

Narratives of Motherhood: Voices of Selected South African Women

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Abstract

The study explored whether South African mothers subscribed to the Western ideology of intensive motherhood and how this ideology was altered or resisted. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten working South African mothers with a child under the age of ten. Thematic content analysis revealed that motherhood was largely regarded as synonymous with womanhood, where the inherent and biological ability to bear children rendered the mother responsible for intensive efforts in child-raising. As a result, motherhood was a gendered practice situated within a powerful and normative ideology of inequality. These themes were discussed in the racially stratified and gendered context of South Africa from a feminist perspective. The research concluded with a recommendation that alternative motherhood ideologies, more representative of the diverse contexts and experiences of mothers, are explored.

Declaration

I declare that this research report entitled “Narratives of Motherhood: Voices of Selected South African Women” is my own, unaided work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated by means of complete references. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Arts (Community Based Counselling) at the University of the Witwatersrand. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination at any other university.

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2009

Sharon van Doorene

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 - Carol, who gives so much.
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