EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANT ADOLESCENT GIRLS

VELLA MASEKO

A research report submitted to the Department of Psychology in the Faculty of Humanities, university of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology).

December 2006

Supervisor: Ms Mzikazi Nduna
DECLARATION

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Clinical Psychology) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination.

VELLA MASEKO

———Day of November 2006
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

• My mother Funeka Siqhola and my children Wonga, Sonke and Zethu, whose love and support kept me going.

• My dear sisters, Sindiswa, Ncediswa, Nonkuthalo and Nasie. My nephew ‘Toto’ Luxolo and niece Nomathemba who assisted me in many ways.

• My friends Daryth, Botle, Deli, Zipho, Khosi and many others who supported and encouraged me during the most difficult times of my life.

• My class mates especially Fikile, Tshifiwa, Melanie and Julia for their continued support.

• Manoke Kalane and Max Matjane who reminded me how to turn dreams into a reality.

• My first supervisor Oscar Modipa for guidance support and encouragement, my who left the institution before this piece of work could be finished.

• My second supervisor Mzikazi Nduna for her dedicated work.
ABSTRACT

This study sought to explore the experiences of pregnant adolescent learners. It solicited information around challenges faced by pregnant adolescent girls, the impact of pregnancy on interpersonal relationships and psychological functioning, the support system that pregnant learners have, as well as their current feelings and perceptions about their experience. It is a qualitative study, and it employed thematic content analysis to analyse the results. The sample, comprising of five adolescent girls, was drawn purposively from Soweto High Schools. Adolescent pregnancy is generally perceived as a social problem because of the negative consequences often associated with it. Literature also suggests that low socio-economic circumstances and developmental factors predispose adolescents to a higher risk for unplanned pregnancy. The results of this study indicate that an experience of pregnancy during adolescence often results in challenges that may have a negative impact on normative development. Another finding is that most adolescent mothers receive very little or no financial and emotional support from families, partners or formal structures.