) points out the importance of the researcher acknowledging where she positions herself in researching motherhood when she is a mother as well. She draws attention to how the view of motherhood, either through an essentialist lens or as a social and cultural construction, can impact on the interpretation of conflicting discourses about women's needs and actions (Quinn, 2004). Within this context, my own experience in meeting the demands imposed by mothering and work, and the influences of the social and cultural forces that create my knowledge of the world, have inevitably impacted on the interpretation of the experiences of the participants.

During the interview process, I maintained an openness about myself to allow the participants to see where I was situated in terms of the topic (that is, being a married working mother with a preschool aged child) and disclosed certain aspects of the research in order to provide context and meaning. I felt that this allowed me the opening to establish a good rapport with the participants and enabled them to relax and respond openly about their experiences. This also served to minimise the power difference between me, as the

researcher, and the participants (Burr, 1995; Letherby, 2003). I was also mindful during the analysis stage of the study, of the danger of projecting my experiences, frustrations and emotions regarding motherhood onto the experiences voiced by the participants. Boyatzis (1998) highlights projection as an obstacle to effective thematic analysis and notes it is more profound when the researcher is too acquainted with the research topic.

3.10   Validity and reliability

Validity refers to the degree to which a study will investigate or describe what it aims to investigate in terms of the inferences made from the results (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997). Reliability refers to the consistency of the study in terms of whether the same result will be achieved on different occasions (Willig, 2001). The concepts of reliability and validity in qualitative research are still much debated. Gergen and Gergen (2000) note that there is a need to reconfigure the concept of validity in thinking of it as other than mere knowledge claims. One view holds that these are concepts imported from the positivistic approach which focuses on the search for absolute knowledge truths and in proving validity, it gives authority to a particular truth to take its hold on the world and the reader (Kelly, 1999). Flick (2002) notes that in qualitative research, the question is about whether what has been produced is accurate and valid representations of the data. This raises the issue of the link between the topic being investigated and the version provided by the researcher. Flick (2002, p.222) points out that the one aspect of the question of validity in qualitative research could then be posed as "how far the researcher's constructions are grounded in the constructions of those whom he or she studied and how far this grounding is transparent for others".

Willig (2001) points out that there is no absolute truth provided by qualitative research. She notes that it does not predict nor can it formulate claims about uniformity in a population, and because research is conducted in the natural setting, it is not able to control variables so as to reduce error or bias (Willig, 2001). Rather, qualitative research is more concerned with the understanding, description, explanation and interpretation of the meanings that individuals attach to their experiences. It takes into account the influences of the settings in which research is conducted and the many realities that participants use to define their situations. Since qualitative research is focussed on exploring a particular experience in detail, smaller samples are used so that rich insight can be gained of a particular phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher, 1999; Willig, 2001). Hence, reliability and generalisation to the larger population is not the main focus. It is important to note that alternative interpretations of data are probable in qualitative research. However, it does tell us something about the social and cultural structures within which the participants make sense of their lives and provides an understanding of the meanings shared within that particular culture and society (Elliott, 2005).

Willig (2001) notes that qualitative research methods can address concerns about validity issues due to its flexibility and open-endedness. She highlights the following ways in which these concerns may be addressed. Firstly, data gathering methods allow for responses to be verified during the data gathering process, offering the participants the freedom to dispute and correct the data. Secondly, gathering of data takes place in natural settings rather than contrived environments. Therefore, greater validity is achieved when utilising the actual setting rather than transferring from a simulated setting. Thirdly, the practice of reflexivity allows the researcher to consciously and constantly examine his or

her position in relation to the research process. Thereby, creating an awareness of his or her contribution to the meanings and interpretations imposed during the research process (Willig, 2001).

3.11   Ethical considerations

This study has observed the following ethical considerations: obtaining informed consent from the participants and the principal of the preschool; obtaining permission from the participants to record the interviews and informing them that the data will be used in a responsible manner; showing respect towards participants by ensuring a sense of caring and empathy; assuring confidentially and anonymity; adhering to an agreement that participation was voluntary and participants may withdraw at any stage and not be disadvantaged; and not misrepresenting the data. In addition, the participants were assured that only I (the researcher) would have access to the tapes and that the tapes would be destroyed once the study was completed.

3.12   Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology used in this study. The chapter stated that this study is situated in a qualitative framework in order to understand the participants' experiences of motherhood and work, and how they made sense of the world which acts upon them and which they act upon in return. The following chapter focuses on the presentation and discussion of the themes that emerged from the data analysis.

Chapter 4

Findings and Discussion

4.1   Introduction

This chapter presents an analysis of the participants' experiences of motherhood and the impact thereof on their lives as conveyed during the interview process. The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis. The themes have been interpreted and discussed with the aim of understanding how the women who participated in this study constructed motherhood within their social and cultural contexts and how this impacted on their lives as mothers in full-time paid employment.

4.2   Themes and sub themes

The analysis of the transcripts revealed the following themes and sub themes that emerged in the participants' experiences of motherhood and the impact thereof on their lives:

- Societal external constructions of motherhood
  - Desire to be a mother
  - Meaning of motherhood

- Personal internal reality of being a mother in full time paid employment

  - Responsibility for nurturing

  - Guilt

  - Emotional and physical demands

  - Motherhood and work

  - Self sacrifice

- Deconstructions

The themes and sub themes are all interrelated and at no point were they disconnected from each other, but for the purpose of this chapter, each will be highlighted separately.

4.3   Societal external constructions of motherhood

This theme examines the social and cultural constructions that impacted on the experiences of the participants in their choice to become mothers.

4.3.1   Desire to be a mother

Most of the participants emphatically said "yes", they always wanted to be mothers. The path to motherhood however, had been influenced by different factors. These were: family environment, marriage and age.

Influence of family environment: For some of the participants, their desire to have children had been influenced by their family environments, their mothers and friends. These are encapsulated in the following comments by three of the participants:

Participant 7: I lived in a big family……We were in such a warm environment; we grew up all of us together, also our uncles stayed with us, we were an expanded family. So I grew up from that and I didn't want to lose it.

Participant 2: I know this is what I wanted to do. I also knew what kind of mother I would be like. Everyone was having children around me you know, and you sort of sit there and think. I would like to be like that or like that.

Participant 1: Yes, I always knew that I wanted children. Seeing your older brothers and sisters having kids you know. I always use to help them.

Linked to marriage: The participants also linked having children to being married. Once they got married, they felt that having children was the right thing to do, or the logical next

step. Most of the participants conceived or tried to conceive not long after they were married.

> *Participant 2: Oh yes, I always thought of becoming a mother. I knew I would get married sometime.*

> *Participant 3: Every person, once he/she is married, feels that they want a baby. My husband and I felt that we could start a family now.*

Even the participant who indicated that having children had not been on her agenda before she got married stated that:

> *Participant 5: Initially before we got married we said we will wait a long while….. then when we were married about two weeks, we decided maybe we should have a baby.*

Age: In expressing their desire to have children, the participants often referred to their age. This reference related to them either being late in getting married and wanting to have their children as soon as possible or being worried about the risks involved in having children at an older age. In addition, some of the participants felt that they were more matured and had done most of the things they wanted to do. The age that they defined as being late differed from woman to woman.

> *Participant 2: I got married late…..I got married at 33. I always knew I would have children some time, was a bit worried about the biological clock…… and when it did happen, I was over the moon.*
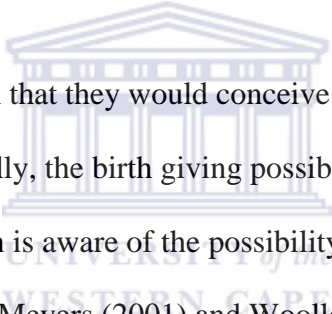
> *Participant 3: I was 29 already when I had P. I felt I was more mature at that age.*

> *Participant 1: We said from the start we going to have kids, we [are]not going to wait like till I'm over 30. Because when I got married, I was 26 already.*

> *Participant 4: I was 42 when she (daughter) was born. I had her late in life.*

The desire to have children featured prominently in the experiences described by the participants and for most, the idea of motherhood was inevitable. Woollett (cited in Sevon,

2005, p.463) notes that "motherhood is a strong expectation for women and when they are in a stable heterosexual relationship (e.g. marriage), they need less to consider whether or not to have children but rather when to have children". This was true for most of the participants in this study. The issue of whether they should have children or not, was not considered. Rather, the decision *when* to have children involved considerations about age, maturity and being married. They had to negotiate around the dominant cultural discourse on the correct time to get married and have children. They were concerned about their age and not wanting children too late in life. This differed from woman to woman, implying that there may be different social and cultural narratives impacting on their experiences.

Once married, the expectation that they would conceive was taken for granted. Sevon (2005) remarks that biologically, the birth giving possibility of the female body cannot be ignored and that every woman is aware of the possibility of having children and needs to make a choice of some kind. Meyers (2001) and Woollett (cited in Sevon, 2005) adds to this the influence of the cultural and social contexts and note that cultural discourses do not present women with alternatives on whether to become a mother or not, as giving birth is seen as an essential part of a normal female identity.

For the participants in this study, it appeared that the ideology prevailing in their culture was certainly one that advanced motherhood as the role that married women should adhere to. In response, they embraced the social and cultural expectations in which they were raised. They thought about becoming mothers in the context of their family environments in which they grew up, knowing people who were mothers, being married, and their age. The expectations for these women were affirmed within the discourses which operated

within their social and cultural contexts and this impacted on how they channelled their actions and behaviour.

4.3.2   Meaning of motherhood

When asked to describe what motherhood means to them, the participants all responded positively. They viewed their role as mothers as a significant part of who they were and many used the term *fulfilling.*

> *Participant 1:…being mother is quite fulfilling. It's like they filling something up for me. ….I will give my life for them.   Motherhood is a blessing.*

> *Participant 3: It is wonderful to be a mother.*

> *Participant 2: …you have that loving, caring nurturing, protecting, all the time. You have a sense of fulfilment. I am doing something worthy.*

> *Participant 5: I felt this was my purpose, this was the reason I was put on earth to have these kids.*

> *Participant 6: I feel it's a blessing, a privilege. It is a honour. As a woman, it's been a good experience.*

For these participants, motherhood appeared to be an awesome event in their lives. It had provided fulfilment and had given them a sense of purpose. In describing the experience as fulfilling, it implied that there had been an emptiness before and now their lives had become worthwhile. As mothers, they had now acquired a new identity, one that is embraced and celebrated by society. The way in which the participants described motherhood seems to equate their personhood as being intertwined with their role of motherhood. A way of understanding the intensity of this fulfilment of a women's life and how deeply embedded it is in the social and cultural construction of a woman's identity, is to compare it with the feelings experienced by women who cannot have children. The

literature on childlessness and infertility (Lewis & Nicolson, 1998; Sevon, 2005; Zucker, 1999) reveals that women who are unable to conceive voice feelings of disappointment, loss of autonomy, identity and independence and do not feel that they had reached true womanhood as defined by society. For these women, the only discourse available to them is the terminology of psychological and pathological distress (Zucker, 1999).

4.4   Personal internal reality of being a mother in full-time paid employment

This theme highlights the personal reality of being a mother in full-time paid employment.

4.4.1   Responsibility for nurturing

All the participants indicated that the responsibility for their children resided with them. They described this responsibility as encompassing the physical and emotional aspects of nurturing. The physical aspects included bathing, fetching or taking to and from school, cleaning, feeding, and spending time playing and doing homework. The emotional aspects of nurturing was expressed as being constantly worried about their children, being overprotective, wanting to do everything and not wanting to leave their children. Some of the mothers reflected at length about the rearing of their children and were especially concerned about correct emotional development and having well-adjusted children.

> *Participant 6: I was put in the position of responsibility of having to care for them.…It was my responsibility; I had to look after her…so I just kind of had to say to myself, well you wanted this child so you must just live with it.*

> *Participant 7: They (children) are mine, really they are mine. I am not complaining anymore now. I am used to it.*

> *Participant 1: I'm the one that is mostly responsible to take them to school and fetch them and see to basically you know the mother stuff of seeing to a child. I think it's because we saw our mothers doing that. You just do it; you just get into it and go on, like it should be like that.*

Participant 2: I had to be organised, very organised. I've worked out a routine…as a mommy that's what you have to do. You've learnt it and you sort of know the role that women play within the family.

It appeared that the participants had accepted total responsibility for their children from the time of birth of their children. This action on their part stems from the cultural views and beliefs about motherhood that operated in their society. They remarked on the actions of their own mothers and watching others in terms of how the role of motherhood should be played out. Their knowledge about motherhood was constructed in their day to day interactions (Burr, 1995). For these mothers, their initial experience of motherhood was a reflection of the values and expectations dominant in their society and they acted accordingly as it was the right thing to do. The societal pressure of being the sole responsible caregiver is aptly reflected in the following comment:

Participant 5: society always looks to the mother.

This echoes the remark by Ruddick (cited in O'Reilly, 2004) that mothers are constantly under the gaze of others.

The participants interacted differently with the responsibility for nurturing as the demands of being the sole caregiver became apparent. Some of the participants felt that they had allowed the situation to develop where they were loaded with all the responsibility. They questioned why they should have all the responsibility and expressed frustration at being the only person responsible.

Participant 3: At the beginning, I was very frustrated. I was very frustrated, as a mother, I had to do everything. You just have to do what is expected of you. I felt that I wanted to get out.

Participant 5: I think the mistake was that I thought they were too dependent on me. I actually lost myself. I took on all the responsibilities and when it became too much, I started asking why I must do everything.

Despite the questioning of their roles and the voicing of their discontent, they continued to enact the social perception that nurturing is women's work. This was most notable in the instance where a spouse felt that he also wanted to take some of this responsibility.

Participant 1: I felt more guilty leaving my husband with 3 kids. You know men don't cope like us… they can't multi-task. …anything can happen, one of the kids can get sick, for me it feels so a little bit unfair towards him….

Participant 3: When they are sick, I stay with them. A mother is what a child needs when the child is sick.

Participant 5: They were my world…everything rotated around them and all my focus was on them...

Two of the participants appeared to have resigned themselves to the situation and offered alternative explanations for the responsibility placed upon them.

Participant 2: There's a reason why God made us all like that. It's when we start playing other roles; it's when we start taking over the role of that one that this child actually becomes confused.

Participant 1: motherhood is a blessing, there is a reason God made us to have kids, he knows we have that instinct….

In subscribing to these stereotypical male and female roles prescribed by society, the participants were actively constructing and perpetuating the perception of mother as the nurturer within their social and cultural contexts. By upholding the notion that mothering falls within the domain of women, fathers were potentially excluded from the mother-child dyad (Cowdery & Knudson-Martin, 2005). As Miller (2005) remarks, despite the shift in social relationships in terms of gender defined responsibilities, women are still defined by society in terms of their motherhood role and this in turn, influences how they view

60

themselves. This action perpetuates the unequal workload of parenting and gender divisions. A sense of ambivalence however, can be observed in the comments made by the participants. Firstly, they want to be mothers and secondly, they want to be good mothers in terms of the societal expectations. In trying to meet the societal expectations, they faced frustration, guilt and emotional and physical consequences. This created hesitancy, an inconsistency and ambivalence within themselves. Their personal internal reality reflected their frustrations, while their social external construction reflected the prescribed role of mother as the nurturer. O'Reilly (2005) suggests that if mothers do not demonstrate their role correctly they will be made to feel guilty or marginalised by society for stepping outside of the prescribed role. Perhaps the participants were hesitant in determining their own mothering experiences for fear of having the gaze of society upon them. Participant 2 reflected this very well in the following comment:

> *it's all these little voices in your head…this is what people tend to do, they don't say it, but you read it and you feel guilty. It's there.*

There is an element of apprehension that if mothers do not uphold the illusion of the ideal mother, they would be labelled as not being good mothers; this in turn, may threaten their sense of self and identity as women (Hatrick, 1997; Koniak-Griffin et.al., 2006; Miller, 2005).

For the participants in this study, the hesitance to share the nurturing responsibility and their ambivalence about their care giving role alludes to an adherence to an intensive mothering ideology. This ideology speaks of mothers as the central caregiver, selfless carer and nurturer (Choi et.al., 2005; Hayes, cited in O'Reilly, 1994). These participants followed the motherhood ideology that was dominant in their social and cultural contexts.

There were no alternative constructions for them to choose from. An emotional implication of any diversion from this role, expressed by all the participants, was guilt.

4.4.2   Guilt

All participants felt a measure of guilt which was linked to them not being there all the time. They felt that they needed to be with their children constantly as this was their responsibility. They felt guilty for leaving their children when they go to work; leaving their children with relatives or even their spouses; doing household chores and not spending time with their children; and when they took time out. Comments related to this theme were:

> *Participant 5: I felt guilty leaving the kids behind...I think that when you are a working mom, guilt plays a big role. You always guilty and you want to make up for lost time.*

> *Participant 2: am also afraid that if they are not with me, that I'm failing as a mother, if you leave your kids with someone else, you also feel that you neglecting them.*

> *Participant 4: At times when I do feel guilty,...is when I come home and....I try to do an activity with her and I'm actually too tired to do it...*

> *Participant 7: The only thing I can manage to do is that she must complete her homework, but I didn't have time to give her more exercises and I felt that I'm failing her.*

One participant felt guilty about not coping with all the responsibilities and if she took time out, she was worried about who would take over the responsibilities.

> *Participant 6: I feel guilty and I feel as though I am not coping.*

An interesting observation was that those participants, who maintained a stronger gendered notion of the mother's responsibility for nurturing, were more expressive about their

feelings of guilt than the other participants. This is also observed in the literature which supports the view that it is the belief that nurturing is the responsibility of women that leads to feelings of guilt (Miller, 2005; Nicolson, 1993; O'Reilly, 2004; Pillay, 2007; Porter, 2006). Pillay (2007) and Porter (2006) note that if mothers can let go of the ownership of nurturing, they would be able to let go of their guilt. For Pillay (2007), letting go and sharing the responsibility is a conscious decision that has to be made by mothers. Only one of the mothers reflected being cognisant of her decision to take all the responsibility:

Participant 5: I can't blame anyone for that, that was a choice I made….it's only because I have allowed it, I took on all the responsibilities.

However, any conscious decisions about sharing their nurturing role were clouded by the societal and cultural expectations which were embedded in their constructions about motherhood. When they were not able to meet the expectations all of the time (for example, being there constantly as the selfless nurturer and care-giver), it resulted in feelings of frustration and guilt.

Another area of guilt was the concern voiced by most of the participants that they were neglecting their spouses. They felt guilty about the attention that they were expending on their mothering role which resulted in them not having enough time and attention for their spouses.

Participant 3: I told my husband that the child will need a lot of my attention and he shouldn't be jealous. He must understand if he receives less attention.

Participant 1: You so into your kids, you forget your husband is also there. He also sometimes need a little support.

Participant 4: We go out as a family a lot, but not as a couple any longer. I think about it so now and then, we must really work on that…

Participant 5: ...with me taking on all the responsibilities I became frustrated and miserable and don't know how to be a wife anymore...

Although this aspect of guilt was not singled out in the literature, it is a reflection of the deeper underlying traditional gendered perceptions that the participants hold about the role of women in society. As Kushner (2005) points out, it is the social and cultural perception of women as mothers, wives and caregivers that intensifies their sense of responsibility to their family over their personal expectations for themselves. Thus, women generally tend to make more sacrifices and tradeoffs to ensure that the family runs smoothly (Milkie & Peltola, 1999).

4.4.3   Emotional and physical demands of motherhood

The participants had no hesitation in voicing their thoughts about the emotional and physical demands of motherhood. The most common word used was that the role was *demanding*. Many of the participants felt that the role placed a tremendous strain on them. It was stressful, physically and emotionally draining and exhausting. In addition to the responsibility for the children, they had their work and were mainly responsible for taking care of the needs of the family and household duties. In addition, three of the participants were also responsible for extended families. Some of the participants noted that they had to be organised in terms of when they performed the various responsibilities and had to keep a tight schedule in order to get things done. For example, washing and bathing of children, cooking, washing of clothes and helping with homework. Despite the vivid descriptions of the demands placed upon them by their motherhood role, the participants simultaneously reflected the positives of this role.

Participant 1: It was a bit stressful....but at the end it was worthwhile.

Participant 2: It is demanding, working mothers, I'd say it's not easy. But they never see a strain because I enjoy doing it.

Participant 4: ....it is demanding, ...in the sense that you want to do all these things.

Participant 5: Emotionally draining...but this was my purpose.

Participant 7: The feeling is great. Although it comes with responsibilities. It does have some strain on you.

Participant 3: It is nice to be a mother, at times exhausting and frustrating...

The sense of ambivalence conveyed by these statements is what Oberman and Josselson (1996, p.344) refer to as "dialectical tensions". For example, in motherhood, women may experience both a sense of maternal power and the burden of responsibility. Since societal expectations placed on mothers are so high, it appeared as if the participants did not want to be viewed as complaining. It was therefore important for them to balance the negative experience with the positive in their reflections, in case they would be judged by society as not being good mothers. It is this relationship between the societal and cultural constructions of motherhood and the personal reality experienced in the guilt and demands imposed by the role, which created ambivalence about motherhood.

For some of the mothers, the experience of motherhood was not what they had expected. This placed additional burdens and emotional demands upon them. Comments related to this theme were:

Participant 6: I do what ever needs to be done. I don't think I ever thought about how it should be done, I always just did the best I could....

Participant 5: it's not only physical, but emotionally draining. I didn't think it would be such hard work. ... are you doing the right thing...am I a good enough mother...am I doing something wrong?

Participant 1: ...it was overwhelming. You feel so dumb, you don't know what to do, what to expect.

Participant 6: I don't think I ever thought what it would be like.

These reflections provide insight to the damaging role played by societal perceptions that nurturing falls into the domain of women. The literature reveals similar feelings of self doubt, low self-esteem, questioning of abilities and feelings of failure in women who battle with fulfilling the expectations of inherent and intuitive notions of mothering (Choi et.al., 2005; Hatrick, 1997; Koniak-Griffin et.al., 2006; Kruger, 2003; Miller, 2005; Weaver & Usher, 1997). The participants' experiences of motherhood were different to their expectations, which had been cultivated by the constructions of motherhood embedded within their social and cultural contexts. There were however, no spaces to voice these reflections and they resorted to doubting their abilities and inflicting much emotional pain on themselves in the process. Participant 6 reflects this as follows

...it kind of brings my self-esteem down, because I feel that you [are] not living up to what you supposed to be doing or you [are]not coping with things that are expected of you.

4.4.4 Emotional and physical demands of motherhood and work

All the participants indicated that it was necessary for them to work due to financial reasons. Work, however, interfered with their role as mothers. Work intruded on their lives at home and clashed with their motherhood role. They often worked a double day, coming home to fit in household chores and childcare responsibilities. Performing the combined roles of mother and worker were demanding and tiring. At times they brought their work stress home and this impacted negatively on their family relationships, resulting in feelings of guilt.

Participant 5: …it's like your day starts all over once you get home and you try to do things in the morning before you go to work.

Participant 3: you leave home early and get back late. The children must be washed, you husband must be given attention, food must be made…

All the participants spoke about the insufficient time they spent with their children. Three of the women expressed the desire to stay at home.

Participant 6: My only regret is that I have to work. If I did not work, did not have the pressure of work, I could spend more quality time with her

Participant 2: If I had a choice I would be home. But to grow as a person, you also need the time away from the children as much as you want to be there for them.

There was also ambivalence around the role of work. Some participants clearly enjoyed the type of work that they did and some were also studying part-time. Most of the participants valued their jobs. They were either in the education or health profession and gained a sense of personal satisfaction in performing their functions.

Participant 2: I get frustrated if you don't give your all to your kids at school, because that's your job to teach. I know that job because I must do it with kids that I've been entrusted with.

Participant 3: I enjoy my work. I am studying management… two years ago I occupational health..

Participant 7: I like to be out, run workshops, talk and advise teachers, do school visits.…

One participant indicated that although her work was stressful, it was time out from her motherhood responsibilities. However, she immediately felt guilty about voicing such a thought.

Participant 5: When I get to work, I forget about the kids and home. I feel much more relaxed, even though it's a stressful environment. I actually enjoy my work…I must sound like a terrible mother (laughs).

Although work was essential from a financial point of view, the responsibilities of motherhood for the participants were more important than work. Hattery (2001) indicated in her study that for many mothers the best predictors of employment were based on their beliefs about motherhood. This was also evident in the literature where although having to work, women still perceived themselves as mothers and wives first (Aluko, 2003; Marks & Houston, 2002; Milkie & Petola, 1999; Vincent et.al., 2004). The participants clearly struggled with meeting the demands of work and fulfilling the cultural expectations of the all giving mother. When these roles clashed, they experienced feelings of guilt.

A number of participants had assistance with household chores. It is evident however, that the societal expectation of the role of mothers is deeply rooted as this did not alleviate the demands that they experienced (Naidoo & Jano, 2002). They continued to experience the emotional and physical demands imposed by the perception of mother as the caregiver. These demands manifested as: responsibility, worrying, the desire to give up their jobs; and not having enough time to spend with their children.

In meeting the demands of work and motherhood, the participants had to make constant comprises. They expressed great difficulty in balancing the demands of motherhood and work and indicated that it was not possible to maintain a balance. Rather, the approach was to neglect the one at the expense of the other depending on which one required urgent attention. Where participants had the support of their spouses, they continued to carry the greater share of the responsibility for child care.

> Participant 6: ...when there are certain deadlines that have to be met at school,...
> I then have to neglect my home.

Participant 7: So you do steal some of your family time and want to do your work

Participant 4: I do neglect my work, I suppose even as a mother you neglect. Not that you don't want to, you can't, you're too tired. So both actually suffers.

Participant 1; I don't there's actually a balance. I'm actually more at work.

Pa*rticipant 7: …there are due dates, you go and take the papers, that time they still want to play with you….they really do want that quality time which you don't give.*

Pillay (2007) points out that the idea of balancing the demands of work and motherhood is a myth. This is borne out by the experiences described by the participants. They had to compromise and negotiate around meeting the expectations and demands of work and motherhood, and were frustrated by not being able to accomplish their tasks in the time available (Kushner, 2005; Wallis & Price, 2003). For example, bringing work home and imposing on family time. This imposition created a conflict between work and motherhood demands and manifested in feelings of guilt: not spending enough time on their work requirements, not spending enough time with their families and guilt about bringing their stress home.

Participant 4: I am not balancing my life and work. I can't. The job is actually more draining. You do neglect your work … even as a mother you do neglect. Sometimes you too tired, to read a story. There are times you have to focus on one…

4.4.5   Self sacrifice

The participants in this study reflected throughout on the great effort that it took to cope with the demands of motherhood and work. They had very little or no time for themselves, felt guilty when they spent time on themselves, and many indicated emotional and physical tiredness. They all acknowledged that they required personal recreation time away from their motherhood role and that they would have to consciously make this decision, but they

found it very difficult to implement. Even those mothers who managed to make time for themselves, felt guilty about leaving their children behind.

Participant 2: Time for me is limited. I'm always doing it for the family. I would love to have some free time, but I can't always get free time.

Participant 6:...I don't know how to have me time, because there's so much. I don't have time for myself.

Participant 7: Sometimes you do feel tired...But without knowing or noticing, you carry on with the responsibilities that you have.

Two of the participants reflected that the stress of both roles had impacted on their physical health.

Participant 2: ...school was stressful at that time, very stressful....it's because you apply pressure to that pressure on yourself.

Participant 6:... I end up with headaches and muscle spasms in my neck. My body couldn't cope with it anymore. So I ended going to the physiotherapist.

It was also evident that for some participants, their emotional and mental health had been affected.

Participant 6: ...there's many a time that I don't even know what myself is...

Participant 5: I could identify that I actually lost my sanity...where you don't even know what you want anymore. Somebody asked me out....I couldn't actually think what it is that makes me happy...

Two of the participants reflected that they did not mind the self sacrifice as they had done what they wanted to do with their lives, and now their energies were for their families.

Participant 2: So stressful, yes it is. But I think I've done what I wanted to do before I got married.

Participant 3: I enjoyed myself when I was young. But I have had enough of that life. Now, I give all my attention to my children and husband.

The literature highlights psychological stress and negative health consequences that mothers face as a result of trying to meet the challenges posed by the gendered nature of the role of mothers and the demands of work (Aluko, 2003; Hughes & Galinksy, 1994; Newell, 1996; Wallis & Price, 2003). The participants in this study spoke of similar stresses and many experienced emotional and physical tiredness, in addition to physical health problems. Some of them employed various coping strategies like being organised or having a schedule, but trying to keep to this was stressful in itself. In applying extra effort in order to cope with the responsibility for motherhood and work outside of the home, it could be argued that they continued to view themselves in terms of mothers and wives. This came across very strongly from the two participants who indicated that they had time for themselves before they got married and now their time was dedicated to their families.

Despite the challenges posed by work and the demands of motherhood, the participants were passionate about their work. In addition, five of the participants were completing further studies. Their actions in other parts of their lives contradicted what they were voicing, reflecting the tension that existed between their needs and the expectations of traditional motherhood ideology. In a sense they were held captive by societal and cultural expectations of mothers and the potential judgment of their actions by others. These participants challenged societal expectations by questioning and challenging in their own various ways, even though they continued to reconstruct and perpetuate their gendered role in society through their personal expectations and actions.

4.5   Deconstructions

This theme examines to what extent the participants had deconstructed the social and cultural constructions of motherhood. Deconstruction refers to the unravelling and challenging of the social and cultural ideologies about motherhood that are taken for granted and viewed as normal accepted practice so as to facilitate the emergence of alternative discourses (Parker, cited in Gillespie, 2000). Deutsch (2007) notes the importance of posing challenges to the social and cultural boundaries that uphold gendered behaviour as this could facilitate the emergence of alternative discourses which can assist in a different realisation of gender.

The extent to which participants in this study deconstructed the social and cultural constructs of motherhood was limited, as they were uncomfortable with voicing those aspects of their motherhood experiences that differed from expectations. For example, they could not voice the negative aspects of their mothering role, without also expressing feelings of guilt. This theme emerged from the reflections of the participants that deviated from the intensive motherhood ideology, even though their underlying experiences resonated with this ideology. This ideology embodied the ideals of mothers taking responsibility for nurturing, caring and giving themselves to others. The participants questioned and expressed their frustrations about the responsibilities that the role of motherhood placed upon them in terms of social and cultural expectations, but did not extend this action as to directly challenge or voice alternatives. For example, the participants had no hesitation in expressing their uncertainty, the frustrations, the emotional and physical demands; the sacrifices made; and questioned why the responsibility should be all theirs. They also voiced their experiences of motherhood which were different to

72

their expectations. They reflected upon the responsibilities that were placed on mothers and how these had been copied from others and their mothers. They admitted that juggling motherhood and work was a struggle and exposed that it was not possible to achieve a balance between work and motherhood. They also noted that they were not always appreciated. These reflections of their experiences which could be viewed as an alternative discourse to that espoused by traditional motherhood ideology were voiced against a background deeply entrenched in guilt. Despite this entrenchment, the participants connected their experiences to the social and cultural contexts, and in this way, exposed the societal expectations of motherhood. This provided and opened up an opportunity for further challenges and alternative discourses to emerge.

Deutsch (2007) notes that at times, it is an individual act of resistance that can generate an environment of change. There was an acknowledgement by one participant that women should start doing something for themselves and not feel guilty about it. Participant 7 mentioned that women

> *do not challenge enough, we don't create for us, whereby we can talk about these things, so that we can help one another.*

Two of the participants particularly presented a challenge when they reflected on their desire to teach their children an alternative view to the traditional gendered roles of males and females.

> *Participant 7: we must challenge it [gendered role expectations] in church, in all social gatherings where men are…I want to teach my son so that he becomes a better father than his father.*

Gillespie (2000) notes however, that resisting and challenging discourses that define and demarcate the role of women and mothers in society should not be viewed as an effortless

and clear-cut process. Firstly, she notes that the culturally constructed discourses which dictate the positions that women should adopt and engage in are so deeply entrenched in women's lives that women find it difficult to separate from this discourse. Gillespie (2000) illustrates how women in her study although opposing discourses related to motherhood, found it difficult to detach themselves from cultural discourses on gender stereotypes when talking about themselves. Secondly, mothers may be hesitant to participate in a discourse of resistance, as motherhood and family represent a way in which women may claim status, privilege or positions of power (Deutsch, 2007; Glenn, 1994). Mothers may be unwilling to relinquish this power. Thirdly, resisting dominant motherhood discourses may pose a risk to women as it may lead to stigmatisation and exclusion as illustrated in the literature on voluntary childlessness, surrogacy, infertility and abortion (Friedman et.al., 1998; Ganong & Coleman, 1995; Gillespie, 2000; Lang, 2005; Ramsay & Letherby, 2006; Teman, 2008; Wager, 2000; Zucker, 1999).
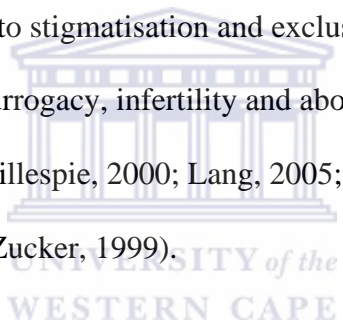
4.6   Conclusion

The themes revealed the tensions and ambivalence experienced by the participants as they negotiated between the social and cultural expectations of motherhood and their personal reality in meeting the demands of motherhood as working mothers. In their struggle to meet the social and cultural expectations of motherhood, they placed tremendous emotional and physical stress upon themselves. However, in voicing their experiences, they were also making sense of it and in this way, exposing the myths of motherhood. The following chapter presents a summary of the research findings, limitations and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 5

Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1   Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore how married working mothers construct motherhood within their particular social and cultural contexts and how this impacted on their roles as mother and worker. My focus was on understanding their individual experiences as told from their own points of view and the meanings that they attached to these experiences. The study revealed that there is a tension between the societal external expectations and the personal internal reality experienced. It is this tension that impacts on the roles of mother and paid worker.

5.2   Research Findings

This study examined the experiences of the participants through a social constructionist lens which holds that the way in which we interact with the world depends on our beliefs and perceptions about it (Houston, 2001). In order to examine how the participants viewed their world and made meaning of their experiences, the context in which their practice of motherhood occurred was explored in their reflections.

These reflections revealed that the social and cultural contexts of the participants hold a view of motherhood that is gendered, comprises ideals of a caring, nurturing and ever giving mother and linked motherhood to womanhood and the female identity. The participants, situated in their social and cultural contexts, are affected and impacted on by these forces. The impact is two-fold**:** their choices and behaviour in respect of how they

perceived motherhood were directed by the external social and cultural contexts. This in turn, influenced their personal expectations which affected decisions made and actions taken. The participants in this study revealed that their perception of motherhood was embedded in this traditional ideology and gendered nature of motherhood. This was reflected in their actions, how they dealt with motherhood and how they strived continuously to be good mothers. They were however, aware of the influences of the social and cultural contexts as they revealed that some of their mothering actions were linked to having observed how their own mothers mothered.

The participants' descriptions of their experiences were diverse and complex and revealed the many dimensions that impacted on their lives: mother, worker, level of support, wife, extended families and demands of their jobs. The expectations and demands set by each of these dimensions had to be considered in their decision making (Kushner, 2005). The personal internal reality voiced by the participants exposed the physical, emotional and mental demands of taking ownership of nurturing, the frustrations, the guilt, the struggle in meeting the demands of motherhood and work; and the level of support they had. They acknowledged that motherhood also meant that they took on responsibility not only for their children, but also for the household and extended family. This placed tremendous stress and strain on them.

The tension between the societal external expectations and the personal internal reality emanates from having to decide the actions required to meet the expectations and many of the participants faced emotional and physical stress in this process. Regardless of the open questioning of the frustration wrought by this role, the participants continued to reflect on

the expectations of themselves as good mothers. It is in this expectation, juxtaposed with

the ongoing emotional, mental and physical struggles that the observation is made that the

traditional view of motherhood and the demands that it imposes on mothers, impacted on

their role as paid workers. The participants' experiences revealed that they diligently tried

to follow the traditional motherhood expectations but struggled with the reality of meeting

the expectations. The struggle to meet the expectations impacted on their role as paid

workers and manifested as guilt, physical exhaustion, psychological stress and a desire to

leave work notwithstanding the value attached to it.

Through questioning and acknowledging that they should start making time for themselves,

some of the participants were starting to step out of the confines of the prescribed gender

roles by assuming contradictory scripts and in doing so deconstructing the myths of

motherhood However, their actions were held in check by their ambivalence. They were

constantly constrained by the expectations and demands placed upon them by the

traditional motherhood ideals. The elements of intensive mothering were embedded and

determined how the role had to be played. Any resistance or challenges expressed resulted

in feelings of inadequacy, blame, guilt and feelings of failure.

Motherhood is a complicated construct to understand and explain as women have such

diverse and complex experiences. Although the participants had similar experiences, there

were different nuances in these experiences. These are reflected in how they interacted

with their role as a mother; juggled the demands of work and motherhood; when they felt

guilty; how they coped; how they interacted with their spouses; the level of support

received and how they felt about work. In addition, this study revealed that motherhood is

a changing role and not a static one. A few of the participants initially accepted the role without too much questioning. However, they started questioning and voicing their frustrations once the impact of taking on all the responsibility became apparent. Though they all felt guilty about leaving their children, even with their spouses, only one participant indicated that she did not feel guilty when leaving her child with her spouse, instead she felt guilty when she was tired and could not play with her child. Most of the participants alluded to wanting the support of their spouses, whereas one participant openly questioned the abilities of her spouse when he offered to assist her. Women's experience of motherhood is impacted upon by so many factors in their world: their personality, religious context, influences of their mothers and friends, their history, social and cultural contexts, communities in which they live and in South Africa, the racial divides that still plague our society. Sen (2006), in his reflection on identity on a more global platform, stresses the importance of recognising diversity and taking into account the many ways in which people see themselves. For this reason, it is important for women to be given an opportunity through research, to share and validate their experiences and reflect on what they want.

5.3   Recommendations and limitations

The study highlighted the need for a deconstruction of motherhood which will enable women to live their lives as mothers without guilt. Further research is required to provide opportunities for women to reflect on their experiences, given that it is so complex and diverse. In addition, the voices of women and men should be exposed about their views on eradicating the gap between the myth and reality of motherhood. It is also important to hear the experiences of fathers and to examine the role that they play in perpetuating the myths of motherhood. This would necessitate a move away from the view that links

motherhood to the female identity. Another area for further research is that of responsibility for parenting. The concept of women, parenting and motherhood are very interrelated and often parenting is associated with women's work. This area requires further research to investigate the relationship between motherhood and parenting given that parenting is such an important aspect of a child's development.

This study has shown that motherhood is influenced by an array of factors and that the experiences from a more diverse perspective need to be explored. Within the context of this study, there was no specific focus on motherhood in other cultural traditions. Some insight was provided by the African Xhosa speaking participant. She noted that the participation of fathers in families was still very limited and any action on their part to act differently (for example, sharing the nurturing responsibility for children) was frowned upon. The other participants did not express any specific cultural factors regarding gendered behaviours. A recommendation would be for research to be conducted with a more homogenous cultural group to investigate how motherhood and gendered behaviours are constructed in a particular culture.

This study particularly focussed on married working mothers from the same socio-economic backgrounds. The sample of participants, however, was not diverse enough in terms of their social cultural and socio-economic background. Perhaps such diversity could have enhanced the wealth of information gathered. By focussing on married women only, I adopted a narrow view of what constitutes the term family. Bozalek (1997) notes that the concept of the nuclear family (husband, wife and children) is not a relevant definition of family in South Africa. The lived experiences of South African families suggest that
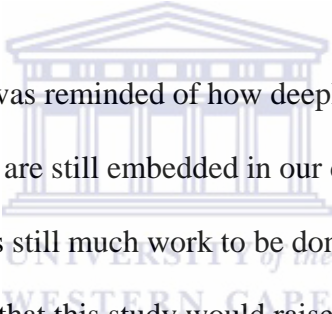
extended families and those living in different arrangements (single parents, unmarried parents, gay and lesbian couples, grandparents and caregivers) should also be recognised as definitions of family (Bozalek, 1997). Amoateng, (HRSC, 2004), in examining the period between 1996 and 2001, highlighted that although South Africa is a very family oriented society, this orientation is no longer toward the traditional nuclear family living arrangement. Rather, extended family households are on the increase. Furthermore, the 2005 South African Social Attitudes Survey (HSRC, 2006) revealed that the attitudes towards marriage are changing: younger people have more negative attitudes towards marriage than older people, thus implying that marriage may continue to decline in the future. Whilst not ignoring that there are other definitions of family as noted, I have narrowed my focus to married women in order to limit the scope and intent of this study.

This study was undertaken within a qualitative research framework which sought to explore and interpret the understandings and meanings that women attached to their experiences in their everyday lives as mothers and workers. In reflecting on their individual realities, a generalisation cannot be made that all women have similar experiences. However, it provided insight into the social and cultural contexts in which the participants made sense of their lives.

5.4   Reflections and conclusion

The participants in this study highlighted that becoming a mother was a special and important event in their lives, but they felt weighed down by the responsibility and the guilt. However, they were not hesitant in voicing their experiences even those that made them feel guilty. An observation can be made that perhaps they were comfortable in

sharing their experiences with someone that was also a married working mother with a preschool child and who shared a similar socio-economic background. The women who participated in this study celebrated their motherhood and were constantly striving to and wanting to do their best as mothers. Simultaneously, as working mothers, they struggled to cope with the demands of being responsible for motherhood, to make time for themselves and meet the demands of work. Feelings of guilt and tiredness were two much featured aspects in their reflections. However, they continue to persevere. Having analysed their experiences, I can only admire these working mothers for their resilience and the ongoing battle to create those spaces for themselves.

In listening to their stories, I was reminded of how deeply the gender norms that govern power relations in our society are still embedded in our consciousness and despite the shift in social relationships, there is still much work to be done to change the gendered nature of motherhood. It was intended that this study would raise an awareness of how women's reality about motherhood is shaped by the prevailing ideologies in their social and cultural contexts. In voicing their experiences in this study, perhaps mothers will look at themselves from different perspectives in order to further challenge that part of motherhood which creates tensions in their lives.

References

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

Aluko, F.S. (2006). Social Science Research: a critique of quantitative and qualitative methods and proposal for an eclectic approach. *Ife Psychologia,* 14(1), 198-210.

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

Amoateng, A.Y. (2004). *The South African Family: Continuity or Change?* Human Science Research Council Ten Years of Democracy Seminar Series.

Andrews, M. (2006). Breaking Down Barriers: Feminism, Politics and Psychology. *Feminism & Psychology.* 16(1), 13-17.

Arendell, T. (2000). Conceiving and Investigating motherhood: The decade of scholarship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family,* (62), 1192-1207.

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

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

Bohan, J. S. (2002). Sex differences and/in the self: Classic themes, feminist variations, postmodern challenges. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 26 (1), 74-89.

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

Bozalek, V. (1997). Representations of the family and South African realities. In C. De la Rey, N., Duncan, T., Shefer & A. Van Niekerk. *Contemporary Issues in Human Development A South African Focus* (pp.7-24). South Africa: International Thomson Publishing (Southern Africa) (Pty) Ltd.

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

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

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

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

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

Chiu, M.Y. (2004). Why Chinese women do not seek help: a cultural perspective on the psychology of women. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 17(2), 155-166.

Chodorow, N.J. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Choi, P., Henshaw, C., Baker, S. & Tree, J. (2005). Supermum, superwife, supereverything: performing femininity in the transition to motherhood. *Journal of reproductive and infant psychology*, 23(2), 167-180.

Christierson, V.A.B. (1997). *Part-time work, motherhood and accumulated role satisfaction: a study of white South African nurses.* Unpublished thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Witwatersrand.

Clowes, L. A. (1994). *Making it work: aspects of marriage, motherhood, employment among white South African women 1960-1990.* Unpublished thesis, Department of History, University of Cape Town.

Cowdery, R.S. & Knudson-Martin, C. (2005). The construction of motherhood: Tasks, relational connection and gender equality. *Family Relations*, (54), 335-345.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research*. Australia: Allan & Unwin Pty Ltd.

Deutsch, F.M. (2007). Undoing gender. *Gender & Society*, 21(1), 106-127.

Dobris, C.A. & White-Mills, K. (2006). Rhetorical Visions of Motherhood: A Feminist Analysis of the *What to Expect* series. *Women and Language*, 29(1), 26-36.

Elliot, J. (2005). *Using Narrative in Social Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Everingham, C. (1994). *Motherhood and Modernity*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Flick, U. (2002). *An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Fontana, A. & Frey, J.H. (2000). The Interview: From structured Questions to Negotiated Text. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Fowler, C. & Lee, A. (2004). Re-writing motherhood: Researching women's experiences of learning to mother for the first time. *Australian Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 22(2), 39-44.

Friedman, A., Weinberg, H. & Prins, A.M. (1998). Sexuality and motherhood: mutually exclusive in perception of women. *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research*, 38(9-10), 781-901.

Ganong, L.H. & Coleman, M. (1995). The content of mother stereotypes. *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research,* 32(7-8), 495-513.

Geldenhuys, J.L. (1989). *The changing role of women with specific reference to the working mother and the pedagogical implications for the puber. A socio-pedagogical perspective.* Unpublished thesis. Department of Psychological Pedagogics, University of Port Elizabeth.

Gergen, K.J. (1985). The social constructionist movement in modern psychology. *American Psychologist,* March, 266-275.

Gergen, M. (2001). *Feminist reconstructions in psychology: Narrative, gender and performance.* California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gergen, M.M & Gergen, K.J. (2000). Qualitative Inquiry: Tensions and Transformations. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research.* California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Gerson, K. (1985). *Hard Choices.* California; University of California Press.

Gillespie, R. (2000). When no means no: Disbelief, disregard and deviance as discourses of voluntary childlessness. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 23(2), 223-234.

Glenn, E.N. (1994). Social Constructions of Mothering: A Thematic Overview. In E.N. Glenn, G. Chang & L.R. Forcey (Eds.). *Mothering: ideology, experience and agency.* New York: Routledge.

Guerrina, R. (2002). Feminist Critique of European Policies on Motherhood and Employment. *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 9(1), 49-68.

Hadfield, L., Rudoe, N. & Sanderson-Mann, J. (2007). Motherhood, choice and the British media: a time to reflect. *Gender and Education*, 19(2), 255-263.

Harding, S. (2001). Comments on Walby's "Against epistemological chasms: The science question in feminism revisited": Can democratic values and interest ever play a rationally justifiable role in the evaluation of scientific work? *Signs: Journal for Women in Culture and Society*, 23 (2), 117-135.

Hassim, S. (2003). Voices, Hierarchies and Spaces: Reconfiguring the women's Movement in Democratic South Africa. *Politikon*, 32(2), 175-193.

Hassim, S. (2005). Turning gender rights into entitlements: women and welfare provision in postapartheid South Africa. *Social Research*, 72(3), 621-646.

Hatrick, G.A. (1997). Women who are mothers: The experience of defining self. *Health Care for Women International,* 18(3), 263-278.

Hattery, A. (2001). *Women, Work, and Family*: *Balancing and weaving.* California: Sage Publications Inc.

Hayes, N. (2000). *Doing psychological research.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

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

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

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

Hugh, D.L. & Galinsky, E. (1994). Gender, job and family conditions, and psychological symptoms. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 18, 251-270.

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

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

Jeannes, L. C. (2002). *A discourse analysis of South African women's experiences of motherhood*. Unpublished thesis, Psychology Department, University of the Western Cape, Bellville.

Johnston, D.D. & Swanson, D.H. (2003). Invisible Mothers: A content analysis of motherhood ideologies and myths in magazines. *Sex Roles*, 49(1/2), 21-32.

Kaplan, M.M. (1992). *Mothers' Images of Motherhood*. London: Routledge.

Kelly, K. (1999). Calling it a day: reaching conclusions in qualitative research. In M. Terre Blanche & K. Durrheim (Eds.). *Research in practice: Applied methods for the social sciences*. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Kiguwa, P. (2004). Feminist critical psychology in South Africa. In D. Hook (Ed.). *Critical Psychology* (pp.278-315). Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press.

Kirkpatrick, E. M. (Ed.). (1983). *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary*. Edinburgh: W & R Chambers Ltd.

Koniak-Griffin, D., Logsdon, M.C., Hines-Martin, V. & Turner, C.C. (2006). Contemporary Mothering in a Diverse Society. *JOGNN*, 35, 671-678.

Kruger, L-M. (2003). Narrating motherhood: The transformative potential of individual stories. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 33(4), 198-204.

Kruger, L-M. (2006). Motherhood. In C. de la Rey, T. Shefer, F. Boonzaier & P. Kiguwa (Eds.). *The Gender of Psychology*. Cape Town: UCT Press.

Kushner, K.E. (2005). Embodied context: Employed mothers' personal and family health decision making. *Health Care for Women International, 26*(1), 69-86.

Lang, L.J. (2005). To love the babe that milks me: Infanticide and reconceiving the mother. *Columbia Journal of Gender and the Law*, 14(2), 114-133.

Lather, P. (1991). *Getting Smart, feminist research and pedagogy with/in the postmodern*. London: Routledge.

Letherby, G. (2003). *Feminist Research in theory and practice*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lewis, S.E. & Nicolson, P. (1998). Talking about early motherhood: recognising loss and reconstructing depression. *Journal of Reproductive and Infant Psychology*, May-Aug 1998, 16, 2/3, 177-196.

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

Macleod, C. (2001). Teenage motherhood and the regulation of mothering in the scientific literature: The South African example. *Feminism & Psychology,* 11(4), 493-510.

Marks, G. & Houston, D. (2002). Attitudes towards work and motherhood held by working and non-working mothers. *Work, Employment and Society*, 16(3), 523-536.

McMillan, J.H. & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education: a conceptual introduction.* New York: Addison-Wesley Educational Publishers Inc.

Meintjies, S. (2005). Gender equality by design: The case of South Africa's Gender Commission on Gender Equality. *Politikon,* 32(2), 259-275.

Meyers, D. (2001). The rush to motherhood-pronatalist discourse and women's autonomy. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 26(3), 735-773.

Milkie, M.A. & Peltola, P. (1999). Playing all the roles: Gender and Work-Family Balancing Act. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, May 1999, 61(2), 476-490.

Miller, T. (2005). *Making sense of motherhood: a narrative approach.* United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press

Naidoo, A.V. & Jano, R. (2002). Role Salience of Dual-Career Women Managers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28(3), 69-74.

Newell, S. (1996). The superwoman syndrome: a comparison of the "heroine" in Denmark and the UK. *Women in Management Review*, 11(5), 36-41.

Nicolson, P. (1993). Motherhood and women's lives. In D. Richardson & V. Robinson
(Eds.). *Introducing Women's Studies* (pp 201-223). London: The Macmillan
Press Limited.

Oberman, Y. & Josselson, R. (1996). Matrix of Tensions: A Model of Mothering.
Psychology of Women Quarterly, 20, 341-359.

O'Reilly, A. (2004). (Ed.). *From Motherhood to Mothering*. New York: State University
of New York Press.

Parker, I., Georgaca, E., Harper, D., Mclaughlin, T. & Stowell-Smith, M. (1995).
Deconstructing Psychopathology. London: Sage Publications Ltd

Pillay, V. (2007). *Academic mothers*. England: Trentham Books Limited.

Popadiuk, N. (2004). The Feminist Biographical Method in Psychological Research. *The
Qualitative Report*, 9(3) September 392-412.

Porter, N.B. (2006). Re-defining Superwoman: An essay on overcoming the "maternal
wall" in the legal workplace. *Duke Journal of Gender Law & Policy*, 13(55), 55-
84.

Quinn, J. (2004). Mothers, learners and countermemory. *Gender and Education*, 16(3),
365-378.

Ramsay, K. & Letherby, G. (2006). The experience of academic non-mothers in the
gendered university. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 13(1), 25-44.

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

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

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

Sen, A. (2006). *Identity & Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*. London: Penguin Group.

Sevon, E. (2005). Timing Motherhood: Experiencing and Narrating the Choice to become a Mother. *Feminism & Psychology*, 15(4), 461-482.

Silverman, D. (2000). Analyzing Talk and Text. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.). *The handbook of qualitative research*. California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Silverstein, L.B. & Phares,V. (1996). Expanding the mother-child paradigm. *Psychology of Women Quarterly,* 20, 39-53.

Smith, J.A. (1995). Semi-Structured Interviewing and Qualitative Analysis. In J.A. Smith, R. Harrè & L. Van Langenhove (Eds.). *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Statistics South Africa. (2002). *Women and men in South Africa: Five years on*. Pretoria: Statistics South Africa.

Sundtröm, E. (1999). Should mothers work? Age and attitudes in Germany, Italy and Sweden. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 8, 193-205.

Taljaard, A. (2000). *Career women's experience of motherhood.* Unpublished thesis, Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria.

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

Teman, E. (2008). The social construction of surrogacy research: An anthropological critique of the psychosocial scholarship on surrogate motherhood. *Social Science & Medicine*, 67, 1104-1112.

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

Van der Westhuizen, C., Goga, S. & Oosthuizen, M. (2007). *Women in the South African Labour Market, 1995-2005*. Working Paper Series, Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town.

Vincent, C., Ball, S.J. & Pietikainen, S. (2004). Metropolitan mothers: Mothers, mothering and paid work. *Women's Studies International Forum* (27), 571-587.

Wager, M. (2000). Childlessness by choice? Ambivalence and the female identity. *Feminism and Psychology*, 10(3), 389-395.

Walker, C. (1995). Conceptualising motherhood in twentieth century South Africa. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 21(3), 417-445.

Wallis, T. & Price, L. (2003). The relationship between work-family conflict and central life interests amongst single working mothers. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 29(1), 26-31.

Weaver, J.J. & Ussher, J.M. (1997). How motherhood changes life – A discourse analytic study with mothers of young children. *Journal of reproductive and infant psychology*, 15(1), 51-69.

West, C. & Zimmerman, D.H. (1987). Doing gender. *Gender & Society*, 1(2), 125-151.

White, J.W., Russo, N.F. & Brown Travis, C. (2001). Feminism and the decade of behaviour. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*. 25, 267-279.

Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing qualitative research in psychology: adventures in theory and method.* Buckingham: Open University Press.

Wilson, H. & Huntington, A. (2005). Deviant (M)others: The Construction of Teenage Motherhood in Contemporary Discourse. *Journal of Social Policy*, 35(1), 59-76.

Wood, G. J. & Newton, J. (2006). Childlessness and Women Managers: 'Choice', Context and Discourses. *Gender, Work and Organisation*, 13(4), 338-358.

Woollett, A. & Boyle, M. (2000). Reproduction, Women's lives and subjectivities. *Feminism & Psychology*, 10(3). 307-311.

Zucker, A. N. (1999). The Psychological Impact of Reproductive Difficulties on Women's Lives. *Sex Roles, A Journal of Research*, 40(9-10), 767-786.
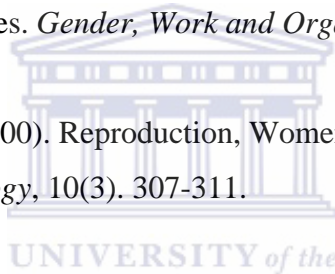
UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959 2827, Fax: 27 21-959
E-mail: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title:

Construction of motherhood and the impact thereof on the lives of married mothers in full time paid employment

What is this study about?
This study is about how married working mothers experience the role of motherhood and how this impacts on their lives. This study is a mini-thesis and forms part of the requirements for a Master's degree in research psychology.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?
You will be asked about your experiences of motherhood and work and how this impacts on you personally. You will be asked if a tape recording of the interview would be possible. This recording will be transcribed and the information on the transcription will be used, together with those of other interviews, to find general themes on the experiences of motherhood.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?
Your personal information will remain confidential. Your age, gender and socio-economic status, will be recorded, but your name will not appear in the records that will be kept of the interview.

What are the risks of this research?
There are no known risks associated with participating in this study, but in the event that participants feel uncomfortable, they have the right to withdraw immediately. Alternatively, they may contact the researcher or the supervisor of the thesis.

What are the benefits of this research?
It is hoped that this study will add to the literature on motherhood in a South African context and will highlight the accepted gendered practices that are in place and which impact negatively on women's lives. It is also provides an opportunity for women to reflect

on their experiences and to challenge those motherhood myths which cause tensions in their lives.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?
Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be blamed or punished.

What if I have questions?
This research is being conducted by Hazel Roberts, who is completing her MA Research Psychology degree at the University of the Western Cape under the supervision of Ms Maria Florence. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Hazel at 021 69 66904 or hazelr@telkomsa.net or Ms Florence at 021 959 2827 or mflorence@uwc.ac.za.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:
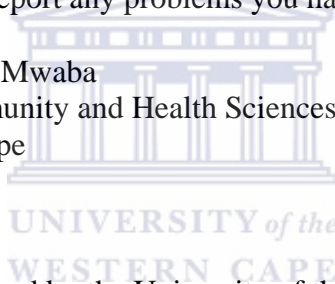Head of Department: Prof K. Mwaba
Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Prof R. Mpofu
University of the Western Cape
Private Bag X17
Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-9592827, Fax: 27 21-959
E-mail: mflorence@uwc.ac.za

CONSENT FORM

Title of study: Construction of motherhood and the impact thereof on the lives of married mothers in full time paid employment

This study has been described to me in a language that I understand and I hereby consent to participate in the research project being undertaken by Hazel Roberts as part of her M.A. Research Psych Degree, which she is completing through the Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape.

The research aims to explore the construction of motherhood and the impact thereof on the lives of working married mothers. My participation will be in the form of an interview with the researcher.

I understand that I will remain anonymous at all times and I declare my right to withdraw at any stage from the project. Furthermore, I assert that all my biographical details and any personal information conveyed will be treated as confidential.

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature……………………………….

Date………………………

Witness' name:………………………………………..

Witness' signature: …………………………………………

Date: …………………………….

Should you have any questions about the research study, please contact Hazel at 021 69 66904 or hazelr@telkomsa.net or Ms Florence at 021 959 2827 or mflorence@uwc.ac.za.

Appendix C

<div align="center">INTERVIEW SCHEDULE</div>

The interview covered 3 broad areas:

1. Personal Details

2. Experiences and meaning of motherhood

3. Work, and the demands of work and motherhood