

**A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF  
MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING**

by

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I declare that

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MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING**

has not been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university, that it is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

**Mrs M H Knowles**

TABLE OF CONTENTS	PAGE NUMBERS
<b>CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the research	2
1.2.1 Demands of the modern female labour force versus traditional role expectations of mothers	2
1.3 Problem statement and research question	5
1.4 The aim of this study	7
1.5 Literature review	8
1.6 Research methodology	13
1.6.1 Qualitative approach	14
1.6.2 Purposive sampling and site selection	14
1.6.3 Data collection	15
1.6.3.1 Narrative interview	15
1.6.3.2 Reflexive journal entries	16
1.6.3.3 Observational field notes	16
1.6.4 Data analysis	16
1.6.4.1 Qualitative content analysis	16
1.6.4.2 Narrative analysis	17
1.7 Significance of this study	17

1.8	Conclusion	18
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>THE CHALLENGE OF THE DUALITY OF THE ROLE OF MOTHER AND TEACHER</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1	Introduction	21
2.2	The multiple roles of mother teachers and their own female identity	21
2.2.1	Berne's theory of transactional analysis	24
2.2.2	Glasser's theory of choice	25
2.3	Theories of feminism	26
2.3.1	Liberal feminism ('Bourgeois', egalitarian, traditional feminism)	27
2.3.2	Radical feminism (Dominant feminism)	28
2.3.3	Socialist feminism	29
2.3.4	Social constructionist feminism (Post-structuralism)	30
2.3.5	Theoretical underpinning of this study	31
2.4	What is meant by motherhood	33
2.5	The teacher as mother and the mother as teacher	34
2.6	Employment equity and the mother teacher	38
2.6.1	The South African Constitution Act, 108 of 1996	39
2.6.1.1	Extracts from the Constitution for South Africa: Bill of rights, 108 of 1996	39

2.6.2	The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998	44
2.6.3	The International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979	46
2.7	Conclusion	46
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>48</b>
3.1	Introduction	48
3.2	Theoretical perspective	48
3.2.1	Epistemological and ontological assumptions	48
3.2.2	Feminist perspective	50
3.2.3	Social constructivist thinking	50
3.2.4	Qualitative research	51
3.3	Research design	52
3.3.1	Case study	52
3.3.2	Narrative case study	54
3.4	Research methodology	55
3.4.1	Purposive sampling	55
3.4.2	Site selection	56
3.4.3	Data collection	57
3.4.3.1	Narrative interview	58
3.4.3.2	Reflexive journal entries	59
3.4.3.3	Observational field notes	60
3.4.4	Data analysis	61
3.4.4.1	Qualitative content analysis	61

3.4.4.2	Narrative analysis	63
3.4.5	Methodological norms	64
3.4.5.1	Credibility	64
3.4.5.2	Thick description	65
3.4.5.3	Confirmability and auditing	65
3.5	Ethical considerations	66
3.5.1	Avoidance of harm	67
3.5.2	Ensuring confidentiality	67
3.5.3	Reciprocity and feedback of results	68
3.6	Conclusion	68
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>ANALYSIS OF MOTHER TEACHERS' NARRATIVES</b>	<b>70</b>
4.1	Introduction	70
4.2	Description of site and participants	70
4.3	Data analysis	71
4.3.1	Qualitative content analysis	71
4.3.2	Narrative analysis	72
4.4	Narrative accounts of themes	72
4.4.1	The mother teacher's role to care for children	73
4.4.2	The mother teacher's feelings of anxiety about being inadequate	76

4.4.3	The role of parent involvement in schools versus the role of the father's participation in parenthood	84
4.4.4	The role of the school principal in understanding how the mother teacher experiences her gender in education	90
4.5	Conclusion	95
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	<b>FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>96</b>
5.1	Introduction	96
5.2	Research question and narrative case study	97
5.3	Main insights from literature and narratives	97
5.3.1	The mother teacher's role to care for children	98
5.3.2	The mother teacher's feelings of anxiety about being inadequate	100
5.3.3	The role of parent involvement in schools versus the role of the father's participation in parenthood	103
5.3.4	The role of the school principal in understanding how the mother teacher experiences her gender in education	104
5.4	Integration and distilling of insights	106
5.5	Recommendations	109
5.6	Methodological limitations	111
5.7	Further research possibilities	111



5.8	Conclusions	112
	<b>REFERENCE LIST</b>	<b>114</b>
	<b>LIST OF APPENDICES</b>	<b>135</b>
Appendix A:	Covering letter	136
Appendix B:	Approval by all four school principals	141
Appendix C:	Another approval by one of the above school principals	146
Appendix D:	Approval by all four management committees	148
Appendix E:	Informed consent form	153
Appendix F:	An example of one of the four participants' narrative interviews, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes	156
Appendix G:	Approval by research ethics committee	200

## **ABSTRACT**

### **A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING**

by

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Promoting gender equality and equity remain an important goal for schools in South Africa, and strides have been made in many areas to reduce inequalities. Local and international legislative and policy frameworks create a context within which unfair discrimination can be curtailed, but these, albeit important, are not entirely sufficient, and inequities persist based on perceptions regarding motherhood and teaching. There is a need to address practices at grassroots level, where historical stereotyping and procedures have become entrenched in the system. For female teachers to experience meaningful equality, these underlying issues need to be addressed and this cannot be achieved through legislative processes. What is required is that the whole process of socialisation into sex roles needs to be addressed. This study sets out to analyse and describe the world of mother teachers, and to explore how entrenched

assumptions, cultural values and beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of the dual role of mother and teacher.

The professional woman who becomes a mother finds herself faced with the dual role of mother and professional and the result is that conflicting and complementary dimensions emerge that makes the pressure to meet all expectations overwhelming. These mother teachers consistently try to be what they think 'others' want them to be and, therefore, they often have not come to terms with who they are. Their life become a life to please 'others' and because they cannot please everybody, they experience feelings of failure. This study came to understand that the mother teachers' will experience ambivalence and discomforts concerning their attempts to balance their personally constructed multiple roles successfully when they do not accept themselves fully as women with special talents, competencies and attributes. Supportive behaviour from the state, school principals and fathers is needed. However, mother teachers themselves are the main source for self-actualisation. Unfortunately, when mother teachers cannot accept themselves for who and what they are, no support system will be able to help them to feel successful about being both homemakers and professionals.

I was interested in what each participant's experiences of motherhood and teaching were; how she expressed herself in conveying these experiences; and consequently, the meaning she attached to her experiences. The research problem, and the nature of the information sought, suggested the use of three distinct methods, namely (1) the narrative interview; (2) reflexive journal entries; and (3) observational field notes. After these three data collection methods had been conducted, coding of the information gathered took place to facilitate analysis and interpretation. From the findings, I believe that these mother teachers will only find themselves and fulfil their place in society once they are able to redefine their own perceived role expectations of society when fulfilling personally constructed multiple role expectations.

## **KEY WORDS**

Acculturation, Equality, Femininity, Gender, Identity, Leadership style, Multiple role expectations, Socialisation, Stereotyping, Unfair discrimination

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION, RESEARCH PROBLEM AND METHODOLOGY

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This introductory chapter lays the groundwork for this study that is located in the social constructionist feminist paradigm. I begin by addressing the historical background of how women began to live a challenging life within their two worlds, namely combining ‘worthwhile work’ with homemaking and childcare. This was done to describe how mother teachers interpret the fulfilment of multiple roles<sup>1</sup>. I then formulated the research question followed by a separate set of sub-questions in order to operationalise themes and to make this dissertation more clearly researchable. People and female teachers in particular, often construct images of what they perceive as society’s expectations, and then set out these as parameters for that which they think society expects them to be. This is reminiscent of Napoleon Hill’s (2003) idea: “I am not who you think I am. I am not who I think I am. I am who I think you think I am.” I claim that people who consistently try to be what ‘others’ want them to be have often not come to terms with who they are. They have not accepted themselves for who and what they are but instead they are swimming upstream in society to fulfil their personally constructed multiple role expectations successfully. There is a need to know more about the world of mother teachers to enable them to redefine their own perceived multiple role expectations without compromising on either of the two worlds, while at the same time finding themselves (Pinnegar, Lay, Bigham & Dulude, 2005).

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<sup>1</sup> The terms teachers and educators are used interchangeably

## **1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH**

The historical background is needed to explore and explain mother teachers' experiences. In this section, I focus on working mothers' multiple role expectations to bring to light how mother teachers experience motherhood and teaching; how they express themselves in conveying these experiences; and consequently, the meaning they attach to their experiences.

### **1.2.1 DEMANDS OF THE MODERN FEMALE LABOUR FORCE VERSUS TRADITIONAL ROLE EXPECTATIONS OF MOTHERS**

For centuries, women were economically productive in the home (Paley, 1999). However, after the Second World War, the economic role of women in the home diminished (Pistrang, 1984:433). Women began to live an interesting, fulfilling and challenging life within the labour market. Nowadays their domestic productivity keeps shrinking, because everything is labour saving, prepared 'ready for use' or ready-mixed in order to save time and trouble (Dessler, 1997). While the woman's role in the home is losing its value, the need for womanpower in the economy is increasing. Since 1950, South Africa has experienced an unprecedented economic growth rate (Hofmeyr & Hall, 1996). A well-known corollary of prosperity is the multiplication of jobs where the need for workers has resulted in an attempt to tap the unused resources of womanpower. Society began to realise that it could be a disadvantage if mature women who represent a growing proportion of the population remained inactive within the labour market. Goodwin (1995) reports that women have become slowly aware that, if they wish to contribute to the well-being of their families, one of the best ways to do so is by becoming wage earners. The money that women can earn represents the means of securing some assets that could not be secured if they remained homemakers (Dowd, 1998). In South Africa, as well as other countries, a growing number of women think along these lines. However, other women go out to work for very different reasons that indicate another state of mind. Dowling, Welch and

Schuler (1999) believe that these women are prompted by the tedium of housework, the isolation of the role as homemaker, their need for personal fulfilment, sometimes their sense of vocation or the need to use their talents, gifts or training.

Talented and educated women with family responsibilities often face special problems of identity and self-esteem when they attempt to continue their professional activity (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Although many do so successfully and only encounter a few problems, others find it more difficult due to multiple roles, commitments and career interruptions. The most striking result is the deep feelings of guilt which haunt so many working mother teachers today (Pretorius, 1990; Grogan, 1996:111; Walzer, 1997; Rogers & White, 1998; Arendell, 2000). Those who do not work blame themselves for vegetating. They feel that they are suspected of being incompetent, parasitic and out of date (Johnson, 1997). They may react by feeling an overwhelming discouragement due to a sense of inferiority and guilt. Alternatively, they may over-react by displays of aggressive jealousy towards working mother teachers, accusing them of being bad mothers, bad wives or traitors to their sex (Beck, 1997). This tension is widespread on both sides of the dividing line between working and nonworking female teachers (Storr, 1988). The reason is that particular gender roles are attributed to women which are different compared to the gender roles of men (Berne, 1964:2-6).

Beck (1997) believes that society controls citizens. There are many mechanisms of social control, some subtler than others and some more sophisticated. Scullion and Brewster (2001) point out that the socialisation process, the climate of opinion in which citizens live, the value structure, the legal system and the distribution of economic opportunities are just some of the means society has at its disposal to channel citizens into the particular roles it finds necessary for its maintenance. At birth, men and women are endowed by society with different characteristics finding expression in their roles (Forna, 1999). Moreover, society expects them to adopt special tasks and duties as well as social attitudes that

clearly define them as men and women. Duncan and Barlow (2002) conclude that the South African society has, therefore, never truly viewed women as individual citizens endowed by the constitution with inalienable rights because they are to carry out traditional role expectations, despite the requirements of a modern economy.

Concepts of the female role are set in rigid patterns which cannot change overnight. Society insists on describing a woman as a cornerstone of the family, the guardian of tradition and the defender of stability. Ironically, Collins (2002) reports that women also need to keep up with social change. However, when they do enter the teaching profession, they are expected to fit into a job description where masculinity has remained the frame of reference over hundreds of years (Schaefer, 1992). Equality of women means that they must be the same as men (Parvikko, 1990). These multiple role expectations have been increasingly challenged, generally by mothers themselves, who feel that these expectations are not to their advantage. Although many are dissatisfied, these expectations are in most circumstances supported by mothers themselves. Multiple role expectations are so firmly established that to many working mothers these seem rooted both in nature and history. They rank family and work life as the two most rewarding activities in their lives (Ennis, 1997). Mother teachers' dual ambition is to feel that they are thoroughly good mothers as well as completely professional teachers. In fact, they consistently try to be what 'others' want them to be and, therefore, they often have not come to terms with who they are. These mother teachers try to please 'others' and because they cannot please everybody, they experience feelings of failure.

The personal lives of female teachers are to some extent sanctioned and regulated by society. It is expected of them to be super-homemakers and model teachers. In this regard Spenser (1986:50) states: "One would hope that this would create an atmosphere of intergenerational understanding between woman teachers, in which younger teachers learn how older women have dealt with role



juggling, and in which older teachers may learn new ways of dealing with these same issues.” Foster (2001) reports that this means mother teachers experience an ongoing battle. Lemmer (1995) has concluded that mother teachers’ lives will never again resemble what school principals think of as traditional. It becomes clear that the school principals of today need to understand how mother teachers experience their own gender in education, as working female teachers do not only act and think of themselves as nurturers at school, but who are often mothers too (Green & Manke, 1994). The support of the school principal is highly valued by teachers specifically with regard to help them gain understanding of the value of their multiple roles, and to develop ways of coping realistically with the complexities of their roles as mothers and teachers (Maritz, 2002). Even if mother teachers themselves are the main source of self-actualisation, they struggle to define personal identities and practices. The fact is that the personal lives of mother teachers have an inextricable effect on their work (Weisner & Millet, 2001).

### **1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND RESEARCH QUESTION**

How the mother teacher perceives her world in terms of role duality is not fully covered and some aspects still remain unanswered. It is my belief that there is a need to know more about the experiences of mother teachers to support them to develop a definition of self. When I reviewed the literature, I began to realise that it was not just my personal need and desire to research the experiences of mother teachers; but that there definitely was an overall professional need to analyse motherhood and teaching obstacles in the educational profession. Although research in education has evolved and matured, only a few researchers have taken the time to conduct research for the past decade specifically into lived experiences of teachers (Pinnegar et al., 2005). I was surprised to discover that even less research has been carried out concerning motherhood and teaching experiences of women who are also teachers. My view is that research literature on educational management, law and policy gives too little prominence to

specific problems more frequently experienced by mother teachers. The difficulties of the interplay between professional demands and household duties and other family demands continue to challenge family members, teachers, principals and policymakers (Foster, 2001). Therefore it is essential for more researchers to investigate the experiences of mother teachers as expressed in lived and told stories. These unfortunate gaps existing in the literature are glaringly obvious.

I initiated my research efforts because of my personal, practical and intellectual interest regarding mother teachers. I have studied various courses, reviewed literature and worked with mother teachers in various schools. In the course of these activities, I observed that many mother teachers have trouble in understanding themselves. From my personal analysis of motherhood and teaching, I would argue that they have not found themselves yet. For this purpose, by alluding briefly to my broad understanding of current investigation into motherhood and teaching, I claim that research on teachers' experiences does not provide mother teachers with the answers needed to understand themselves when attempting to reconcile their two worlds. More research into the world of mother teachers is needed to highlight the complexity of being good enough in all multiple roles while maintaining unique identities.

The importance of the nature of this research cannot be overemphasised. Alarming facts in the literature and the large amount pressure on the part of society and the media with regard to motherhood are even more a justification for the need of this study. Accordingly, in the light of this analysis, there is a need for a variety of studies which are aimed at understanding the world of motherhood in the teaching profession (Cortazzi, 1993). Urgent attention is needed to support mother teachers in bringing their two worlds together to find the excluded middle where they fulfil both roles without compromising one of them (Josselson, 1990; Grogan, 1996; Walzer, 1997). These aspects have dramatically underlined the shortcomings of existing research into motherhood and teaching. It became

apparent that a dangerous vacuum exists because of this lack of motherhood stories (Bullough & Baugham, 1997). This is a problem of great complexity, and therefore, I made the experiences of mother teachers the centre of this investigation. I investigated the duality of the role of mother and teacher, which led me to the topic of this study: A narrative analysis of educators' lived experiences of motherhood and teaching.

The key research question of the present study is: **“How does the mother teacher perceive her roles as a good mother and a professional teacher?”**

In light of the key research question, I have formulated three sub-questions:

- a) How does the mother teacher construct and harmonise meaning to fulfil multiple role expectations?
- b) How does the mother teacher reconcile her sense of self with her own perceived role expectations of society?
- c) How does the mother teacher experience the school environment, especially the management environment, in terms of her dual role?

#### **1.4 THE AIM OF THIS STUDY**

The aim of this study is to explore and explain how the mother teacher makes sense of herself through engagement with the social world when she interprets the fulfilment of multiple roles. This study also attempts to fill the 'silence' in the literature, by trying to add more current qualitative data to the theoretical debate concerning motherhood and teaching. The reason is that mother teachers not only have to contend with the conflict between their traditional roles of wife and mother and their modern career role, but they also have to develop a definition of self. Lastly, the study aims to stimulate further research by finding a new methodology and set of metaphors to represent a rethinking of motherhood and

teaching constructions in order to provide mother teachers as unique, competent human beings with individualised opportunities to come to terms with who they are.

## **1.5 LITERATURE REVIEW**

Mental health speaks to the duality of the role of mother and teacher. Singh and Kaushik (2000) find that when working mothers struggle to discharge their duties equally, they feel tense, and continuous tension creates stress which in turn may affect their mental health status. Nathawat (1997) investigated the mental health status of working women. Bhati and Gunthey (1999), Yawen, Ichiro, Eugenie, Joel and Graham (2000) claim that mental well-being is an essential component in the health of all individuals. Verma, Nehra and Puri (1998) refer to mental health as the full and harmonious functioning of one's total personality as to one's bio-socio-psychological and spiritual well-being. The findings in their study of quality and quantity mental health, conclude that mental health includes positive aspects like originality, satisfaction, hope, creativity, happiness and self-actualisation as well as negative aspects like frustration, disability, emotional instability or neuroticism, psychosis, anxiety depression, hopelessness, paranoid tendency, jealousy and fear. Singh and Singh (2006) have recently done a study that relates specifically to mother teachers and their mental health. They report that there is a need to assess the mental health status of working middle-aged (45 to 55 years) teachers so that programmed interventions may be planned for maintaining and improving the quality of their life. The aim of the study by Singh and Singh (2006) is to assess the psychosocial stress, work-family conflict and the level of anxiety, depression, somatic symptoms and social dysfunction of middle-aged female teachers. A sample of 50 middle-aged female teachers was selected randomly from 15 government girl's schools. An interview schedule and two questionnaires, namely a General Health Questionnaire and a Psycho Social Stress Scale were administered simultaneously. The Psycho Social Stress Scale score showed moderate to high level of stress in 54% subjects, whereas 18%

cases had low scores while, 28% cases were in between low to moderate level of stress. Anxiety level was observed as being low in 64% cases and moderate in 32% cases. The level of depression was low in 92%. The somatic symptom score was moderate in 44% cases while, the social dysfunction score was seen to be moderate in 80% cases. The overall assessment reveals that though the subjects are normal, a substantial proportion of them are at risk of developing psychosocial stress generated problems that may affect mother teachers' mental health. Their findings suggest that modification in coping strategies and planned interventions like meditation and relaxation are desirable to reduce stress and add quality of life.

Beck (1997) claims that from birth, most women continually receive at least three paradoxical messages, namely: (1) boys and girls are, and should be, completely different from each other; (2) girls have an inferior station and to win praise they must excel in 'male' areas; and (3) if you are born female you must conform to society's model of a 'good girl'. Women who fail to meet any of these or, the many other paradoxes our society provides them with, tend to become overcome by guilt. Considering Beck's criteria of the female paradox in society, it becomes clear that the stress associated with lack of time increases on average for professional women. Another study done by Foster (2001) shows that the juggling act of balancing family and career roles is not unique to women who are involved in agricultural education. Foster's study reveals that balancing multiple roles are a real dilemma for all mother teachers. This study leads toward the development of action frameworks in the interest of realising social justice for women (Glesne, 1999). Today a woman is faced with maintaining a traditional family role and developing a new niche for her role as mother and professional. Foster points out that whatever route chosen, there will always be sacrifices. The purpose of her study, named "Choices: A dilemma of women agricultural education teachers" is to describe the unique challenges, regarding the personal lives, family and children, facing women agricultural education teachers. Two specific objectives were included, namely (1) to identify roles and responsibilities

unique to women agricultural education teachers, as expressed through comments added to a quantitative survey, and (2) to identify perceptions of women agricultural education teachers regarding balancing their personal and career lives. The aim of this ideological research is to correct both the invisibility and distortion of female experience in ways relevant to ending women's unequal social position. Foster describes her study as a phenomenological study, and made use of a qualitative research design to process the individual stories and reflections of women agricultural education teachers across America. She employed two techniques to accomplish the objectives of the study, namely (1) historical research, and (2) selected survey statements. The population consisted of all the female secondary agricultural education teachers employed in the United States, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. A stratified random sample by the National Association of Agricultural Educators (NAAE) regional divisions allowed each region to be represented in proportion to the number of women in their total secondary agricultural education population. State supervisors of agricultural education were contacted to identify teachers' roles and to help identify female teachers in each state.

The findings of Foster's study indicate that society has reached an impasse in dealing with working women. Participants professed great frustration with trying to maintain professional standards and still have quality family or personal time. There are great internal conflicts created by society's paradoxical expectations of the roles women play (Beck, 1997). A mother is supposed to be a caregiver, but in today's economy she is often expected to be a wage earner. The participants reflected that there never seems to be enough time for personal and work life. Underlying the need for more time is the female trait of trying to be all things to all people. Foster states that the fact that any young woman feels it necessary to choose between establishing a personal life and a career points to a unique difference between male and female agricultural education teachers. These mother teachers experience an ongoing battle. Other differences between male and female expectations were found in comments regarding spousal support.

Although fewer direct comments were made in this area, indirect inferences confirmed the value of having a separate category. Where men are taught from birth to expect support from their wife and family, women often tend to feel as though that same support is a gift instead of a reasonable expectation of a partner (Johnson, 1997). Throughout all the individual comments, the general sentiment was expressed that it is extremely difficult to combine what society defines as a 'normal household' and what is perceived as a 'successful career'.

Pitstrang (1984) has accessed several dimensions of the experience of new motherhood. His investigation examined the relationship between previous work involvement - the importance of work in women's lives prior to pregnancy - and the experience of first-time motherhood. Pitstrang chose participants who met almost the same requirements as those applicable to my study. The participants were 105 women who had given birth to their first child within the last five to nine months. Forty-two mothers were currently working, and sixty-three were not. The lower limit of five months was chosen as a result of pilot interviews, which suggested that the psychological impact of leaving one's job might not be felt in the early postpartum months. The upper limit of nine months was set in order to increase the homogeneity of the sample. Mothers were eligible for the study if they had worked immediately prior to becoming pregnant. Work was defined as paid employment, including self-employed, for at least twenty hours per week. Several additional criteria for eligibility were established in order to increase the sample's homogeneity. All participants were married and living with their husbands; had at least a high school education; had no other children living in the home, were not currently pregnant; and had babies who had no physical problems. Two predictions were made, namely: (1) for women who did not work after their baby was born, previous work involvement was expected to be negatively related to the quality of their experience of motherhood, and (2) for women who did work, previous work involvement was expected to be positively related to the quality of motherhood experiences. The findings for nonworking mothers generally supported the first prediction. Women who were highly



involved in work tended to report greater irritability, decreased marital intimacy, higher costs of motherhood, greater depression and lower self-esteem than those with less involvement. The findings for working mothers did not support the second prediction. Work involvement was generally unrelated to motherhood experiences. The findings suggest that paid employment has psychological importance for many mothers of infants, and that work involvement should be considered as an individual difference variable in research relating to new motherhood.

Research has also been done to investigate the relationship between motherhood and teaching. Ribbens (1994) concludes in her research on “Mothers and their children” that both mothers and teachers feel a strong obligation toward supporting the moral development of children. Green and Manke (1994) claim in their study that teachers as well as mothers are expected to be dedicated and moreover that they expect dedication of themselves. In reviewing the literature on mothers being teachers, it becomes clear that both are influencing the education of children. Bowlby (1988) believes that mothers who develop trusting relationships with their children support the lifetime success and mental health of their child. Pinnegar and Carter (1995) add in the *Journal of Teacher Education* teachers report that in order to promote learning they focus on developing trust and respect among learners. In a profession that is dominated by females, a closer examination is needed of how the experience gained as a mother influences the experience of teaching (Pinnegar et al., 2005). The abovementioned authors examined stories of motherhood to observe the specific impact of mothering on teaching beliefs and how being a mother profoundly influences teaching in their article, “Teaching as highlighted by mothering: A narrative inquiry.” In their paper, they explained the value of examining teachers’ lives and practices. They collected stories from four participants who were white, married, Latter-Day Saint women in order to make sense of the job of mothering and connecting it to teaching. The narratives gave them an intimate, realistic view of lived experiences in order to expand the



knowledge of the roles of mother and teacher. They found that the mothers' teaching identities are not easily separated from other dimensions of their life. In their inquiry about "First year teacher eight years later: An inquiry into teacher development" Bullough and Baughman (1997) also consider that a teaching job affects a teacher's personal life. Knowles (1994) points out that research based upon a series of metaphors helps to clarify the connection between life experience and teacher experience. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that an underlying system of metaphorical concepts guides every person's ways of thinking. These metaphors provide greater understanding of the assumptions and reasoning that guide the actions of the individuals (Pinnegar et al., 2005:56). Bullough, Knowles and Crow (1992) demonstrate that the depth of metaphors for teaching actually predicts failure and success in initial teaching when they write: "Metaphors form the basis ... and define the situational self when first becoming a teacher."

Mother teachers question almost every aspect of what they do, think and feel and measure their actions against perceived constructions of the ideal mother teacher (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). These mother teachers gain these perceptions from stimuli around them (Berne, 1964:2-6). They therefore experience a discrepancy between society's expectations and their own perceptions of how they should fulfil their multiple roles. This process alters their self-concept and role definition (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). To be able to understand the experiences of mother teachers fully, it is necessary to analyse and describe the world of mother teachers. Each mother teacher has multiple role expectations to fulfil, yet she perceives and interprets her fulfilment differently (Berne, 1980). Chapter 2 discusses the perceived female-gender based role in greater detail.

## **1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

From a social constructivist paradigm, I was able to analyse and describe the world of mother teachers; and to explore how entrenched assumptions, cultural values and beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of

the dual role of mother and teacher. The research methodology speaks to a qualitative approach, purposive sampling and site selection, as well as data collection and data analysis.

### **1.6.1 QUALITATIVE APPROACH**

Qualitative research is characterised by the search for meaning and understanding (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium & Silverman, 2004). Sherman and Webb (1988:7) encourage investigation of the experiences of participants, as these are 'lived', 'felt' and 'undergone'. Therefore, the aim of this inquiry was to understand human interaction and social behaviour from the participants' perspectives (Dooley, 1984:267; Padgett, 1998). This research has been located in the interpretive constructivist perspective, using qualitative data, such as narrative interviews, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003).

### **1.6.2 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING AND SITE SELECTION**

I purposively selected four participants from similar white middle socio-economic classes who met the requirements for this inquiry, in that they had to be working mothers. All participants had had full-time professional careers prior to having children. The participants, aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years, had not been promoted during their appointments, and each had a child, with ages ranging from three months to two years. All were in committed relationships both at the time of falling pregnant and at the time of the interview. The participants had resumed work after the birth of their children, after various periods of maternity leave.

I carried out this inquiry in a city in the east of Gauteng. After identifying the site, I contacted the school principals from four private institutions to gain permission for the research (Appendix A). All the school principals and management

committees granted me official approval to observe mother teachers and to conduct narrative interviews in April 2005 (Appendix B, Appendix C & Appendix D).

### **1.6.3 DATA COLLECTION**

The research problem, and the nature of the information sought, suggested the use of three distinct methods, namely (1) the narrative interview; (2) reflexive journal entries; and (3) observational field notes. Data collection occurred simultaneously, one phase informing the other, with the research study emerging and evolving as work proceeded.

#### **1.6.3.1 NARRATIVE INTERVIEW**

The narrative interview proved to be a suitable data collection method in order to enter the private lives of mothers as teachers. Participants were requested prior to the recording to 'tell their story' about motherhood. I conducted altogether eight narrative interviews over a twelve-week period, which began in April 2005. These interviews developed into descriptive portraits of motherhood constructs. Each first narrative interview enabled me to think critically about what the participants said about their motherhood and teaching experiences. The follow-up interview with each participant allowed for the acquisition of further data to explore some of my working assumptions. The follow-up interview also gave participants an opportunity to reflect on the first narrative interview. I scheduled the follow-up interview two weeks after the first interview and spent the time in between the two interviews working through the data, analysing it and refining follow-up questions. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours. I audiotaped and transcribed the interviews with the permission of participants shortly after I had conducted them.

### **1.6.3.2 REFLEXIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES**

To expand data gained through interviews, I asked participants to keep a two-week journal detailing and describing their experiences as mother teachers. In this work the term reflexive journal means that the mother teachers expressed their thoughts in a journal rather than in an actual interview. Spradley (1980:71) points out: “A reflexive journal includes a record of participants’ experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems.” When I read the journals it was clear that these diary-like reflections were not only cathartic, in that the participant released her emotions about being a mother and a teacher; they also provided a record of the participant’s feelings, attitudes and subjectivities during data collection.

### **1.6.3.3 OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTES**

I preferred to use non-participant observations for the purpose of description of settings, activities and the meaning of what I observed from the experiences of the participants (Patton, 1990). I wrote extensive field notes to describe what occurred by looking, listening and questioning the process (Gillham, 2000).

## **1.6.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Empirical data were analysed for content and narrative. All the raw data were analysed, compared and interpreted against the background of the research problem.

### **1.6.4.1 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

In this study, there was immersion in text to reveal aspects of how participants made sense of their lives and lived experiences through thematic organisation. The participants’ transcripts were individually analysed to discover how

widespread the experiences were among all of the participants. I coded the participants' transcripts to find meaningful information. Upon further analysis, these experiences appeared to fall into themes that characterised much of the study data. I took back transcripts of the interviews and a summary of the final themes to participants for feedback and verification. Finally, I described each individual case according to the themes.

#### **1.6.4.2 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

Narrative analysis means to study experience via the stories that participants tell and remember (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004). In this research, I collected stories by choosing a format based on the work on narratives of Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000). This analytical process helped me to understand and make sense of motherhood and teaching, using a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to examine raw data.

### **1.7 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS STUDY**

There is a lack of research into motherhood and teaching and therefore, I deemed it part of my professional and research duty to become a contributor by investigating the stories of mother teachers' lived experiences in a methodical and responsible manner. This study extended the understanding of mother teachers' experiences and revealed that the mother teachers will experience ambivalence and discomfort concerning their attempts to balance their multiple roles successfully when they do not accept themselves fully as women with special talents, competencies and attributes. Through participation in this study the mother teachers increased their knowledge of themselves and society. They started to think more deeply about their personal constructions. Their ability to express themselves fully was enhanced. They have been inspired to bring out their full creativity, imagination and best efforts and have also been encouraged to live their lives with greater control and balance.

The findings also support the notion that school principals should address the potential conflict between family and work roles that has great impact on the nature of family and educational work itself. School principals could use the findings of this study in order to become sensitive in solving problems and to improve their overall managing experiences through better decision-making. School principals can no longer conceptualise gender equity and equality without rethinking the constructions of what it means to be a mother teacher, because the findings reveal that many mother teachers tend to have incompatible, if not conflicting needs that should be catered for in the whole system.

## **1.8 CONCLUSION**

I conducted this research in three parts. Firstly, in an extensive literature review, I analysed the topic in order to draw theoretical conclusions concerning motherhood and teaching. I then carried out an empirical research study in a city in the east of Gauteng. I collected data by the process of selecting four participants purposively in a non-random manner by using judgement sampling from four different private institutions. I used my findings concerning mother teachers' narratives to bring the data together with the research problem and the theoretical background. This was followed by the integration and distilling of insights.

The four chapters which follow deal with the issues listed below.

- The challenge of the duality of the role of mother and teacher (Chapter 2)

This chapter provides an analysis of motherhood and more specifically what the literature reveals in terms of the duality of the role of mother and teacher. This chapter, therefore, sets out to explore what femininity - as the female gender-based role - entails; how this role is perceived and described in the literature; and

how the literature portrays women, especially female teachers, in the workplace. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a provisional theoretical framework against which the insights gained from interviews with mother teachers can be compared and triangulated.

- Research design and methodology (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3 provides a framework for the qualitative research used in this investigation in order to learn more about participants' experiences, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and choices. This chapter describes the research methodology, specifically the narrative interview, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes, as well as narrative and qualitative content analysis. It concludes by outlining the range of ethical considerations in terms of the methodology.

- Analysis of mother teachers' narratives (Chapter 4)

The central focus of this chapter is the narratives of mother teachers in which I analyse the data. The analysis focuses on mother teachers and their engagement with the social world, and how they interpret the fulfilment of the multiple roles of being mother teachers. The analysis proceeds according to themes, which were constructed as part of the analysis process based on questions asked during the narrative interviews.

- Findings, conclusions and recommendations (Chapter 5)

Chapter 5 draws on the insights gained from this study and indicate how the findings corroborate the argument formulated in this present chapter. The main idea is to unravel the bits of information discussed in this study and to infer the insights that will enable me to draw a number of conclusions. This chapter

concludes with the methodological limitations, suggestions for further research and also some personal comments regarding the study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **THE CHALLENGE OF THE DUALITY OF THE ROLE OF MOTHER AND TEACHER**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chapter 2 provides an analysis of motherhood and more specifically what the literature reveals in terms of the duality of the role of mother and teacher. The literature suggests that, as long as motherhood continues to be perceived as woman's essential role and major responsibility, with any outside employment seen as an addition to that role, real equality between male and female is almost unreachable; and, as long as the woman's role continues to be defined in terms of universal motherhood, multiple role expectations will be difficult to fulfil.

This chapter, therefore, sets out to explore what femininity - as the female gender-based role - entails; how this role is perceived and described in the literature; and how the literature portrays women, especially female teachers, in the workplace. The purpose of chapter 2 is to provide a provisional theoretical framework against which the insights gained from interviews with mother teachers can be compared and triangulated.

#### **2.2 THE MULTIPLE ROLES OF MOTHER TEACHERS AND THEIR OWN FEMALE IDENTITY**

Woollett and Phoenix (1991) believe that the fact that motherhood comes naturally to women, is instinctual and biologically 'right'. The insistence that a certain style of motherhood is 'natural' leads women to question every aspect of what they do, think and feel, and to measure their own experience against an impossible and rigid standard (Forna, 1999:23). Human interaction impacts on a person's self-image and can influence one's feelings to turn positive feelings into

negative experiences. One could argue that the moment that one becomes a mother, society's expectations regarding the roles one is supposed to play, change (Pistrang, 1984:433). Yet at the same time, society (or the world of work) expects a woman to continue and develop her professional career. The cultural definition of women when they become mothers unconsciously dictates that the role of mother has to be considered before the sense of self in a woman's identity. This may result in powerful feelings as guilt, the need to be and do more than one is and does, denial of one's needs, and intense emotional distress on a regular or continual basis (Knowles & Cole, 1990:4). These feelings occur when working mother teachers interpret a situation in terms of a failure in responsibility (Ennis, 1990; 1997). The sense of a failure in responsibility arises when mother teachers lack real control over the demands made on them in different spheres of life or in situations where they exhibit any assertive behaviour in which they put their responsibilities and their own needs foremost (Storr, 1988). These conflicting role expectations compel mothers to improve on their mothering duties and to dedicate themselves more fully to the task of mothering. Mothers continuously attempt to become better mothers, and by doing this women sacrifice themselves and their needs in the perceived interests of their child. McBride and Mills (1993) see fathering, and consequently fatherhood, as a far more intangible construct and as a choice for male partners. Less stress is put on the father to be good enough. Women are therefore regarded as being biologically predisposed to nurture, whilst men are perceived as being limited in their nurturing capacities (Pleck, 1997).

Forna (1999:23) claims: "Women have been constructed as the essential and natural caregiver of the child within the heterosexual dyad." The unquestionable supremacy of the baby and the baby's needs is central, constantly reminding women of the conflict between their needs and those of their offspring, and of their 'badness' in even having their own needs at all (Storr, 1988). Inherent therein is the assumption that a mother possesses saintly qualities, in this sense the ability to prioritise other's needs at all costs, if that is what is called for by

society. Gabbard (1990) asserts that the mother's constant presence and nurturing are essential to the child's ongoing psychological well-being. This reflects one of the most popular constructs about women and motherhood, namely that mothering is inherent in being a woman (Gordon, 1990). Women and women's bodies are primarily and ultimately valued for their mothering functions and capabilities. Different gender roles are also delineated and are based on the assumptions of biological predisposition and notions of instinct. Most women instinctively know what is right for their children and have an inherent nurturing ability (Arendell, 2000). That is because mothers are viewed as being biologically or psychologically/socially the natural caregiver to see to the child's physical and emotional needs (Woollett & Phoenix, 1991).

Guilt often arises out of a conflict of needs, most often between the mother's need to work and the child's apparent need for her omnipresence and 'perfect' care (Rogers & White, 1998; Arendell, 2000). These mother teachers experience ambivalence and discomfort concerning their attempts to balance their multiple roles successfully. Most men enter parenthood without changing their employment status at all; however, women are concerned with how they are going to fulfil their multiple roles (Pretorius, 1990; Grogan, 1996:111; Walzer, 1997). This reflects the degree of responsibility and consequent pressure on women who are mothers. There is thus conflict between motherhood and employment in the public sector, since inherent therein is the assumption that motherhood is a liability in the school's sphere (Schaefer, 1992; Spain & Bianchi, 1996). The dominant reason for this in society is that equality of women in the workplace means that they must be the same as men (Parvikko, 1990). This results in the marginalisation of mothers in the working world.

The social context - including ways of life and cultural patterns - has a profound influence on mothers. Mothers are seen as shaped by, and as active shapers of, their social and cultural context. This implies that female teachers may find themselves confronted with conflicting ideas regarding the roles they are

supposed to fulfil. These expectations could be broadly grouped into three sets, namely (1) the expectations of the child (care and nurture); (2) the expectations of the family (culturally bounded expectations); and (3) the expectations of the employer (and the world of work focused on equity and redress). The question then arises as to how the mother is to reconcile these expectations to come to terms with who she is. To be able to answer this, it is appropriate to review a number of theories dealing with how women act out competing roles.

### **2.2.1 BERNE'S THEORY OF TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS**

A review of Berne's theory has revealed that women are required to play a number of multiple roles, both in and away from their jobs. These roles can be defined as a set of expected behaviour patterns attributed to women occupying a given position in a social unit (Berne, 1964:2-6). Each role has associated attitudes and actual behaviours, which create role identity. Women gain these perceptions from stimuli around them, because, as Berne (1980) states, different contexts impose different role requirements on individuals.

Many women experience a discrepancy between society's expectations and their own perceptions of how they should fulfil their multiple roles. This discrepancy can cause frustration and tension, both at home and in the workplace (Berne, 1980). Women find that compliance with the requirements of one role may make compliance with another role more difficult. At the extreme, this would include situations in which two or more role expectations are complementary but also simultaneous conflicting and exclusive. In this way, the mother's self-image, feelings and experiences can be evaluated where dysfunctional behaviour is seen as stemming from under-use, over-use or inappropriate use of any of the primary ego states that make up the personality (Pitman, 1984:23-25). Berne (1964) also contends that the main problems in balancing roles are undoubtedly related to previous experiences that women carry with them. Berne also believes that the roles of mothers are constantly redefined by their daily contact with

people. I claim that most (if not all) of humanity problems are interpersonal and are underpinned by people's diverse needs that they want to satisfy. This opens the avenue to Glasser's theory of choice. Glasser (1998) believes that women are responsible for what they feel and do.

### **2.2.2 GLASSER'S THEORY OF CHOICE**

The psychiatrist William Glasser reinforces the notion that women choose their behaviour and that they contribute to their degree of self-image by how they think and act in their present-day living (Glasser, 1998). To satisfy needs, he contends that women create a world in their brain in which they store memories along with knowledge. He believes that women are responsible for what they feel and do, because they control their own behaviour. Glasser differs from Berne by believing that women are not the victims of their past, unless they presently choose to be (Glasser, 1984). He states that, for the present purposes, what women need to understand is the nature of the multiple challenges that face them now, and in the future, if they are to grow beyond the past.

However, I disagree with Glasser's theory of choice. The stable functioning of a society requires that there be shaped patterns of behaviour among its members and that there is some basis for knowing how to behave as a female in certain situations. Mothers then make decisions with reference to moral and socially negotiated views about what behaviour is right and proper for their particular social and cultural group. Thus, mothers navigate their way through potent and immediate normatives of 'good mothering' (Duncan & Barlow, 2002). They cannot always exercise their ability to influence their own behaviour, choices and decisions that are to a large degree affected by past experiences.

## 2.3 THEORIES OF FEMINISM

The duality of roles (i.e. motherhood and professional) has been argued from various perspectives within the field of feminism. It is essential to look at some of the insights gained from these theories and to relate them to this study. These theories may provide alternative view points that will help me make meaning of the data collected in the interviews with mother teachers and may provide a broader sphere from which interpretations of meanings can be inferred during data analyses, may correct any biases that may arise, and may provide alternative frameworks to study questions about motherhood and teaching (Friedan, 1963).

Feminism as a worldwide movement, has gained momentum since the 1960s and holds a significant place in law and legal thought. It influences many debates on inequality based on gender discrimination. South Africa has been described as a society in which patriarchy is deeply embedded, and where women are oppressed by the social structures. However, since 1990, South Africa has been engaged in a process of fundamental reconstruction, striving for a non-racist, non-sexist society, with the feminist movement contributing to this process.

Feminism, focusing on sexual stereotyping, creates a broader role for women in society and rejects the view that women are inferior to men. Feminism is therefore based on the principle that women have innate worth, inalienable rights, and valuable ideas and talents to contribute to society. Feminist claims that the entire experience of 'being human' has been seriously damaged and distorted by masculine domination and the marginalisation of women (Code, 2000). Feminist also states that women have been, and are, denied basic human rights. Feminism goes beyond mere equality; it insists not only that women be given equal rights to men, but that women be respected for who they are.

Feminism should, however, not be seen as a uniform movement. On the contrary, it is an umbrella term that accommodates various strands of thinking. For the purposes of this study, it is essential to discuss briefly some of these major strands in feminist thinking.

### **2.3.1 LIBERAL FEMINISM ('Bourgeois', egalitarian, traditional feminism)**

Liberalism is a philosophy based on the principle of individual liberty. Feminists like Mary Wollstonecraft, John Stuart Mill, and second wave feminist, Betty Friedan assume that government is the first place to look to solve a problem (Friedan, 1963; Schaef, 1992). These feminists assert that discrimination or structural barriers must be removed to ensure equality between the genders. Agassi (1989) also believes that all stereotyped social roles for men and women have to be abolished. Liberal feminists accept that the inequality of women stems from the denial of equal rights and from their learned reluctance to exercise their equal rights. This group fights for the extension to women of those rights and privileges being offered to men through social and legal reform. Their perspective is based on the assumption that women are just as rational as men, and therefore, should have equal opportunity. They challenge the assumption of male authority and seek to erase gender-based distinctions recognised by the state, thus enabling women to compete in the school sphere.

Liberal feminism is a form of feminism that argues that equality for women can be achieved without changing basic economic and political arrangements, and that men as a group do not actually need to be challenged. Liberal feminism accepts the general structures of society, but believes that women have been excluded from participating. They assume that the best way to fight patriarchal systems is by focusing on professional, better-paid and prestigious jobs for women and the elimination of laws discriminating against the political, property and social rights of women (Stromquist, 1990). This process will make women more visible in the current social structure where they be respected for who they are. They hold on

to basic social structures such as capitalism and representative democracy. Thus, liberal feminists are often concerned with whether or not women can become, for example, effective school principals.

### **2.3.2 RADICAL FEMINISM (Dominant feminism)**

The second feminist perspective, radical feminism, emerged in the late 1960s and was the cutting edge of feminist theory from 1967 to 1975. Kate Millet was one of the founders of this movement (French, 1988; Wolf, 1990; Orbach, 1991). The meaning of the term *radical* originates in Latin, which means *the root*. This school of thought posits that the root cause of all inequalities is the oppression of women, one that is not limited to gender, race or culture, but extends to include things like perceived attractiveness, sexuality, ability and economic class.

Radical feminism is a philosophy emphasising the patriarchal roots of inequality between men and women, and, more specifically, social dominance of women by men. Radical feminism views patriarchy as dividing rights, privileges and power primarily according to gender, and as a result oppressing women and privileging men (Stromquist, 1990). Radical feminists question why men and women must adopt certain roles based on their anatomy, and attempts to draw lines between genetically-determined behaviour and culturally-determined behaviour in order to achieve equality between men and women (Leakey & Lewin, 1992). These feminists also regard reproduction and male control of female sexuality as main causes of women's oppression. They felt that if reproduction could be removed from the female body, men would not be able to impose restrictions on women.

Radical feminism is a movement intent on social change to embody a new female-centred social structure. Radical feminists try to abandon traditional approaches that take maleness as their reference point. They argue that sexual equality must be constructed on the framework of woman's difference from man and not be a mere accommodation of that difference.



This theory has often been criticised as being too radical. However, this school of feminism allowed later theorists to branch into new avenues in conceiving the possible place and role of female sexuality within the debate on inequality between the genders.

### **2.3.3 SOCIALIST FEMINISM**

Socialist feminists see women's relationship to the economy as the beginning of women's oppression and have assumed that gender took shape under capitalism, where women's work often took place in private and was unpaid or underpaid (Steyn, 1998; Walby, 2002). These feminists have acknowledged that it is the engendered division of labour that contributes to women's inequality. They point out that supporting the relegation of mothers to the private domain is a pervasive gender inequality that constructs women as inferior to men in terms of public work (Richter, 1990). Alongside this, is the construction of public work as more valuable, more significant and indeed more challenging than private work. The consequence is ultimately a devaluing of mothers, because they are forced to embrace a private function, which is constructed as inferior (Parvikko, 1990). The aim of socialist feminism is to transform basic structural arrangements of society so that categories of class, gender, sexuality and race stop to act as barriers to equality (Afshar, 2000; McEwan, 2000). The reality that men have historically been paid more and achieve higher positions in the workforce, and the fact that the majority of caretakers who stay home to raise children and run the home are women, plays a big role in their view of unequal pay (Johnson, 2001).

Social feminism holds that men and women are seen as different, not by birth, necessarily, but through early childhood experiences and continued socialising (Gilligan, 1982). Social feminism takes as its point of departure the belief that society as a whole has been damaged by the structures of capitalism, and that

women particularly struggle under these social structures. By reviewing economic structures, social feminists believe that the subordinate role of women in society needs to be transformed.

Marxist feminist, as a branch of social feminism, also views women's oppression as originating from capitalism, because the production of goods and services may have no or little exchange value for example, domestic work and childcare (O'Rourke, 1998).

#### **2.3.4 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST FEMINISM (Post-structuralism)**

Berger and Luckmann (1966) define a social construction as an invention of a particular society or culture. These social constructions exist solely, because human beings agree to act as if social constructions exist, or agree to follow specific conventional rules and expectations (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Social constructionist feminism is a school of thought that tries to analyse seemingly natural and given phenomena in terms of social constructions. These feminists claim that social constructions are part of lived reality among societal and cultural members.

Social constructionist feminism believes that social constructions include class, race, gender, religion, sexuality, morality, memory and the whole of reality. According to Jönköping (2003), social constructions vary in time and place irrespective of gender. However, gender lies at the heart of unequal life experiences; it is what society and culture believe of the fact that humans are categorised into men and women. Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001:409) say: "Gender becomes a positioning or diverging factor." Accordingly, Elvin-Nowak and Thomsson (2001:409) write: "Gender is socially constructed through difference, which means that men and women as groups [do not] have the same qualifications for taking care of children and home-related responsibilities as well as for occupying higher positions in society." Gender inequality, therefore,

provides the context within which working mothers experience motherhood in the teaching profession and construct their individual meaning thereof. Whereas the social construction of gender through difference means that men and women are deemed different it also means that one gender is regarded as superior to the other. Since masculinity has remained the frame of reference over hundreds of years in South African society, the criterion of difference still serves to reinforce and legitimise the positions of power and superiority in relation to women (Schaef, 1992; Jönköping, 2003). The construct of women and mothers as the 'second sex' continues to reflect and perpetuate gender inequality (Oberman & Josselson, 1996:341; Gordon, 1990:2).

There is an increasing predominance of social constructionist thinking concerned with gender, which highlights the shifting and historically contextual nature of gender identities, including those of mothers and women in the educational field. Lorber and Farrell (1991:10) suggest: "A social constructionist notion of gender that is a powerful ideological device which produces, reproduces and legitimates the choices and limits that are predicated on sex category." Social constructivism is critical for the acts and knowledge that have generally been taken as 'truth', such as the notion that all women are naturally mothers (Forna, 1999:23).

### **2.3.5 THEORETICAL UNDERPINNING OF THIS STUDY**

I consider myself a feminist, by accepting that men and women have been created equal, and therefore, should be politically, economically and socially equal regardless of race and gender (Adler, 1981:165). I align myself with the theory of social constructionist feminism, because it points out that the traditional feminine construct fails to live up to its promises of multiple role fulfilment. Therefore, many working mothers' feelings of inadequacy are mainly brought on by constantly swimming upstream in a society that imposes impossible expectations on unrealistic multiple roles (Ross, 1995; Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). The pressure to meet the expectations of the super-mother is

overwhelming and the constant scrutiny from 'others', especially other working mothers, is unbearable, and leaves mother teachers exhausted and defensive. They cannot escape the scrutiny of 'others' based on their sentiment and attachment to the multiple roles of the ideal mother; it is embedded in their culture and appears to be the norm. Thus, trying to balance these multiple roles of the idealised mother is largely an unattainable goal, one that is more linked to preserving the status quo and less about reality or accuracy, because many mothers find themselves in unanticipated circumstances (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982). These mothers continuously need to bend and reshape their actions and desires to accommodate their personally constructed role expectations of the super-mother.

These feministic thoughts contribute by providing a new perspective from which to re-examine basic constructions in many spheres of motherhood in order to restructure the school's functioning into one of real equality of opportunity, treatment and results for both sexes (Gans, 1993). It also brings an awareness of how society unconsciously practises gender-specific roles. For the most part, these practises go unnoticed in the school sphere. Their effects mainly appear in the unequal treatment of mother teachers. Social constructionist feminism especially points out that, in order to allow both male and female teachers in the school sphere the freedom to succeed in their expected roles without fear and prejudice, are to give them truly freedom. This includes both cultural and biological freedom to avoid intractable work and social problems. Furthermore, Piggford and Tonnsen (1993) point out that specific attention should be given to gender differences and similarities. Allen (2004) argues that men and women are both equal in dignity and worth (shared humanity), and also significantly different (peculiar) and that difference and similarity, although paradoxical, need not be mutually exclusive, but could co-exist.

## **2.4 WHAT IS MEANT BY MOTHERHOOD**

Women's physiology has been used to construct traditional sex roles that have defined women as the lesser gender. This seems to be a universal phenomenon across so many cultures. This research rejects this perception and does not attribute any special status to a woman other than that of being a whole human being. It focuses on women who have undergone higher education to qualify for the teaching profession and are, in employment terms, fully qualified for appointment as teachers.

The assertion does not deny the female physiology and the possibility of lesser physical strengths, nor the possible vulnerability during pregnancy and lactation. It also acknowledges that the natural occurrence of pregnancy and childbirth may act as a barrier to a woman's achievement of professional advancement and success. Moreover, it is accepted that an innately different psychology may be ascribed to the female, based on the nurturing qualities required by motherhood, or on a maternal instinct or drive (Parvikko, 1990:105). Sometimes these real and supposed differences have been eulogised; but they have also been misused to justify and maintain women's inferior status, and to specify a certain role (motherhood as the primary career) as being peculiarly appropriate to women (Montague, 1968).

Realistically speaking, pregnancy and childbearing are defining events in a woman's life that will alter her self-concept and role definition. The responsibilities of motherhood place an additional burden on women that go far beyond most other occupations. In general, babies are demanding and dependent on an adult, with the result that mothering is traditionally associated with caring, loving, protection, emotion and sensitivity (Ribbens, 1994; Rogers & White, 1998; Arendell, 2000). The professional woman who becomes a mother finds herself faced with the dual role of mother and professional and the result may be that conflicting and complementary dimensions emerge that are

imbedded in this duality of being a mother and teacher. Therefore, it is important to investigate how working mothers reconcile the demands of their professional role with the expectations being placed on them as mothers.

## **2.5 THE TEACHER AS MOTHER AND THE MOTHER AS TEACHER**

The status of women in society has changed and continues to do so. The place of women is no longer in the home; today they have the opportunity to live an interesting and challenging life within the labour market. Talented and educated women with family responsibilities often face special problems of identity and self-esteem when they attempt to continue their professional activity (Spain & Bianchi, 1996). Although many do so successfully and only encounter a few problems, others find it more difficult due to multiple roles, commitments and career interruptions.

Women may offer unique qualities to intellectual and creative endeavours (Nussbaum, 1985); however, one of the main barriers to women's achievement of excellence is the stereotypical perceptions regarding the hindrance that motherhood will place on their expectations, career paths and motivation and that these stereotypical perceptions will be different to that of men (Chester, 1990). In this regard, the dominant perception in society is that equality of women means that they must be the same as men (Parvikko, 1990). Women who enter the teaching profession are expected to fit into a job description where masculinity has remained the frame of reference over hundreds of years (Schaefer, 1992). When they cannot fit this description, because of their actions as mothers, the choices that women make in the interest of their own children, and their uniqueness as women, are emphasised by school principals as reasons for marginalising and discriminating against them. When this happens, mothers experience deep feelings of guilt and inadequacy (Moulton, 1986; Ennis, 1990; 1997). Working mothers who try to fit the perceived masculine description of a professional (i.e. to exhibit strongly ambition, drive, power, competition and

assertiveness) are sometimes haunted by feelings that they have betrayed their feminine role (i.e. to be caring, nurturing, soft spoken, selfless and sacrificing martyrs), and they run the risk of being branded as not being 'good mothers' (Gerdes, 1972). These rigid patterns of expected multiple roles cannot change overnight, and they create barriers for many women who wish to be self-fulfilled by combining 'worthwhile work' with homemaking and childcare.

Given the fact that female teachers have become the quintessential force through the years in education (Dekker & Lemmer, 1993:22), issues of reconciling family and work roles have become increasingly acute. These female teachers do not only act and think of themselves as nurturers at school, but who are often mothers too. A review of the literature has highlighted the complexity of being good enough in all multiple roles while maintaining a unique identity as a mother and a teacher.

- Storr (1988) points out that two opposing drives operate throughout life, namely the drive for companionship, love and everything else which brings us close to our fellow humans and the drive toward being independent, separate and autonomous (Glasser 1984). However, as Flax (1981) and Richter (1990) confirm, when women insist too strongly on autonomy, when they recoil from sacrifice and interdependence, they are more likely to undermine their prospects for long-term contentment than to assure it.
- Friedman (1981:316), Morse and Fürst (1982:159), Josselson (1990), Grogan (1996:111) and Walzer (1997) draw attention to another often overlooked conundrum that underpins integrating motherhood and employment. Through their research, they find that mothers struggle to understand themselves by feeling a sense of acute division when attempting to reconcile the two worlds. Pretorius (1987; 1990) states that working mothers have conflicting attitudes toward their maternal choices, because they are pursuing a career and are fearful that they are

shortchanging their children. Working mothers feel both psychologically pressurised and pressed for time by facing the strenuous demands of productivity in the workplace. Thus, despite the fact that they are expected to fit into a job description where masculinity has remained the frame of reference, they also have to live another life. Working mothers have to take care of their children, and they therefore, feel that there is too little time to spend with their families. They feel exhausted and overwhelmed trying to balance paid work commitments with parenting commitments, because for these mothers, multiple roles absorb psychological, intellectual and emotional energy. The result is often that working mothers are then confused about what they should do, and what it is they should feel good about, because they are racked with guilt and plagued by unrelieved anxiety (Ennis, 1997). Grotstein (1986) doubts whether the above factors can outweigh the positive factors of work for the mother. Thus, the quandary that mothers face is combining employment with motherhood without simultaneously doing injustice to a child, marriage and a job.

- Having children increases the workload and strain on the working mother (Ennis, 1999). The division of responsibility for family care remains highly engendered, despite the fact that women are working in far greater numbers than before (LaRossa, Gordon, Wilson, Bavian & Jaret, 1991; Marsiglio, 1991). This multiple role can cause feelings of depression, confusion, jealousy, frustration, abandonment, overburdening, isolation, rejection, conflict, stress, tension, fatigue and irritability and occur when the mother is absorbed in her job at the same time that she is highly invested in mothering (Swanepoel, Erasmus, van Wyk & Schenk, 2003). It can also contribute to child neglect due to the experiences of the mother's negative attitude as uncaring, unfeeling and rebellious (Winnicott, 1987:94; Grogan, 1996). Pretorius (1987:27-28; 1990:253) reports that home situations are then experienced as insecure, lonely and unfulfilling.



- Expectations do arise that the father should share more in household chores and in the primary responsibility of caring for the baby (Steyn, 1990:27). However, a study by McBride and Mills (1993) reveals that although fathers are providing significantly more family care than they did two decades ago, their contribution still represents less than one third of the total time parents spent with their young children. Only when the children are aged between 13 and 19 years does the father's part of the total time with them begin to approach 50 percent. Thus, during the years when being with the children is most time-consuming and labour-intensive, the mother provides the most family care with lower levels of social and economic resources, which increases her vulnerability to stress and health problems (Pleck, 1997). Klitzman, House and Mero (1990:221-243) agree in their study of work stress, non-work stress, and health and report that, while the total workload increases as soon as there is a child in the family, stress accumulates. Stress at home and work combines to overload women and put them at risk. When they cope with a stressor, especially one that is incessant or difficult to control, their ability to cope with subsequent environmental demands can be impaired (Sears & Galambos, 1993). Therefore, the denial of bi-parental affection can be particularly traumatic and could create an inhibiting socio-pedagogic family climate (Carey & Knight, 1990:27-29; Le Roux & Smit, 1992:85-86; Kung & Farrell, 2000:510). In addition, when there is a gendered division of family care in the home, there cannot be gender equality in the workplace (Ruddick, 1980; Bailey, 2000). However, societal expectations may cause further conflict, by sending encouraging or discouraging signals about a working mother's choices and about the feasibility of combining family and work.

Difficulties in combining family care and work responsibilities are largely a function of differences in family and work demands and resources, and they add

another layer of complexity to problems facing schools, not only because this concerns a large part of the population, but because it is also one of the key elements of equality (Davies, 1990:74; McGivney, 2000). A survey of the literature shows that, when family and work balance is defined solely as a women's issue, it will continue to be marginalised. Why can the mother teacher not simultaneously be a mother for her own child and a teacher for the learners in the teaching profession, regardless of gender differences? What the mother teacher recognises is that her similarities and differences are part of who she is. These cannot be set aside even momentarily, and for as long as the relational character of difference is theorised as irreconcilable, as apart, the mother teacher will not find her wholeness of being, nor will she be able to fulfil her multiple role expectations. The historical discrimination against women is realised by government and the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 is aimed at addressing this need, however, some aspects of motherhood still remain unanswered.

## **2.6 EMPLOYMENT EQUITY AND THE MOTHER TEACHER**

The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, was promulgated after extensive negotiations in NEDLAC (National Economic Development Labour Council) and was implemented during 1999. The Act should be interpreted in conjunction with the South African Constitution Act, 108 of 1996 to give effect to its purpose, and to promote the purpose and intent of the Constitution. The Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 should also be read in conjunction with the international declarations and conventions ratified by the South African government, and the associated obligations placed on the state, particularly the International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979, dealing with Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation. The paragraphs that follow identify the main stipulations in these documents that affect the position of women in the workplace.

## **2.6.1 THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONSTITUTION ACT, 108 OF 1996**

Parliament, as well as the private and public sectors, are all subordinate to the Constitution, the supreme law. This means that any action that is in contravention thereof can be challenged. Subsequent legislation, such as the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998, must therefore, give effect to the purpose and intent of the Constitution. In South Africa the Constitution has great significance for school principals, especially Chapter 2 (Bill of Rights) outlining fundamental rights, which affirm human dignity, equality and freedom (Nelson & Quick, 1997:39).

Section 7 of the Constitution compels the state to respect, protect, promote and fulfil the rights in the Bill of Rights. This implies that schools, and specifically school principals, as agents of the state, have a duty to ensure that the sections in the Constitution are respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled. This means that school principals have a duty to eradicate unfair discrimination of any kind, to ensure equal treatment between genders with regard to employment practices, as well as the promotion of female rights as a designated group. Extracts of fundamental rights most applicable to labour relations have been summarised in the section below.

### **2.6.1.1 EXTRACTS FROM THE CONSTITUTION FOR SOUTH AFRICA: BILL OF RIGHTS, 108 OF 1996**

- ***EQUALITY***

The equality provision does not prevent the government from making classifications and from treating some people differently to others. This is because, the principle of equality does not require everyone to be treated the same, but simply that people in the same position should be treated the same (De Waal, Currie & Erasmus, 2001:206). Section 9 is set out below.

9. (1) Everyone is equal before the law and has the right to equal protection and benefit of the law.

(2) Equity includes the full and equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms. To promote the achievement of equity, legislative and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken.

(3) The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one of more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language or birth.

(4) No person may unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds in terms of subsection (3). National legislation must be enacted to prevent or prohibit unfair discrimination.

(5) Discrimination on one or more of the grounds listed in subsection (3) is unfair, unless it is established that the discrimination is fair.

One of the most pertinent challenges facing South African school principals in the workplace today is a thorough understanding of labour laws and the implementation of employment equity plans to redress the effects of discrimination in the workplace. This means that school principals need to ensure that suitable qualified female teachers have equal employment opportunities and are equitably represented in all categories and levels in the workforce. This includes preferential treatment of female teachers and the setting of goals in order to create and sustain an environment in which all women feel comfortable, recognised, valued and appreciated, based on gender and cultural differences (RSA, 1998a). The past century has seen many changes in terms of woman's rights, with particular regard to education, employment opportunities and indeed

female representation at senior levels in the system of education and training (Rossener, 1990; Willis & Daisley, 1992; Piggford & Tonnsen, 1993; Grogan, 1996). However, little has changed regarding multiple role expectations of working mother teachers. There is a profound lack of providing opportunities for female teachers who are mothers to alter their circumstances. This prevents real equality between male and female teachers in the matter of finding a foothold in South African society.

- ***HUMAN DIGNITY***

The right to human dignity in Section 10 is one of the core constitutional rights. All rights in the Bill of Rights must be interpreted so as to promote the Constitution's ambition of creating an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom (De Waal, Currie & Erasmus, 2001:230). Section 10 is set out below.

10. Everyone has inherent dignity and the right to have their dignity respected and protected.

This includes measures designed to further diversity in the workplace based on equal dignity and respect for all mother teachers. The melting pot assumption should be replaced by one that recognises and values differences by addressing the different lifestyles, family needs and work styles of mother teachers. The effective management of every unique mother teacher's dignity holds the advantages that (1) it increases the morale of the workforce; (2) reduces tension, confusion and counter-productivity; (3) increases motivational levels; and (4) it leads school principals to view differences as valuable assets among mother teachers rather than unwanted liabilities (Kast & Rosenzweig, 1985; Chang, 1996; Booysen, Nkomo & Beaty 2002).

- ***FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION***

Section 18 protects individuals against state and private interference with their freedom to establish, to join or take part in the activities of the association (De Waal, Currie & Erasmus, 2001:342). Section 18 is set out below.

18. Everyone has the right to freedom of association.

This gives every mother teacher in South Africa the opportunity to join an association which will protect her and negotiate on her behalf with the school principal for fair and acceptable remuneration and conditions of employment.

- ***FREEDOM OF TRADE, OCCUPATION AND PROFESSION***

Section 22 affords a degree of protection for the freedom to practice a chosen occupation (De Waal, Currie & Erasmus, 2001:384). Section 22 is set out below.

22. Every citizen has the right to choose his or her trade, occupation or profession freely. The practice of a trade, occupation or profession may be regulated by law.

Every mother has a right to achieve her full potential being a teacher. Her career goals should not be shattered by having to choose between two exclusive worlds, namely combining 'worthwhile work' with homemaking and childcare.

- ***LABOUR RELATIONS***

Section 23 provides the principal guarantee of fair labour practices. The right of workers to form and join trade unions and to participate in the activities and programmes of those trade unions is enshrined (De Waal, Currie & Erasmus, 2001:393). Section 23 is set out below.

23. (1) Everyone has the right to fair labour practices.

(2) Every worker has the right -

- (a) to form and join a trade union;
- (b) to participate in the activities and programmes of a trade union; and
- (c) to strike.

(3) Every employer has the right -

- (a) to form and join an employers' organisation; and
- (b) to participate in the activities and programmes of an employers' organisation.

(4) Every trade union and every employers' organisation has the right -

- (a) to determine its own administration, programmes and activities;
- (b) to organise; and
- (c) to form and join a federation.

(5) Every trade union, employers' organisation and employer has the rights to engage in collective bargaining. National legislation may be enacted to regulate collective bargaining. To the extent that the legislation may limit a right in this Chapter, the limitation must comply with section 36(1).

(6) National legislation may recognise union security arrangement contained in collective agreements. To the extent that the legislation may limit a right in this Chapter, the limitations must comply with section 36(1).

36(1) The rights in the Bill of Rights may be limited only in terms of the law of general application to the extent that the limitation is reasonable and justifiable in an open and democratic society based on human dignity, equality and freedom, taking into account all relevant factors including:

- (a) the nature of the right;
- (b) the importance of the purpose of the limitation;
- (c) the nature and extent of the limitation;
- (d) the relation between the limitation and its purpose; and
- (e) less restrictive means of achieving the purpose.

It is suggested that mother teachers who have unfulfilled needs and expectations will search for a means to satisfy these needs. Mother teachers then voluntarily make a decision to join a union (Wheeler & McClendon, 1991). Much of the research into reasons why mother teachers join trade unions concludes that instrumental attitudes to unionism prevail over moral and political commitment (Hirszowicz, 1981). In other words, mother teachers' aims are focused on 'bread and butter' issues and the contents of their pay packets. Many mother teachers also join unions as a means of protecting their jobs, as well as for comradeship and acceptance by the community. Thus, trade unions not only aim to improve conditions such as wages, working conditions and other benefits at the workplace, but also to defend and protect mother teachers from dismissal, retrenchment and unilateral action by school principals. Mother teachers may thus have very different expectations of the union. The challenge for the union is then to ensure that the needs and aspirations of its individual mother teachers are met without experiencing any limitations from school principals in attempting to meet mother teachers' needs.

### **2.6.2 THE EMPLOYMENT EQUITY ACT, 55 OF 1998**

The rationale of the Act, (Department of Labour, 1997) is to achieve equity in the workplace by the following two measures: (1) promoting equal opportunity and fair treatment in employment through the elimination of unfair discrimination; and (2) implementing affirmative action measures to redress the disadvantages in employment experienced by designated groups (including women). The most



important provisions as listed in the memorandum on the object of the Act are set out below.

- All employers must take steps to end unfair discrimination in their employment policies and practices.
- Unfair discrimination against employees or job applicants on the grounds of race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, family responsibility, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, political opinion, culture, language, birth or HIV status is prohibited.
- Employees are protected from victimisation for exercising their rights conferred by the Act.

Major emphasis over the past few years has inevitably fallen on the many employment equity changes that are needed in the educational policy for it to be more supportive toward multiple role expectations of a wide variety of mother teachers. Creating these legal frameworks provides access to previously male dominated jobs, ensures equal pay for work of equal value, and removes the 'glass ceiling' to the advancement of women into management positions. Thus, provisions in the aforementioned document protect female teachers from dismissal or any form of unfair discrimination based on pregnancy and family responsibility. However, this document does not address the challenge inherent in the duality of the mother teacher's role. The needs associated with this duality are not covered and only provide a legal framework that protects her from unfair discrimination. It does not (and maybe cannot) cover the covert aspects discussed earlier that could result in mothers feeling that they are still marginalised, and therefore, restricted in living out their own identity in fulfilling multiple role expectations.

### **2.6.3 THE INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANISATION CONVENTION, 111 OF 1979**

The objectives of the International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979 are to promote peace and regulate labour rights in order to protect workers throughout the world. This organisation requires member states to respect, promote and to realise, in good faith, on the following standards:

- freedom of association and rights to collective bargaining;
- the elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour; and
- the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation.

A global revolution is taking place and is driven by the requirements of mother teachers' needs and aspirations in the direction of gender equality for all. The International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979 especially regulates female rights throughout the world, because many mothers struggle to survive in these two worlds of family and work. Mother teachers are particularly confronted with comments about not taking their careers seriously and the expressions of annoyance towards mothers who at times have to be absent from school, because of the needs of their children. At the same time mothers are confronted by the social opprobrium they face when leaving their children in the care of a child minder. The International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979 strives to eliminate unfair discrimination against mother teachers in order to help the mother to express herself, but again this is done through the creation of legal or convention-based frameworks.

## **2.7 CONCLUSION**

Gender equality and equity remain an important goal for school principals in South Africa, and strides have been made in many areas to reduce inequalities. However, while the South African Constitution Act, 108 of 1996, the Employment

Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979 provide opportunities for women and prohibit any form of unfair discrimination, inequities nevertheless persist based on culture and perceptions regarding motherhood (Finnemore & Cunningham, 1994; De Klerk, 1996:100). What has been achieved is what liberal feminists have been arguing for - legal equality. But legal equality does not address the more profoundly entrenched forms of inequality based on acculturation and socialisation into sex role stereotypes. Therefore, important as it may be, it is not sufficient to change the legal contexts alone.

There is a need to address practices at grassroots level, where historical stereotyping and procedures have become entrenched in the system. For female teachers to experience meaningful equality, these underlying issues needs to be addressed and this cannot be achieved through legislative processes. What is required is that the whole process of socialisation into sex roles needs to be addressed. To do this, school principals need to understand how mother teachers experience their own gender in education. Thus, for the mother teacher to be recognised in her own identity, school principals as key agents can make useful contributions to ensure that the needs, interest and motives of all mother teachers are respected. This requires a work environment that is anti-discriminatory, democratic, respectful of rights, mindful of dignity and legally sound or legitimate, that motivates and satisfies mother teachers in order to attain the necessary co-operation and commitment. It also includes that school principals should adopt the leadership style most likely to promote success and efficacy for the mother teachers in coming to terms with who they truly are.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 3 provides a framework for the qualitative research used in this investigation in order to learn more about participants' experiences, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and choices. I developed the questions of this social scientific research based on the background of the research problem and the research available. To analyse and describe how the mother teacher perceives her roles as a good mother and a professional teacher suggested the use of a narrative design which made it possible to understand the meaning of life experiences as revealed in stories. This chapter describes the research methodology, specifically the narrative interview, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes, as well as narrative and qualitative content analysis. It concludes by outlining the range of ethical considerations in terms of the methodology.

#### 3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

##### 3.2.1 EPISTEMOLOGICAL AND ONTOLOGICAL ASSUMPTIONS

The methodological feature is underpinned by epistemological and ontological assumptions (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). The assumptions Henning, van Rensburg and Smit (2004:15-23) refer to are assumptions about knowledge and knowing, and the social world. The first methodological feature, epistemology, is the branch of Western philosophy that studies the nature and scope of knowledge and belief in terms of its relativity or situation-dependence, its continuous development or evolution, and its active interference with the world and its subjects and objects (Hendricks, 2006). The term epistemology comes from the Greek words, *episteme* (knowledge) and *logos* (account/explanation). This

feature addresses the following questions: “What is knowledge?”, “How is knowledge acquired?” and “What do people know?” The theory distinguishes true (adequate) knowledge from false (inadequate) knowledge. Geertz (1995) points out that we know what we know, because of how we are positioned in society. In this study, mother teachers are exposed to the process where their knowing changes when they shift their position in society. Clandinin and Connelly (1994:19) write: “This is the way the world is, and therefore this is how it should be thought about.”

Knowledge is influenced by, and is dependent upon, society through received ideas and through the provision of the apparatus of thought (Butchvarov, 1970). Butchvaroy believes that one’s knowledge reflects the social world. This leads one to the second methodological feature, ontology, because researchers need a presupposition about the social world to understand what knowledge is. Ontology refers to the metaphysical account of the nature of being and existence. Bovens and Hartmann (2003) define the word *being* as, having an objective existence; having reality or actuality; and being by nature. Dewey (1922) states that the personal and the social are always present. He elaborates by explaining that people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. Their social world should also be included. Berne (1964) asserts that mother teachers are connected to their cultural position, because society forces them into balancing the roles of motherhood and teaching. However, according to Glasser (1998), women create a world in their brain in order to interpret the social world in a unique manner. In other words, mother teachers view the world from different perspectives.

Guba and Lincoln (1994:109) view the social world in terms of local and specific constructed realities. These realities are created by the human mind and are subject to change as new knowledge is acquired. Reality as a whole is thus ‘reasonable’, in the sense that every participant’s life is based on something and has a ‘why’ that grounds it. This means that reality varies from participant to

participant (Smith & Heshusius, 1986). I, therefore, strove to know more about each participant's experiences of multiple roles as a working mother teacher (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992; Crotty, 1998:42-43).

This study investigates mother teachers and their engagement with the social world, and how they interpret the fulfilment of multiple roles. This study sets out to analyse and describe the world of mother teachers, and to explore how entrenched assumptions, cultural values and beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of the dual role of mother and teacher. Mother teachers have to contend not only with the conflict between their traditional role of wife and mother and their career role, but they also have to redefine their own perceived role expectations. The theoretical frame is grounded in the feminist tradition within a social constructionist paradigm.

### **3.2.2 FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE**

Motherhood is central to femininity, because women are deemed biologically predisposed to nurture. Forna (1999:23) believes that women are constructed as the natural caregiver of the child. The study, is therefore, fundamentally located in a feminist paradigm, because this perspective allows for an exploratory approach in order to uncover knowledge about how mother teachers perceive their world. I used this paradigm to understand the wholeness of women's life experiences in their societal and cultural context. In addition, I deemed the feminist perspective as a suitable paradigm in that the approach in itself fulfils a purpose of the study. The nature of a feminist methodology suggests that women be recognised and acknowledged (Gordon, 1990; Burns, 2000).

### **3.2.3 SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVIST THINKING**

More recent developments in feminist theory and practice, particularly those drawing on post-modern theories, have shifted the terrain of feminist

argumentation with respect to motherhood (Appignanesi, 1995). The post-colonial theories contribute to understanding the constructions that participants initially hold about multiple roles of working mothers. Within this inquiry, it means that participants agree to act as if social constructions exist, or agree to follow specific conventional rules and expectations (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Social constructionist thinking shows, therefore, how individuals, members of families and social groups think, avoid, insure, stigmatise and explain each other at a specific historical time.

### **3.2.4 QUALITATIVE RESEARCH**

Qualitative research offers useful insights into social, emotional and experiential phenomena in the multiple roles that mother teachers play. Qualitative research procedures were appropriate to make sense of and to understand the phenomenon (epistemology) from the perspectives of participants in their social world (ontology). This inquiry is characterised by the search for meaning and understanding (Seale et al., 2004). I am the primary instrument of data collection and analysis in seeking the uniqueness of each participant's experiences of what it is to be a mother and a teacher. Qualitative research is also an inductive research strategy that involves a richly descriptive report. Sherman and Webb (1988:7) encourage investigation of the experiences of participants, as these are 'lived', 'felt' and 'undergone'. Therefore, the aim of this inquiry was to understand human interaction and social behaviour from the participants' perspectives (Dooley, 1984:267; Padgett, 1998).

This qualitative research gathered continuous data in the field where participants tend to behave naturally. Rossman and Rallis (2003) refer to qualitative research as naturalistic-ethnographic or phenomenological. This study is naturalistic and interpretive. The goal was to interpret experiences of mother teachers within a naturalistic setting. I focused on the actions of the participants as well as how they represent their experiences and thoughts about being mother teachers. I

used semi-structured interviewing in real-world settings where I looked for social transactions and interactions between participants and events. Settings were observed, described and interpreted as they were to maintain the intended meaning of participants' stories. I became aware of the framework within participants' interpretation of their feelings, thoughts and actions when I focused on the full complexity of human sense making in a particular societal and cultural context. This research has been located in the interpretive constructivist perspective, using qualitative data, such as narrative interviews, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). I established an atmosphere of constructive understanding in a participatory manner through obtaining rich and thick description.

### **3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN**

I used a hybrid of a narrative and case study design, with a discussion of the understanding of a case study, and thereafter, the meaning of narrative inquiry according to Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000).

#### **3.3.1 CASE STUDY**

The case study design has its philosophical roots in the interpretivist (constructivist) paradigm. This phrase 'case study' is not used in any standard way (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000:1). Stake (1995), for instance, points out that precise definitions of case study are unclear. Stake explains: "The concept of *case* remains subject to debate, and the term *study* is ambiguous." Merriam (1998:19) also comments on the use of case study: "The literature on case study methodology has expanded in the last few years, but it still lags behind other types. In fact, there is still much confusion as to what constitutes a case study, how it differs from other forms of qualitative research, and when is it most appropriate to use." Despite this vagueness, several researchers propose various definitions. Schumacher and McMillan (2001:403) state that a case study



refers to an in-depth analysis of a specific phenomenon and not the number of research participants sampled. They believe that it is characterised by flexibility and adaptability. Merriam (1998:27) defines a case study in terms of its result: “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description, and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit.” Stake’s (1995:2) definition emphasises the unit of study and the ‘boundedness’ of an object or system. By ‘boundedness’ he means that the object or system studied is a specific instance. Yin (1994:13) focuses on case study as a research process and writes: “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.”

I used the case study design to collect detailed information and to draw conclusions about the world of mother teachers and how entrenched assumptions, cultural values and beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of the dual role of mother and teacher. This design was preferred mainly, because it provided knowledge to understand the complexities of motherhood in the teaching profession. The real-life, contemporary, human experiences of researched participants were probed (Creswell, 2003). In using the case study design for this investigation, I rely primarily on Stake’s (1995) definition of the case study as a process of investigation. He says that case studies are not a methodological choice, but a choice of object to be studied. Stake also makes the distinction between an intrinsic case study and an instrumental case study. This study was an instrumental case study, because this case study focused on the aspects that the case has highlighted.

The goal of this study was to gather as much information about the research problem with the intention of analysing, interpreting and theorising about this phenomenon. Merriam (1998) distinguishes between the interpretive and descriptive case study. As I wanted to understand as fully as possible how the mother teacher makes sense of herself through engagement with the social

world when she interprets the fulfilment of multiple roles, this study was both interpretive and descriptive.

The specific case study used was a narrative case study to understand the lived experiences from the point of view of those who live it.

### **3.3.2 NARRATIVE CASE STUDY**

I used narrative as a method of understanding the case. The importance of the narrative lies in its ability to encounter the perspectives of participants. Narrative develops from memories collected from participants' experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative case study is a study that is concerned with stories. In social life, people narrate their lives in story form. They use stories to make sense of the world as they perceive and experience it and they use it to tell other people what they have discovered and about how the world is experienced by them. People understand and construct meaning using their experiences. Clandinin and Connelly (1994:415) state: "Stories are the closest we can come to experience as we and others tell our experiences. A story has a sense of being full, a sense of coming out of a personal and social history ... Experience ... is the stories people live. People live stories and in the telling of them reaffirm them, modify them, and create new ones." Clandinin and Connelly (1994) also describe the phenomenon as the story and the inquiry as the narrative. This implies that humans lead 'nature-storied' lives and they tell stories of their lives. Narrative researchers describe such lives and tell stories about them. According to Järvinen (2004), the meaning of life cannot be comprehended outside the narrative process. Life and story are not two separate phenomena. Widdershoven (1993:2) writes: "They are part of the same fabric, in that life informs and is formed by the stories."

Norrick (2000:1) has a differing viewpoint about narratives and claims that stories only exist in stories (whereas life goes by without the need to turn it into stories).

Chafe (1990:79) argues: “Narratives provide evidence for the nature of the mind. Narratives are overt manifestations of the mind in action ... windows to both the content of the mind and its ongoing operations.”

Together with Clandinin and Connelly (1994; 2000), I believe that stories are the backbone of human experiences, and therefore, used narrative as a suitable approach and a valuable research tool, appropriate to explore participants’ experiences as mother teachers in their particular societal and cultural context. The section below describes the research methodology.

### **3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology speaks to sampling, site selection, data collection, data analysis and methodological norms.

#### **3.4.1 PURPOSIVE SAMPLING**

I selected participants purposively from the population in a non-random manner by using judgement sampling, by means of a judgement based on knowledge about the population and selected participants who could provide the best information to address the aims of this research (Silverman, 2004). I recruited participants using a purposeful sampling technique, based on the work of Patton (1990:169) who contends that this particular mode of sampling was selecting information-rich cases to study in-depth when the researcher wanted to understand the meaning of the case without needing or desiring to generalise. I selected the sample based on personal judgement and expertise. I chose four participants who met the requirements for this inquiry, in that they had to be working mothers. All participants had had full-time professional careers prior to having children. The participants, aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years, had not been promoted during their appointments, and each had a child, with ages ranging from three months to two years. All were in committed

relationships both at the time of falling pregnant and at the time of the interview. The participants had resumed work after the birth of their children, after various periods of maternity leave. It is important to note that I mainly drew the sample from the white sector of the population.

Due to the nature of this investigation, the sample population was intentionally small so as to capture the in-depth stories over an extended period. Therefore, in order to increase the value of the research, in spite of the small sample size, I selected the participants from similar middle socio-economic classes. Kaplan (1992) believes that women with such a background are more affluent and have less material constraints, and therefore, more freedom to exercise choices and so share their experience of motherhood.

To enhance the validity of the findings, I conducted intensive interviews, used reflexive journal entries and did direct non-participant observations until data saturation occurred. Bogdan and Biklen (1998) point out that data saturation occurs when new information collected is redundant and does not offer any additional insights to elucidate further understanding. Three criteria were helpful in deciding when the data were saturated, namely (1) exhaustion of resources; (2) emergence of regularities; and (3) overextension (Guba, 1978).

### **3.4.2 SITE SELECTION**

Choosing a site was a negotiated process, and I carried out this inquiry in a city in the east of Gauteng. After identifying the site, I contacted the school principals from four private institutions to gain permission for the research (Appendix A). All the school principals granted me official approval to observe mother teachers and to conduct narrative interviews in April 2005 (Appendix B & Appendix C). School principals proposed that mother teachers should participate on a voluntary basis after they had been notified. Thereafter, permission from the management committees was received (Appendix D). The management

committees are groups of five or more interacting and interdependent leaders, who meet on a monthly basis to discuss the objectives of the schools. This group of leaders is determined by the school's structures, with designated work assignments to establish tasks. These leaders comply with the rules of the schools and also report directly to the school principal.

Participation in this research project was voluntary and confidential, and I informed participants of this prior to data collection. The research started with the establishment of a clear and fair agreement that clarified obligations and responsibilities. When participants declared themselves willing to participate in the narrative interview, confidentiality was guaranteed and they were permitted the choice to decide to withdraw at any stage if they wished not to continue with the narrative interview. When participants fully understood the implications of participation and were aware of their rights in the research process, they signed a letter of consent (Appendix E). This consent alluded to participation and the right to withdraw from the research project at any time without any penalty or repercussions.

### **3.4.3 DATA COLLECTION**

Choosing data collection strategies involved a process of deciding between available alternatives for the collection and corroboration of data to obtain an in-depth understanding of motherhood and teaching. The research problem, and the nature of the information sought, suggested the use of three distinct methods, namely (1) the narrative interview; (2) reflexive journal entries; and (3) observational field notes. Data collection occurred simultaneously, one phase informing the other, with the research study emerging and evolving as work proceeded.

### 3.4.3.1 NARRATIVE INTERVIEW

The narrative interview proved to be a suitable data collection method. This investigation attempted to create a research setting that enabled participants to express their experiences, perceptions, thoughts and viewpoints creatively. I based thinking, perception, imagination and decision-making on a narrative structure through a face-to-face interpersonal role situation (Wengraf, 2001). Participants told their stories and I asked open-ended questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research questions (Mishler, 1986; 1995). The narrative interview was particularly helpful for this specific inquiry, because as Durrance (1997:26) writes: "The story is our oldest, proven motivational tool that carries the shared culture, beliefs, and history of a group. Moreover, it is a means of experiencing our lives." Merriam (2002:286) also agrees and suggests: "The story is a basic communicative and meaning-making device pervasive in human experience."

I conducted altogether eight narrative interviews over a twelve-week period, which began in April 2005. These interviews developed into descriptive portraits of motherhood constructs. I gathered personal information as well as information about the school environment from each participant, in order to place their responses into context. In every narrative interview, participants contributed actively and with a considerable degree of interest. They were requested prior to the recording to 'tell their story' about their experiences of motherhood and teaching. Each first narrative interview enabled me to think critically about what the participants said about their experiences. The follow-up interview with each participant allowed for the acquisition of further data to explore some of my working assumptions. The follow-up interview also gave participants an opportunity to reflect on the first narrative interview. I scheduled the follow-up interview two weeks after the first interview and spent the time in between the two interviews working through the data, analysing it and refining follow-up questions. Each interview lasted approximately one and a half hours. I

audiotaped and transcribed the interviews with the permission of participants shortly after I had conducted them.

Open-ended questions for story telling have the advantage of being flexible. These types of questions also encourage cooperation. One can understand participants' experiences, beliefs and attitudes. Approaching interviews in this relaxed manner had the additional advantage that it involved participants in reminiscences rather than confrontational questions. There was an agreement with participants that they could ask me questions about my personal life as well (Bloom, 1998). This set the scene for an easy and non-threatening gradual progression into 'deeper' questions later in the interview. In essence, each participant could relate her experiences of motherhood in the teaching profession in a relaxed manner with some 'prodding', when required.

#### **3.4.3.2 REFLEXIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES**

To expand data gained through interviews, I asked participants to keep a journal detailing and describing their experiences as mother teachers. Spradley (1980:71) points out: "A reflexive journal includes a record of participants' experiences, ideas, fears, mistakes, confusions, breakthroughs, and problems." When I read the journals it was clear that these diary-like reflections were not only cathartic, in that the participant released her emotions about being a mother and a teacher; they also provided a record of the participant's feelings, attitudes and subjectivities during data collection. For me, as the researcher, richness and contextual validity of data were obtained through the perceptions of multiple role expectations expressed in participants' experiences, feelings, thoughts and beliefs as recorded in the participants' two-week journal. Later, during data analysis, this record provided a context for understanding the observational field notes taken at the same stage of the data collection process.

### **3.4.3.3 OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTES**

Non-participant observations led to deeper understanding, because it provided knowledge of the context in which events occurred, and revealed aspects of the multiple roles of participants. Often participants themselves were not aware of the multiple roles that they were playing, or they were unwilling to discuss them. I preferred to use observational field notes for the purpose of description of settings, activities and the meaning of what I observed from the experiences of the participants (Patton, 1990). Clandinin and Connelly (1994:106) confirm this and point out: "Observational field notes are constructed representations of participants' experiences."

I used direct non-participant observations for data collection to explore participants' experiences of motherhood and teaching. I intervened only when further clarification of actions was needed, and I spend time in the social milieu of participants and recorded non-verbal and verbal cues before, during and after the two interviews. Erasmus-Kritzing, Bowler and Goliath (2003:10-11; 60) write: "Non-verbal cues are facial expressions, gestures, tone of voice, body movements and other un verbalized social interactions that suggest the subtle meanings of language." I wrote extensive field notes to describe what occurred by looking, listening and questioning the process (Gillham, 2000). The field notes formed an early stage of analysis during data collection and contained raw data necessary for more elaborate analyses in the study. In this study, tape recordings did not substitute for direct field notes, based on the conviction that this less obtrusive strategy was a more sensitive approach while working with mother teachers and their experiences.

The presence of an observer can introduce a distortion of the natural scene. However, I revealed to the participants my role as an observer, as well as the purpose of observational field notes. I also explained the length of time spent in the field and the specific observation techniques used to the participants. The



legal and ethical responsibilities associated with naturalistic observation were taken into account.

The use of multiple data collection methods added rigour to this study, because information was captured with one method that may have been overlooked with another method. I analysed all data from the interviews, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes on a continuous basis for five months. This analysis assisted in constructing the final themes.

#### **3.4.4 DATA ANALYSIS**

Empirical data were analysed for content and narrative to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a coherent depiction of participants. This process was an ongoing cyclical process, integrated into all phases to understand the stories of the experiences that make up mother teachers lives. I prepared my own database to assist with categorising, sorting, organising, storing, tabulating, recombining and retrieving data for analysis. All the raw data were analysed, compared and interpreted against the background of the research problem.

##### **3.4.4.1 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

In qualitative content analysis, there was immersion in text to reveal aspects of how participants made sense of their lives and lived experiences through thematic organisation. I developed authentic conceptualisations and understanding through deep, personal reading and thinking about textual data. However, more structured, analytical techniques were also involved (Mayring, 2000). In-depth analysis of what participants reveal, why, how and with what effect was possible through systematic examinations of stories as a source of data (Riessman, 2000). The participants shared stories that belonged to them during the interview sessions.

Merriam (1998:178) believes that the basic level of analysis is a descriptive account of the study's findings and claims: "Data are compressed and linked together in a narrative that conveys the meaning the researcher has derived from studying the phenomenon." Merriam (1998:179) also writes: "The next level of analysis is the construction of categories or themes that capture some recurring pattern that cuts across ... [most of] the data." These categories are concepts indicated by the data. To discover these categories or themes, the analytical methods of 'categorical aggregation' and 'direct interpretation' were used (Stake, 1995). Creswell (1998:249) defines 'categorical aggregation' and points out: "Categorical aggregation is the process whereby the researcher seeks a collection of instances from the data, hoping that issue-relevant meanings will emerge." I used open coding by labelling selected segments of texts that were meaningful. Open coding was the predominant method in order to categorise data into broad themes. I examined single instances in the data and drew meaning from them without looking for multiple instances. Stake (1995:74) claims: "Direct interpretation is a process of pulling the data apart and then pulling them back together in ways that are more meaningful." I first applied this category generating process to each individual case for a within-case analysis and later I compared the cases in a cross-case analysis. This was followed by axial coding which involved the forming of relationships between the codes. 'Established patterns' were observed and I looked for any correspondence between two or more patterns of categories, and then developed categories of clusters of codes, which later developed into themes (Morse, 1994:23-43). In these cases, I reviewed and re-coded the open codes, which opened the debate on puzzles of motherhood and teaching. Therefore, in the data analysis process, the themes that emerged were constantly refined throughout the data collection and analysis process, and continuously shaped the formation of categories (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). I developed themes by comparing data with published literature on motherhood and teaching to conclude the analysis.

Thus, the overall framework of qualitative content analysis is set out below. The participants' transcripts were individually analysed to determine how they make sense of their multiple roles in their societal and cultural context. This was followed by a cross-case analysis to discover how widespread the experiences were among all of the participants. To determine what their experiences were, I coded the participants' transcripts to find meaningful information that indicated how the societal and cultural context had constructed these women's lives in a particular way. Upon further analysis, these experiences appeared to fall into themes that characterised much of the study data. I took back transcripts of the interviews and a summary of the final themes to participants for feedback and verification. Finally, I described each individual case according to these themes.

#### **3.4.4.2 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

Narrative analysis means to study experience via the stories that participants tell and remember (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004). Narrative analysis was well-suited to this study, because this method recognises the extent to which the stories participants tell provide insights about their lived experiences (Sandelowski, 1994:23-33; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). Merriam (2002:286) also states: "Narratives are participants' accounts of experiences that are in story format." I used this method accordingly to learn more about the experiences of women who are working mother teachers. A psychological approach was used to a degree to explore participants' thoughts and motivations as unique human beings. This methodological approach is holistic in that it acknowledged the cognitive, affective and motivational dimensions of meaning making (Merriam, 2002:287). It was possible to maintain the intended meaning and voice of participants, because their stories remained the central focus (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; 2000). I preferred an inductive reasoning process to interpret and structure the meanings that derived from the data. I used the data to generate new knowledge (Crotty, 2003).

In this research, I collected stories by choosing a format based on the work on narratives of Clandinin and Connelly (1994). This analytical process helped me to understand and make sense of motherhood and teaching, using a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to examine raw data. The terms are: personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This set of terms creates a metaphorical three-dimensional narrative inquiry space, with temporality along one dimension, the personal and the social along a second dimension, and place along a third (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The inquiry about mother teachers' experiences had temporal dimensions and addressed temporal matters. This analysis focused on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and the personal and the social occurred in specific places or sequences of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). This process allowed me to transform the actual experiences of participants into a communicable representation of it.

Specific attention was also given to the four directions in this inquiry, namely (1) inward (internal conditions of participants, such as feelings, experiences, hopes and reactions); (2) outward (external conditions, such as the environment); (3) backward; and (4) forward which refer to temporality (past, present and future). Clandinin and Connelly (1994:50) believe: "Any event, or thing, has a past, a present as it appears to people and an implied future."

### **3.4.5 METHODOLOGICAL NORMS**

I addressed the claims of trustworthiness as part of an epistemological grounding. The elements for this qualitative research included credibility, thick description, confirmability and auditing.

#### **3.4.5.1 CREDIBILITY**

I enhanced the credibility of this research by three methods.

Firstly, I used a methodology that corresponded to the design with qualitative approaches and included on-going collaborative approaches for discussion and investigation of research questions. I also used a hybrid of data collection methods to understand beliefs, assumptions and biases. Triangulation of data ensured that similar themes emerged.

Secondly, I enhanced credibility through prolonged engagement where I invested sufficient time in learning more about the participants' experiences, and checked for misinformation introduced by distortions either of the participants or myself. I also build a trustful relationship with participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:301).

Thirdly, I asked participants to review transcripts and their synthesis. Researcher bias was limited through the process of debriefing to make sure that I interpreted the data the same way as participants. Thus, I made use of 'member checks' where participants corroborated the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985:313-316).

#### **3.4.5.2 THICK DESCRIPTION**

As the main instrument of this research, I described the context of motherhood and teaching in-depth with ample empirical evidence to develop thick description (Henning et al., 2004:6-7; 85). I complemented this description with a strong theoretical base (social constructionist feminism) and a coherent convincing argument based on both empirical evidence, and an understanding of mother teachers' experiences as expressed in lived and told stories. The evidence thus comes from the data collected, compared and triangulated, and from theory that explicated and explained the data (Henning et al., 2004:7).

#### **3.4.5.3 CONFIRMABILITY AND AUDITING**

The data and the interpretations of this study were not figments of my own experiences, beliefs and perceptions. Schwandt (1997:164) points to the fact:

“Researchers need to link assertions, findings, and interpretations to the data themselves in readily discernible ways.” I was aware that I could influence the interviewing situations to a certain degree and therefore realised that all interpretations are subjective. However, in an effort to minimise subjectivity, I did not play a passive role, but interjected with appropriate questions to keep the interview on track. I asked related questions during different parts of the interview, and kept searching for a deeper understanding of interpretations. In this type of qualitative research, bias can and should be expected. However, the best way to circumvent this vexing problem was to realise that bias exists (thus not expecting ‘confirmability’), and to ask multiple questions at various times during the interview in an attempt to limit biased interpretations.

Schwandt (1997:6) also states: “Auditing is a procedure whereby a third-party examiner systematically reviews the audit trail maintained by the inquirer.” The audit trail for this inquiry included verbatim accounts, interview transcripts, interview guides, list of interviewees and personal notes captured in the Addenda for perusal.

To sum up, I established trustworthiness through findings that I articulated in a logical manner. These findings were also accessible to a critical reader. The relation between the actual data and the conclusions was explicit and claims were rendered believable.

### **3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

This section gives a brief overview of ethical principles and standards. My responsibility to participants included aspects such as avoidance of harm, ensuring confidentiality, reciprocity and feedback of the findings.

### **3.5.1 AVOIDANCE OF HARM**

I conducted this research project with minimum amount of risk, and therefore, the risk of harm to participants was negligible. The sum of potential benefits to participants and the importance of the knowledge gained were outweighed the risk of harm to participants, and thus supported the decision to carry out the research (Shrader-Frechette, 1994). I was obligated to remove any undesirable consequences of participation. Potential risks or problems that might be involved in the future, that might not have been anticipated, were made clear to participants at the outset. I protected the participants from physical, mental and social harm. Narrative interviews on sensitive topics could have had provoked powerful emotional responses from participants. Professional help was available, had referral been necessary.

### **3.5.2 ENSURING CONFIDENTIALITY**

Protecting participants from harm included confidentiality to guarantee that no participant would be identifiable from the research data, report or any subsequent publications. In ensuring confidentiality, I did not report private data that identified participants. Schumacher and McMillan (2001:479) state clearly: "Researchers have a dual responsibility: protection of the participants' confidences from other persons in the setting whose private information might enable them to identify them and protection of the informants from the general reading public." One of the safest ways of ensuring anonymity was not to record the names of the participants at all. Categories of sensitive information requiring anonymity were the following: (1) information that could have damaged participants' financial standing, employability or reputation; (2) staff record information that could have lead to stigmatisation or discrimination; and (3) any information about participants' psychological well-being or mental health. I assured participants that the data collected from them were safeguarded. Thus, I did not disclose the

information collected from participants to a school or the public in a way that could have identified the participants.

### **3.5.3 RECIPROCITY AND FEEDBACK OF RESULTS**

There was reciprocity in what participants gave and what they received from participation in this qualitative research project. I am indebted to participants for sharing their experiences. Reciprocity entailed giving time to help out, providing informal feedback, tutoring and being a good listener.

After collecting the data from participants, I carefully explained the nature of the research project to them for a second time. Debriefing was an attempt to remove any misconceptions participants had about the study. This was an extremely important element in conducting the research study. I worded the explanation of the study in such a way that participants who felt that they had been deceived did not feel foolish or embarrassed. It was beneficial for both participants and me to review the data. I have also made all the possible attempts to contact participants once the entire data collection was completed, being obligated to report exactly and honestly, what the findings were to gain truthful information and to carry out the responsibilities of the profession. Participants received feedback on the research findings, because this was a form of recognition and gratitude to participants for their participation in this study.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

I used a narrative research design to capture the meaning of participants' multiple role experiences as expressed in lived and told stories. This qualitative approach allowed me to learn more about the participants' relations with themselves and their societal and cultural context. I addressed the claims of trustworthiness as part of an epistemological grounding. I also described how I have implemented ethical features to carry out my responsibilities as an



instrument. The next chapter covers the analysis of data in the form of participants' narratives. I compared and triangulated the data gained from interviews, reflexive journal entries and observational field notes.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS OF MOTHER TEACHERS' NARRATIVES**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

In the previous chapter, I discussed the research methodology, namely the qualitative fieldwork for this inquiry. The central focus of this chapter is the narratives of mother teachers in which I analyse the data. The analysis focuses on mother teachers and their engagement with the social world, and how they interpret the fulfilment of the multiple roles of being mother teachers. The analysis proceeds according to themes, which were constructed as part of the analysis process based on questions asked during the narrative interviews.

#### **4.2 DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND PARTICIPANTS**

I carried out this inquiry in a city in the east of Gauteng. After identifying the site, I contacted the school principals from four private institutions to gain permission for the research (Appendix A). All the school principals granted me official approval to observe mother teachers and to conduct narrative interviews in April 2005 (Appendix B & Appendix C). Thereafter, permission from the management committees was received (Appendix D).

I recruited participants by using a judgement sampling technique in a non-random manner, by means of a judgement based on knowledge about the population and selected participants who could provide the best information to address the aims of this research (Silverman, 2004). I selected the sample based on personal judgement and expertise. Due to the nature of this investigation, the sample population was intentionally small so as to capture the in-depth stories over an extended period. I purposively selected four participants from similar white middle socio-economic middle socio-economic class who met the

requirements for this inquiry (see Chapter 3 in which the requirements were discussed). The main criteria were that they had to be working mothers and full-time teachers. All participants had had full-time professional careers prior to having children. The participants, aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years, had not been promoted during their appointments, and each had a child, with ages ranging from three months to two years. All were in committed relationships both at the time of falling pregnant and at the time of the interview. The participants had resumed work after the birth of their children, after various periods of maternity leave.

Participation in this research project was voluntary and confidential, and I informed participants of this prior to data collection. The research started with the establishment of a clear and fair agreement that clarified obligations and responsibilities. When participants fully understood the implications of participation and were aware of their rights in the research process, they signed a letter of consent (Appendix E). When participants declared themselves willing to participate, confidentiality was guaranteed and they were permitted the choice to decide to withdraw at any stage if they wished not to continue in this research.

### **4.3 DATA ANALYSIS**

The empirical data were subjected to a content and narrative analysis to obtain a coherent understanding of the perceptions and understanding constructed by the participants.

#### **4.3.1 QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS**

In qualitative content analysis, there was immersion in text to reveal aspects of how participants made sense of their lives and lived experiences through thematic organisation. The participants' transcripts were individually analysed. This was followed by a cross-case analysis to discover how widespread the

experiences were among all of the participants. To understand what their experiences were, I coded the participants' transcripts to find meaningful information that indicated how the societal and cultural context had influenced these women's lives in a particular way. Upon further analysis, these experiences appeared to fall into four themes that characterised much of the study data. Finally, I described each individual case according to these themes.

#### **4.3.2 NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

I collected stories by choosing a format based on the work on narratives of Clandinin and Connelly (1994). This analytical process helped me to understand and make sense of motherhood and teaching, using a three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to examine raw data. The terms are: personal and social (interaction); past, present and future (continuity); combined with the notion of place (situation). This analysis focused on the personal and the social in a balance appropriate to the inquiry; and the personal and the social occurred in specific places or sequences of places (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

#### **4.4 NARRATIVE ACCOUNTS OF THEMES**

Stories of the in-depth narrative interviews were audiotaped and transcribed shortly after they had been conducted. The eight narrative interviews developed into descriptive portraits of motherhood constructs. I gathered personal information, as well as information about the school environment, from each participant, in order to place their responses into context. The conversations and interactions with the participants made up the bulk of data used in the analysis. I maintained the intended meaning and voice of participants, because their stories remained the central focus (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994; 2000). The data presented below are the result of the process described, and represent key themes from the personal narrative interviews, reflexive journal entries and

observational field notes, but the names and characters are fictitious to protect the participants, their families and the private institutions.

#### **4.4.1 THE MOTHER TEACHER'S ROLE TO CARE FOR CHILDREN**

Green (1991) describes the teacher in terms such as nurturer, guide, parent, matriarch, moral force and protector. Curriculum 2005 is the name of the National Curriculum Framework introduced into schools in 1998, based on the concept of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). The revised National Curriculum Statement of 2005 also visualises teachers who are qualified, competent, dedicated and caring. Potts, Armstrong and Masterton (1995) take the view that teachers are key agents in any schooling system, and the reconstruction of education in our country will require teachers to discover or rediscover their roles as teachers. Growth in professionalism cannot take place without teachers' commitment. The National Education Policy Act (1996:42-43) outlines the various roles of teachers, namely being: mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of Learning Programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and pastors, assessors and subject specialists. In South Africa, with its discriminatory past, cultivating empathy between all community members who are part of the education process of different races, social classes, gender, religions and ability is a challenge for teachers. The roles of mothers and teachers in our society share many similarities. The roles of being a mother are to be caring, nurturing, soft spoken, selfless and sacrificing martyrs (Ribbens, 1994; Rogers & White, 1998; Arendell, 2000). One of the themes that come into stark clarity, when transcribing the narratives and delving into their analysis, is the mother teacher's care not just for her own child but also for the learners she facilitates.

Christina said:

"My dream came true when I became a teacher. I chose this career with the idea that if I had my own children, I would have time off during the afternoons and

holidays to be with them, even if I had some schoolwork to do. I care not just for my own child, but also the learners I facilitate. I nurture, protect, guide and love both. I have a strong obligation towards my child and feel responsible for the success of my learners' future, especially my grade twelve learners. I have a natural instinct to love, help and facilitate the learners to live out their full potential in the world. Life is short and we, as teachers, must make sure that the learners in our classes know where they are going so as to make the best of themselves and their future. Teachers should set enough time aside to care for the learners. A teacher must put the learners' needs before her own in order to be a 'good teacher' who knows the needs, desires and feelings of the learners."

*(Christina, Responses, Narrative 1)*

Marilize cares about both her own child and the learners whom she teaches. She stated:

"My goal in life was to become a veterinary surgeon due to my love for animals, and not to be a teacher. However, when I started to teach with my mother, I loved it and thought teaching was a dream career for women. I live out my talents and creativity in the classroom and on the field. I am concerned about what the learners do and how they feel. It feels as if they are my children, and I am there to protect, care for and nurture them. I care for both. My child and my learners are important to me."

*(Marilize, Responses, Narrative 2)*

Daleen's narrative reveals her role as a mother and a teacher. She claimed:

"I worked long hours before my daughter, Cayla, was born. When Cayla was thirteen months old, I went back to school and chose other alternatives. Teaching is my passion and I, therefore, prefer to teach at schools without extra-mural

activities. I enjoy being at school and believe that I made the right decision to go back to work. Cayla is able to socialise with other toddlers and I am productive, doing things that I prefer to do. It is not always easy, but I feel that Cayla copes with being away from me. I am secure and find stimulation through interaction with the staff and learners. It is a privilege for me to work with the learners, because I try to develop the learners in a physical, cognitive, emotional, social, moral and spiritual way that contributes to becoming a positive, competent and confident citizen. I enjoy my role as a mother and a teacher. My life is complete. I have learners in my class, and a daughter at home. I care for both, both are important to me. I feel that it is my duty and responsibility to care for them as a mother and a teacher. My maternal instinct is strong and that enables me to care for them in the way I should, to be good at being a mother and a teacher.”

*(Daleen, Responses, Narrative 3)*

Leona also feels obligated to care for and nurture her child and the learners at school. She said:

“I went back to school when my son, Eduan, was three and a half months old. I felt sad leaving Eduan at home, not knowing what he was doing. Frankelina, my husband’s grandmother, looked after Eduan, but passed away when Eduan was almost five months old. I then employed Madira, as a full-time nanny, after three weeks. I preferred to go back to work, although I was not satisfied with the idea of leaving Eduan alone with Madira. However, it made me want to go to work, and to come home after a tiring day to spend time with my family.”

“I prefer high school teaching, because I get stimulation from the subjects I teach as well as from the learners in my class. I go the extra mile for my learners because they are my priority. I receive a salary for caring, loving and supporting them. I am a mother and a teacher. This means that I am the primary caregiver of children. In other words, I need to nurture, take care of and protect children. I

therefore feel responsible for assisting the learners with learning difficulties on a Monday and Wednesday afternoon.”

*(Leona, Responses, Narrative 4)*

Analysing each mother teacher’s narrative in its uniqueness, the narratives served to demonstrate and prove similarities throughout that the roles of mothers and teachers are traditionally associated with nurturing, guiding, parenting, matriarchy, loving, emotion and sensitivity (Ribbens, 1994; Rogers & White, 1998; Arendell, 2000). The theme of care shows the interwoven nature of the roles as mothers and teachers. As mothers and teachers they felt an obligation to protect, care for and nurture children, whether their own children or learners who were children of other parents (Storr, 1988). Mother teachers tended to prioritise another’s needs above their own and are affected in their choices by the needs, desires and feelings of other people. As mother teachers, they commit themselves both physically and emotionally to the expectations of their societal and cultural context (Gordon, 1990). This leads me to the second theme, namely the mother teacher’s feelings of anxiety about being inadequate.

#### **4.4.2 THE MOTHER TEACHER’S FEELINGS OF ANXIETY ABOUT BEING INADEQUATE**

The modern workplace forces teachers to participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities. Education is critical for the survival of the entire society. Greater community participation in the life of the school is required and it is essential that the school contribute to the life of the community. The role of teachers as community members and citizens is to promote healthy development in the classroom, school, community and societal environment. This means that teachers need to be concerned about the whole context and environment in which learning occurs in order to reflect on, and to



get in touch with, their own and other people's life experiences under different social, cultural, political and economic circumstances.

Society also demands that mothers participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities. However, mothers have entered the out-of-home workforce and at the same time, their societal and cultural context expects them to maintain their traditional gender responsibility for the 'second shift', namely household work and childcare. As teachers, these mothers deal with other people's children and claim that they know what the needs of children and parents are due, to the fact that they have undergone professional training. Ironically, when it comes to their own children, they sometimes suppress what they know by sacrificing the needs of their own children for the sake of taking care of the needs of other people's children. This leaves the mother teachers with feelings of guilt and inadequacy. By looking at specific comments and responses from the participants, these narratives repeated the theme of inadequacy. The challenge for mother teachers is to engage in a constant search for their own development. Berger and Luckmann (1966) state that there is a multitude of relationships and expectations of 'others' that further define mother teachers in order to get at who they are.

Christina questions her ability to be a 'good nurturing mother' to her own child. She also wonders how a teaching career will fit in with her family responsibilities. She said:

"I experience different feelings about being part of two worlds. I feel depressed trying to balance my multiple roles. This makes me feel guilty about not spending enough time with my family. I feel worthless, because I am not with Nicky until she is asleep. Consequently, I experience tension, because I am not there to take my daughter to her doctors' appointments or to the clinic. I also experience anxiety due to tiredness. There is no time to unwind; I have to present a mother figure. I am impatient, because I am always in a hurry. I work overtime and am

overworked. At the end of the day, I am frustrated, because I cannot do my best in all my multiple roles. I feel dissatisfied and angry, desperate for any help, because I know that I am not always as successful as I would like to be in all my multiple roles. I feel that I neglect Nicky tremendously, because I have a responsibility to teach other parents' children. It feels as if I look after the children of other parents better than I look after my own daughter."

"My feelings of guilt started when Nicky was still a baby. A women's body is there to carry out mothering functions, and I could not fulfil my role as a mother. I was not there to breastfeed her. That upsets me; it feels as if, as a mother, I cannot do the basic things I should. I constantly feel guilty and inadequate. It feels that I am not good enough at being a mother and a teacher, because I cannot give more of myself to fulfil my multiple role expectations. Therefore, I describe my days, since I have gone back to school after the birth of Nicky as a negative experience. My days are awful and miserable. I feel over-stressed, because little attention is paid to the needs of mother teachers. I struggle to integrate my two worlds of being a mother and a teacher. I do not want to neglect any of my duties, but I feel that I do. I am worried about Nicky when I am at school."

"I experience great ambivalence towards the expectations of my two worlds. There is no greater compliment than when people close to you tell you that you are a 'good mother' and a 'good teacher'. But I have not received a compliment like this. Society has expectations of me. I am guided by two apparently conflicting aims where a gain in one area means a loss in another area. Sometimes I choose between these two roles unconsciously, just to finish my duties, and to complete all the tasks that everybody expects from me as a mother and a teacher. I define this as 'role conflict'. I focus more on my schoolwork. My family is supposed to come first, but they come last. I struggle to balance my family expectations with my work duties. My baby of seven months needs my attention, but I am exhausted when I go home after a stressful day. I go home to

start with my 'second shift'. My work never stops, because I have multiple role expectations to fulfil."

*(Christina, Responses, Narrative 1)*

Christina's feelings of inadequacy stem from her desire to balance properly her multiple roles as a mother and a teacher. Spain and Bianchi (1996) report that feelings of uncertainty are more pronounced when obligations as a mother and obligations as a teacher do not coincide. This sense of uncertainty concerning multiple roles echoes strongly in Christina's narrative, because she believes that she is failing as a mother. The first reason why Christina interprets her situation in terms of a failure in responsibility, is that she is unable to take all her multiple roles on without feeling inadequate. Secondly, her motherhood and work demands are in great conflict. This then affects who she is as a mother, because of her own construct of a 'good mother'. She feels trapped in trying to resolve her dilemmas and inadequate as a mother (Duncan & Barlow, 2002). She is desperately unprepared for her multiple role. Her career dreams are shattered by uncertainty about who she is (Moulton, 1986; Ennis, 1990; 1997). She sets high standards and expectations for herself as a mother teacher and is worried about failing not only herself, but also 'others'. She sees the world, which includes the parents, teachers and the school principal, as against her which is a manifestation of a faltering self-image and is linked to the feelings of inadequacy (Swanepoel et al., 2003).

Marilize's feelings of inadequacy in her role as a mother also became evident. She claimed:

"I perceive that my multiple role expectations are mutually contradictory and exclusive. I am driven to succeed, determined to take the latest challenge that has presented itself to me and turn it around into something spectacular, but it turns out that my multiple role expectations have contributed to child neglect. My

family and work duties interfere with each other and thus I have to juggle them. The physical demands of family and work, the hours, the energy and the commitment, make it difficult to be a successful wife, parent and mother teacher. I mark portfolio assignments and tests until late at night to ensure that other people are satisfied with my performance. It feels as if I please other people instead of my own family. I feel awful, because Desmond, my son, has chickenpox and he needs my attention and love, but I am too committed to my schoolwork to give him the necessary attention. I do not have enough time to nurture and care for him during school terms. I cannot strengthen the connection between Desmond and myself, and I rely on other people to interact with my child. This makes me feel insecure and uncaring. Therefore, being in the workplace is a constant source of frustration to me. I know Desmond needs me full-time. I also know that I cannot do justice to my marriage and son as a homemaker, and to a teaching career, at the same time. I do not know how to fulfil my multiple role expectations.”

“I feel overwhelmed by the expectations that ‘others’ have of me, because the expectations ‘others’ have of me have become too much to fulfil. I struggle to mesh my family and work roles. With all the changes, and the coming changes at school, it is stressful for me to be a ‘good mother’ and a ‘good teacher’ when I am tired most of the time. I find it difficult to provide Jan and Desmond with a healthy home life, because I do not have enough time during the day. I am too busy making sure obligations are met, because time does not stand still for me. I have too many expectations to fulfil. I am unable to relax, I worry throughout my day, non-stop. I try to make time for my family, but I find it difficult.”

*(Marilize, Responses, Narrative 2)*

Marilize's narrative illustrates how mother teachers' may experience their perceived weaknesses. Such negative perception about their perceived

inadequacy may result in mother teachers undervaluing the rich experiences they bring to their family and to the teaching profession.

Leona expressed her inadequate feelings during her two narrative interview sessions. She stated:

“I feel guilty, I am worried and sometimes am I frustrated, but I try to manage my feelings by convincing myself that most mother teachers feel guilty and stressed. I worry about whether Eduan is warm enough, whether the bath water is too hot or too cold, and I am worried about Eduan’s health. I also feel sad if I have to leave Eduan alone with Madira in the morning. When Eduan smiles at me when I say goodbye, my heart starts to crumble. However, at least Tony, my husband, is there to look after Eduan when I go to work. Tony leaves for work after me and he has the freedom to work at home or to work at his office in Boksburg. It feels to me as a mother teacher as if I am satisfying the needs of the learners I teach instead of the needs of my own child.”

“I try to be successful in my multiple roles. I accept that I cannot do everything, and that some things are beyond my control. I realise that I cannot be ‘perfect’ and therefore, I threw away my feelings of guilt. A ‘perfect mother teacher’ does not exist, it is just a myth. I do what I think is good for Eduan, due to the experiences that I have gained from other mother teachers. They have set unrealistic standards for themselves. I do not compare myself with other mother teachers. I believe in myself and build on my own motherhood-image with realistic goals.”

*(Leona, Responses, Narrative 4)*

Leona’s feelings of inadequacy that she is failing as a mother correspond with those described by Gerdes (1972). Leona may be described as a ‘conflicted parent’. In an attempt to shrug off her guilt she must invent strategies to make

good her feelings of inadequacy, which at best mean that she feels guilty only about half of the time. She admits that she experiences feelings like guilt and stress in trying to balance her multiple role expectations. Her experiences as a mother teacher are hardly unique, compared to the stories of Christina and Marilize.

What emerges from the data of these mother teachers' narratives are that they feel a strong obligation toward the development of children, a feeling that can result in uncertainty about meeting multiple role expectations. Because of the complementary but also simultaneous conflicting and exclusive multiple role expectations, mothers feel compelled to embrace the mothering role, yet they feel eternally inferior within it (Grogan, 1996:111; Walzer, 1997). The participants from my observations fulfil their roles as teachers, yet sometimes they wonder and feel stressed about the choices that they have made in the past (Storr, 1988; Glasser, 1998). Motherhood becomes a time of confusion, turmoil and conflict for the mother, her family and her work. It seems as if universal role expectations of women and motherhood create barriers and contribute to the escalation of feelings of inadequacy (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982; Gans, 1993). Indeed, it seems that society has never truly viewed women as individual citizens endowed by the constitution with inalienable rights, because society restricts women to preserve traditional role expectations, despite the requirements of a modern economy (Duncan & Barlow, 2002).

Daleen's emerging self-identity and the positive view she has of herself as a mother was evidenced in her narratives. Daleen is not discouraged about being a mother teacher. She is lively, humorous and self-confident. When I encouraged her to tell her narrative, she pointed out:

"I got depressed having to stay at home to baby-sit Cayla. I was neither a 'good mother' nor a 'good wife' at that period. When I started to work after the birth of Cayla, I said to myself I am not going to feel guilty about who I am, what my job

entails and how I cope with my multiple roles as a mother teacher. I am positive and believe that I am a 'good mother' even if I am working outside the home. I am successful in both my two worlds, because I rise to my greatest possible heights in talent and soul development."

"I battled to have a child and was surprised when I heard that I was pregnant. I stopped teaching for eighteen months. Teaching stressed me, and Charles, the doctor, recommended that I should look after Cayla and myself. To start a family was more important for Anton and me, than to facilitate other peoples' children. I am honest with my family members and inform them about my daily activities. I therefore rely on their help and tell them exactly what I want from them. I want to work smarter and not harder. I try not to worry when I delegate some of my authority to someone else. People around me must accept that I cannot do more than my best. Then I am not myself nor am I cheerful. I complete my tasks to the best of my ability. I see myself, however, not as the domesticated type of woman, but I do some of the things that a mother should do. I regard my family responsibilities as an opportunity and am thankful for them, even if they are challenging."

"You must understand yourself. You must know what you are capable of doing or not. Mothers must start to teach themselves what is important in life and what is not before they can be successful in their family and work roles. I do not feel guilty about what other people say about who and what I am, because I am doing my best. I enjoy my life because nobody can do it for me. I am not going to feel guilty about the things that are expected of me. I have made peace with the mother that I am and want to be."

*(Daleen, Responses, Narrative 3)*

Daleen sees herself as a 'good mother teacher' with special talents and feels positive about her abilities that are valued by her husband. Her perceptions and

views are in stark contrast to those of the other participants and will be reflected on later in Chapter 5.

#### **4.4.3 THE ROLE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS VERSUS THE ROLE OF THE FATHER'S PARTICIPATION IN PARENTHOOD**

The relationships between the teacher and parents are different to what was standard a decade ago (Schulze & Dzivhani, 2002). Parents are becoming more involved in the school sphere in order to gain greater understanding of teachers and to feel more positive about their abilities to help their children (Romi & Freund, 1999). An increasing number of working fathers also demand involvement in childrearing, and this may be advantageous to working mother teachers. Fathers are becoming more involved, because they built up their skills and self-confidence in order to care for their children.

The rights and duties of parents are set out in the South African Schools Act (1996:6) and in provincial legislation (School Education Act, 1995:5). The state no longer limits parent involvement as a means of financing schools, but recognises that parents have roles to fulfil in the education of the youth. The National Curriculum Statement of 2005 demands that the teacher seek new ways to work with parents. Berger (1991), Dauber and Epstein (1993:53), Davies (1993:206), Stormshak, Bierman, McMahon and Lengua (2000) and Oosthuizen (2002) agree that a partnership between the teacher and parents benefits all role players, namely the learners, parents, teachers and schools.

Christina observes that to achieve a good relationship between parents and herself is difficult. She claimed:



“I feel over-stressed because teacher development programmes have not trained me to work with parents. In my experience, the parents are meddling in my duties.”

*(Christina, Responses, Narrative 1)*

This means that Christina is often unable to offer parents a variety of ways in which to become involved at school. Neither is she able to assist parents in their parenting tasks.

However, Marilize, Daleen and Leona involve parents at school.

Marilize stated:

“Parent involvement in schools is important for learner development and achievement. I assist the parents in promoting a positive attitude towards their children’s education.”

*(Marilize, Responses, Narrative 2)*

Daleen confirmed this when she said:

“The parents are interested in getting to know the teachers. Parents then find a new appreciation for the commitment and skill of teachers. They also improve their own parenting abilities, especially those who feel insecure. Some parents feel insecure because they never had the opportunity to attend school when they were young. I try to understand the circumstances under which they live. I focus on the parents’ educational background, ability and their social class.”

*(Daleen, Responses, Narrative 3)*

Leona highlights the importance of family conditions and parent involvement in schools for her role as teacher. She stated:

“Parent involvement increases my understanding of the learners in their specific societal and cultural context. I experience positive feelings about teaching, because my work is manageable and the learners show commitment and dedication toward their schoolwork. Perhaps most important, parental involvement leads to feelings of excitement and determination to apply my insights in my roles as a teacher.”

*(Leona, Responses, Narrative 4)*

Together with Dauber and Epstein (1993:63), I conclude that regardless of parental education, family size, student ability or school level, parents are more likely to become involved in their children’s education if they perceive that the school has firm policies aimed at involving parents at home and at school. Teachers have a central role to encourage parents to develop a sense of ownership of what happens in education. Parents must be engaged in saying what this ownership means and how it matters to them.

Although the research reported here is limited in scope, analyses of data also indicate that the value system of partnered mothers show both uniformity and diversity. The value system of partnered mothers appears uniform, because society views mothers as being biologically the primary caregiver to see to the child’s needs. How mothers substantively exercise this responsibility, varies however. Mother teachers also have varying feelings about their husband’s participation and involvement in parenthood.

Christina said:

“I feel that I abuse Ruth’s goodness. As a husband, he shares in some of the household duties and he helps me with my schoolwork even though he is also working and is tired in the afternoons. However, he complains when he helps me. It feels to me as if Ruth does not want to help me. I experience pressure to take on my role of primary caregiver. My responsibilities have increased since having Nicky, because I am mainly responsible for the household duties, and I also have to fulfil Nicky’s physical and emotional needs. I have to do it; I do not have a choice. Ruth, on the other hand, has a choice. He can decide for himself how he wants to take on his role of fatherhood.”

*(Christina, Responses, Narrative 1)*

Marilize feels upset because she has to retain the primary role as a caretaker for her child while her husband’s role is more play-orientated. She pointed out:

“Jan is a wonderful husband, because he assists me with my household and school duties. He does not mind helping me, but he would rather work in the garage, or lie on a couch in front of the television. I would also like to do other things, but I am mainly responsible for the household duties and Desmond’s personal needs. I retain the primary role as a caretaker for Desmond, while Jan is his playmate. Mothering is in my genes. It upsets me when Jan takes over with Desmond. It hurts me not being part of my son’s life and I feel jealous when Desmond prefers his dad’s attention. I also feel guilty, because I cannot afford to play with Desmond for an hour or more like Jan. I have schoolwork to do.”

*(Marilize, Responses, Narrative 2)*

It is clear that Christina and Marilize remain the primary caretakers as their interactions are significantly more functional, while the fathers’ interactions are

more play-orientated. In general, parental responsibility for childcare is often associated exclusively with mothers (McBride & Mills, 1993; Pleck, 1997). Women largely carry out unpaid domestic work and childcare. This leads that mothers are overburdened by both paid and unpaid work.

Daleen and Leona share almost the same feelings concerning the help of their husband's.

Daleen appreciates her husband's help and care. She said:

"I appreciate my husband's help and care. He is always there when I need him. He is reliable, accepts responsibility and shows a serious attitude towards helping me to fulfil my multiple roles. Through his support, I am able to express my individuality as a mother teacher. The fact that Anton helps me does not bother me, nor do I feel guilty or jealous about it. My responsibilities have not increased much at home, because I give Nthabiseng, the domestic worker, orders about what to do and how to do it. I have the free and unrestricted use of all the things which are necessary to my fullest mental, spiritual and physical unfoldment."

*(Daleen, Responses, Narrative 3)*

In reviewing Daleen's experiences of her husband's participation and involvement in parenthood, it becomes apparent that her husband is often the inspiration for balancing her multiple roles (Steyn, 1990). Along with emotional support from her husband, she finds support from people beyond her family. Daleen is inspired to fulfil her multiple roles in a variety of ways through the help of 'others'.

Leona also relies greatly on the help of her husband, Tony. She stated:

“I rely greatly on the help of Tony, even if I am providing the most family care. I appreciate the fact that he arranges his lifestyle around my multiple roles. The two of us try to do things together as husband and wife. It is fun; there is not a night that goes by without both of us being involved in bathing Eduan. However, I feel that my duties have increased since having Eduan. My duties are far greater after the birth of Eduan and I have just enough time during the day to meet my obligations.”

*(Leona, Responses, Narrative 4)*

Society sees the nurturing of children as a choice for male partners (Carey & Knight, 1990; Pleck, 1997). But the more it becomes the norm for both parents to stay involved with their children, the less mother teachers' family obligations will negatively affect their advancement in schools, and the more it may increase the child's feelings of paternal acceptance (Kung & Farrell, 2000). Based on the aforementioned data, it appears that involvement with children at home and at school is a vital link in the role of a mother teacher. It is therefore important to understand the father's participation and involvement in parenthood, because when there is a gendered division of family care in the home, school principals cannot implement real equality management effectively in the school sphere.

In reading the mother teachers' narratives, it became clear that mother teachers want change, and are searching for ideas and strategies through which they could come to terms with who they are when balancing their multiple role expectations (Storr, 1988; Pretorius, 1990; Walzer 1997). This leads me to the last theme, namely the role of the school principal to ensure that the needs, interest and motives of all mother teachers are respected.

#### **4.4.4 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN UNDERSTANDING HOW THE MOTHER TEACHER EXPERIENCES HER GENDER IN EDUCATION**

The mother teachers experience different feelings toward school principals as key agents of equality management. Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) emphasise using appropriate styles of leadership and management, according to the particular needs of the situation.

Christina feels that her school principal does not have the ability to adapt his leadership style to the needs of the situation and people. She claimed:

“My experience is that I do not get enough support from Pieter, the school principal. Pieter does not influence me to willingly and enthusiastically direct my efforts and abilities towards attaining defined school goals. It started when I asked for maternity leave. The year when I got pregnant, Pieter’s positive attitude changed towards female teachers. He did not allow female teachers to go on maternity leave, unless this was viewed as unpaid maternity leave. I was unhappy and approached Pieter the next day to confirm my salary for the following months. In my view Pieter used me. My talents, potential and commitment are not appreciated. He treats me as if I have broken the school’s rules and laws. Pieter seems to be unaware that I have multiple role expectations to fulfil.”

“I feel that Pieter does not have the ability to adapt his leadership style to the needs of the situation and people. He is unapproachable, because he ignores the fact that he employs mostly young and unmarried female teachers. Pieter is not interested in my personal needs, feelings, emotions or the difficulties that I face. He does not have the ability to tap into my soul. He is only concerned about what I do in my classroom. I then have to agree with his decisions, and do what is expected of me as a teacher, and not as a mother teacher who wants to be the

best in both worlds. Pieter is a principal who is self-centred, too strict, unreasonable, unfair and a leader without emotional intelligence. He cannot enhance mother teachers' confidence by understanding and dealing appropriately with their emotions and concerns."

*(Christina, Responses, Narrative 1)*

Marilize displays the same feelings as Christina about her school principal. She said:

"The school as a business focuses on itself, the learners and the parents, and does not attend to the needs of mother teachers. Martin, the school principal, perceives me as a production machine and a cost factor. He has a negative attitude towards me; my feelings and emotions are not truly valued. This process results in me being overworked, tired, unfulfilled and stressed because he treats me like a male teacher."

"He is not sympathetic. He is there to carry out his responsibilities, to delegate and not to care or encourages. He is not a human-human leader; he is an autocratic manager. In my experience, Martin does not want to see the problems I face. When I have a problem my hands are cut off and the battle is lost. Martin does not support me with my multiple roles. I find it unfair, because Martin does not find a method, or create a system and implement it to support mother teachers at school. However, I appreciate the fact that Martin allows me to teach, because I have not completed my teaching diploma yet."

*(Marilize, Responses, Narrative 2)*

The narratives of Christina and Marilize confirm that the school principals of the two schools may find themselves trapped in twentieth century Fordist and Taylorist modes of thinking and operating. In an autocratic leadership style,

school principals dominate the teachers' thinking and behaviour. The autocratic leader makes all the decisions and he or she alone determines the policy. These leaders determine the roles of the mother teachers and set goals towards which they will work. The autocratic leadership style is characterised by the fact that there is only one-way communication between the school principal and the mother teachers (Zand, 1997). The narratives of these two participants reveal that the school principals are determined to have their own way to ensure that set goals are attained. The school principals have created needs among the mother teachers which previously did not exist. These school principals realise their own needs through working with mother teachers. In this leadership style, the school principals are inclined to dominate and have difficulty in working with mother teachers who have personal problems, feelings, needs and experiences.

Daleen and Leona had different experiences when it came to their school principals.

Daleen stated:

"My general perspective of school principals is when they climb the corporate ladder, they tend to be self-centred. However, Dave is an exception. Most teachers, male or female, want to be his followers, because he treats them with respect and dignity. The way he carries out his duties does not clash with his teachers' personalities. I have a positive relationship with Dave, because he is concerned about my individual needs and my involvement in decision-making processes. He makes me feel as if I add value, because my views are truly necessary and my contributions are highly appreciated. I tend to give my best in return. It is a give and take relationship. He is kind, sympathetic, fair and respectful, and in return, I am committed, loyal and dedicated."

"I believe that mother teachers should not rely on school principals to support them in balancing their multiple roles. It will not be the school principal's problem



that mother teachers have difficulties in balancing multiple responsibilities. Unfortunately, if mother teachers start to think that it should be the school principal's problem, they will continue to be dissatisfied with the school or any other work environment. I think policies need to change, rather than management processes. To change the policies is the only way to achieve an optimal fit between mother teacher, job, school and environment, so that mother teachers can reach desired levels of satisfaction and performance, and the school can meet its goals."

*(Daleen, Responses, Narrative 3)*

Leona stated in her narratives:

"The experiences I encountered when I returned to work were like an emotional roller-coaster. On the one hand, I developed my personality to the full and took an active part in the social and economic life, and on the other hand, I wanted to be at home and care for my family. However, I looked forward to balancing my multiple roles and saw it as a challenge, because my school principal, Frans, has a positive attitude towards me. My pregnancy has created an opportunity to develop a two-way relationship. Not only does Frans influence me, but I also exert influence over him. We respect each other and both of us strive towards a win-win situation. Frans supports me in my motherhood and teaching duties by creating an atmosphere where I can be honest about my daily problems as a mother teacher. Frans has a firm, but friendly personality. He is truly interested in me, he is supportive and a great leader with excellent management skills."

"I view Frans as a great manager and I believe that he will continue to gain respect from all his teachers. He will make it possible for them to fulfil their personal, financial and work goals. He has the ability to create a vision and excite people to achieve the impossible. I know that he will continue to value his teachers as an asset by striving to reward them with the remuneration system

they value. I want to wake up in the morning to go to school. Frans is a good leader and manager.”

*(Leona, Responses, Narrative 4)*

In the thirty-day period during which I collected data from Daleen and Leona, evidence of a democratic leadership style was noted. Democratic leaders try to influence the mother teachers, but do not attempt to dominate their thinking or behaviour (Maritz, 2002). This style of leadership stresses the necessity for positive and harmonious interpersonal relationships and co-operation in the workplace (Weisner & Millet, 2001). Some school principals make use of this leadership style, because it offers opportunities for contributions by mother teachers to attain goals. Perspectives on motherhood are opened up during meetings and other group discussions where mothers feel free to share their motherhood and teaching experiences. Decisions are then made by means of voluntary and spontaneous communication where the school principal plays an active role in this process (Kotter, 2003). The school principal becomes a personnel manager through developing a ‘we’ approach to school problems. This serves the interest of the entire school community.

When I delved into the narratives of Daleen and Leona, it becomes clear that these school principals recognise that they are key agents in resolving motherhood obstacles effectively, equitable and permanently before promising teaching capacity is lost. They noticed that in the end, their schools would deliver outstanding products to society. These school principals do not limit mother teachers nor do they force their will on them. The school principals provide leadership by means of conviction and reason, and they respect the ideals of the mother teachers that they are leading. Daleen and Leona instinctively give of their best because they work under leaders who express the qualities of good service, empathy and humanity towards ‘others’ in a practical way.

All two leadership styles, namely (1) the autocratic leadership style; and (2) the democratic leadership style, should be applied with tact. No particular leadership style can be regarded as the best style that will bring about an optimal fit between the school's goals and the needs of mother teachers. There seems to be a direct connection between the type of leadership and the type of situation in establishing real equality between male and female.

The data expanded the knowledge of how mother teachers interpret the fulfilment of multiple roles. These narratives highlight the importance of support not only from the state, but also from the school principal.

#### **4.5 CONCLUSION**

The narratives provide an intimate and personal view of lived experiences. The life experiences of the mother teachers emphasise significant aspects that call attention to the numerous problems facing schools in terms of equality management. When I analysed the narratives, many questions arose that needed to be answered. This chapter, therefore, has attempted to add meaning to the understanding of how mother teachers experience and interpret the fulfilment of their multiple roles.

In the next chapter, I discuss and interpret the findings of mother teachers' narratives to bring the data together with the research problem and the theoretical background. The main idea is to unravel the bits of information discussed in this study and to infer the insights in order to draw a number of conclusions.

## CHAPTER 5

### FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The professional woman who becomes a mother often finds herself engulfed by the tension created between the dual role of mother and professional. This tension finds expression in the conflicting but also congruent dimensions that emerge as pressure to meet all personal and societal expectations arises. This study sets out to examine how mother teachers perceive and make sense of the world they live in. Chapter 1 argued that people, and female teachers in particular, often construct images of what they perceive as society's expectations, and then set out these as parameters for that which they think society expects them to be. This is reminiscent of Napoleon Hill's (2003) idea: "I am not who you think I am. I am not who I think I am. I am who I think you think I am." It was also claimed in Chapter 1 that people who consistently try to be what 'others' want them to be have often not come to terms with who they are. They have not accepted themselves for who and what they are but instead they are swimming upstream in society to fulfil their personally constructed multiple role expectations successfully.

Chapter 5 draws on the insights gained from this study and indicate how the findings corroborate the argument formulated in Chapter 1. The main idea is to unravel the bits of information discussed in this study and to infer the insights in order to draw a number of conclusions. As a narrative study in the qualitative tradition, the intention is not to verify or test any specific theory, but to make sense of the emerging patterns revealed through the stories of the mother teachers. This chapter concludes with the methodological limitations, suggestions for further research and also some personal comments regarding the study.

## 5.2 RESEARCH QUESTION AND NARRATIVE CASE STUDY

To be able to explore the experiences of mother teachers fully, it is necessary to analyse the world of mother teachers. Each mother teacher has multiple role expectations to fulfil, yet she perceives and interprets her roles differently. I investigated the duality of the role of mother and teacher.

The key research question of the present study is: **“How does the mother teacher perceive her roles as a good mother and a professional teacher?”**

In social life, the mother teacher narrates her life in story form to develop a definition of self. She uses stories to construct the meaning of the world as she perceives it. The mother teacher’s self-concept is based on her perception of what reality is to her, not on reality itself. Josselson (1990), Grogan (1996:111) and Walzer (1997) state that how the mother teacher perceives her world is how she interprets the fulfilment of multiple role expectations in the societal and cultural context. Insights for this study were enhanced through prolonged engagement to understand the complexities of motherhood and teaching from the stories of mother teachers who live it. This study is concerned with using these stories to draw conclusions about the world of mother teachers, and to explore how entrenched assumptions, cultural values and beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of the dual role of mother and teacher.

## 5.3 MAIN INSIGHTS FROM LITERATURE AND NARRATIVES

In examining the narratives of teachers’ lived experiences, I observed the specific impact of duality on mothers who are also teachers. The narratives revealed four recurring themes. Firstly, the mother teachers explored moments of care and secondly, feelings of inadequacy, which gave me the opportunity to analyse and

describe the world of mother teachers as they try to be both a homemaker and a professional. Thirdly, the narratives revealed the perceptions of mother teachers on 'others', versus the expectations of 'others' concerning mother teachers. Lastly, they show that mother teachers expect from school principals, whether male or female, to succeed in adopting the leadership style most likely to promote success and efficacy for the mother teachers in coming to terms with who they truly are.

### **5.3.1 THE MOTHER TEACHER'S ROLE TO CARE FOR CHILDREN**

Dekker and Lemmer (1993) view teaching as being complementary to a woman's role of wife and mother. A caring and protective approach that makes allowances for compromise, approachableness and human warmth in particular is regarded as being a typically feminine attribute in the educational field (Nussbaum, 1985). Christina stated in her narrative: "I have a natural instinct to love, help and facilitate the learners to live out their full potential in the world." Arendell (2000) claims that among these attributes are a multitude of outstanding characteristic qualities such as consideration, tact, attention to detail, thoroughness and, above all, that calibre of empathy that makes children feel protected. Gordon (1990) and Parvikko (1990) are convinced that many of the needs of children relate to their attitudes, emotions and sense of personal self-esteem. They believe that female teachers are in a better position to meet these needs.

The narratives reveal that the mother teachers chose the educational profession with clear goals that are supported by their dedication to duty and an emphasis on humanitarianism and good human relations. Christina said: "I chose this career with the idea that if I had my own children, I would have time off during the afternoons and holidays to be with them, even if I had some schoolwork to do." Daleen realises the importance of fulfilling her roles and embraced those caring and supportive characteristics of her role as mother teacher. Daleen claimed: "I have learners in my class, and a daughter at home. I care for both, both are

important to me. I feel that it is my duty and responsibility to care for them as a mother and a teacher. My maternal instinct is strong and that enables me to care for them in the way I should, to be good at being a mother and a teacher.”

The narratives show that the mother teachers believe society still insists that they should avoid unfeminine, domineering and autocratic patterns of behaviour because a strong inclination towards self-assertion, competitive approach, a domineering outlook and the ability to fight back are traditionally linked to typically masculine patterns of behaviour. The mother teachers emphasised that male and female have different sex role expectations, and that their role is to strive to establish positive, friendly and supportive relationships among ‘others’. The narratives show, in terms of the duality of the role of mother and teacher, that most mother teachers are particular about high quality behaviour towards children. Leona stated: “I go the extra mile for my learners because they are my priority.” These mother teachers, therefore, possess communication skills and take particular care when individual differences have to be respected. They also show empathy for people. They point out that they will do everything in their power to satisfy the needs of children. Christina said: “A teacher must put the learners’ needs before her own in order to be a ‘good teacher’ who knows the needs, desires and feelings of the learners.” The mother teachers strive then to succeed in maintaining a high standard of morale among children, because they feel that being a ‘good mother teacher’ depends largely on caring for children at home and in the classroom. Marilize claimed: “My child and my learners are important to me.” Leona added: “I am a mother and a teacher. This means that I am the primary caregiver of children. In other words, I need to nurture, take care of and protect children.”

These characteristics provide an enriching and unique component which has an inestimable value and is an indisputable asset to schools in this country (Arendell, 2000). In modern society, it is increasingly acknowledged that femininity and being a woman in the teaching professional context are a positive

aspect. However, many mother teachers experience their role as women in the educational context as being negative. Ironically, mother teachers express those femininity traits that are a prerequisite for fulfilling the role of pastor as set out in the National Education Policy Act (1996:42-43).

### **5.3.2 THE MOTHER TEACHER'S FEELINGS OF ANXIETY ABOUT BEING INADEQUATE**

The literature emphasises that multiple role expectations of women lead them to share pains, trials and life-altering forces (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001). This impedes a healthy family life and work success because many mother teachers feel that they are not doing as well as they would like in either world. Christina stated: "At the end of the day, I am frustrated, because I cannot do my best in all my multiple roles." Marilize said: "I perceive that my multiple role expectations are mutually contradictory and exclusive." Ribbens (1994) and Arendell (2000) reveal that mother teachers have a poor self-image and lack self-assertion and self-confidence. This means that women often experience themselves as being incompetent at being mother teachers (Chodorow & Contratto, 1982). Leona experiences the feelings of inadequacy and said: "It feels to me as a mother teacher as if I am satisfying the needs of the learners I teach instead of the needs of my own child." Ross (1995) claims that when the mother teachers do become successful educators, successful family life becomes next to impossible. Christina stated: "A women's body is there to carry out mothering functions, and I could not fulfil my role as a mother. I was not there to breastfeed her. That upsets me; it feels as if, as a mother, I cannot do the basic things I should." Pretorius (1990) and Schaef (1992) point out that the relationship between the broad spectrums of family duties on the one hand, and career demands on the other hand for mother teachers in education, entail conflicting role demands and expectations. Therefore, Chester (1990) believes that men and women do not only experience the world around them in different ways but the actual



experiences of women are almost completely different from the world which men experience daily.

The narratives of mother teachers reveal that these women had run into a variety of divergent barriers which hampers them in finding themselves. Pretorius (1987; 1990) states that working mothers have conflicting attitudes toward their maternal choices, because they are pursuing a career and are fearful that they are shortchanging their children. According to Ross (1995), this causes the mother teachers to struggle with insecurities within themselves and to experience conflict regarding their identity and the fulfilment of motherhood and teaching roles. Walzer (1997) claims that the mother teachers experience psychological stress which causes unnecessary internal ambivalence. They have feelings of loneliness, isolation and a lack of acceptance. Ennis (1997) finds that the reasons for having these feelings are that unnecessary tension and personal sanctions result in poor self-assertiveness, and feelings of inadequacy and incapacity which then lead to a lack of ambition, poor self-image and self-confidence. Leona said: "I feel guilty, I am worried and sometimes am I frustrated, but I try to manage my feelings by convincing myself that most mother teachers feel guilty and stressed." In Leona's experience, having to cope with a family and a teaching job is taxing, because she has trouble resolving her conflicting roles of wife, mother and teacher. Marilize displays the same feelings and stated: "The physical demands of family and work, the hours, the energy and the commitment, make it difficult to be a successful wife, parent and mother teacher." The narratives reveal that the mother teachers want to balance their multiple role expectations. Christina said: "I feel dissatisfied and angry, desperate for any help, because I know that I am not always as successful as I would like to be in all my multiple roles." She does not want to choose between such starkly exclusive worlds as 'home' and 'work' with children. However, together with most other mother teachers, Christina feels incompetent to influence her own decisions and choices, and she allows 'others' to interfere in her decision-making regarding multiple role fulfilments. The narratives of the mother teachers also

reveal that, like many women of their generation, they have ideas about multiple role expectations that are rooted in their societal and cultural context. Josselson (1990) and Richter (1990) believe that the mother teachers are caught on the cusp - pursuing their careers as responsible citizens, yet chronically fearful that they are failing to fulfil their family's expectations by doing so. Marilize stated: "I am driven to succeed, determined to take the latest challenge that has presented itself to me and turn it around into something spectacular, but it turns out that my multiple role expectations have contributed to child neglect."

There are women who have succeeded in overcoming these hurdles, based on their outstanding personal qualities, qualifications and talents (Ennis, 1997; 1999). Daleen said: "I am successful in both my two worlds, because I rise to my greatest possible heights in talent and soul development." This self-confident mother teacher does not allow herself to be influenced by anachronistic attitudes from society, because she has positive attitudes, feelings, experiences and knowledge about her abilities, skills, appearance and social acceptability (Rogers & White, 1998). She claimed: "I am not going to feel guilty about the things that are expected of me." The mother teacher does not feel threatened by the expectations that 'others' have of her and she ignores any elements that have a negative impact on her personal development through using various strategies but without forfeiting her femininity (Forna, 1999). Her narratives reveal that she accepts the image that community members hold of her as a mother teacher. She said: "I do not feel guilty about what other people say about who and what I am, because I am doing my best."

In the narratives these mother teachers say they think that society expects them at all costs to fulfil their personally constructed multiple role expectations successfully. They feel that this all adds up to tasks that sometimes make super-human demands on those women who approach their work with the measure of professionalism and awareness of their calling as mothers. The literature show that mother teachers understand themselves based not on the way their external

environment actually is but, rather, on what they see or believe it to be. Berne (1964; 1980) finds that it is the mother teacher's perception of a situation that becomes the basis for finding herself in her engagement with the social world. The evidence emerging from the literature and narratives suggests that what mother teachers perceive about their world influences how they accept themselves.

### **5.3.3 THE ROLE OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLS VERSUS THE ROLE OF THE FATHER'S PARTICIPATION IN PARENTHOOD**

Hamby (1992) and Swap (1993) state that mothers are and remain the primary, natural and first teachers for their children, and should fulfil their roles in the education of the youth. Narratives on parent and teacher collaboration show that many of the mother teachers feel that they are in an excellent position to assist the parents with some of the responsibilities of parenthood. Daleen stated: "I try to understand the circumstances under which they live. I focus on the parents' educational background, ability and their social class." Schulze and Dzivhani (2002) acknowledge that the optimum development of the learner rests with the partnership between parents and teachers. Marilize said: "Parent involvement in schools is important for learner development and achievement." Regular and effective two-way communication between the school and the home binds the various components of this partnership into a unit for the mutual exchange of information regarding the learner (Stormshak et al., 2000). The mother teachers reveal in their narratives that many parents have a desire to know their child's teacher in order to know more about their child's development level. Daleen said: "The parents are interested in getting to know the teachers." Oosthuizen (2002) believes that these parents feel that teachers are able to support their children's learning at home. However, mother teachers' full-time employment creates demands on their own family life (Storr, 1988). This requires fathers to take on more responsibility in the areas of childrearing and housework (Pleck, 1997).

McBride and Mills (1993) state that there is a stereotyped concept that women need to remain tied to their family responsibilities. The literature reveals that male dominance is embedded in the cultural context, and is sustained by notions generated in society that assign differing male and female roles during childcare (Cook-Gumperz, 1986). Women's first responsibility is to their family. Marriage and a healthy family life are then seen as an advantage for working fathers, while in the case of women these two are regarded as a hindrance (Pretorius, 1990). The mother teachers' narratives indicate that they would like fathers to take their role in fatherhood more seriously. The narratives reveal that the mothers are responsible for childrearing and housework. Christina said: "My responsibilities have increased since having Nicky, because I am mainly responsible for the household duties, and I also have to fulfil Nicky's physical and emotional needs. I have to do it; I do not have a choice." Marilize also stated: "I retain the primary role as a caretaker for Desmond, while Jan is his playmate." The mother teachers relate their anxiety about childrearing to the fathers' involvement. Bailey (2000) argues that greater involvement by fathers decreases mothers' childrearing anxiety. The mother teachers also state in their narratives that they feel unworthy and inadequate in balancing motherhood and teaching role expectations unless their husbands appreciate their competencies, talents and attributes as wives and mothers. Daleen stated: "I appreciate my husband's help and care. He is always there when I need him. He is reliable, accepts responsibility and shows a serious attitude towards helping me to fulfil my multiple roles."

#### **5.3.4 THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL IN UNDERSTANDING HOW THE MOTHER TEACHER EXPERIENCES HER GENDER IN EDUCATION**

The literature emphasises that mother teachers desire to receive many contributions, and particularly moral support, from their school principal (Bergh & Theron, 2003). Leadership in schools is fundamentally a moral act that requires

school principals to possess sound values in order to place the needs of teachers ahead of personal needs of power and control (Weisner & Millet, 2001). School principals, therefore, have a duty to give careful thought to the subject of how mother teachers interpret their world (Zand, 1997; Walters 1999). The mother teachers' narratives reveal that they have greater work satisfaction and that they are also more intensely involved in their work when the school principal adopts a democratic leadership style. Daleen stated: "He makes me feel as if I add value, because my views are truly necessary and my contributions are highly appreciated. It is a give and take relationship. He is kind, sympathetic, fair and respectful, and in return, I am committed, loyal and dedicated." She reports that this leadership style provides more personal support and understanding of attempts to balance personal and professional life demands, and also assists school principals to have a deeper understanding of the problems and barriers experienced by women. Leona added: "Frans supports me in my motherhood and teaching duties by creating an atmosphere where I can be honest about my daily problems as a mother teacher. He is truly interested in me, he is supportive and a great leader with excellent management skills." Daleen and Leona prefer the democratic, participative leadership style and feel that there is then a greater measure of professional commitment to the ideals of educational excellence.

The narratives also reveal that although there are numerous needs of mother teachers, there is still an unwillingness on the part of many school principals to provide even short-term opportunities for women to balance motherhood and teaching role expectations. Christina claimed: "Pieter is not interested in my personal needs, feelings, emotions or the difficulties that I face. He cannot enhance mother teachers' confidence by understanding and dealing appropriately with their emotions and concerns." Kotter (2003) reports that an autocratic leadership style is then prominent because these mother teachers have little say regarding their needs, feelings and experiences. Marilize expressed her feelings and said: "In my experience, Martin does not want to see the problems I face. When I have a problem my hands are cut off and the battle

is lost.” It comes to light that the school principals of these two schools are often unaware of the great need for self-actualisation perceived by mother teachers, and therefore they fail to find solutions to specifically female professional problems in order to promote development of personhood (Weisner & Millet, 2001). Christina and Marilize believe that school principals should succeed in creating a school climate which promotes education and achievement without sacrificing their personnel morale and dedication. The mother teachers feel that school principals have a duty to give the feminine perspective more prominence. For this reason, Zand (1997) states that the time has come for school principals to place the contributions of mother teachers to the educational profession in the right perspective. The literature and narratives reveal that when school principals as both leaders and managers, adopt the right leadership style it holds greater possibilities for success and efficacy. Maritz (2002) believes that where a leadership style does not suit mother teachers’ personalities and attitudes, this does not generally serve the best interest of the school and quality education of each learner.

#### **5.4 INTEGRATION AND DISTILLING OF INSIGHTS**

The first finding points to the fact that the mother teacher is interconnected to ‘others’ according to her perceived gender role in the societal and cultural context. Wheatley (1992:34) states that this applies to men and women equally. He writes: “None of us exists independent of our relationship with others.” Arendell (2000) believes that the mother teachers specifically feel this way because of their maternal instinct. These mother teachers think that the natural occurrence of pregnancy and childbirth acts as a barrier which hampers them in finding themselves. Parvikko (1990:105) accepts that an innately different psychology is ascribed to the female, based on the nurturing qualities required by motherhood, or on a maternal instinct or drive. Women therefore perceive that these real and supposed differences have not only been eulogised; but they have also been misused to justify and maintain their inferior status, and to specify a

certain role (motherhood as the primary career) as being peculiarly appropriate to women (Montague, 1968). Thus, the mother teacher's life is intricately bound to the lives of 'others'. She feels obligated to do what is 'right' and 'acceptable', and constantly evaluates, judges, and criticises herself and consistently living with anxiety. The reason for this is that the mother teacher has constructed personal multiple role expectations in which she thinks she should succeed. Ennis (1990; 1997) claims that neither the multiple role expectations nor the multiple role fulfilments will ever be resolved, for as long as the mother teacher concentrates on the expectations that she thinks 'others' have from her. The result is that the mother teacher lives with many uncertainties and much controversy (Spain & Bianchi, 1996; Swanepoel et al., 2003). It is clear that the reality of the present situation in the schools where this research has been conducted shows that the mother teachers struggle to find themselves.

In analysing and synthesising my data, a common narrative is constructed: On becoming a mother, most women redefine their own being in terms of a new role and perceived accompanying role expectations. By and large, this role definition could be attributed to a process of acculturation (see Chapter 2). The female teacher accepts that when she becomes a mother, the roles that she is supposed to play, change (Pistrang, 1984:433). This study brings to light that the female teacher thinks that her role as a mother has to take precedence over her sense of self. Ironically, Forna (1999) reports that the moment that a mother sacrifices her own identity, she is likely to experience such powerful feelings as depression, guilt, rejection, exhaustion, jealousy, frustration, irritability, inadequacy, tension, abandonment, stress, conflict and isolation. Gordon (1990) adds to this statement by pointing out that the mother will feel that she needs to be and do more than she is and does. According to Knowles and Cole (1990) she may even feel confused about what she should do and what it is that she should feel good about. The second finding shows that the mother teachers express themselves on the subject of failure in terms of what they think 'others' think they must be, due to the fact that they lack control over their own identity. Berger and

Luckmann (1966) state that there is a great possibility that the women think that they should improve on their motherhood and teaching duties. Many of the mother teachers believe that they should dedicate themselves more fully to their personally constructed multiple role expectations (Berne, 1964:2-6). Therefore, it does not matter what alternative plans the majority of the mother teachers have made to reduce the number of their duties; they have not been able to rid themselves of the duties completely. Most mother teachers, as participants, attempted to become better, and by doing this they have reminded themselves that they need to bend and reshape their desires and actions. Many of them hold on to the idea that there are expected patterns of behaviour in their societal and cultural context. Ennis (1990; 1997) believes that the mother teachers then navigate their way through the norms that they think represent a 'good mother teacher'. Friedman (1981:316), Morse and Fürst (1982:159), Josselson (1990), Grogan (1996:111) and Walzer (1997) claim that trying to balance the multiple role expectations is then an unattainable goal. Therefore, many of the mother teachers of this study do not succeed in balancing their feminine approach, with their humanitarian perspective and their unique range of talents. The result is that they feel that they are neither completely good mothers nor professional teachers.

Through applying the skills as a female teacher and academic to examine motherhood and teaching, I conclude that the mother teachers consistently try to be what they think 'others' expect them to be. The mother teacher's life becomes a life to please 'others' and because she cannot please everybody, she experiences feelings of failure. It is only when the mother teacher redefines her own perceived role expectations of society that she will be able to fulfil her personally constructed multiple role expectations successfully.



## 5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Important recommendations are set out below, based on the findings of this inquiry.

The South African Constitution Act, 108 of 1996, the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979 all contributed to provide opportunities for women. However, I do believe that more support from the school principal and father is needed, to make the process of self-actualisation rewarding for the mother teacher.

School principals need to accept that mother teachers cannot be understood as objects that are passively influenced by the forces around them. Mother teachers are indeed active and make sense of themselves, 'others', social interactions and relationships through the societal and cultural context. They tend to derive more of their self-esteem from their capacity to connect with 'others'. The mother teachers are motivated to interpret information to fit the way they already see themselves, and they prefer people who verify rather than challenge their views of themselves. The way mother teachers perceive themselves, and even their ability to recognise and label their own emotions, are influenced by those around them. I believe in the suggestions of Zand (1997) and Walters (1999) who claim that school principals have a duty to give careful thought to the subject of how mother teachers interpret their world. The most positive thing school principals can do is to recognise and acknowledge that mother teachers in particular often construct images of what they perceive as society's expectations, and then set out these as parameters for that which they think society expects them to be. School principals can emphasise the necessity for understanding oneself truly through constructing more intricate self-portraits based on one's unique identity and practices. The challenge for school principals are to be fully informed about the perceived expectations of diverse groups of mother teachers in order to accommodate their personally constructed multiple role expectations of being a

mother and a teacher. Principals should adopt the leadership style most likely to promote success and efficacy for the mother teachers in coming to terms with who they truly are. This can aid in the development of personhood for female teachers as well as overall school performance. School principals should initiate and maintain a healthy environment by shifting their philosophy from treating every teacher alike to recognising differences and responding to those differences in ways that will ensure that mother teachers remain in the profession and show greater productivity. At the same time, the school principals must avoid discrimination as set out in the South African Constitution Act, 108 of 1996, the Employment Equity Act, 55 of 1998 and the International Labour Organisation Convention, 111 of 1979.

Action at family level is important to improve the balance between family and work life. There is a need to redefine gender roles equitably to distribute family care responsibilities, both in the provision of care and in securing and maintaining formal care arrangements, and other obligations that are traditionally associated with women. In this context, promoting and enabling a more active role for fathers is essential. Fathers should share in childcare and household chores equally. Fathering and fatherhood should not be seen as an intangible construct and as a choice for male partners. Less stress is put on the father to be 'perfect'. Women are therefore regarded as being biologically predisposed to nurture, whilst men are perceived as being limited in their nurturing capacities (Pleck, 1997). Workplace policies that allow fathers more flexibility can become a stepping stone towards increasing their level of involvement with children, while at the same time sharing more in household duties. Developing programmes to teach fathers about the challenge of the duality of the role of father and worker as a way of increasing their sense of self is also important.

Finally, the study of motherhood and teaching needs to be included as a mainstream subject at universities and colleges. The education system must arrange a learning environment which is conducive to preparing teachers, male

and female, for planning and coping with multiple role expectations, especially in how to redefine their own perceived role expectations of society. I believe this will be a formative experience for all parties involved.

## **5.6. METHODOLOGICAL LIMITATIONS**

The fact that the researched group was limited to a certain population is regarded as a shortcoming. All four of the participants were high school, married, white mother teachers with more than five years experience in the teaching profession. Mother teachers in the study were aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years, had not been promoted during their appointments, and each had a child, with ages ranging from three months to two years. The participants were in committed relationships both at the time of falling pregnant and at the time of the interview. Therefore, by nature, this study cannot and does not aspire to represent the experiences of all mother teachers in South African schools. Another limitation in this study was that I only focused on mother teachers who had a child aged between three months to two years.

The study is one-sided, in other words, only the experiences of mother teachers were sought. This is also regarded as a shortcoming. A questionnaire, or interviews with school principals and fathers, could provide a valuable dimension to this study.

## **5.7 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

By answering the question as to whether this research raises problems not previously regarded as important that needed to be answered, indicates that further research could stem from this study. This study began as an attempt to investigate how mother teachers interpret the fulfilment of multiple roles in their societal and cultural context. The world of mother teachers was analysed and described to bring to light how entrenched assumptions, cultural values and

beliefs impact on the meaningful construction and harmonisation of the dual role of mother and teacher. It may be interesting to explore whether teacher development programmes at pre-service or in-service level should include preparing teachers (male and female) for planning and coping with multiple role expectations, especially in how to redefine their own perceived role expectations of society. Such research may also deepen the understanding of management in schools and thus shed additional light on the adoption and use of different leadership styles to provide male and female teachers with real choices to find themselves.

Teachers suffer from acute and chronic feelings of anxiety, with female teachers twice as likely as male teachers to be afflicted. A suggestion for further research is to focus on mother teachers' feelings of anxiety. Such research studies could make a valuable contribution to the education system, and could build on this study to explore the images, metaphors and stereotypes of motherhood and teaching in greater detail.

To broaden the scope of this study, more research is needed into the experiences of single mother teachers, mother teachers of disabled children, mother teachers with AIDS and other family-teacher situations. It would be meaningful to conduct a similar investigation among diverse groups of mother teachers from different ethnic and religious groups to examine in full the experiences of female teachers with personally constructed multiple role expectations.

## **5.8 CONCLUSIONS**

The insight that this study brought to the understanding of how mother teachers perceive their world is that they will experience ambivalence and discomfort concerning their attempts to balance their multiple roles successfully when they do not redefine their own perceived societal expectations in terms of the duality

of the role of mother and teacher. The study highlights and unearths that support from the state, school principals and fathers is needed. However, mother teachers themselves are the main source of self-actualisation in accepting themselves fully as women with special talents, competencies and attributes. Unfortunately, when mother teachers cannot come to terms with who they are, no support system will be able to help them to feel successful about being both homemakers and professionals. I believe that mother teachers will only find themselves and fulfil their place in society once they are able to redefine their own perceived role expectations of society when fulfilling personally constructed multiple role expectations.

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## **LIST OF APPENDICES**

### **CORRESPONDENCE REGARDING AUTHORISATION FOR RESEARCH ON A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED- EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING**

**THE NAMES AND CHARACTERS ARE FICTITIOUS TO PROTECT THE  
PARTICIPANTS, THEIR FAMILIES AND THE PRIVATE INSTITUTIONS**

## **APPENDIX A**

### **COVERING LETTER**



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

Appendix, A  
07 March 2005

The School Principal

**REQUEST FOR AUTHORISATION: SEMI-STRUCTURED NARRATIVE  
INTERVIEW TO BE COMPLETED BY A MOTHER TEACHER FOR  
RESEARCH ON A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED-  
EXPERIENCES OF MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING; UNDERTAKEN BY  
MRS M H KNOWLES DURING 2004-2007**

I hereby request authorisation to observe a mother teacher via a narrative interview during April 2005.

I am registered as a part-time student for postgraduate studies towards a Magister degree in Education at the University of Pretoria. Narrative interviews will form part of my data collection method.

**1. RESEARCH PARTICULARS**

*Topic: A narrative analysis of educators' lived-experiences of motherhood and teaching*

The first aim of this study is to understand how the mother teacher makes sense of herself through engagement with the social world when she interprets the fulfilment of multiple roles. This study also attempts to fill the 'silence' in the literature, by trying to add more current qualitative data to the theoretical debate of motherhood and teaching. The reason is that, I believe mother teachers have to contend not only with the conflict between their traditional role of wife and mother and their career role, but they also have to develop a definition of self to succeed in their own identity. At the same time, it is hoped this study be of use to other working mothers aspiring to express themselves fully being a mother and professional simultaneously.

**2. TARGET GROUP**

I will interview and observe one working mother teacher. She must comply with the following criteria:

- had a full-time professional career prior to having children;
- aged between twenty-eight and thirty-five years;
- had not been promoted during her appointments;
- has a child aged between three months and two years;
- were in a committed relationship at the time of falling pregnant, and at the time of this study; and
- resumed work after the birth of her child.

### **3. NARRATIVE INTERVIEW**

Special authorisation is required to implement the two narrative interview sessions. The alarming facts in the literature and in the media with regard to motherhood are a further justification for this project. The importance of the nature of this research cannot be overemphasised.

I would appreciate your attention and a reply before the school closes in March 2005, as I would like to schedule the implementation of the interview for the beginning of the second academic term in April 2005.

Thanking you kindly

Yours sincerely

Mrs M H Knowles

I hereby attach the two narrative interviews' questions. I will select appropriate questions from the following list to be asked during the interviews. This semi-structure enables participants to express and explore their experiences, thoughts and viewpoints creatively.

I will ask the mother teacher to help by participating in the narrative interviews as honestly as she can. Her responses will be treated confidentially. Neither her name nor the school's name will be revealed. The purpose of the narrative interviews is to obtain information on the research problem. Her honest response will thus be a contribution towards a better understanding of the nature of the problem.

The question schedule is set out below.

1. I would like you to tell me your story of being a mother and a teacher. Why did you want to become a teacher? Was it always your dream to become a teacher?
2. How did you feel when you heard the good news that you were pregnant?
3. As a mother teacher, you participate in both the family and work system. According to you, what are the positive and negative consequences in integrating your multiple roles?
4. What are your feelings if you go to school in the morning and leave in the afternoons, thinking about aspects at home? Please support your answer with practical examples.
5. What unintended consequences followed when you needed support from your school principal for the multiple role expectations you confront?
6. How will you describe your school principal?
7. What in your opinion is the school principal's perspectives, attitudes and feelings towards the mother teachers? What value do you think the school derives from this point of view? Is this opinion generally held in this school? Should it be?
8. What is typically the reason for the perspectives, attitudes and feelings that the school principal has towards the mother teachers? Is this always the reason? What other reasons can you think of?
9. What will it take for a school principal to see mother teachers differently?

10. What changes if any could be recognised and implemented by school principals to facilitate the context of the mother teacher's work?
11. What suggestions do you think is important to improve the perception of what it means to be a mother and a teacher?
12. From your own experiences, what personal needs support the idea that the school's rules and policies need to change or do not need to change to serve the whole schools' interests as a system?
13. Why do you think or do not think that it is necessary that supportive ways to be found and recognised to minimise the demands mother teachers face?
14. Why is there a need or not a need to change some employment equity processes? What are the reasons? Is there an attempt to reach consensus about these intentions? Should all this be done?
15. How adequate and appropriate do you think the education programmes and training are according to equity management and labour law?
16. If the adoption of the employment equity system results in some school change, how would the male teachers, learners and parents be prepared for such change? Apart from training, what incentives can be provided for the teachers to aid or ease the adoption to accommodate the mother teachers?



## **APPENDIX B**

**APPROVAL BY ALL FOUR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**



## *Franciscan Matric Project*

ST. ANTHONY'S ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE  
ST. ANTHONY'S ROAD - REIGER PARK - BOKSBURG

P.O. BOX 131  
BOKSBURG  
1460

YOUR REF: .....



TEL: 910-1160  
FAX: 910-1150

OUR REF: .....

### APPROVAL BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Appendix, B1  
16 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

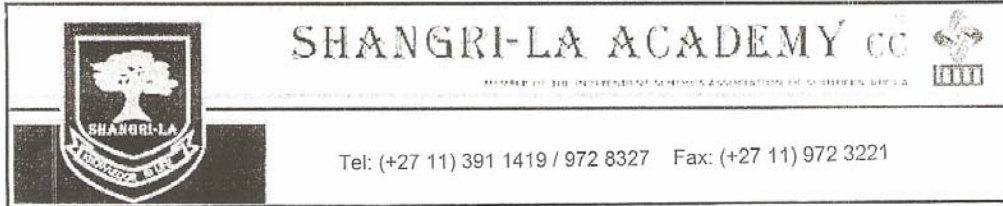
Narrative interview: one mother teacher

At the meeting, which took place on Monday 14 March 2005, the following was decided regarding Mrs M H Knowles request.

- The school principal has granted official approval to conduct the narrative interviews amongst the mother teacher.
- It may be necessary to notify the mother teacher involved in this research.

Your sincerely

The school principal



**APPROVAL BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL**

Appendix, B2  
17 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Narrative interview: one mother teacher

The school principal has granted official approval to observe a mother teacher and to conduct narrative interviews from April 2005. It may be necessary to get permission from the management committee.

Your sincerely

The school principal



## Ashton International College



*Sedulit Paraestantia*

47 Beryl Street Benoni  
P O Box 19 Benoni 1459  
Tel no: (011) 395 3741 Fax (011) 395 3435

### APPROVAL BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Appendix, B3  
18 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Narrative interview: one mother teacher

The school principal granted approval to conduct a narrative analysis of educators' lived-experiences of motherhood and teaching via a narrative interview during April 2005.

Please note: the management committee and the mother teacher need to be approached directly.

Your sincerely

The school principal



# GLOBAL SECONDARY COLLEGE

GDE REG NO 490124

Proprietor : First Ready Development 533 Reg No 2003/009066/03

Non Profit Org: 051-434-NPO

Walrus Building . 61 West Street Kempton Park

P O Box 28 Kempton Park 1620

Tel No: (011) 975-1044 Fax (011) 975 6033

Email: globalsec@polka.co.za

## APPROVAL BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Appendix, B4

21 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Narrative interview: one mother teacher

The school principal grants you permission to continue with the project. However, the mother teacher should participate on a voluntary basis.

Your sincerely

The school principal

## **APPENDIX C**

**ANOTHER APPROVAL BY ONE OF THE ABOVE  
SCHOOL PRINCIPALS**



## *Franciscan Matric Project*

ST. ANTHONY'S ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE  
ST. ANTHONY'S ROAD - REIGER PARK - BOKSBURG

P.O. BOX 131  
BOKSBURG  
1460

YOUR REF: .....



TEL: 910-1160  
FAX: 910-1160

OUR REF: .....

### APPROVAL BY SCHOOL PRINCIPAL

Appendix, C  
22 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Research for Magister purpose

The school principal has already approved that you may involve a mother teacher for the completion of the narrative interview.

Your sincerely

The school principal

## **APPENDIX D**

### **APPROVAL BY ALL FOUR MANAGEMENT COMMITTEES**



## *Franciscan Matric Project*

ST. ANTHONY'S ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE  
ST. ANTHONY'S ROAD - REIGER PARK - BOKSBURG

P.O. BOX 131  
BOKSBURG  
1460

YOUR REF: .....



TEL: 910-1160  
FAX: 910-1160

OUR REF: .....

### APPROVAL BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Appendix, D1  
28 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

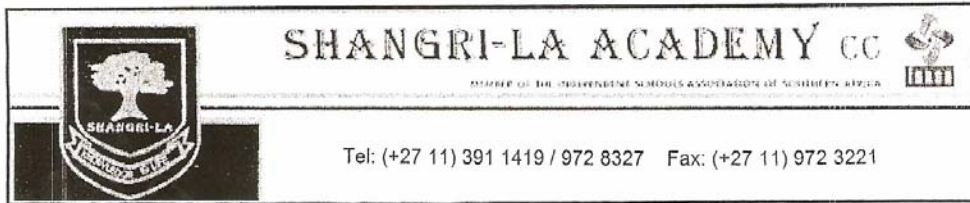
Completion of the narrative interview

The management committee discussed this research matter with the principal.  
We grant you permission to continue with the investigation.

Best wishes with the research.

Your sincerely

Director of management committee



### APPROVAL BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Appendix, D2

29 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Completion of the narrative interview

The management committee grants you permission to continue with the investigation.

We, as a committee, would prefer to be kept up to date as soon as the findings have been revised. Your findings might help our committee in our daily tasks and decisions. This research content seems inclusive and comprehensive.

Your sincerely

Director of management committee



## Ashton International College



*Sedulis Paraestantia*

47 Beryl Street Benoni  
P O Box 19 Benoni 1459  
Tel no: (011) 395 3741 Fax (011) 395 3435

### APPROVAL BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Appendix, D3  
30 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

Faculty of Education: registered student

Completion of the narrative interview

The management committee grants you permission to continue with your studies.

It will be adequate to inform the mother teacher about this study two days before.  
Also, the mother teacher must be ensure of the confidentiality of the narrative interview.

Your sincerely

Director of management committee



# GLOBAL SECONDARY COLLEGE

GDE REG NO 400124  
Proprietor : First Ready Development 533 Reg No 2003/009066/05  
Non Profit Org: 051-434-NPO  
Walrus Building , 61 West Street Kempton Park  
P O Box 28 Kempton Park 1620  
Tel No: (011) 975-0044 Fax (011) 975 6033  
Email: globalsec@polka.co.za

## APPROVAL BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Appendix, D4

31 March 2005

Mrs M H Knowles

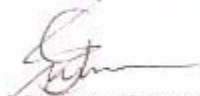
Faculty of Education: registered student

Completion of the narrative interview

We grant you permission to carry out your research of educators' lived-experiences of motherhood and teaching.

We, as a committee, would prefer that you do not disclose the name of the institution to the public.

Your sincerely



Director of management committee

## **APPENDIX E**

### **INFORMED CONSENT FORM**



**FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA**

Appendix, E  
March 2005

**A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF EDUCATORS' LIVED-EXPERIENCES OF  
MOTHERHOOD AND TEACHING**

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in a research project aimed at tracking and exploring the experiences of mother teachers.

Your participation in this research project is voluntary and confidential. I will not ask you to reveal any information that will allow your identity to be established, unless you are willing to be contacted for individual follow-up narrative interviews. Should you declare yourself willing to participate in an individual narrative interview, confidentiality will be guaranteed and you may decide to withdraw at any stage should you wish not to continue with a narrative interview.

The particular research problem suggests use of the semi-structured narrative interview with open-ended questions. Two interviews will be conducted. As a participant, you will be requested beforehand to be prepared to 'tell a story' about your motherhood and teaching experiences to gather background information about yourself and your school in order to place your remarks in context. Each interview will last at least one and a half hours and will be conducted over a two-week period. Due to time constraints and to the manner in which you will choose to tell your story, the opportunity to ask all the questions from the prepared set will not arise in all interviews. The text that will be gathered from the two interviews will therefore be a mix of natural and structured dialogue, between you as the participant and me as the researcher.

The findings from this study will be used by school principals and others aspiring to positions of responsibility in schools. Educational practitioners will be showed how, and to what extent, they could use the findings in order to improve their work. As both a female teacher and researcher, I sought to contribute more qualitative data to the theoretical debate of motherhood and teaching. The reason is that, I believe mother teachers have to contend not only with the conflict between their traditional role of wife and mother and their career role, but they also have to develop a definition of self to succeed in their own identity. At the same time, it is hoped this study be of use to other working mothers aspiring to express themselves fully being a mother and professional simultaneously.

If you fully understand the implications of participation and are aware of your rights in the research process, please sign this letter of consent, that is that you participate in this project willingly, and that you understand that you may withdraw from the research project at any time without any penalty or repercussions. Participation in this phase of the project does not obligate you to participate in follow-up semi-structured narrative interviews. However, should you decide to participate in follow-up interviews your participation is still voluntary and you may withdraw at any time. Under no circumstances will your identity be made known to schools or the public.

---

Participant's signature

---

Date

---

Researcher's signature

---

Date

Yours Sincerely

Mrs M H Knowles

## **APPENDIX F**

### **AN EXAMPLE OF ONE OF THE FOUR PARTICIPANTS' NARRATIVE INTERVIEWS, REFLEXIVE JOURNAL ENTRIES AND OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTES**



## MOTHER TEACHER 1

### **FIRST SEMI-STRUCTURED NARRATIVE INTERVIEW: CHRISTINA**

#### **THE STORY OF BEING A MOTHER AND A TEACHER**

(This interview was held in the morning at a quiet coffee shop in the Lakeside Mall. The participant was excited to meet me there. We ordered coffee and muffins, while we talked about our general life experiences. Thereafter, I explained the interview procedures to her.)

**Researcher:** First, would I like to thank you for your time and interest in my studies in the educational field. Kindly participate in this narrative interview as honestly as you can. Your response will be treated confidentially. Neither your nor your school name will be revealed. This interview will last for approximately one and a half hours, and the purpose is to add to the knowledge base of mothering and teaching. Your honest response will thus be a contribution towards a better understanding of the nature of the problem. Please respond in terms of your own experiences and beliefs. Do you have any questions or uncertainties?

**Participant:** (She smiles) No, thank you.

**Researcher:** May we continue then?

**Participant:** (Looking shy) Yes, we may continue.

**Researcher:** I would like you to tell me your story of being a mother and a teacher. Why did you want to become a teacher? Was it always your dream to become a teacher?

**Participant:** I can still remember when I was a small child; it was my dream to become a teacher. My dream came true when I became a teacher. Every single day, after school, I played school. While other children in my class played doctor-doctor, or Barbie and Ken or anything else, I played school. I planned daily and made sure that the learners were equipped with the necessary facilities. I had a blackboard, and chalk as well as chairs in my classroom.

**Researcher:** Why did you enjoy playing school?

**Participant:** I was a teacher with the best homeroom class. Actually, creative if I think about it (She smiles). I could teach all subjects. When we went on holiday, I collected shells with the intention of giving it to the learners to assist them to learn how to count in an interesting and fun manner. The learners also received a report at the end of each term. My parents motivated me every day, by saying that I was the best teacher in the whole wide world, and that there could not be a better or stricter teacher than me. My parents knew exactly what happened in my real school classes through listening at the door to me, playing school.

**Researcher:** When did you stop playing school?

**Participant:** Mmm, never. I think I still play school. In the beginning, my parents thought that I would stop playing school when I became a teenager, but even then, when I was in high school, in my final year, I played school, and I still enjoyed it! I enjoyed it until the very last moment before going to university. Sometimes I forced my parents to be two of the learners in my classes (She looks excited).

**Researcher:** Can you see yourself in any other profession?

**Participant:** No. I believe that I was born to be a teacher. I perform the role of a leader and a manager. I also reveal the duties and qualities of a manager on a

daily basis. I analyse problems, I have the necessary managerial qualifications, I am able to plan creatively, I understand people, I strive to achieve the school's goals and I give direction to the actions of the learners. I cannot see myself in any other profession. I love to work with children, I enjoy the subjects that I teach and I am satisfied with my career choice to a certain extent. Nowadays it is not always easy for me to adapt to all the school transformation processes, because you just have to cope.

**Researcher:** Do you get support to help you cope with all the transformation processes at school? Please motivate your answer.

**Participant:** I get no support or motivation from anyone. You just have to make sure that you have met all the specific outcomes and goals within the particular time limit. But, I am still committed to my teaching responsibilities, because I feel that I have an obligation to the learners in my class.

**Researcher:** Christina, would you mind speaking a little bit louder. I can only just hear you.

**Participant:** Sorry, do I have to repeat my answer?

**Researcher:** No, I have recorded it. Thanks. Do you sacrifice yourself to accommodate the needs of the learners, and if so, in what way?

**Participant:** Most definitely. I care not just for my own child, but also the learners that I facilitate. I nurture, protect, guide and love both. I have a strong obligation towards my child and feel responsible for the success of my learners' future, especially my grade twelve learners. I do more than what is actually expected from me, because I want the learners to remember me as a 'good teacher', who is always prepared and reliable. I have a natural instinct to love, help and facilitate the learners to live out their full potential in the world. Life is short and

we, as teachers, must make sure that the learners in our classes know where they are going so as to make the best of themselves and their future.

**Researcher:** What was the main reason why you decided to become a teacher?

**Participant:** Things change. I finished my teaching degree at the University of Johannesburg, I still know it as RAU, twelve years ago. I chose this career with the idea that if I had my own children, I would have time off during the afternoons and holidays to be with them, even if I had some schoolwork to do.

**Researcher:** Tell me more about your current teaching job.

**Participant:** I have been teaching at this school for seven years now, and I am teaching Business Economics and Economics. My classes are very big and vary from 38 to 47 learners.

**Researcher:** What are your experiences being a teacher?

**Participant:** Mmm, my experiences as a teacher are that you have to love the job; otherwise, you are not going to be able to cope. Teachers should set enough time aside to care for the learners. A teacher must put the learners' needs before her own in order to be a 'good teacher' who knows the needs, desires and feelings of the learners. Being a teacher requires enormous administrative tasks, that is during and after school hours, extra-mural activities, meetings, it just never stops. You can never be ahead, and if you do not have anything to do, you must know that you are lazy and are neglecting your learners in the classroom.

**Researcher:** Are you able to relax during weekends and holidays when you said that you could never be ahead? Why would you say that?

**Participant:** No, I am not able to relax during weekends. Even during holidays, you cannot relax, because you have to mark and do preparation. You spend a lot of time at home on preparation and marking work. I carry out these tasks most of the time after hours. There is no time to do this at school. You just have to do it, you cannot leave it until you want to do it or when you find the right time to do it. You have to do it now, and leave all your other obligations, until you are finished with your schoolwork.

**Researcher:** What are the other obligations and tasks that you have to fulfil as a teacher?

**Participant:** (She looks around) At my school, we have many obligations. I feel that I am stressed the whole time, because there are too many things to do at once. I also feel that I am burned out. There is almost never, ever time to relax or to spend quality time with my precious family. Yet that is actually why I chose this career, to have time and to be with my family. At my school, we have to stay until four o'clock everyday, except on Fridays. On a Monday afternoon, we have a regular staff meeting. On Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons we have to divide our tasks to participate in two sporting and or cultural activities per term. In addition, I am responsible for giving extra lessons to the learners who struggle or who would like to improve their marks in my subjects. I think that giving extra classes after school hours have its advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that some learners work hard, and it pays off at the end of the year when they pass with a distinction. A disadvantage is that some learners do not work in class when they are supposed to work, and then they expect you to be friendly and helpful after hours as if you have a lot of patience and energy. Therefore, there is no time to relax during the week. I normally prefer athletics and swimming in the first term, netball in the second term and cross-country during the third term. Every second year, we have a revue; this year we will have a revue. I am not responsible for the revue on my own, but I am part of

a team. This takes a lot of my time and energy, because we practise in the evening, because the learners are involved in too many school activities.

**Researcher:** When you went back to school, did the school principal support you?

**Participant:** You are joking! No definitely, no support.

**Researcher:** In what way do you get support for all your school duties?

**Participant:** In our work, the school principal does not actually look after our needs. Most of the time it is all about the learners' needs. As a teacher, I have many tasks and work to do, not just teaching learners from eight o'clock in the morning until two o'clock in the afternoon. It is very stressful to be a 'good mother' and a 'good teacher' at the same time, because I am not always just working and at school until four o'clock in the afternoon.

**Researcher:** What are your feelings if you go to school in the morning and leave in the afternoon, thinking about the situation at home? Please support your answer with practical examples.

**Participant:** It feels as if I look after the children of other parents better than I look after my own daughter. It is difficult for me to establish a good relationship with the parents. I feel over-stressed because teacher development programmes have not trained me to work with parents. In my experience, the parents are meddling in my duties. I am impatient, because I am always in a hurry. I work overtime and am overworked. This is how I feel when I am going home or going to school in the morning. I feel dissatisfied and angry, desperate for any help, because I know that I am not always as successful as I would like to be in all my multiple roles.

**Researcher:** What do you mean when you say that you are not always just working and at school until four o'clock in the afternoon?

**Participant:** Sometimes, if we have school competitions, for example, netball matches, we will visit other schools, or the matches will be hold at our own school. We will be at school until after four o'clock. We are responsible for taking care of all the learners, so we cannot leave before their parents have fetched them. Also, we as teachers do not just work from Mondays to Fridays. Most of the time, I have school obligations on a Saturday morning, for example on a Saturday; we may have a netball match. As well as, ... during holidays we have netball courses or leadership camps. This does not even take into account any cluster meetings, where they actually just waste your time, because nobody actually knows what is going on. Or, ... any other compulsory activities we have for example, parents evening, prize giving evenings or "Mr and Miss's" functions.

**Researcher:** How do you feel after a typical school day?

**Participant:** Most of the time, I am so exhausted when I go home after a working day, that I do not feel like spending time with my family. I do not have the time or the energy. I just want to go to bed in order to be ready for the next day. But, that is impossible. I have to divide myself (Waiter asks us if we would like to order something), even if (Participant waits for the waiter to walk away) even if I do not have the energy, but at home I have to prepare for the next day's lessons. I have to cook dinner, meaning I have to carry out my household duties. I have to spend quality time with my child and husband. I know that I am not always as successful as I would like to be, and that also stresses me out as a mother teacher. I feel dissatisfied and angry. I need help!

**Researcher:** Tell me your story of being a mother.

**Participant:** At the age of twenty-two, I met my husband. After five years, we got married and have now been living for seven years in Sunward-Park. When I was twenty-nine years old, we talked about having children. Some of our friends had babies already, but that did not bother us. A year passed by, and I fell pregnant with the good news that it was going to be a girl.

**Researcher:** How did you feel when you heard the good news that you were pregnant?

**Participant:** We were very happy and excited. We actually fell in love all over again (Smiling, looking happy). When my daughter was born, it was like a gift from heaven. She was, and is still my angel. She is beautiful with blue eyes, the cutest smile and she has her father's ears. My husband and my daughter are the two most important people in my life. If they are unhappy, I am unhappy, if they need something, I will go out of my way to give it to them. If I pray at night, they are the first and last images in my thoughts. My life is richer and fuller with them.

But my daughter is seven months old now, and I find it extremely difficult to be a good mother of such a small baby at the same time as being a teacher. My multiple roles require too much from me, and it is impossible for me to balance the most important things in my life: that is, family and work. I strive to be a successful mother and teacher, but I experience difficulties in balancing my multiple roles. I would like my family to be my first priority, but most of the time it is just work. You cannot do it the other way around. I focus more on my schoolwork. My family is supposed to come first, but they come last. I struggle to balance my family expectations with my work duties. Sometimes I choose between these two roles unconsciously, just to finish my duties, and to complete all the tasks that everybody expects from me as a mother and a teacher. I define this as 'role conflict'.



**Researcher:** You said that you have difficulties in balancing family expectations with your work duties. Can you please explain it to me in more detail?

**Participant:** Wow! It is really difficult for me. I experience different feelings about being part of two worlds. Now that I am a mother, happily married with a daughter of seven months, I find it very difficult to balance all my multiple roles, because my schoolwork requires a lot of time and energy, and therefore I feel that I neglect my own child. I am in a hurry; I am overworked and impatient. Nicky is actually at the day-care mother, Betsie, from half past six in the morning until almost five o'clock in the afternoon. I feel that I neglect Nicky tremendously, because I have a responsibility to teach other parents' children. It feels that I look after the children of other parents better than I look after my own daughter. I am spending more time at school than I want to. Unfortunately, the nature of schoolwork has changed, and teachers just have to adjust to all the changes. We do not have a say about it. More working hours, more work, but no extra support, benefits or a better salary (I asked her to speak up). Sometimes I feel so depressed, because I cannot be myself at home and at school with all the duties that are expected of me. If I am at work, I am stressed out, because I think about the things that I still have to do with my limited time and energy. I feel guilty that I have to do most of the things as quickly as possible just to get things at home finished. I feel ashamed of myself because I have to leave my child with the day-care mother.

I can still remember my first day back at school. That day and the following days were terrible. Therefore, I describe my days, since I have gone back to school after the birth of Nicky as a negative experience. My days are awful and miserable. I feel over-stressed, because little attention is paid to the needs of mother teachers. I receive an inadequate salary and the parents are meddling in my duties. That is my summary. Each day goes by, but I cannot forgive myself, I am missing out on all my daughter's special times. I feel awful to leave my daughter with the day-care mother, because you notice that Betsie will not give

your child enough attention. You are also aware that she will leave your child to cry and feed the child when she thinks it is the right time. But I do not have a choice, even if I feel guilty, depressed and angry. I felt guilty because Nicky was so small and she needed me. I could not even breastfeed her when she was hungry. I was not there to breastfeed her. That upsets me; it feels as if, as a mother, I cannot do the basic things I should. I am guided by two apparently conflicting aims where a gain in one area means a loss in another area. As I mentioned before, sometimes I choose between these roles unconsciously, just to finish my duties, all the tasks that everybody expects from me as a mother and a teacher. This is what I call 'role conflict'.

We need my income to pay accounts and to make a living. We considered a crèche, but that did not work out for us. The crèche was too big, there were too many babies to look after, and the crèche was understaffed, without enough staff recruited to work with small babies. And then we looked at different day-care mothers who were affordable and professional. We found a day-care mother who looked after not more than ten babies. For me, that is still a lot of babies for one person, but we did not have any other options. She is the best in our area, but still, I feel sad to leave my child with the day-care mother. I am missing out on so many things concerning my daughter. I do not know how I live with myself. But my mother, Tracy, lives far away and my mother-in-law, Ann, also lives far away. I also do not have any other family members who can look after my daughter, so I have to make use of this day-care mother in our area who is not too expensive for us according to our income.

I feel ashamed of myself, (Waiter interrupted her, asking if we would like to order drinks. She waited for him to walk away before she continued explaining why she felt ashamed.) when, ... when I am at home, there is little time left of the day. In the remaining hours, I have to do my preparation work, I have to mark portfolio books, tasks, projects, case studies, assignments, ... and that never stops. My work never stops, because I have multiple role expectations to fulfil. Sometimes

my husband will help me with the calculation of marks on test papers. But he is also a working father, also tired in the afternoons, and I feel that I abuse his goodness. He helps me to finish my work in the limited time that I have available. As a husband, he shares in some of the household duties and he helps me with my schoolwork even though he is also working and tired in the afternoons. Also when I am at school, I worry if I look at my desk at all the work that I still have to do, the work that I did not have time to finish. I also stress when I receive telephone messages. That means that I have to phone the people back during my break. I feel guilty that I did not spend time with my daughter the night before. I feel worthless, because I am not with Nicky until she is asleep.

I was excited about being pregnant. I thought it was a wonderful idea and we were looking forward to our baby girl, but we did not realise how much time the baby would take. I go to school in the morning, very tired, and I just have to cope. And then, when I go home, I am still very tired. I cannot go to sleep because I still have to look after the baby's needs, so it is very stressful to me with the little support that I am getting.

**Researcher:** Would you say that your responsibilities have increased being a mother and a teacher? Motivate your answer.

**Participant:** My responsibilities have increased since having Nicky, because I am mainly responsible for the household duties, and I also have to fulfil Nicky's physical and emotional needs. I have to do it; I do not have a choice. Ruth, on the other hand, has a choice. He can decide for himself how he wants to take on his role of fatherhood. Yes, my husband is wonderful and does many things for me, but I am the mother and I have to see that my daughter has everything she needs before she goes to the day-care mother. In the house, I am mainly responsible for the household duties and the baby's needs.

At school, I worry the whole day about our daughter, and then I also worry about my learners in the class. It feels as if I look after the children of other parents better than I look after my own daughter. I feel that I neglect Nicky tremendously, because I have a responsibility to teach other parents' children. If I do not facilitate and teach them, then I will lose my job, and how am I going to look after our daughter then? It is tough, really tough, and you are alone in it. I struggle to balance my family expectations with my work duties. My baby of seven months needs my attention, but I am exhausted when I go home after a stressful day. I go home to start with my 'second shift'. I do not want to neglect any of my duties.

**Researcher:** Christina, you said that it is really tough and that you are alone in it, what do you actually mean by this?

**Participant:** Mmm, I would say that you have to deal with the anger, guilt, depression and stress on your own. Yes, my husband shares in some of the household duties for example, packing our lunch, bathing our daughter and so on, but if he has to do it, sometimes he complains so much that I wish I had the time to do it myself. However, he complains when he helps me. It feels to me as if Ruth does not want to help me. He will say to me that your lunch is much better than mine, and yes (She smiles) I have to admit, the food that I make is sometimes more tastier.

**Researcher:** What unintended consequences followed when you needed support from your school principal for the multiple role expectations you confront?

**Participant:** My experience is that I do not get enough support from Pieter, the school principal. Pieter does not influence me to willingly and enthusiastically direct my efforts and abilities towards attaining defined school goals. It started when I asked for maternity leave. The year when I got pregnant, Pieter's positive attitude changed towards female teachers. He did not allow female teachers to

go on maternity leave, unless this was viewed as unpaid maternity leave. I worked until I was eight months pregnant. Then I had four weeks off when I became a mother. The baby was than three months old when I had to go back to my school. We could not even think about the idea of unpaid maternity leave, even if I had wanted to. We desperately needed the money. It would have placed extra stress on us as a family to be without my salary. I was unhappy and approached Pieter the next day to confirm my salary for the following months. I sort of asked the school principal about, if I can, ... can take my leave, and he were like, ... uh. We talked about it. He was not very keen on the idea of not having me at school, because I do many things at school and I am responsible for many tasks. And every now and then, then another female teacher is on maternity leave. He never ever complained about my work. I had good results at the end of each year, but you know, you are always there for the school, but when you need the school principal's support, he is not there for you. My talents, potential and commitment are not appreciated. He treats me as if I had broken the school's rules and laws. Pieter seems to be unaware that I have multiple role expectations to fulfil. But, eventually he agreed that I could take my maternity leave.

You know, .... the principal will congratulate you when you are pregnant, but when you ask for leave, he will treat you if you have broken the rules, because he will need to get a replacement for you. He treats me as if I have broken the school's rules and laws and as if I did not have multiple roles to fulfil. And it worked out that I had to find my own replacement. Well, if I did not find another teacher, he would have probably found someone, but I found somebody that could stand in for me. That was my responsibility. The school principal forced me to get my own replacement. So, I found somebody who could took my place for me for four months and then when my time was over, I had to go back to school and work as if teaching is my life, and as if I do not have multiple roles to balance.

And now..., the principal does not like it at all if you ask him if you can take your daughter to the doctor, because you then have to use your teaching time to do it. His argument is that other teachers will see what you do and some of them might think that you are taking advantage of the situation. He thinks that it will be unfair that you are allowed to have more free time because you have a baby and they do not have one.

**Researcher:** What suggestions do you think are important to improve the perceptions of what it means to be a mother and a teacher?

**Participant:** I feel that Pieter does not have the ability to adapt his leadership style to the needs of the situation and people. I suggest that school principals should change their style according to the situation in which mother teachers can find themselves. It is difficult, so difficult, but if your child is sick, she is sick and you need to take her to the doctor, but the school principal does not always understand this, and he does have a problem with it. I think that usually their kids are already grown up and then they have forgotten how it is to have a baby. I do not always feel free to approach the school principal if my daughter needs me. He is unapproachable, because he ignores the fact that he employs mostly young and unmarried female teachers. You are always on the wrong side. Pieter is not interested in my personal needs, feelings, emotions or the difficulties that I face. He does not have the ability to tap into my soul. Therefore, it is not easy to ask the principal a favour, and you sort of postpone till the last moment. And normally at the end he will say yes with a negative attitude, but I still do not like it. I then have to agree with his decisions, and do what is expected of me as a teacher and not as a mother teacher who wants to be the best in both worlds.

**Researcher:** You said that if you ask the principal a favour to be with your baby he has a negative attitude towards you. Do you think this attitude may have an effect on your teaching career in the coming years? And, why would you say so?

**Participant:** O yes, definitely. Why will I say so? Well, ... I am passionate about my teaching career, but I do not think that I will be promoted in the future, even if I want to be promoted. I want to work my way up in the teaching profession. And also, I know but do not know where I see myself in the coming five to ten years. I am not sure about my career goals. I think I asked too many favours of the school principal to support and to look after my child. And to be honest with you, although I mentioned too many favours it is not too much. It was just the basic responsibilities that I had to do, nothing more. I do not get enough support from Pieter.

I would like to be promoted in my teaching profession but having Nicky affects my promotion opportunities. I really think that my child affects my promotion opportunities because I am stressed. I think about my daughter the whole time. I am worried that she is taken care of. I changed as a human being. Now, I put my family first. I live a complete different life now, or I try to. I can see that it affects my career growth negatively. Maybe this will pass, but I do not know. I am not so involved anymore in so many school duties. I think that in the future, I will only carry out the most important duties and activities in my career. Well, I do not like the idea, but I have made a personal decision and I have to live with it. My husband and child come first, before work. Even if I do not get it right, I will keep on trying and striving for this. For me it will be important to know what is going on in their lives, who are their friends, if they have problems with their homework and so on. I want to be a 'good mother', and feel that if the school principal does not recognise me as a mother teacher, then I do not see why I must do extra work in the future. If I do more, then he will expect more of me, without any recognition, and recognition in this sense means freedom and autonomy to be with my family.

I think in the future, I will just carry out the most important duties and activities in my career. This includes the duties and activities I have to carry out as a teacher, because it does not help if I do more. This will be the only way to balance my

multiple duties. It is unfair, because I will do less in the future. I will not be so involved in extra-mural activities. I will only be involved in netball, swimming, athletics, cross-country activities and the extra lessons after school. And I struggle just to carry out these compulsory activities. Even if I cannot be good at everything, I feel guilty and I think this will lead to more guilt if I do not do my work to my best potential. This process will increase my feelings of guilt. I might be a better mother, but then fail as a teacher. That is why I say that, for me, it is extremely difficult to balance all my duties and to be good in both roles without compromising one of them. So, even if I want to be promoted, I do not have the time and energy. The principal can see that I have also other responsibilities at home, and I do not think that he likes the idea.

**Researcher:** Is this the only reason?

**Participant:** Yes, Pieter is not interested in my personal needs, feelings, emotions or difficulties that I face. Pieter is dissatisfied if I am not a hundred percent committed to my schoolwork.

**Researcher:** What are your plans for the future?

**Participant:** For now, I do not think I will have another baby soon. Maybe in four years time, then we will decide. Mmm, ... I plan another baby after four years. I have limited amounts of time and energy, and therefore, we plan to have another baby after four years when we move to Mossel Bay. With all the changes in the school curriculum, ... it places so much stress on me that I do not have the time and energy for another child. I struggle to cope with one, so not now, thank you (She smiles). There will not be another baby, because it is too stressful. I struggle to balance my multiple roles, and that leaves Ruth, my husband, looking after Nicky. I do not want to feel guilty anymore.



Even if I am so busy and stressed out in my daily activities, my child and husband come first. I have a desire to put my family responsibilities before my work responsibilities without feeling guilty about the clouded lines between my two competing worlds. My life has changed dramatically after having a baby. I know that I have changed after having a baby, and I am also not sure if I want to teach for the rest of my life. It is not a half-day job at all. It was never a half-day job. I work until four o'clock in the afternoon, then I go home to do my household duties. I also have marking work to do and with this new transformation processes, you have to mark the learners' books within two days, because the learners must get these back to add to the work that they have done previously and to do their corrections. You constantly have to mark and there is just too much marking and preparation work to do.

I want to teach for the rest of my life, but I do not know where I see myself in five to ten years. I have considered applying for a primary teaching position at a school where Nicky will be going, but I do not think that this would be the best alternative. I am a high school teacher, so I do not know if this would work out. It is convenient to go to the same school, but again, I think it is also not a good idea. The child is always that teacher's child. And other teachers look differently at that child, because you are teaching there. I do not know what I what to do. I want to balance my multiple roles, but I do not know how. I would like my family to come first, even if it seems unreachable. I want to accommodate my family's needs, but I find it difficult.

**Researcher:** Why do you think or do not think that it is necessary that supportive ways should be found and recognised to minimise the demands mother teachers face?

**Participant:** I think that it is extremely important to find ways of supporting mother teachers, because we struggle!

**Researcher:** Is there a need or not a need to change some employment equity processes? What are the reasons?

**Participant:** There is a need to change the processes. We are not treated equally.

**Researcher:** Is there an attempt to reach consensus about these intentions?

**Participant:** No, there is not. There should be an attempt, because you work with people's feelings, needs and emotions.

**Researcher:** Thank you for your time and participation. I really appreciate your effort.

**Participant:** It was a pleasure, thank you.

**Researcher:** Thank you.

(We ended the interview. She informed me about what she planned to do during the school holiday. The waiter came and I asked for the bill. While we waited for the waiter to return, we made arrangements for the follow-up interview on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 2005. I paid and we walked to our cars.)

## MOTHER TEACHER 1

### THE FOLLOW-UP SEMI-STRUCTURED NARRATIVE INTERVIEW:

#### CHRISTINA

#### THE STORY OF BEING A MOTHER AND A TEACHER

(This interview was held in her classroom after school. We sat next to each other. She looked tired, even though it was only the first day of the third term. I explained the interview procedure to her and told her what she could expect from this follow-up semi-structured interview.)

**Researcher:** In the previous interview, you said that as a mother teacher, you face multiple challenges. Can you still remember that you mentioned something like that?

**Participant:** O yes, I can remember it. I think I also said that it is difficult for me to balance all my multiple roles.

**Researcher:** That is correct. As a mother teacher, you participate in both the work and family system. In your opinion, what are the positive consequences in integrating your multiple roles?

**Participant:** Well, the advantage for me to work is that I am able to support my family financially. If I did not work, it would have place a lot of stress on us as a family.

**Researcher:** Your husband, is he working, or are you the only breadwinner?

**Participant:** You know, my husband is an entrepreneur and works for himself.

**Researcher:** Is your husband the breadwinner? Please motivate your answer.

**Participant:** Mmm. It depends. His income varies every month. Some months, he earns a lot of money, and other months he does not get an income at all. There are specific months in which he is successful, like November and December. If I think about the winter months, like June and July, or even during, say, ... January and February he is unsuccessful, because those are his quiet months.

**Researcher:** Is it possible for you then to support your family, and if so, in what way?

**Participant:** Yes, absolutely. I can support my family in those months. I get the same income every month, not a lot, but we cannot live without it. And then in November we get a bonus, and then we save it for January and February. Also at the end of March or April, we normally receive an increase of eight to ten percent, and, that definitely helps us a lot. This year we only got a six percent increase. I cannot say that we are rich or poor. If I have to judge, I would say we are average people according to our income. But, my income helps us a lot. We would not be able to live the life we are living now without my income. I mean, we go out during weekends, eat and drink something at restaurants if we feel like it. At this stage, we do not have to think twice about going to drink a milkshake at the Wimpy, or if we have a craving for KFC over the weekend, like a Friday night, we go and buy it. Also, if we want to go on holiday to break away from everything, we can do that. Obviously we cannot go everywhere we want to go, we are not that financially strong, but we will go to Scottburgh, or Pilansburg or even just to Lekkerrus and Libertas. Lekkerrus and Libertas are not so expensive, but still, if you do not have R1 500 to spend, without the petrol and food, jacuzzi and all the other entertainment activities that cost you money, you do not have it. It is expensive for us to go to Cape Town, because it is far. Our

goal is to move to Mossel Bay in five years time, before our daughter goes to school, so that she has enough time to adjust, if necessary.

**Researcher:** Do you like living in Boksburg and if so, why?

**Participant:** Mmm, yes. But, as I said I would like to move to Mossel Bay. Ruth, my husband, and I stayed in Boksburg for seven years before we got married.

**Researcher:** Is your house near the school?

**Participant:** No, or yes. It is not so far, it depends on the traffic. The school is situated in an upper-class area, and is thirty-five minutes drive from the house. We live in a working-class suburb and the day-care mother, Betsie, lives close by.

**Researcher:** What are the other possible benefits for you as a mother to work, apart from supporting your family financially?

**Participant:** I am passionate about my job and I am interested in the subjects that I teach. I support my family financially, I enrich myself, develop my communication skills, learn to socialise and I feel a sense of personal satisfaction. Maybe, ... to work is a source of self-development. I have changed a lot as a person, not just because I am a mother, but also, because I am working. I have friends, older friends who do not work at all, and I can tell you that I cannot actually communicate with them, because it is just about themselves and how busy they are. And really, how busy can they be?

**Researcher:** What other skills and experiences do you gain being a teacher?

**Participant:** I have gained many experiences in my field as a teacher. I am an introvert, but I have gained the knowledge to develop and to enrich my

communication skills. I still do not like to speak in front of all the parents on a prizegiving night, but I am much better than I was a few years ago.

I also learned to work under stress, even if I am stressed most of the time. I can handle it better than my friends who do not work. To be a teacher is very stressful, and as I said in my first interview, it is very difficult to be a 'good mother' and a 'good teacher' at the same time, but I think working gives you a sense of personal satisfaction. But, ... I am so tired in the afternoons, I do not even want to watch a programme on TV, and also I do not have the time or the energy to do it. If I want to spoil myself, I will watch a movie with my husband once a week, but I often fall fast asleep in front of the TV. And then the next day I experience double stress, because I have not worked the night before. But, to come back to your question, I am satisfied and proud of myself at the end of each year, of what I have done and achieved, because I know that I have done more than the other teachers at my school.

**Researcher:** You are saying that you feel satisfied and proud of yourself at the end of each year. Are there any other reasons why you feel satisfied and proud, other than doing more than other teachers at your school?

**Participant:** I feel like I am worth something, that I am special. You know when you receive a Christmas present, you feel special. And for me it is important to make a difference in every child's life, and then I feel that all the hard work has been worth it. All the times that I missed out on my child, or when my husband was angry at me, for not being a wife or mother, because I worked too much, I did not waste my time, the work that I have done, was generally important and I made a difference.

Also, what I did not say, o yes, I have remembered now, ... is that my communication skills have improved, and I have learned to socialise.

**Researcher:** Why do you say that you learned to socialise? Have you experienced another situation in which you felt unease, or were it just when you had to speak in front of the parents on a prizegiving night?

**Participant:** No, previously, if we went to, ... to Spur, I always asked my husband to ask for a glass of water or wine on behalf of me, or if we went to the bank, I would have sat next to him, and then he would have talked for me. So ridiculous, but that was me. Now I will ask things on my own. If I have to make a telephone call, I can do it. I am not afraid, or let me say, not so afraid anymore. I am able to socialise, even with the teachers at my school, I can communicate with them, even if English is not my first language. My home language is Afrikaans. I have the self-confidence. And they are also my friends, and it is nice, because you can talk about the same things. You share the same problems at school. You can support each other and advise one another (She smiles).

**Researcher:** You said in the first interview that you teach Business Economics and Economics. Are these the only two subjects?

**Participant:** Yes, I gain a lot of knowledge in my field. I am a Business Economics and an Economics teacher. I enjoy the subjects that I teach. For me, it is interesting and challenging. I have knowledge about basic organisational aspects. And it feels good if my husband asks me something about his own business. Sometimes, not always, he will ask me for advice on what he should do, or not do. Also if he wants to employ a casual worker, he will ask me to work out some interview questions that are relevant to the job. Or he will ask me for the things that he should look out for such as general appearance and non-verbal communication messages. Also, if he has to place an advertisement in the local newspaper, he will ask me questions to help him to gather the correct information. You know that feels good, even if he does not always use my ideas or advice. At least he asks me, and sees me as a person who knows at least something. I think to work makes you feel good about yourself. People see you

as someone who knows something. Like some of my friends think that I am very intelligent and clever to teach the grade twelve's and to set up question papers for them. I have also worked out a specific study guide for them (She shows a lot of self-confidence). They think that I am brilliant, because I can do something that they struggle to do, or do not have knowledge about it. Yes, sometimes they see me as a teacher, nothing else to do, or nothing better to do. I enjoy my job, even if the salary is poor, if we work too hard and if there is little growth in this type of job.

**Researcher:** Are there any other negative consequences you experience in integrating your multiple roles?

**Participant:** More than you can ever imagine (She smiles)! To begin with, ... I am burnout, if that is the correct term. I experience problems beyond merely teaching 38 to 47 learners in a class. You know, to work from early in the morning, say half past seven to four o'clock in the afternoon is hard. It is difficult to be full of energy during the last period. You are tired, irritated and anxious. And then to do schoolwork after hours is even harder. There is no time to relax, even during weekends. There is just too much work to do. As I said in the first interview, we as teachers have too many duties. And I cannot handle it if parents or anybody else, think that we have a half-day job. I mean, we coach athletics, swimming, cross-country and all the other sport activities after a normal school day, after teaching. And then it is not the end of our day. It actually just started. I try desperately hard to ensure that all my obligations are met and nobody is let down, but I suffer a continual drain of resources and energy. I am exhausted. I feel depressed trying to balance my multiple duties. This makes me feel guilty about not spending enough time with my family. I feel dissatisfied and angry. I am not as successful as I would like to be.



**Researcher:** Why will you say that your day has just started? What is the meaning of this statement?

**Participant:** Well, my work never stops. At the end of the day I am frustrated, because I cannot be the best in all my multiple roles. When I go home, I start with my second shift. I have a daughter of seven months and a lot of schoolwork to do. After two o'clock, we are not allowed to go home. We have to stay at school, until four o'clock. And that still does not mean that we go home exactly at four. If we have a netball match, we stay at school sometimes until six o'clock. And then you have to go home after a tiring day, and still be a mother figure. There is not time to unwind; I have to present a mother figure. I still have to look after my family. I have to look pretty for my husband. My husband always says that I look better for work than I do for him. So, my husband does not want to see me in ugly, but the most comfortable clothes. So I have to look my best both at work and at home without a break. I struggle to balance my family expectations with my work duties. I have to cook the most delicious food and need to spend quality time with the family, because my husband maybe had a bad day. But, I also have bad days. He does not like it if I moan and groan about my day. He says what can be so difficult or challenging about your job? You have only six periods a day of fifty-five minutes each, and you have one break of thirty minutes, ... what can be so stressful about that? Also, he thinks that we coach netball after school and that it should be relaxing and joyful. Well I can tell you, my feet are sore. I just want to sit and do nothing. I feel that I abuse Ruth's goodness. As a husband, he shares in some of the household duties and he helps me with my schoolwork even though he is also working and is tired in the afternoons. However, he complains when he helps me. It feels to me as if Ruth does not want to help me. He is wonderful and supportive, but I am mainly responsible for the household duties and I have to look after our daughter, Nicky. I experience pressure to take on my role of primary caregiver. I consequently experience tension. I am tense, because I am not there to take my daughter to her doctors' appointments or to

the clinic. My duties increased after Nicky was born. I experience anxiety because I am tired most of the time.

I am so tired in the evenings that I do not want to spend time with my family. I neglect them, the two most precious people in my life. But I cannot be a 'good mother' and a 'good teacher' at the same time. That is impossible. I do not have the energy to spend with my little daughter at night. I am too tired. I feel dissatisfied and angry. I am desperate for any help. I would like to be more successful. I also worry about the schoolwork that I still have to do for the next day, and I feel guilty about the things that I still have to do at home. My house is a disaster at this stage. The kitchen needs an extreme makeover (She smiles). But I do not have the time to do it. If I have a few minutes to rest, it is not on my mind to work in the kitchen. I would rather spend my time with my family or try to relax, if possible. I try to put my family before my work, but my teaching career takes most of my time. And then, if some friends or family members visit us, I feel ashamed of my home, because it is not as clean as it should be. I am not happy with the toys lying everywhere, but they are my daughter's toys. And I feel that it is ok for me, because she enjoys the sight of her toys lying everywhere.

Teaching is a very stressful and a demanding job. You work far more hours than you are supposed to, or that your salary allows you to. My husband always says that our service is cheap. Sometimes, I feel that I need to give extra lessons at home for learners from other schools, but than again, I do not have the energy. I want a better income, but it does not make any sense to me to work harder and harder. I also have other friends who receive a good income at the end of each month, say R 18 000 - R 25 000. Wow! I wish I could get an income like that. And then they do not even have the qualifications that we have. Yes, we have more free time available than they have, if I have to think about our holidays, but we do not really have holidays. We work in our holidays, and with our poor salary, we cannot always go away. We cannot afford it. If I had to be a single mother, earning the salary that I am getting now, I do not know how I would have been

able to survive. My salary is poor, and even if I have to compare my salary with older, more experienced teachers, I know that we work for peanuts, for nothing. I do not know how the Department of Education gets away with it year after year. I feel ashamed of my salary.

So, there is also a lot of pressure on our teachers to perform and be fully productive. The parents are so involved in our duties, I do not know if it is the same in other schools. I hate it. This system has both its advantages and disadvantages, but I do not like it at all. Some parents think that they are better than you are. They look down on you, as if you mean nothing at all, because they receive a better paycheck at the end of each month. They have more status than you have, and they add more value to the community. Also, they seem to think that you do not work enough, because they are paying school fees, and we must make sure that their children do well, and perform in all areas. It feels that most of the time, it is more about the parents, and not about the child. For instance, I had an incident last week. The learner had to do a portfolio assignment. I could see that he had not done the work himself, so he received an average mark. The parents came to school to see the school principal, and complained about my remarks. They do not like the idea that other learners received better marks. For me it is crazy, because the learner would not have been able to do the assignment on his own. And it is also unfair to other learners, because their parents do not have the time to do the assignments for them. So I suggested that the learner stayed behind that day, to do a similar assignment on his own, so that I could re-evaluate his mark. They also did not like my suggestion, because they knew he would get almost the same mark.

So, the problem that I experience is that people, overall, expect from us to do too much work. The people include the Department, the learners, the parents, the priest and the whole community. We just have to adapt to all the changes in the school environment, but without recognition that includes a good salary and more status in the community. For me, it is unfair, because we just have to be ready

and good in what we are doing. The Department gives us extra, different work to complete in so little time, bigger classes, and they do not even consider the situations that we have to deal with. Our classes are very big; it is actually impossible to teach and facilitate each individual unique learner. But we just have to do it. The focus is on the learners and not on the teachers. That is why South Africa lacks good teachers. And it is going to become a big problem, because we can do only so much. Nobody considers my situation. I find myself in an impossible bind. The lines between family and work are increasingly clouded. I want to change that, even if it seems unreachable, but I do not know how. I feel dissatisfied and angry, desperate for any help.

**Researcher:** Are you worried about failing not only yourself, but also ‘others’?

**Participant:** Yes, I feel guilty. I experience great ambivalence towards the expectations of my two worlds. There is no greater compliment than when people close to you tell you that you are a ‘good mother’ and a ‘good teacher’. But I have not received a compliment like this. My daughter is so small, she is still a baby, seven months old and she needs me. My baby of seven months needs my attention, but I am exhausted when I go home after a stressful day. She cannot drink milk from me, because I am not there when she is hungry. My feelings of guilt started when Nicky was still a baby. A women’s body is there to carry out mothering functions, and I could not fulfil my role as a mother. I was not there to breastfeed her. That upsets me; it feels as if, as a mother, I cannot do the basic things I should. That upsets me, because I know that I am a mother and a teacher. I am also aware of it that I must be good at both of these jobs, but I find it difficult. Society has expectations of me. I am guided by two apparently conflicting aims where a gain in one are means a loss in another are. Sometimes I choose between these two roles unconsciously, just to finish my duties, and to complete all the tasks that everybody expects from me as a mother and a teacher. People do not consider your personal needs. Consequently, I experience tension, because I am not there to take my daughter to her doctors’

appointments or to the clinic. My husband has to take our daughter, because I cannot take the day off, or I feel too guilty to ask the school principal, Pieter, if I can go home during the last two periods. His positive attitude changed towards me after the birth of Nicky. I feel guilty, because the only time that I spend with her, is when she sleeps. She might not even be aware of me (She thinks). I feel worthless, because I am not with Nicky until she is asleep. Also, if I have to spend time with my husband, I am tired, and not even in the mood to communicate with him. I stress too much about my schoolwork, and all the things that I have to do. I am so worried about all my tasks that I have to complete, that I almost ignore my own, my husband's, and my daughter's needs. And then I feel guilty, because I place my schoolwork before them, and that is not my intension to do it like that, but it is the only way to fulfil all my multiple role expectations. I feel depressed trying to balance my multiple roles. This makes me feel guilty about not spending enough time with my family.

I also experience a lot of anxiety. There are just too many things that I have to do. There are the dishes, washing, food that I have to cook and I have to prepare her goodies to take to her day-care mother. It is impossible to lie down on the bed. There is not even any time to spend on myself. First of all, there is not money to go for a facial or a French manicure. You know, ... the gel nails. I do not have the best skin, I need a facial once a month and a French manicure looks beautiful. But, I think if we had the money, I would have rather spend it on my child.

At the end of the day, I am frustrated, because I cannot be the best in my multiple roles. I constantly feel guilty and inadequate. It feels that I am not good enough at being a mother and a teacher, because I cannot give more of myself to fulfil my multiple role expectations. I feel desperate for any help, to spend more of my time and energy with my family. And I even think of doing less at work, just to save some of my energy when I come home. It is really difficult for me.

Because then I would feel guilty that I had not done enough at work, that I have neglected my school learners.

**Researcher:** Christina, you said in the first interview that you do not get enough support from Pieter. Is there only one-way communication between the school principal and you as a mother teacher? Motivate your answer.

**Participant:** Yes, first of all, that year when I got pregnant, the principal's attitude changed completely towards female teachers. Now, at my school, the majority of us are female teachers. We are a very young group. The female teachers are between 24 to 38 years old. Most of the women are single, even the deputy principal. Now I think that he likes to employ young teachers, because then he does not have to pay them the same salary as an experienced teacher. Pieter ignores the fact that he employed mostly young female teachers.

The year when I was pregnant, he said that he is not going to allow us to go on maternity leave anymore. If we want to go, then it will be viewed as unpaid maternity leave. I worked until I was eight months pregnant, and stayed at home for four weeks before my child was born. At that stage, there was also another female teacher pregnant. Now, I understand that we put a lot of pressure on him, because he had to find replacements for us. So, both of us, decided that we could not survive without our income. And then we approached him. He eventually decided that he would pay us our full salary, but then we had to find our own replacements. I am sure that he was also looking for two replacements, but he made it our responsibility. His attitude changed completely after this situation. And even if I needed his support afterwards, he was really unhappy when I asked him if I could take my daughter to the doctor one day for her chest, during school hours. His answer was that I could do it after school hours. When ...? I stay at school until four o'clock. And then I have preparation work to do for the next day. It is not that I manage my time incorrectly; it is just that I have to do

too many things. He does not even want to find out what is wrong with her chest, whether it is serious or not.

He is just interested in my schoolwork. He is not interested in his staff who play a vital role in the success of the school. Pieter does not influence me to willingly and enthusiastically direct my efforts and abilities towards attaining defined school goals. In my view Pieter used me. He is only concerned with what I do in my classroom. He never complains about my work. I have good results. He is not there if I need him. When I came back after three months, he treated me as if I do not have multiple roles to fulfil, as I explained in our first interview. Pieter is a principal who is self-centred, too strict, unreasonable, unfair and a leader without emotional intelligence. He cannot enhance mother teachers' confidence by understanding and dealing appropriately with their emotions and concerns.

**Researcher:** What are typically the reasons for Pieter's attitude toward mother teachers other than the fact that he employs mostly young and unmarried female teachers?

**Participant:** Well, ... his children are already grown up. If I think about it, ... his daughter is in her second year at UNISA, and his son works somewhere in a well-known company. That could be a reason, because his wife works half-day. She is a secretary. He does not know, or has already forgotten what it is like to have a small baby, sleepless nights and less time for yourself. He also does not stay until four o'clock in the afternoon at school. He does not know how it is to go home to mark 250 portfolio assignments and simultaneously look after your family. So, he is not interested in our feelings, our emotions or the difficulties that we face. His goal in life is to work and to be successful. My goal in life was also to be successful in my career, but after having a baby, that has changed. Now, I experience conflict and stress, ... because I would like to be good at both my roles without compromising one of them. If I neglect one of my roles, I feel guilty and dissatisfied with myself. I feel depressed and worthless. And with my

principal, Pieter, ... he ignores my personal needs, and, ... yes, ... you are there to work and to work hard. You must be committed and do what is expected of you to do. He is only interested in what I do in my classroom.

Also, I think that he regrets the fact that he made a mistake, and he does not want to admit it to himself. The staff is too young and the majority of them are women. Most of the staff are not married and most of the women would like to have children. He does not want the women to go on maternity leave, because the parents rule the school, and they do not like the fact that a 'good teacher' must be replaced by an unknown teacher, especially in the learners' final year. I can understand it, but we cannot sacrifice our whole life. I do not think that he pays all that much attention to the parents' feelings, because at the end of the day, he rules and decides what is the best for him and then the school. I think that if he were to give us an opportunity to tell him our concerns and problems, it could make a difference, but with his negative attitude, I doubt if it will happen.

**Researcher:** I would like to get one thing clear please. You said that if he paid more attention to you as a person, Pieter would see you as a mother teacher differently. Is that correct? Motivate your answer please.

**Participant:** Yes, because he does not have any idea what is going on in my personal life. And I doubt if he is truly interested in me as a person. He sees us as teachers, and we have to carry out his decisions. In a sense, I will say that he is self-centred, too strict and he makes unreasonable demands on us. Mmm, he is very authoritarian. We have no say in any decision, because he is too strict. If my child is sick, he expects me to stay. He will say yes, you may take your child to the doctor, but he will be annoyed about my choice, not to do it after school hours, after the netball practise. I think he is unfair and unreasonable. He is a leader without emotional intelligence. He does not even think about all the good things that you do for the school. I would say that he is sometimes selfish, because he does not communicate with us in an informal manner. Sometimes he



is unapproachable about personal matters. You are always wrong. When I need to ask him something, I will usually postpone until the very last minute.

**Researcher:** What changes, if any, could be recognised and implemented by school principals to facilitate the context of the mother teacher's work?

**Participant:** Personally, I do not think that the principal can change anything. It has to come from the Department of Education. They do not see us as mothers, so I do not think that they will change the context of our work. Personally I think that every mother has different needs. But for me, I do not like to stay after school to coach netball and athletics. There are more than enough teachers to do this voluntarily. So, I would say, ... that if you have a small baby, you should not have to stay at school every day until four o'clock, or later than four. I do not have a problem with the subjects that I teach, even if my classes are big and the marking is too much, ... it is ok, because that is the nature of my job. I do not know how other teachers feel about it.

I know some companies provide the mothers in their organisation with day-care facilities. I think that schools have an advantage, because we have trained, skilled and experienced teachers who can look after the mothers' babies. I think if schools were to have day-care facilities for mother teachers, almost all our problems would be solved. Personally, I would feel less guilty and frustrated. I could be with my child. I would feel less worthless, because I would have more time and energy. I do not know if this will become a reality. Hope so.

**Researcher:** From your own experiences, what personal needs support the idea that the school's rules and policies need to change or do not need to change to serve the whole schools' interests as a system?

**Participant:** Well, ... for what purpose. There must be some backup plan if you as a mother teacher do not get support from the principal. Maybe in other

schools, the principals are excellent in managing teachers in an equal manner, regardless of gender and race. I do not know, from my experience I do not think so, but that is my personal point of view.

There are so many changes in schools recently. For example, we have to complete portfolio assignments, tasks, case studies, projects, attend cluster meetings, facilitate big classes, implement technology in the learning programmes and so on. There is just no support for the teachers. The overall school changes focus on the learner, but not on the teachers' needs. For me, when you become a mother, you have more needs. For instance, you would like more free time to spend with your baby. You need more managerial support to approach your principal in times of difficulties. Maybe, if the policies could be revised, school principals could look after the mothers' needs, because if you think about it, the majority of staff is female teachers, who can become pregnant. It could become a big problem if they do not accommodate the mother in the workplace. Without good teachers, schools cannot be successful or productive, and will lose promising teaching capacity.

**Researcher:** What will it take for a school principal to see mother teachers differently?

**Participant:** First, school principals should recognise the fact that married female teachers have multiple responsibilities. Pieter should recognise that I am squeezed between my multiple responsibilities, and he should be aware that I would like to integrate my competing demands without further complex and enduring problems. I worry about Nicky when I am at school. I struggle to integrate my two worlds of being a mother and a teacher. I do not want to neglect one of my duties, but I feel that I do. I am worried about Nicky when I am at school. I think in a way, he is aware of my problem, but he does not care. Maybe he should get training as a leader and a manager in order to improve the personnel's morale, especially that of the mother teachers. I personally think that

my principal does not know how to lead and manage mother teachers. Especially, ... male principals. Maybe female leaders are more encouraging and are more able to listen to you. Maybe they can accommodate your needs? Mmm, ... my days since I have gone back to school after the birth of Nicky have been a negative experience for me. Male and female teachers should adopt an appropriate leadership style.

Society also needs to be aware that the traditional woman does not exist anymore. Because in a way, society still puts a lot of pressure on us to perform in our duties as a wife and a mother. We do not have the time to do all these things. Maybe the husband's role has to change more. Yes, it has changed already over the past few years, but women are still the mother figure in the house. Maybe there is a need to change the father's role in terms of fatherhood.

**Researcher:** Thank you for all your time and sacrifices to participate in the follow-up interview. I will keep in touch as my studies progress.

**Participant:** It is a great pleasure. I would like to hear from you.

(We walked together to the staffroom.)

## MOTHER TEACHER 1

### **REFLEXIVE JOURNAL ENTRY: CHRISTINA**

Christina kept a journal of her daily activities from **28 June to 18 July 2005**.

I went home after our first interview at the Lakeside Mall. I am worried, because I had marking to do. The learners had written examinations during the last three weeks. They had written exams in my subjects, namely Business Economics and Economics in the last week. I had a lot of schoolwork to do during the first week. I stress. I did not know how I am going to fit all my duties in. Then, after I had done my marking, I still had to go back to school to fill in the marks on the schedule. The learners receive reports when they come back the next term. I feel that it is unfair to have to do schoolwork during the holidays, because we cannot relax. We do not have a choice.

That same afternoon I started to mark until half past eleven. I could not continue with my marking work. I was physically exhausted. I did not spend much time with my daughter. I felt guilty. I did not even cook. My husband, Ruth, bought us KFC. I worked hard the rest of the week. I marked, and marked and marked. I was tired, impatient and overloaded. My husband had to take care of Nicky. I felt guilty and ashamed, because I was at home, but could not be with my child. I asked Ruth to drop Nicky at the day-care mother. I cannot baby-sit Nicky while I am marking. I felt that my priorities were wrong. I look after the children of other parents better than I look after my own daughter. By the end of the week, that Friday, I had to go back to work to fill in my marks. I was tired, but at the same time relieved. I was finished with my examination marks!

That Friday afternoon I started to pack. We planned to go to Scottburgh during the last two weeks of the holiday. We left that Monday. I was excited. I wanted to spend time with my family, because I have no time for them during the school

terms. I felt guilty and I hoped that I could be a 'good mother' for my daughter this holiday. I have to prove myself, because I am not a 'good mother' for her nor a 'good wife' for my husband. I neglect them tremendously. But I have work expectations to fulfil.

Our holiday was lovely. I enjoyed being away with my family, even though I kept thinking about my work duties for the next term.

## MOTHER TEACHER 1

### **FIRST OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTES: CHRISTINA**

The first interview was scheduled for the 28<sup>th</sup> of June 2005 - on the Tuesday morning, during the June-July holiday. We decided to go to a quiet coffee shop in the Lakeside Mall. This mall is not so popular in the East Rand. The mother teacher was excited to meet me in the coffee shop, and not in her classroom or an unfamiliar place. When we met, she asked if we could order something to eat. I insist that we eat something. We ordered coffee and muffins, and I used this technique to get to know the mother better. We talked about general life experiences and activities. When our coffee and muffins were finished, I explained the interview procedures to her.

The interview started at half past ten and ended at quarter past twelve. This interview lasted one and a half hours. The mother teacher is a quiet and serious person, and I think that the choice of a coffee shop was best suited to place the mother in a relaxing and calm mood.

With the first few questions, I had to drag a lot of information out of the mother. If I asked her a question, she would tell her story in three to four short sentences. Then I needed to ask her questions out of her brief answers. However, when I asked her questions about her multiple role expectations, she gave me a complete story. Sometimes she answered the questions with irrelevant information, but that data linked to one of my other themes.

Out of the specific questions concerning multiple role expectations, it came out that the mother teacher experience negative feelings about her dual role. She experience feelings such as depression, anxiety, guilt, frustration, stress and tiredness. The mother repeated a few times that she was tired, because there was always something to do and not enough time for it. This lead to the fact that

she feels depressed, because she feels guilty not being a 'good mother' and a 'good teacher' at the same time. That was her experiences of being a mother teacher.

The mother teacher had an open body language, but she had a tendency to look around before she answered a question. I asked her to speak a little bit louder two times, because she was a shy person and her soft voice disappeared with all the other voices around us in the coffee shop. If the waiter interrupted us to ask whether we would like something else to drink or eat, she made sure that the waiter walked away before she continued with her unique story about being a mother teacher.

I would say that she was shy, but not afraid to participate in the interview. When we ended the interview, we talked about other things (School and motherhood aspect were not included), and then she told me that she had an awful dream previously. She said: "I dreamt about my child being kidnapped, and that I was unable to help my daughter. There was no food for my daughter, no toys to play with, nobody washed her bottle or changed her nappies. My daughter was crying the whole time." She also mentioned: "This dream bothers me every day." She was afraid that something might happen to her daughter at the day-care mother, or when she had to stay after school.

The mother admitted that she wanted to do more for her family, but that the school required too much from her. She admitted that there was no balance in her life between her home and school activities. She revealed in her story that she wanted her family to come first. She wanted to balance her multiple roles, but she did not know how.

When the waiter came, I asked for the bill. While we waited for the bill, I asked her if I could have a follow-up interview with her. She first hesitated, but with a friendly smile she said: "No problem." All my other interviews were scheduled two

weeks after the first interview, but the mother and her family planned to go away during the last two weeks of the holiday. We arranged the next interview for the first week when the third term started. When the waiter brought our bill, she wanted to pay her half, but I refused. I paid, and we walked to our cars. We said goodbye. I saw her again at the robot when we waved at each other.

**My conclusion:** The mother teacher lives an unbalanced lifestyle. Her work comes first and her family comes second. She feels depressed and guilty, because she does not spend enough time with her family. She wants to change her unbalanced lifestyle but she does not know how.



## MOTHER TEACHER 1

### **SECOND OBSERVATIONAL FIELD NOTES: CHRISTINA**

The follow-up interview was arranged for the first week of the third term. We decided to hold it the first day that the school started. It was on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2005, after school at half past two in her classroom. She met me in the office and then we walked together to her classroom. She had a lovely classroom with beautiful and colourful posters against her walls. In her classroom, she had a notice board full of 'dates to remember' and other important messages from subject heads and sport coaches.

I looked at her greenboard and there was not space to write anything else on it. I told her that she kept the learners busy and she said: "Yes, this morning I woke up a little bit negative, and can you believe it is our first day back to school. Then I decided that today, I am going to keep my learners busy with test revisions." And the learners have done their examination corrections. Christina said: "The learners were full of energy, just the opposite of what I am at this stage. They thought that they could sit and socialise in my class, but unfortunately, I had a better surprise for them. The learners were required to work." I asked the mother teacher why she feels that she has limited energy (It is the beginning of a new term, after a three-week holiday period). She said: "I do not have the energy to do all the things." I asked her what type of things. She stated: "Look at the learners, they are busy with their sport activities. I am still young, early thirties, but I do not have the energy to spend time with them, I do not feel like it. And that is not all; the grade twelve learners' prelim marks and portfolio books must be marked and be handed in before the end of this term. I need to divide myself into small pieces to be able to complete all my work. And with a small baby, it makes everything worse."

I complimented her on her lovely classroom and I asked her where I could sit. She directed me to her desk, and I asked her where she was going to sit. She said: "I will sit on one of the learner's chairs." I asked her if I could also sit on a learner's chair, because I know that she is shy and not as talkative as some of the other participants. I did not want to create a too formal situation, so the two of us sat next to each other.

I started the interview after I explained to her what she could expect and why we were having this follow-up interview. When I asked her the first few questions, she was as shy as during the first interview. She also started her story by explaining her experiences as a mother teacher in three to four short sentences, and I had to build on her feedback to gather more data. The interview went smoothly. I asked some of my semi-structured questions, and included additional questions to gain further data.

After the interview, we walked together to the staffroom. The mother teacher introduced me to some of the other teachers who were in the staffroom. She made me a cup of tea. We communicated with the teachers in the staffroom.

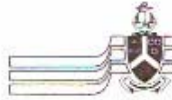
After I had drunk my tea, I excused myself. She stood up with me and helped me with my bags. We walked to my car. On our way, we met another teacher at that school. That teacher asked Christina what she thought about the two different places that they had in mind for the end-year staff function. The mother stated: "I have not been thinking about the end-year staff function, because I do not actually want to go." The other teacher asked her why not, because it was to be on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November 2005, and most of their work will be finished. The mother said: "Yes, I know, but I do not feel like it, and it is silly to pay an extra R 80, because during the year, we pay R 200 staff fund." The other female teacher agreed.

We walked to my car. I thanked her for her input in my studies, and I wished her good luck for this term. She said: “Thank you, I need it.” I drove out. That evening I started to transcribe our one hour and forty minute interview, because we started at quarter past two and finished at twenty-five minutes past four.

**My conclusion:** This mother teacher has a negative attitude towards her family and work duties. The reason for this is that she is not sure how to manage all her multiple role expectations. People around her find her pleasant, but she is still negative and sorry for herself for all the things that she has to do. This mother does not have a balanced lifestyle.

## **APPENDIX G**

### **APPROVAL BY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**



UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA  
FACULTY OF EDUCATION  
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE**

**DEGREE AND PROJECT**

**INVESTIGATOR(S)**

**DEPARTMENT**

**DATE CONSIDERED**

**DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE**

**CLEARANCE NUMBER :** EM07/09/01

M.Ed (Education, Management, Law and Policy)

A narrative analysis of teachers' lived-experiences of motherhood and teaching.

Mariska Knowles (née Roesch) - 24338126

Education, Management, Law and Policy

14 September 2007

APPROVED

This ethical clearance is valid for 2 years from the date of consideration and may be renewed upon application

**CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS  
COMMITTEE**

Dr S Human-Vogel

**DATE**

14 September 2007

**CC**

Dr J Nieuwenhuis  
Prof B Smit  
Mrs Jeannie Beukes

This ethical clearance certificate is issued subject to the following conditions:

1. A signed personal declaration of responsibility
2. If the research question changes significantly so as to alter the nature of the study, a new application for ethical clearance must be submitted
3. It remains the students' responsibility to ensure that all the necessary forms for informed consent are kept for future queries.

Please quote the clearance number in all enquiries.