DEDICATION

To my beloved children for enduring my absence and my husband for the unwavering sacrifice and support rendered throughout my studies. Also to all family members who provided care to my children.

To my parents, for inculcating in me, the value of education.

To all girl-children in Zambia, who against all odds are determined to make it in their studies.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the experiences of pregnancy re-entry girls in secondary school in Ndola, Zambia. It was informed by perspectives in the Sociology of Childhood which consider children as social actors who should also be studied from their own perspective. The low re-admission rates among girls who fall pregnant whilst in school, despite existence of a school re-entry policy after giving birth, forms the background that necessitated this research. The research aimed at gaining knowledge on the pregnancy re-entry girls' school and off-school daily experiences that influence their learning, their reasons for returning and/or not returning to school, the challenges they face and how they respond, and the support systems available and needed by the girls. The research used different qualitative methods such as observation, drawing, essay writing, time-lines and semi-structured interviews with 12 girls, 9 of which had returned to school (re-entrants) while the other 3 had not returned to school (non-re-entrants). In order to gain more insights, adult participants were also interviewed; these included 2 school head teachers (male), 2 guidance and counselling teachers, one from each gender, 1 official from the Forum for African Women Educationist of Zambia (FAWEZA) and 3 parents (female). The data that was collected was qualitatively analysed.

Relying on an approach that considers the learning experiences of the girls and how these are influenced by their mothering role, the study argues for focussing beyond mere re-entry but attending to structural factors such as the socio-economic, gender, culture and local constructions of childhood and motherhood among others that interact in complex ways to mainly exclude the mothering girls from the education system. Attainment of educational quality and achievements for these girls needs recognition of endemic structural gender inequalities that are embedded in the social contexts.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACRWC	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Disease
CSO	Central Statistical Office
GSCE	General School Certificate of Education
FAWE	Forum for African Women Educationist
FAWEZA	Forum for African Women Educationist in Zambia
EFA	Education for All
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
ILO	International Labour Organisation
MoE	Ministry of Education
MOFNP	Ministry of Finance and National Planning
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
NDP	National Development Plan
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
PAGE	Programme for Advancement of Girl-Child Education
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programs
YWCA	Young Women's Christian Association
ZANEC	Zambia National Education Coalition

1 INTRODUCTORY OVERVIEW

1.1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the everyday experiences of pregnancy returnee girls as they negotiate the roles of motherhood and studentship in selected schools in Ndola, Zambia. It concentrates on how the girls' daily learning experiences are influenced by how the society and the girls themselves perceive school-girl pregnancy/motherhood. Exploring the 'lived experiences' can help to provide insights on the girls' responses to the different situations they encounter. It brings to the fore, both social and structural factors that enable or constrain the learning experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls in school. As argued in literature, provision of policy to address gender inequality is not in itself adequate but asking how girls experience education and how social contexts both within and outside the school influence these experiences (Swainson 1995, Aikman and Rao 2012).

This research suggests that achieving equitable and quality education for the re-entry girls goes beyond access and retention in schools, to addressing gender inequalities and other structural factors both within and outside the school that perpetuate their 'exclusion' from the school environment. The paper argues that the structural factors present in school, home and the wider society do not just hinder the girls' return to school but influences their learning experiences and ultimately compromise the quality of education that they receive. Quantitative measurement of access and retention conceal the educational experiences of the re-entry girls. Therefore, the paper concerns itself with people's views of the pregnant/mothering girls, what they deserve and how these constructions interact with other structural factors to include or exclude them from school. Considering the multiple influences on the learning process of these girls, there is need for concerted efforts from various stakeholders to strengthen social support systems which in turn would enhance their learning experiences.

1.2 Gender parity and girls education

In recent years, there has been growing attention and emphasis on education of a girl child in Zambia many other countries in the global South. This is because educating women has various social and economic benefits for family units and the nation as a whole. However, there exist several socio-economic and cultural barriers which disadvantage girls' education. It is observed

that there are not only low enrolment and progression rates among girls, but drop-out rates are also generally higher for girls than for boys (Mumba 2002, Ministry of Education 2010). For example, countrywide enrolments in Grade 10-12 in 2009 were 123, 180 for girls and 141, 610 for boys, while those in 2010 still reflected the same picture with girls at 127,420 and boys at 156,500. At Grades 8-9, a similar situation exists with 191,690 girls and 216,690 boys enrolled in 2009 and 219, 670 girls compared to 245,330 boys in 2010 (Ministry of Education 2010). For drop-out rates, though they have reduced over the years, those of girls still remain higher than that of boys. For example, the drop-out rate for girls was 2.7 in 2000 while that for boys was 1.6, while in 2010 it was 1.4 and 0.5 respectively, for Grades 10-12. At Basic school the drop-out was even higher with 4.9 for girls and 4.3 for boys in 2000, while those for 2010 were 2.4 for girls and 1.6 for boys nationwide. These and other statistics like repetition, retention and completion rates have mostly been negative for girls in comparison to boys, down to 2000 and beyond (Ministry of Education 2010). There are several barriers that contribute to these poor rates for girls in Zambia, among others are poverty, school location and infrastructure, quality of school, household chores and gender attitudes, child-rearing practices, high illiteracy levels among women and pregnancy among others (Mitchell, Blaeser et al. 1999, Ministry of Education 2008).

The Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE 2006:3) reports that "One other barrier, as girls grew older, was pregnancy. Girls who became pregnant were expelled from school and were not re-admitted into the school system". I remember in my time (1988-1992) at secondary school when I was twice subjected to a compulsory pregnancy test and some girls who were discovered pregnant were expelled. This shows that school-girl pregnancy has been viewed as a huge problem both in Zambia and elsewhere, triggering various responses from governments in sub-Saharan Africa. Chilisa (2002:21) has identified three types of policies that various governments in Africa have used in dealing with pregnancy in school namely; expulsion, continuation and re-entry/re-admission. In expulsion policies, pupils are forced out of school upon discovery that they are pregnant. In this case, falling pregnant means the end of school. In fact, in the 1970s; the Zambian government used to fire and blacklist single female teachers that became pregnant. In recent years, continuation and re-entry policies have emerged in the recognition that pregnancy especially disadvantages the girl-child's advancement in education. The former policy allows the girl to continue with school while the latter gives leave and a

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chance to return to school later. The re-entry policy introduction was necessitated by high number of girls who were dropping out of school. For instance, Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :12) report that before the policy was introduced in 1997, more than one third of mothers were teenagers between 1992-1996. It was against such a background that it was announced "school girls who become pregnant will no longer be expelled, and those that had been expelled in 1997 should be allowed to return to school" (FAWE 2006:4).

School-girl pregnancies have still remained a high concern in Zambia as indicated by recent reports[1]. In fact, school-girl pregnancies have consistently increased over the years. While others might argue that this increase is expected due to increased population, it may also highlight the continuous disadvantaged educational position of the girl-child in Zambia. At Basic school (up to Grade 9) nationwide, the number of girls who fell pregnant while at school increased from 3,663 in 2002 to 13,769 in 2010. The statistics for Grades 10-12 show a similar trend with 765 pregnancy cases in 2002 to 1,817 in 2010 (Ministry of Education 2010). Although the policy was put in place to retain the girls in schools, on average, the majority of the girls do not return to school as the table below shows.

Figure 1. Combined Pregnancy, Re-admission and Return rate for Basic and High Schools[2]

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Pregnancy	4 428	5 060	7 516	10 441	13 942	13 143	13 936	15 497	15 586
Re-admission	1 928	2 341	3 428	4 831	5 489	4 952	5,711	6 679	6 067
Return rate %	43.5	46.2	45.6	46.2	39.3	37.6	40.9	43.0	38.9

Source: Adapted from Ministry of Education (2010:119-120), Statistical Bulletin.

[1] Zambiareports.com 2013, reports that Zambia ranks fifth in incidences of teenage pregnancy in sub-Saharan Africa especially affecting the girls in secondary school.

[2] The statistical bulletin (2010) from which the table is adapted uses the categories of Basic school to cover Grade 1-9 and High school for Grades 10-12. For this study, I use the new nomenclature of Secondary schools to represent Grade levels of 8-12 in accordance with the system introduced by the current government since assumption of office in 2011. It is important to also note that although the original representation of Basic schools covered Grades 1-9, pregnancy is more common among older groups of girls in Grades 8-9.

The re-entry policy was introduced in line with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 2 which focuses on completion of primary school education for all children, boys and girls alike and MDG 3 endeavours to eliminate gender disparity in all levels of education by 2015.Particularly for Zambia, the two goals are categorized as those that need accelerated effort if they are to be met (UNESCO 2013). It is noted that though the progress made in primary school completion so far is commendable, Zambia has to improve access, quality, relevance and completion of secondary and tertiary education (UNESCO 2013). One major factor attributed to this progress is the Programme for Advancement of Girl-Child Education (PAGE), and the re-entry policy to a minimal extent. This corresponds with the observation that the re-entry policy has not performed to its expectation as also indicated by the increased pregnancy cases (Ministry of Education 2008) and low return rates in (Figure 1) above.

In fact, UNDP (2012:23) notes that "quantitative improvements in education while necessary, are not sufficient." Therefore, the actual experiences and views of the re-entry girls can present a comprehensive picture on how they receive education in schools. An understanding of the everyday experiences and negotiations between motherhood and schooling can help to contribute to a better implementation of the policy.

However, it is also important to note that the experiences of the girls in school are influenced by how society views pregnancy.

1.3   Perceptions of school-girl pregnancy/motherhood

Though the re-entry policy was strongly supported by certain sections of the society, it faced criticism and opposition by others. FAWE (2006:5) reports that, "The church, the Zambia National Union of Teachers, some teachers, parents, and some pupils, both boys and girls, opposed the move". Considering the low re-admission rates, the policy implementation could still be influenced by moral and cultural factors, rather than just granting educational rights to the re-entry girls. Out of concern and possibly control of teenage sexual activity, media is never short of sexual abstinence messages that are also stress the importance of school.

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Figure 2. Poster on Sexual Abstinence and School

Teen pregnancy, in most literature has been strongly linked to negative consequences. These negative consequences are said to affect not only the girl and her baby, but also the economic wellbeing of the nation as a whole (Magnani, Karim et al. 2002, Chigona and Chetty 2008). This is because it leads to drop-out, interrupted education and school advancement difficulties.

1.3.1 Pregnancy as a burden

In deprived economies, it is seen as a perpetration of the cycle of poverty and entails a bleak future for most girls (Kabaso 2012). It is in this light that school girl pregnancy is perceived as a burden both socially and economically. Those children that have babies are assumed as incompetent and not yet ready to handle both the social and economic demands that go with baby care and child rearing. This responsibility is seen as too immense to be handled by the children themselves and therefore creates an extra burden and demand on the other family members socially, morally and materially. However, others have noted that the negative consequences have been overstated and are not usually permanent, emphasizing that there are also positive outcomes of the incidence of pregnancy with the teen mothers re-evaluating their priorities and a renewed view of school and commitment to it (Madhavan and Thomas 2005, SmithBattle 2007, Estrada 2012).

1.3.2 Pregnancy as immoral and deviance

Early pregnancy and motherhood is also seen as immoral. This is influenced by dominant cultures that do not approve of sex among children. In many societies, it is not morally, culturally and religiously acceptable for a child or young person to engage in sex. As such those

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who engage in sex defy the 'adult rules' and are therefore seen to be deviant. Like the perception of children in the *Puritan discourse* (Woodhead and Montgomery 2003) pregnant girls are seen to be 'wicked and sinful', and perceived in the same light and a 'contamination' (Pillow 2004) to others. In societies like Zambia, where the majority of people are religious, sex outside marriage is a sin and a sign of moral decay. Pregnancies among school girls occur outside the context of marriage and therefore, immoral. As such, the re-entry girls are barely accepted in school and are seen as social misfits that are likely to corrupt the moral fibre of other students in the school and therefore compromise discipline and transmission of norms and values acceptable to society. The association of early pregnancy with deviance also 'justifies' the negative treatment that they receive, as payment for their sins with many advocating for alternative education for them.

1.3.3   *Pregnancy as foolishness*

Falling pregnant while at school is also perceived to be foolishness on the part of the girl. Masuku (1998:38) reports that; "pregnancy was seen as a girls' issue and the result of girls' foolishness or promiscuity". It is seen as foolishness for a girl to sexually engage or give in to a man when she (and not the boy or man) bears most, if not all the consequences and responsibilities of pregnancy and child care. It is also seen as foolishness especially in a society where school has become natural and compulsory (Qvortrup 2000) for children as it results in disruption or curtailment of education attainment (CSO 2007). As such, school should be prioritized more than anything else for children. Therefore, those things that are seen as potential interference to school are undesirable and pregnancy is one of them. Pregnancy is seen to jeopardize school and a bright future. So a girl who becomes pregnant while at school is seen to have made a foolish decision.

1.3.4   *Construction of motherhood*

The negative reactions to school girl pregnancy is influenced by societal values and norms attached to motherhood. Motherhood is controlled by society in terms of age, marital status, space and roles. Chilisa (2002) observes that a girl has to be married in order to be a mother. As such, the stage at which a school girl gets pregnant is not the 'right' time in the eyes of society. Motherhood is also enshrined in elements of gender culture that insist on a woman as the primary caregiver for a child; a child who should also be raised in a private home environment (Chilisa 2002, Probert 2002). So, even in post-Fordism economy (Lee 2001) the ideology of girls/women

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and domesticity is still dominant. Those girls who return to school are seen to neglect their duties of motherhood. So, a girl mother at school is therefore seen to be 'out of place'.

1.4   Notions of 'proper childhood' and 'value' of school

In many societies, childhood is dominantly viewed as a time of 'becoming' (Lee 2001), a time of learning the norms and values that prepares children for future adult responsibilities. It is a time for investment in children for themselves, their families and the country at large. School therefore, is one such avenue to acquire these values, develop intellectually and morally, a vehicle of economic progress (Serpell 1993). Therefore, school is seen as compulsory for every child and those that are outside the school are perceived to be 'outside childhood'. Interventions like campaigns against pregnancy aim at keeping the child in school. Those that fall out of school are seen to be burdens, a threat to themselves and their own countries. Therefore, the introduction of the re-admission policies is aimed at retaining the girl-child in school. People's notions of what childhood is, influences their perceptions of school-girl pregnancy. With the emphasized link between childhood and school, it is clear that anything that is likely to interfere with school is seen as a threat. Moreover, these children are perceived as 'innocent' and therefore sex and sexuality remain a prerogative of adults and must entirely be separated from children and especially those in school. Therefore, in this context of ideal studentship, "sex is something that these children should not be doing" (Morrow 2003:294) . Therefore, there are age boundaries in relation to sex which also influence the experiences of the re-entry girls in school as they are seen to be out of place and 'outside studentship'.

1.5   Context and interest

Despite the existence of the policy since 1997, (Ministry of Education 2008:94) notes that, "the pregnancy re-admission rates have been very low and do not correspond to the expectations of the policy." This is the case even in urban areas where there are more schools than in rural areas. This research was undertaken in Ndola, an urban town in the mining province of the Copperbelt. This region, despite being predominantly urban and having the highest number of High schools (99 in urban, 30 in rural) in the country, recorded the lowest percentage (28%) of pregnancy re-admissions at Basic schools (Grades 8-9) and 68% at High school (Ministry of Education 2008). The question is therefore why is there a low re-admission rate despite the good intentions of the policy and availability of school places?

Most of the secondary schools in Ndola are co-educational (both girls and boys) with an exception of three, two of which are mission schools, and the other is a national school which caters for best girl students countrywide. Mission schools also have a history of not allowing re-entry girls to avoid compromising their repute of high discipline (FAWE 2006). Therefore, the only option for the girls in Ndola, is co-educational schools where "girls suffer more teasing and taunting than those that attend all–girls schools" (FAWE 2006:16). Pregnancy statistics for certain schools, especially those in low-income residential areas are also very high. One school had 50 cases in one year (2012) out of a population of 1500 girls in the school, and only 13 girls returned. So, even when the Ministry of Education (2010) Educational statistics indicate a high performance of re-admission, (84% at High school) for Copperbelt, narrowing it down to districts and schools present a gloomy picture. In academic literature, policy provisions have been seen to seldom permeate gender inequality encrypted in social structures (Stromquist 1990, Unterhalter 2005). In their review of the re-entry policy, Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :35) also observe that "there was need to focus on the welfare of the young mothers and their babies" (2010:35). It is clear that structural factors are at play. Therefore, it may be insufficient to just retain the girls in school. Attention should also be directed at their daily experiences both in and outside school as this influences the quality of education they receive. The goal of this study therefore, is to provide knowledge on how re-entry girls are actually receiving education and how they perceive this service in a school set up. It also considers how their mothering role influences their learning.

1.6   Research questions

The research was guided by the following questions:

a) How is teenage pregnancy and motherhood perceived by the girls and their community?

b) What are the factors that influence the teen mothers to return or not to return to school?

c) What are the challenges that the re-entry girls face at school and home and how do they respond to them?

d) How do schools and parents respond to the needs and challenges of the girls?

e) How do the girls view the support of the school and parents?

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1.7   Organization of the thesis

The thesis comprises eight chapters. The first one is an introduction providing an overview of school-girl pregnancy trends in Zambia, perceptions and societal responses. Chapter two reviews information on the country's political and socio-economic context and related work on the topic. Chapter three presents the research methods; ethical considerations and challenges, strategies and limitations of the study. Chapter four presents theoretical frameworks used in the study and analyzing of data. Chapter five, six and seven, deal with data analysis and interpretations. Chapter eight as the last one, discusses the findings, make a conclusion and presents recommendations and areas for further study.

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2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY AREA

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the characteristics of the area in which the research was conducted. It describes the geographical location, socio-economic context of the country in general and how this may affect learning for the re-entry girls. It also presents the education system, girl-child education and the relevant interventions that have helped to promote it. Previous researches done in relation to school-girl pregnancy and motherhood are also presented..

2.2 Geographical location and demography

Figure 3. Map of Zambia and neighbouring countries

Internet source: http://www.zambiamining.com/maps/zambia-provinces   23rd May 2014 17:35hours.

Zambia is a landlocked located in the Southern region of Africa and surrounded by eight neighbours like Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Angola and Congo DR.

For administrative purposes, Zambia is divided into 10 provinces with Lusaka and Copperbelt as predominantly urban while the rest are predominantly rural provinces (CSO 2007). The provinces are further divided into 74 districts (CSO 2012) one of which is Ndola, the area in which this research was conducted. Politically, Zambia has been a multi-party democracy since 1991 and has enjoyed relative peace since its independence in 1964. According to the 2010 Census Population and Housing for Zambia, there were 13, 092, 666 people living in Zambia at the time (CSO, 2012). Out of this Lusaka province had the highest number of people at 2, 191, 225 followed by Copperbelt with 1, 972, 313 making the two as the most densely populated regions in the country (CSO 2012:6).

2.3   Socio-economic context

For a long time, Zambia has depended on copper mining as the mainstay of the economy accounting for 95% of export earnings and contributing about 45% to government revenues in the period between 1965-1975 (CSO 2007). However, due to the reduction in copper prices and increase in fuel prices since 1970s, the economy has continued to decline leading to economic diversification that has encompassed agriculture, transport and a few manufacturing industries (CSO 2012). The economy stagnated in the 1980s prompting the change of government from one party state to a multi-party democracy in 1991. In order to rescue the dwindling economy this new government expedited the implementation of the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) that led to liberalisation of trade, removal of subsidies and privatisation of parastatals among others. This privatisation culminated into some parastatals folding up with many people losing formal employment. The new owners of the mines and others industries embarked on cost-saving measures which led to reduction of labour in order to reduce production costs. As such, there were massive job losses leading to rapid growth of the informal sector and generally poverty for a lot of Zambians. This also affected the economy for Ndola which was the industrial hub to subsidiary mining companies. This led to expansion of the informal sector with many other people relying on agriculture (City of Ndola 2008).

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In the Zambian context poverty is described as "lack of access to income, employment opportunities, and entitlements for citizens to such things as freely determined consumption of goods and services, shelter, and other basic needs of life" (MOFNP, 2002 in (CSO 2007:2). These basic needs of life include food, health and education. Over the years, various measures including Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and different National Development Plans (NDPs) have been undertaken to generally improve the economy. However, this growth has been very minimal and has not necessarily translated into significant reduction in poverty and general improvement in the living conditions of the majority of Zambians (MOFNP 2013) and many people still continue to live in poverty (CSO 2012). As such many households live under economically stressful conditions that make them struggle in order to meet the very basic needs like food, health services or even school requirements for their children. The CSO, observes that education attainment is largely linked to the socio-economic situation of the people and that larger gender gaps (against women/girls) in schooling are observed in low-income areas (CSO 2007:34). It is in this case that the economic situation of the people has great negative influences on the education of the girl-child and in turn, on women at large as the table below shows.

Figure 4. Wealth Quintile and Education Attainment among Women

	No Education	Some Primary	Completed Primary	Some Secondary	Completed Secondary	More than Secondary	Total
Lowest Quintile	19.6	53.8	17.9	8.2	0.6	0.0	100.0
Second Quintile	19.0	48.3	20.1	11.9	0.7	0.1	100.0
Middle Quintile	12.0	45.3	22.4	18.7	1.3	0.3	100.0
Fourth Quintile	4.9	30.3	22.8	35.1	5.5	1.4	100.0
Highest Quintile	1.5	10.7	13.3	40.0	15.1	19.4	100.0

Source: CSO (2007:35), Zambia Demographic and Health Survey.

From this table, it is easy to see that the lower the wealth quintile, the lower the education level of the women and girls within that bracket. The percentage gets lower as they progress from primary to secondary with post-secondary being zero. It is also important to note that there is a higher percentage of girls/women with no education or only primary education in the lowest quintile bracket compared to the highest. It is then clear that the chances of secondary completion are much slimmer in the lowest wealth quintile than the highest. The same document observes that, "teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile are more than twice as likely to have started childbearing as those in the highest wealth quintile" (CSO 2007:64). It is not surprising therefore, that the high rates of pregnancy cases were found in schools that are located in townships where the majority of the children come from the lower wealth quintiles.

2.4   International instruments and national policies

Education in Zambia has been identified as one the prime movers of development (MOFNP 2013). Therefore, there have been various initiatives at various levels to ensure that there is education provision for the majority, if not all Zambians. These levels have included global, regional and national initiatives that focus on access, progression and completion of education at various levels across genders. These instruments include the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals among others. Moreover, Article 12 of the UNCRC espouses the right of the child to express their views on matters that directly affect them, while Article 28 emphasizes on the right of the child to education, including a pregnant/mothering girl child. The views and experiences of these girls have the potential to inform interventions aimed at promoting and improving their welfare in school.

However, there are still concerns on the quality of education received as well as enrolment and completion rates in secondary schools. Moreover, there is need for accelerated efforts in order to achieve gender parity, especially at secondary and tertiary levels of education (UNDP 2012).

The achievements so far indicate that Zambia has not worked in isolation from other nations. At regional level, various initiatives including the Dakar Conference on Education for All, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child both emphasise on access to education for all including the pregnant and mothering learners (ACRWC, 1999). Many more programmes, both globally and regionally have been initiated to accelerate the achievement of various targets

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by the year 2015 and beyond, both of which are concerned with putting every child in school, addressing the still low rates of girls, high drop-out rates as well as improving the quality of learning (UNESCO 2013).

Following these global and regional campaigns, Zambia have domesticated most of these targets in its currently operating 1996 policy on Education dubbed 'Educating Our Future'. In its introduction, the policy document states that "The Zambian Government recognizes the basic right of every Zambian to good quality education. Hence, emphasis in this *National Policy* has been placed on such key factors of educational provision as access, equity and quality maintenance at all delivery points in the system"(Ministry of Education 1996:ix). Focus has been to "eliminate factors that hinder access, progression and accomplishment of girls in schools." (Ministry of Education 1996:65). The schooling of the pregnancy re-entry girls is therefore, not an exception.

2.5   Causes and scale of school-girl pregnancy in Zambia

Teenage pregnancy prevalence is regarded as high in Zambia especially in the rural areas and among those that are from low wealth quintiles, which covers most Zambians. Causes of pregnancy are said to be poverty, peer pressure, lack of social amenities, lack of comprehensive sexual knowledge, risk behaviour and certain cultural practices (Pillai and Barton 1998, CSO 2007). Overall 28% of women between the ages 15-19 have begun childbearing (CSO 2007:64). This effectively covers the girls in secondary school raising concern for their education attainment and adverse impact on the achievement of the MDGs. The national educational statistics also indicate a high drop-out of girls due to pregnancy, many of which do not actually return to schools despite the existence of the policy (Figure 1) above.

2.6   The re-entry policy guidelines

 Enshrined in the frame of Education For All (EFA) of 1990, the children's rights to education (UNCRC, 1989), the Beijing Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the policy aims at increasing access to education for the girls. The main emphasis as explicated in the motto is to "protect the rights of *all* children, leave *no child* out of school! Secure the *future* today!" (Ministry of Education, FAWEZA et al. 2004), [Emphasis in original]. So it was aimed at increasing access to education for the re-entry girls. But as Unterhalter (2005) argues,

resourcist approaches by governments and NGOs do not always address the embedded social factors.

 As a policy directive, provinces, districts, and down to school level were required to implement it. The policy was also given legal framework in the Education Act of 2011 Part IV in which a person who contravenes this re-admission commits an offence Shonga (2011:22). Although the policy came into place in 1997, the guidelines on how to implement it only came later in a document dated 2004. It may mean that there was no implementation framework during this period. The policy guidelines deal with steps to take when a girl falls pregnant to ensure her stay and later, her return to school. A girl is supposed to return to school not later than one year after delivery and "should go on mandatory leave at the end of the seventh month of her pregnancy" (Ministry of Education, FAWEZA et al. 2004), although schools are advised to be flexible to grant the wishes of the girl. While the leave caters for the safety of the pregnant girl and the health of the baby, it effectively affects their academic performance and progress (Mwansa 2011), and as also reported by participants in this study. The men/boys responsible or their families should provide support for the girl and child maintenance, and also be punished in case of the girl being a minor (under 16years) (Ministry of Education, FAWEZA et al. 2004).

Apart from dealing with the procedures, the policy guideline also emphasises on counselling the girls during the whole process. Although school transfer is not mandatory, the guidelines expect school administrators to facilitate it if the girl wishes to move. This is in a bid to avoid stigmatisation (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010) as also revealed by this study. The policy has since benefited many girls who would otherwise been out of school and also been praised as one of the best practices by UNICEF (Ministry of Education, FAWEZA et al. 2004, Mwansa 2011). However, the nature of the learning environment to which the girls return has not been adequately covered. Schools, heads, teachers and the returnee girls are left to adapt to the changing learning needs of the girl mother to the best of their ability. As such the experiences of the girls are varied depending on their needs and responses as well as responses of schools or teachers they encounter in the learning process. There are also no clear ways of dealing with those that stigmatise these girls.

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Other sectors have been concerned with the environment in which the policy was formulated. Major stakeholders in planning and implementation like church, head teachers, parents and including the girl pupils who are the direct beneficiaries were not consulted and that it was formulated as an ad hoc (Mwansa 2011). On the implementation of the policy, Banda (2010) in Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :15) observes that school authorities "implemented it, somewhat half-heartedly because they did not have a choice. They did not want to be seen to be fighting Government, so they just obliged. They have never believed in the idea of girls who have had babies attending school". Partly due to non-consultation, the policy has had many gaps in its implementation, with the Ministry confirming that the policy has not been performing to expectation (Ministry of Education 2008). The other hindrance to the success of the re-entry policy has been people's reactions to it.

2.7   Public responses to the re-entry policy

The low performance of the re-entry policy in Zambia could also be attributed to the initial reactions the policy received and continue to do from certain sectors of society. There were mixed responses from the public with major criticism from teachers and some parents (FAWE 2006). Mwansa (2011) also reports apathy in implementation of the policy especially by the Grant aided schools (mostly run by churches). Recent press reports confirm this. Headlines like *"Mwamba forces re-entry policy on church schools"* (Staff Reporter 2013), among many others go to confirm the resistance still exists. Moreover, education administrators, teachers and the general public's negative reactions purporting abuse of the policy by the girls abound. With such newspaper headings as "*Abuse of girls' re-entry policy worrisome, say St. Mulumba Head"* (Mbagu 2013), people generally assert that the policy is being abused with impunity. However, this has been challenged and many education officials at higher level and FAWEZA who have outlined that there are many advantages of the policy which outweigh the disadvantages in media and other researches (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010). Nevertheless, it still remains that despite the progress made, the policy continues to be surrounded by controversy and this has implications for the girl-child who returns to school after delivery.

2.8   Research on school-girl pregnancy/mothering in Zambia

There have been substantive studies on teenage pregnancy and its effects in general (Kabaso 2012) but very few have focused on the school re-entry policy and educational experience of

returnee mothers in Zambia. Available literature within the school re-entry policy area has been advocacy on the benefits that it offers to the girls who return (FAWE 2006) or situation analysis and reviews of the policy performance (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010). Conducted in four provinces and twelve districts, the latter study used mixed methods with questionnaires, focus group discussions and interviews with 279 participants, which included re-entry girls, other pupils, teachers and other community leaders. The main findings in the study were early initiation of sex among the girls especially on the Copperbelt and these were mainly due to peer pressure, fun and lack of support from parents or guardians. Schools were urged not just to emphasise the return of the girls to school, but also look at their welfare as well as that of their babies.

 Other academic studies have focused on the health effect the policy has on the re-entry girls' babies (Unknown 2010). Carried out in Choma, the study also used both quantitative and qualitative methods with its 1,318 participants who included administrators, returnee and non-returnee girls as well as their parents. Its main findings included mixed views about the re-entry policy, stigmatisation of school-girl mothers by peers and some teachers, child care challenges as well as limited support from the child's fathers and schools. Others have focused on the process of policy formulation and key stakeholders including the beneficiaries of the policy who were not consulted leading to its partial failure (Mwansa 2011). While all these studies have in a way touched on the perceptions and the challenges the girls face in school, there has been very few studies that actually focus on the welfare of the re-entry girls when they return to school (Hamusonde, 2003 cited in (Unknown 2010) and how these girl-mothers respond to these tensions both at home and in school, and how their learning is influenced. Yet, how both the home and school factors interact, and how the girls negotiate them in their learning process has profound effects on the well-being of the re-entry girls and the devising of appropriate measures to improve their learning experiences.

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3   METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the strategies and methods that were used for data collection. The choice of methods depends on how one views the world, the social phenomenon under study as well as the potential participants in the study. Some scholars have called these ways of seeing and knowing as *ontological* and *epistemological* perspectives (Mason 2002). Experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls in school being the focus of the study, it was important that the girls' perspectives are gathered and various techniques and methods provided to ensure their participation. Punch (2002:322) notes that; "the way in which a researcher perceives the status of children influences the choice of methods." Therefore, this section describes my role and position as a researcher and how the children were positioned as social actors. It also discusses how the methods used facilitated and limited the collection of the required data. Ethical considerations such as consent, privacy and confidentiality, reciprocity and immediacy of benefit are also discussed.

3.1   Nature of the study

The study is grounded in qualitative research practice and the new sociology of childhood in which ethnographic research provides the children with a direct voice and an opportunity not only to participate, but also for the researcher to provide a general in-depth descriptions of their experiences of mothering and schooling (Prout and James 1990). The new sociology of childhood positions children as "social actors who can provide a unique perspective on the social world about matters that concern them as children" (James 2007:261). They are active in shaping their own lives and that of the people around them and not just passive recipients of adult actions or policies. Therefore, the interest was on how the girls view the re-entry policy, how it is helping them and what changes if any, could be made in order to improve their welfare in school. Many scholars have emphasised the need to listen to children. For example, they advocate that "research methods must allow children to express their own views, experiences and perceptions and help children to do this in a variety of ways." (Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009:1.23). Thus, this study used methods such as semi-structured interviews and task based techniques in a way that gave greater opportunity for children to express themselves. James (2007:267) also observes that "listening to what children say about their everyday lives and experiences can allow us both to

theorise and act on their understandings in relation to larger issues of social and political change".

3.2 Researcher's position

Personal and professional (as a teacher) aspects would have influenced the decisions I made in the research process. Some scholars have alluded to the fact that a qualitative research cannot be neutral but is influenced by the researchers and the many decisions that they take in the whole process of research (Mason 2002). She further proposes that "researchers should constantly take stock of their actions and their role in the research process" It is this that I reflect on and how it influenced the research (Mason 2002:7).

As a teacher, I am familiar with daily routines and general activities in a school set-up. Exposure to school cultures gave me a better understanding of the relations/interactions both between pupils and also between them and their teachers. It was easy for me to understand the daily routines in the school and why certain decisions had to be made in the interest of the participants. For example, I clearly understood concerns from teachers about how much time I spent with the children and avoided disturbing their lessons. In fact, for those that agreed, the research activities were done at home when they were free. However, being a teacher and conducting a research in a school set-up made me my role fluid in relation to what McCracken (1988) calls insider/outsider role of a researcher. By insider, one is familiar with the situation under study and therefore is likely to ignore certain occurrences as 'normal' and therefore miss the very essence of undertaking such a particular study." This familiarity and perception may have also blinded me to certain ideas that I might have assumed as 'normal.' For example, it is professionally normal practice for a teacher to scold a pupil who is not working hard, and would therefore not have recognised the effect that such could have on the learning experience of the pupils. I would have also been judgmental on the 'wrong' they have done and questioned the morality of these girls who engage in sex when young or while at school. Therefore, in my interaction with my participants I remained alert to these perceptions and any departure from my assumptions and personal biases. This was helped by the distance that I had manufactured. McCracken (1988) proposes that, in order to overcome insider challenges of seeing things as normal, one should leave the place for some time. By staying in Norway for close to a year, and away from a school set-up, it helped to be alert to certain things I had taken for granted.

Personally, I have always considered education as a liberator- an escape from a life of hardship especially for girls. My parents have always emphasized the importance of education; this I believe is the case in most homes in Zambia. However, some of my siblings whom I was sponsoring have become parents while at school. I understand the pain and disappointment that goes with such an occurrence on the part of sponsors or parents. I was therefore alert to my own perceptions and looked for things that would surprise (McCracken 1988) my taken for granted assumptions and therefore made me able to gather the re-entry girls' perceptions. One such case was a girl whose parents (who apparently had financial difficulties in meeting school demands) were happy that she was pregnant, so that they can have grand children.

3.3   Rapport building and power relations

Rapport building is basically establishing a trusting relationship between the researcher and his/her participants. This is especially crucial in research with children where power differences are magnified. Removal of barriers that can hinder development of such a relationship becomes vital. This was an early encounter for me in my study. At both schools where I did this research, I met colleagues who knew me as a teacher and in the process of such talk; some of my participants also came to know that I was a teacher. In fact, at one of the schools, I met my former pupil who was working at the school and she introduced me as her former teacher to her colleagues and some of my participants. This in a way created a barrier for me in that my participants now knew I was a teacher and could therefore view me as an authority figure, thereby magnifying the power-differential. The girls would have casted doubts on whether to see me as a researcher genuinely concerned and interested in them or as a teacher who was possibly mocking them or 'spying' on them. Goodenough et al, (2003) in Powell, Fitzgerald et al. (2012) caution that research in schools can be framed by children's attitudes to adults within a school setting and perceive a researcher as being in a teacher role.

However, these fears did not materialise. Firstly, I was formally introduced to my participants by the teachers specifically in charge of Guidance and Counselling, a department that also takes responsibility of their welfare. Scholars note that, "children are more likely to trust researchers who are accompanied by someone known and trusted" (Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009:2.10) I had explained clearly both verbally and in written, the purpose of the research and how the information shared was confidential. The girls were not 'afraid' as they expressed openness and

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freedom by asking questions to seek clarification on the research. For example, from the outset, one girl asked me frankly how the research would personally benefit her. *"What is in it for us? Ok, let me just say, how do I personally benefit from this research?"* Moreover, I informed them of my lack of experience in teaching at a girls or mixed school. In my years of service, I have only taught at a boys' school, and therefore was not very familiar with girls' experiences in school. Throughout the process of research, I also distanced myself from being viewed as a teacher by dressing simply, in flat shoes and simple clothes rather than formally like most teachers. I also never assumed any other teacher role and avoided using the staffroom at all times. The fact that I was not a teacher in these schools, also in a way helped me to deal with power relations. These strategies, I believe helped to reduce the power differences that I had perceived to be influenced by my profession as a teacher.

However, I was still seen as an adult and this culturally created power differences. For example, it is not common to address an adult by their first name without putting a prefix that denotes respect. Although I encouraged the girls to address me by my first name, those that did still added the prefix *'ba'* even if they were using English to communicate. But the fact that they used my first name means that they were close enough and treated me as their 'friend'. So the friendly role I assumed, in this case as one who is different from them as an adult, but one that lacks knowledge and was willing to listen and learn from them (Mayall, 2000) in (Powell, Fitzgerald et al. 2012). There were also informal interactions, sharing snacks and of facts about my own life which opened the way for them to share their own life experiences, thereby creating a trusting relationship (Abebe 2009, Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009). This helped to 'set the mood 'and make them relaxed around me.

Most of the girls had busy schedules, making it difficult for group interactions. They were also not involved in any extra-curricular activities like clubs or games for the same reasons. When asked about after school activities, Maggie said; *"I just rush home to check on the baby and do the washing and other house chores, there is no time or reason to stay in school".* So to ensure that I fitted in their plans and activities and followed their guidelines (Punch 2002, Abebe 2009), I avoided meeting them at once but continued making informal interactions individually at their homes or at school. Moreover, Powell, Fitzgerald et al. (2012:41) note that "conceptualising relations as one in which adults are 'all powerful' is overly simplistic" (2012:41). In this case, I felt the children had more control, creating a shifting relationship in terms of power balance.

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Barker and Smith (2001) in Powell, Fitzgerald et al. (2012:42) note that power distribution between adults and children in the field is "fluid, constantly renegotiated and prone to slippage". Therefore, research relations were fluid.

3.4   Access

Access is a way of reaching and making contact with one's potential participants. In order to get this access, preliminary contact was made with the officials at the District Education office by e-mail and phone, on the possibility of conducting the study in the area. A research description outlining the aim, objectives, methods and ethical considerations was sent and access was granted. Focus narrowed down to two schools because of their high incidences (10 and 50 cases each) of pregnancy, both located in low-income residential areas and the head teachers were helpful and assigned teachers to assist me. However, they cautioned that the prospective participants were very irregular in school attendance due to their difficulties in balancing child care and school.

This irregular school attendance made it difficult to meet them on scheduled times and required regular assistance from assigned teachers. Although the assigned teachers were initially very helpful in calling the girls from their respective classrooms, and also arranging permission for the girls with other teachers who were likely to miss them, they seemed reluctant to help as the research continued. So, there emerged a further chain of gatekeepers like the receptionist, who helped during the times the assigned teachers were busy or not available. The receptionist was also busy sometimes and would assign other staff to help. Moreover, regular permission had to be sought from the different teachers who were in class at a particular teaching period as different teachers are responsible. I remember one girl requesting the receptionist to take her back to class, because she was afraid the teacher would not allow her to enter, since he was not the one in class at the time she left. So, the irregular school attendance and long chain of gatekeepers, in a way delayed the progress of the research and subtracted learning time from some of the participants. This delay was in consideration that there were common mock examinations forthcoming the following month (July), the period in which, ethically no research was to be done with the girls.

In some cases the girls preferred to remain unknown as pregnancy re-entrants. When I went to one Basic school (up to Grade 9), I was informed that for the cases they had, the girls were still on leave. Those others whose leave had ended had passed to Grade 10 at a neighbouring school. When contact was made with the neighbouring school, they also said they only had cases of girls who were on leave at the time and had not yet returned to school. When I inquired about those who came from the other school, the head was not aware they were re-entry girls. In our informal interactions, one girl, Nelly, comments; *"Tuli bengi madam, bambi tabafwayafye ukwishibikwa"* (We are many madam; others do not just want to be known). Therefore, it was not only difficult for me to access these participants, but also for schools to keep correct records and address needs of the re-entry girls. Later in the research, it was discovered that this preference of the girls to remain a 'hidden group'(Liampultong 2007), was a survival strategy, in view of common stigmatisation.

3.5 Sampling

Selection of a sample in research depends on the nature of the research questions and the participants who are likely to answer them and in what setting. Mason (2002:120) provides a broad definition of sampling and selection as "principles and procedures used to identify, choose and gain access to relevant data sources from which you generate data using your chosen methods". In order to answer the main research question of how return girls negotiate the roles of mothering and schooling, I had chosen Ndola district. This district is on the Copperbelt, one of the regions where the policy is expected to be performing well but is still low (Ministry of Education 2008) and therefore the policy had not fully achieved its intended objective of "retaining the girl child in school" (Mumba 2002:81). One other practical reason was easy access as I live in the district and the familiarity with the local language. The characteristics of the research participants were also clear from the start. It was those girls, who had fallen pregnant while at school, took leave and later returned to continue school. Therefore, the re-entry girls were purposively chosen because of their characteristics. They were potentially present in the district, and this was confirmed by relevant authorities.

Guidance and Counselling teachers were also included as they are the ones who are directly concerned with such issues. The school Heads as implementers on the ground were seen as key informants and directly involved in ensuring the welfare of the girls in school. The parents were

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also seen as key players in the learning and upkeep of not only their daughter, but also care for the baby. Furthermore, girls who had initially left school because of pregnancy, but had not returned were included. These were accessed using snowball sampling. Gobo defines snowball sampling as "picking some subjects who feature the necessary characteristics and, through their recommendations, finding subjects with the same characteristics" (Gobo 2004:410). Inclusion of these categories of participants was seen as a means to provide a comprehensive picture of the girls schooling and mothering interaction. This focus on these groups of people facilitated "depth, nuance and complexity" (Mason 2002:121) on the phenomenon of school-girl pregnancy. Creswell also advances that the intent in qualitative research is to elucidate the particular rather than generalizing(Creswell 2007).

The figures below shows a summary of both adult and child participants.

Figure 5. Child participants

PARTCIPANT CODE	AGE	GRADE LEVEL
MWR 001	18	11
MWR 002	17	11
MWR 003	18	11
MWR 004	18	12
MWR 005	19	12
LUA 001	17	10
LUA 002	18	11
LUA 003	18	12
LUA 004	17	11
NON 001	19	9
NON 002	17	9
NON 003	16	8

N.B: The participants with NON- codes are non-re-entrants and the Grade level shows their last grade before falling pregnant.

Figure 6. Adult Participants

PARTICIPANT CODE	POSITION/OCCUPATION	GENDER
MWR HD	School Head	M
MWR GC TR	Guidance teacher	F
LUA HD	School Head	M
LUA GC TR	Guidance teacher	M
FWZ OFF	Faweza official	F
PR 001	Marketeer (Fish)	F
PR 002	Marketeer (Veg./cooking sticks)	F
PR 003	Farmer	F

N.B: The intention was to balance the gender of parents but it was not realizable in the field due to time and travelling.

3.6 Age of child participants

The initial plan of the research was to adhere to the definition of the child as espoused in the UNCRC of 1989 where a child is anyone 18 years or under. This however, was not practical. As the table shows, those aged 19 are included and many others as old as 22 years were encountered in the field. For a girl-mother in a Zambian school, her social age is fluid, depending on what one wants to emphasize, whether it is the status of being in school or that of pregnancy/mothering. All pupils in school are generally regarded as children regardless of the chronological age. This was evident in the interviews with school heads and teachers where they consistently referred to the re-entry girls as children.

However, the status of the re-entry girls as children suddenly changes depending on a particular situation. One participant, Carol, mentions an incident where they were fighting over a chair with a fellow pupil, in which she was referred to as "*mwe bafyashi, mwe bakulu"* (you are a parent, an adult). Such comments therefore, confirm the social light rather than chronological age, in which the girl mothers in school are sometimes perceived. Like many other international definitions, there are problems in applying this chronological age definition of a child to different social situations (Meintjes and Giese 2006, Abebe 2009). Different societies have different conception of who a child is, regardless of chronological age. Njungwe (2009:15) also observes that in most African societies, "an individual remains a child even after 18 years so long as she remains under the parents' shelter or guidance". Zambia is such a one. This study therefore, adopts (Clark-

Kazak 2008) 'social age' which encompasses the experience and meanings that a particular society attaches to a particular social phenomenon, in this case, a girl mother in school.

3.7   Methods of data collection

The nature of methods used and the order in which they are administered greatly help in the generation of the required data. Varieties of methods are complementary to each other covering up for the limitations of one and offering opportunity for triangulation or cross-checking. Use of multiple methods in research with children is strongly recommended by scholars (Punch 2002, Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009). Multiple methods were used for the child participants in this study and include; observation, drawings, semi-structured interviews, time-line and essay writing and were administered in the same order presented. For adults, observation and interviews were us used.

3.7.1   Observation

In any qualitative research, observation of social actions and interactions provide very useful knowledge of a phenomenon under study which could not be expressed eloquently in interviews. Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009:5.9) contend that "observation is the basis of all good research." Observation is the process enabling researchers to learn about the activities of the people under study in the natural setting through observing their activities (Mason 2002). In line with the old adage '*Actions speak louder than words*', much more useful information emerged, some of which did not emerge in the interviews. Therefore, the method endeavoured to uncover perceptions, challenges and responses which could not be captured in other methods. Since the settings of these observations were physical spaces as well as social, interactions both at home and school were of interest.

 Some conversation that related to my study indeed, emerged. For example a pregnant pupil frequently came to see the receptionist, to follow up on the forms for her maternity leave. So, it was during such interactions that certain comments were passed on the condition of the girl. One of the staff said, "*Bamoneni, nabanaka. ala, tabalacimona*" (Look at her, she is very tired. She is yet to see it). Such a comment was a mixture of pity and scorn. Such data would not have been possible in other methods used.

 Further data in regard to perceptions of girls emerged. Commenting on the irregular school attendance of some of the participants one teacher says; *'Baleonsha!'* (They are breastfeeding!)

The fact that it was produced in a natural social setting, it brought out all the body language and facial expressions, which carried with it the deeper meaning and intention of scorn (Goodwin 2006). This later, revealed the perception that school is not the right place for these girls, but home where they can concentrate on breastfeeding their babies.

Responses to situations were also observed. One particular incident of interest was the role-switch that occurred immediately the participant reached home. While it was the duty of my participant's mother to take care of the baby while she (my participant) was at school, this role ceased immediately the mother to the baby arrives. We found the baby crying, and it seemed a relief for the carer that my participant arrived. I had already introduced myself to the family and so was known. Since the baby was crying and my participant had to change her uniform, I took it upon myself to relieve the mother (Grandmother to baby). I took the baby and hushed her for a while before the mother (my participant) came out to breastfeed her. Taking off her uniform, was like taking off her identity as a school-girl and quickly switching on to that of a mother. This shows how competent the girl had become in negotiating the two roles even when in our adult view; we see it as a burden.

One limitation of this unstructured observation was the reliance on chance that relevant themes, actions or behaviours would emerge. Mason (2002) observes that simply hanging around waiting for data to happen can be time consuming, unproductive and exhausting. I therefore used this method throughout the whole process of research in the settings alluded to earlier.

3.7.2   *Drawings*

This technique was used as the first interactive method with the participants, providing a detailed background to family contexts. It involved making drawings of the people that the participants live with and there after discuss how they relate to them and support them. The other part (support circle) required them to do a ranking, in concentric circles, of individuals that they regard to be supportive in their lives. This method was amusing to them and this helped to sustain their interest (cf.Punch 2002). In one case, it was done in a group of three participants who kept on comparing their drawings and establishing who the best was. This was the funny part of it, and did not distract the others who had seemingly poor drawings. They simply laughed it off as they were not necessarily expected to be good at it (drawing). Moreover, I had assured them that it was not the particular outlook of the drawing that mattered but what it actually represented and what they had to say about the same drawings.

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The questions asked about the drawings opened avenues on varied ways of how the girls relate to different family members. The aim was to establish social networks within and outside the home that are a factor in the lives of the girls. The support circle required them to rank the people who supported them in different ways and how they perceived this support in relation to their mothering and schooling. In their drawings of concentric circles, they ranked the persons they thought supported them more to those that they thought supported less. Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009) advise that questions should be asked to discover children's reasons for the order of ranking. Thus, by discussing these rankings with them, data was generated on not only individuals close to them, but also the kind of support the girls regarded as more important than the others. This is further discussed in (5.5) on family structure and relations.

3.7.3 Semi-structured interviews

Interviewing has been seen as an obvious method in most qualitative researches because of the in-depth nature of data generation and collection required. Kvale (1996:124) describes a semi-structured interview as one with "...a sequence of themes to be covered, as well as suggested questions. Yet at the same time there is openness to changes of sequence and forms in order to follow up the answers given and the stories told by the subjects". The main tool in the study was the semi-structured interview which had various themes like perceptions of teenage pregnancy and motherhood, factors in return/non-return to school, school and home challenges faced by the re-entry girls as well as the support systems both in schools and at home and how this was perceived by the re-entry girls with a list of possible questions for each theme. The questions were used as a flexible guide to not only cover the themes in the research but also give enough room for the participants' own exploration. Commenting on semi-structured interviews, Westbrook (1994:241) notes that "the flexibility of the technique allows the investigator to probe; to clarify and to create new questions based on what has already been heard".

The interviews were done on a one-to-one basis and lasted between 30 minutes -1 hour depending on how readily and openly the participant discussed the questions. The situations and set-ups varied with some interviews conducted in offices, departmental rooms while others were done in the school canteen and at home. I realised that the location greatly influenced the interviews. Most of those interviews that were conducted at home were longer and the girls expressed themselves freely, compared to those that occurred at school. This could be attributed

to limitations of time on those done in schools as some were done during tea breaks, and also difficulties in finding a suitable room. I also recall one interview that was done in the Deputy Head's office because there was no other room available and it was too windy and sandy (July) to do an interview outside. The girl was initially unsettled and did not even allow me to use a recorder. Bearing in mind (Woodhead and Faulkner 2000)'s 'naughty room', I kept assuring her that what we discussed was safe and confidential, as not even the Deputy Head knew the exact questions we discussed. Normally, the children rarely visit the Deputy Head's office unless they have a case to answer. This could have therefore made the girl unsettled. So the 'tactful arrangement' (Alderson and Morrow 2011) was to postpone the meeting to another day.

Although, the participants were in most cases free to choose the location of the interviews, it did not always work in their favour. Some of those interviews that took place at home also attracted attention from other household members including parents in some cases. Like Abebe (2009:457) observes in his study; "in most cases, adults, parents and other children would simply come and join in". Therefore, privacy and confidentiality were at stake. It was difficult and it would have sounded impolite for me to directly ask the mother to excuse us. Moreover, it emerged in the interviews with both, that they were very close to each other. Instead, I had to inform my participant in advance on the nature of questions, and asked her if she was comfortable if her mother stayed and listened. In this way, I felt I was indirectly asking the mother to excuse us as well as giving freedom to my participant to choose what she preferred. She allowed her to stay, probably out of respect, though I feel the participant would have been much comfortable to answer certain questions in her parent's absence. Fortunately, the parent noticed this, and excused herself. The question remains as to whether my participant consented to her mother's presence because she was free with her or out of courtesy not to turn her down as an adult. Bearing in mind that parent's presence may inhibit their children (Alderson and Morrow 2011), I later in the interview, I decided to rephrase the questions asked earlier and asked them again, when the parent had left us. The responses turned out to be the same as those given earlier.

The fact that the questions in the interview touched on many aspects of the research afforded me, an opportunity to triangulate the information generated with other methods used. While in the other methods certain factors were just mentioned, the interview gave me opportunity to ask

follow-up questions and clarify the meanings. For example, when Leah filled in the *time-line* on people's perception of school-girl pregnancy, she simply wrote "They say it is foolishness". This "foolishness" could not have been clearly understood without prior information from the interviews. Moreover, being a semi-structured interview gave freedom to the participants to explore the subject on their own terms, thus providing "depth" to the case (Creswell 2007).

3.7.4 Essay

Considering that not everything could be captured in a one-to-one interview because of power differences between adults and children, task-based methods were also used, and among them, the essay. This was not just to avoid being obtrusive, but to address generational issues (McCracken 1988). The essay was entitled *My memories of pregnancy, baby and school,* and meant to explore their thoughts and feelings about their daily experiences. This writing, gave them control on what they shared and time to reflect on it; unlike in an interview where they might say something they are not ready to share considering its 'live' nature (Abebe 2009). In reflecting on what she had shared, one participant decided to write more after she had already given mean essay, which was almost 2 pages, while others were very brief; as brief as half a page (A4). This therefore reflects the freedom they had in deciding what and how much they shared. The information generated helped to understand the girl's perceptions of their own situation and how this could influence their learning in school. This corresponds to Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009:5.32) assertion that "essays can provide new insights into activities and ideas of children, especially their own views, priorities and concerns".

Unlike interviews with specific questions by the researcher, the essay topic was open and broad enough to allow freedom of exploration. So a variety of stories were produced with some concentrating on details of the reactions/responses of the people around them when their pregnancy condition became known. Others focused on their relationships with their boyfriends and the driving factors that led them to become pregnant. Considering the 'private and personal' nature of sexual matters and avoidance of being obtrusive (McCracken 1988, Ennew 2008, Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009) there were no specific questions soliciting for details of their relationships with their boyfriends in the interview guide. As such, the essay writing proved handy and brought out the varied experiences that the girls.

However, there were limitations also on how much they could write considering their limitation in the English language, which all of them decided to use. Although Punch (2002:238) observes that, "younger children may have a more limited vocabulary..." even older children experience that. Moreover, in the interviews, most of them frequently switched to the local language. On writing however, it was not possible for them to use the local language as many of them are only exposed to the spoken part. In schools, the local language is optional, and so very few take it. This could have the limitation in some of them writing briefly. Much as my interest was not their language, but what they said, a point that I emphatically made to them, I feel this language limitation also influenced what and how much they shared.

3.7.5   Time-line

A time-line designed in table form, was also used. This tool can be categorized in the recall (remembering) class of methods (Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009). In this particular case, it was used to allow the girls to reflect on the changes, if any, that have occurred in their lives since the incidence of pregnancy. It covered various areas of life like performance at school, perception of school, reactions from teachers, classmates and parents and siblings as well as finances and sponsorship among others. This covered the time periods of before, during and after pregnancy. Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009) note that recall instruments like the time-line can provide useful insights into social change. In this case, it is various changes that have to do with the responsibility of child care, school sponsorship changes in perception of school as well as reactions from people around them. The time-line was very useful in generating this kind of data. This supplemented other data that emerged in interviews. Activity based techniques were prominent in his study to allow the participants to be actively involved in the whole process of research. Punch (2002) advises on combining traditional methods like interviews and observations with task-based methods as effective.

While some of the participants produced detailed changes, others were as brief as saying 'o.k.' Therefore; this prompted me to ask further questions on what the o.k. was referring to. This also showed how varied the responses of participants can be, to a particular technique.

3.7.6   Reflections on task-based methods

Some task-based methods used in this study, (essay and time-line) sometimes proved problematic in some cases as participants delayed bringing them back. I interpreted this delay in different ways. Firstly, the interest that they had initially with the drawings had waned as we went deep into the research. This is similar to Punch's experience with diaries when she observes that; "as time went on, children wrote less and less" (Punch 2002:335). Considering their irregular attendance and the period of examinations, the research had extended over a period of two months and this could have made them tired even though they were not met on a daily basis. They therefore became bored with filling in papers especially without any immediate and tangible benefit. This is evidenced in a comment made by one participant who was discouraging others from participating *"Mwandini mwiyako, balepelafye ifipepa, nokwipusha ama questions ukwabula nangu cimo".* (Don't go there; she is just giving papers to fill in and asking questions, nothing else). This statement points out the fact that, filling papers (Time-line) and writing stories (Essay, on memories of pregnancy) were such boring and daunting tasks that they required to be rewarded. On the other hand, the comment also implied on the broader scale, giving material benefits to them and not just 'use' them (This is further discussed in 3.9 on reciprocity).

The other reason for the delay in returning the papers was to do with their limited time in negotiating their roles of motherhood and schooling. At school, very limited time (Break/lunchtime) was given to me as a researcher to be with the participants. The main concern was their loss of learning time considering their irregular attendance in school. At home also, there were issues to do with baby care such as feeding, fetching water, washing nappies among many other 'normal' household chores. In Punch's case (2002), the teachers helped to free the children for the tasks in the research by not giving them homework. However, my participants sometimes had homework to be done or just general study especially that they were writing Mid-year or Mock examinations in that term. So I allowed them to bring the forms at their own time. This however, might have affected their reflections and flow of ideas on the experiences they wanted to share.

3.8   Ethical considerations

Ethics feature prominently in decisions that have to be made throughout the whole process of research. This is especially so in research with children. Gallagher (2009) in Powell, Fitzgerald et al. (2012:1) defines research ethics as "a complex construct, essentially concerned with right and wrong conduct... within a particular social and cultural context". With this in mind, it was therefore important to heed to Alderson and Morrow (2011) advice that a harm-benefit analysis should always be done to ensure protection of the children. It therefore calls for a balance between protecting the children as well as allowing them to participate by expressing their views on the matter. Some of the ethics embedded in the methods have already been discussed under the various methods used in this study. In this section, I therefore discuss protection, informed consent, confidentiality and privacy as well as reciprocity.

3.8.1   Protection

Considering the characteristics of my participants, I had to ensure that they received the protection they needed especially from emotional harm. Being pregnant at a young age and in school, carry with it various stresses. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:63) note that "even during interviews there is a possibility of becoming stressed because of painful memories". Moreover, some of the girls may have been sexually abused (FAWE 2006). Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009:2.14) also advise that "arrangements for contacting counsellors or other means of emotional support should be part of the research plan" I anticipated possible emotional breakdowns and therefore, before engaging my participants, I had made contact with the Young Women Christian Association (YWCA), a charitable organisation, which was ready to offer counselling to the girls in case of need. I gave the contact details to my participants. I also ensured that the phone had air-time so that my participants could access this counselling if it was needed immediately.

3.8.2   Informed consent

Seeking voluntary participation and informing participants of the purpose of research is very critical especially in research with children. Emmanuel et al., (2000) in Liampultong (2007:33) describe informed consent as "the provision of information to participants, about purpose of research, its procedures, potential risks, benefits and alternatives so that the individual understands this information and can make a voluntary decision whether to enrol or continue to

participate". Although the children were accessed from their respective schools, with the permission of responsible authorities, I went further and sought the consent of both the participants and their parents. The research was explained to them, with chance given to ask questions for any clarification. Some consented while others did not. Those that consented also carried the form to consult their parents. One parent did not agree to his child participating in the research and the girl was released. Since consent also involves the right to withdraw at anytime (Alderson and Morrow 2011), I normally asked my participants at each stage and for each method if they were willing to continue and comfortable with the method. Some participants wished not to be recorded in the interviews while one later withdrew. This therefore shows that the children had freedom to opt out at any time and their participation was voluntary.

One interesting incident relating to consent arose with one potential participant in relation to signing the consent form. Although she verbally consented, she hesitated when asked to sign the form and requested to consult with the parent. One issue that can be raised is whether it is verbal or written consent that should be upheld. Similarly, Abebe (2009) also raises the issue of scepticism by participants in signing of the consent forms. On following up the case, the teacher in-charge explained that there were general fears of 'satanism' a secret cult in which people were unknowingly being recruited through such links as signatures or anything else that directly connects an individual to these people in the cult. Later the child returned the form and informed me that the parent had declined.

3.8.3   *Confidentiality and privacy*

Another ethical consideration is that of confidentiality and privacy. Birch et al. (2002) in Kvale and Brinkmann (2009:62) observe that ethical issues arise because of "researching private lives and putting them in the public arena". This was taken into consideration in this research with the pregnancy re-entry girls. Their experiences both in school and at home are private and personal to some extent. But they voluntarily gave consent to participate and measures were taken to ensure this privacy and confidentiality. Firstly, there was anonymity of the schools that were involved in the research. With more than 30 secondary schools in the district, it is difficult to exactly trace which schools, let alone, participants who took part in the research. Secondly, even when in some cases a tape recorder was used, the information given was only for me as the

researcher and for academic purposes. The transcriptions were also done by me. In all the methods and techniques used, codes were used for participants on all sheets. In the writing of the report, pseudonyms have also been used. Masson in Fraser, Lewis et al. (2004) asserts to this when she explains that the location, individuals and some facts that may identify them are changed or omitted. The names of both the schools and participants have been changed in this report.

In certain situations however, especially with the problem of space for interviews, it was difficult to ensure privacy. For instance; the time we were using a school canteen for an interview. It was all quiet initially but became crowded during break time. At such times, we would discuss other matters until it cleared. It was one of the quiet times when I was interviewing my participant and without noticing, a boy was watching us. After noticing him, he approached us and explained that he thought we were discussing academic questions. I do not know how long he had been observing us or how much he heard. Abebe (2009) also mentions the challenge and possibility of eavesdrop in using community spaces such as a canteen. Therefore, it was difficult to ensure privacy in such a case.

3.9   Reciprocity and immediacy of benefits

The issue of giving money or gifts is heavily contested in academic literature. It is often discouraged to give money to participants to avoid raising expectations (Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009). However, reflexivity was used on the different situations encountered in the process of the research (Solberg 1996). Although I did not provide money directly, I had to buy lunch for participants especially those that I met during lunch time. While some declined, others were happy this was done. Moreover, considering that most of them highlighted the difficulties with study materials and detergents for washing of baby clothes and nappies, I had to do something. At the end of the research, I decided to photocopy past examination papers in various compulsory subjects and bought some note books and detergents to give to each of them. The girls were very happy and thankful. It was also a way of appreciation for me, for the time they gave me; especially that it was limited in their case. In his case with the disadvantaged children, Abebe (2009) also believes that attending to their circumstances, was one way of reciprocating to them.

It is advocated that the objectives, costs and benefits of a particular research should be clearly explained to the participants (Ennew, Abebe et al. 2009). Much as this was done, two situations

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of direct benefit to the participants arose. One of the participants asked me upfront, *"What is in it for us? Ok, let me just say, how do I personally benefit from this research?"* This raises the question of whether the benefits of a particular research should be direct/indirect or short-term or long term. I had explained that this was an academic research; they had an opportunity to speak on matters that directly affected them, sharing their experiences, and the potential of benefiting many others girls in a similar situation as well as bringing about social change. It was thus seen as them (my participants) helping other girls. I also explained that I was just a student who had no capacity to meet their financial needs. Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009) advise that researchers must be clear and honest about the research and what will be done with the information gathered The girl understood this and still consented to take part in the research.

However, if their situation of juggling the financial needs of baby care and school expenses in a deprived economy is considered, this question seemed as a direct soliciting of material help especially that I was a student from a university in Norway. This is generally so in the global South where material and financial expectations are very high in the context of many NGO's that offer such assistance. Nyambedha (2008) in Alderson and Morrow (2011:95) notes that;

> (...) many people in the study area did not believe that somebody working closely with a European organisation from the West could just come all the way to Nairobi to ask the orphans (...) questions about their life without providing assistance.

Like the orphans in Nyambedha's case, some of my participants did not just expect to share their experiences, but be directly assisted as well. This is especially so with the activities of NGOs which offer financial assistance to some children with difficulties. It is thus not surprising that some participants in this research anticipated that kind of support. This is later confirmed in the research when another participant who had become elusive, discouraged her friends from participating. She cautions them; *"Mwandini mwiyako, balepelafye ifipepa nokwipusha ama questions ukwabula nangu cimo, tulebawinishafye."* (Don't go there; she is just giving papers to fill in and asking questions and nothing else. We are just making her rich). She moreover thought I was financially benefiting from the research. I had intended to further explain what the research was all about but never saw the girl again, despite making effort to meet her. Reflecting on the participant's statement raises some questions for me as a student researcher. Much as I was not directly and immediately benefiting from the research, there is a potential of obtaining a higher

degree and possibly a better life than that of most of my participants. Therefore, I feel like 'using' them for my benefit while theirs is not assured. Scholars like Nyambedha (2008) in Powell, Fitzgerald et al. (2012) and Liampultong (2007) also question the morality of such a situation.

3.10 Challenges and limitations

Considering the characteristics of participants, I faced particular challenges during the research. One such challenge was the accessing the participants. Much as permission had been granted by the district and the head teachers, finding the actual participants proved difficult. One of the girls that were introduced to me refused that she was a re-entry girl, and therefore could not participate in the research. While the teacher was convinced that she was, the girl persistently refused. Moreover, one girl wondered why she was the only one picked from the class when there were many others. It was discovered later that where possible, the re-entry girls preferred not to be known as such due to fear of stigmatization. They therefore proved to be a 'hidden group' in some cases and therefore difficult to access.

Another case was withdrawal of one participant, considering the difficulties encountered in accessing them. After initially consenting and doing some activities, the child later withdrew and returned the activity form. Although scholars advise that withdrawal of participants should not be questioned (Alderson and Morrow 2011), this leaves the researcher in a dilemma of wanting to know. Much as the disappointment was not expressed in words, it is difficult to control the bodily expressions which may be seen by the participant. Knowing the reasons for withdrawal could also help the researcher to plan carefully the next time.

There was also general failure to keep appointments. The girls were frequently absent from school, sent on errands at home or could not simply show up. Much as the participation is voluntary, it raises the question of whether it is only the researcher who should keep appointments and not the other way round. This breach of appointments brought extra costs on time and effort, on transport and phone calls to make fresh appointments. Sometimes it was exhausting and very disappointing.

As mentioned earlier, space was a problem. This was especially so because the authorities only allowed limited time with the participants during lessons, so that the children could not lose on learning time. So, most of the participants were met during break time (20 minutes) and lunch. But during those times, the spaces available (Canteen) were also full of people and therefore interviews or other activities could not proceed. As such, sometimes I ended up eating into the pupils learning time. Other participants were also not comfortable to do the interviews in their homes as they had other commitments like baby care and feared the curiosity of neighbours.

Another challenge was their situation of lack and failure to meet some of the financial demands. Two of my participants had not paid the school fees in full and were frequently sent away by the school authorities. This proved a challenge to me especially that most of these re-entry girls were frequently absent because of baby care demands and therefore already lost much of their learning time. I could have gone out my way and help them pay their school fees, but this could have proved me to be ethically biased in research.

3.11 Data analysis

In analysing, I read and re-read through the data that was generated in the different techniques used in the research, following some scholar's advice of personally engaging with the data by close and detailed inspection (McCracken 1988). Doing this exposed me to the recurring themes in the data. I also did the transcriptions on my own and was therefore exposed enough to the data and was able to 'discover' certain recurring categories (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). The categories discovered among others include; agency, school as socio-moral space and social network as crucial in the girls learning. These are discussed later in the chapter on findings.

Ennew, Abebe et al. (2009:7.9) also assert that "themes may be derived from the main research questions or may relate to social ideas". The data was also analysed thematically and according to the research questions and research instruments that covered a particular theme. This is called concept-driven coding (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009). By using this kind of coding, data pertaining to events, situations, conditions and constraints that helped to describe/explain the experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls were included and marked accordingly with particular colours. Themes that emerged related to the parental and school support and societal perceptions among others as critical in the education of these girl mothers. Further comparisons were made on what emerged to be common.

4   THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter discusses the conceptual and theoretical framework to be used in the analysis of the research data. Though the study is grounded in concepts from the Sociology of Childhood as its main framework, it also draws on other relevant concepts to analyse the data that emerged from the research. It presents the main ideas in Sociology of Childhood that question the traditional ways of seeing children and presents alternative perspectives. Further the chapter considers various sociological discourses on childhood, social constructionism, agency and gender equality and equity in education. The chapter ends with the presentation of the concept of social capital and how it can be used to navigate challenges in one's life. These concepts will act as lenses in analysing how the re-entry girls in school negotiate their dual roles of schooling and motherhood.

4.1   Sociology of childhood

Emergent in the 1970s and gaining its ground in the 1990s, Sociology of Childhood or Social Studies of Childhood deconstructs the traditional views on children symbolised by child development and socialisation theories, which position children as 'yet-to-be-human' and what they will eventually become (Prout and James 1990, Lee 2001, Kehily 2004). Disruption of this linear development or failure to harmoniously socialise into society's functioning in effect meant failure and classified as deviance (Kjørholt 2004, Jenks 2005). The positivist thinking provided (and still does) a framework of explanation of a child's nature and justified the concept of naturalness, universality as well as irrationality of children which culminated into child-rearing and training practices where children are highly regulated and controlled by adults.

Scholars have observed that developmental psychology constantly uses biological facts of life (birth and infancy) to explain the social facts of childhood with little account taken of any cultural component (Prout and James 1990). This means that although childhood is a common feature of all societies today, it not be seen as constant or universal. It is in this line that Alanen (2000) in (Kjørholt 2004:25) advocates for deconstructive sociology in post-positivist social research when she argues that "to investigate the childhood(s) of today is to "deconstruct" the ... ideas, images, models and practices through which children and childhood are presently "known" and acted upon". This calls for questioning and challenging the basis for certain

discourses or constructions that are dominant today. I would posit that one area of contesting this is in that of childhood sexuality and pregnancy. Therefore, the main thesis in Sociology of Childhood is that rather than being natural, universal, irrational, constant and biological, childhood is a phenomenon that is socially constructed (Prout and James 1990, James, Jenks et al. 1998, Kjørholt 2004, Mayall 2012). Without disputing the biological fact of physical growth and development of children, Childhood studies provide an alternative and argue that childhood is understood and made meaningful in different ways by different societies in diverse places and at different times. The socio-cultural context in which the 'natural' child lives varies making their experiences different. It is in such a case that childhood is a social construction. In extending this thesis of childhood as a social phenomenon, James, Jenks et al. (1998) present four foundational sociological discourses on childhood as discussed in (Kjørholt 2004).

4.2 Sociological discourses on childhood

There are various notions or discourses about children and childhood. Mills (1997) in Kjørholt (2004) notes that social phenomena like children and childhood are never constructed by one discourse, but by a variety of often conflicting discourses and social practices at the same time. These discourses have consequences not only in the way children are treated at various societal levels but also influence policy formulations which also have practical implications for children. A discourse is defined as "a set of interconnected ideas that work together in a self-contained way, ideas that are held together by a particular ideology or view of the world" (Woodhead and Montgomery 2003:21). The ways children, including the pregnant/mothering girls in school are treated in society are based on notions of childhood in that particular society. James, Jenks et al. (1998) identify four foundational sociological discourses that more or less presently influence the experiences of children namely; tribal child, minority group child, social structural child and the socially constructed child. However, they are quick to point out the fluidity and overlapping nature of these discourses. The discourses are briefly presented and how it may be argued that they culminate into social construction as espoused by Kjørholt (2004).

The 'social structural child' discourse recognises that although the social facts of children may differ, children are a permanent and constant feature of all social worlds, placing them as a social category which has uniform rights and needs like any other (James, Jenks et al. 1998, Qvortrup 2002). As a social category therefore, childhood is not only conceptually comparable to other dominant groups like adults, but also influenced by the social structural factors like socio-

economic and political forces. Mayall (2012:348) also argues that "large scale forces make a difference in the individual lived experiences of children and their social status".

Closely related to the social structural child is the 'minority group child' which James, Jenks et al. (1998:210) describe as "an embodiment of the empirical and politicised version" of the former. They are quick to point out the 'minority' is moral rather than demographic and conveys relative powerlessness or victimization. In similar ways to peripheral positions assigned to women and ethnic groups by society, this discourse seeks to challenge existing power relations between adults and children. The child in this discourse is therefore presented as a member of an exploited minority group, whose rights are down-trodden by the patriarchal, adult-centred society.

The other discourse identified is that of 'tribal child'. This discourse conceptualises children as different from adults and focuses on childhood social worlds as real places and provinces of meaning in their own right (James, Jenks et al. 1998, Wyness 2006). The social world of children is seen as autonomous, with its own rules and rituals. However, this social world is not unaffected by adult influence although the children skilfully and "artfully insulate it from the adult world" (James, Jenks et al. 1998:29). It is in this sense that it is likened to tribal subcultures in which adult rules and views are resisted and self-determinacy is exercised.

The last discourse is the 'socially constructed child' in which the child has to be understood in relation to socio-cultural factors that surround him/her. Jenks (2005:6-7) advances that

> Childhood is to be understood as a social construct; it makes reference to a social status delineated by boundaries that vary through time and from society to society but which are incorporated within the social structure and thus manifested through and formative of certain typical forms of conduct. Childhood then relates to a particular cultural setting.

So unlike in dominant discourses of development and socialisation in which children have a natural and universal life course, social constructionists suspend these taken-for-granted assumptions and examine the child in a particular context. Patterson (2004) in Fonda, Eni et al. (2013:3) describe Social Constructionism as "a theory of knowledge that examines how cultural and social responses develop in social contexts. A social construction can be said to be a concept or practice that is a creation of a particular group or sub-group". Such a social context differs

from society to society and is also influenced by material conditions. While children and childhood exists in all societies and cultures, it is not 'natural' or universal. Although there may be some similarities, how children are treated and what is expected of them differs from on society to another. Even within the same society, the experiences of children differ widely in time and space.

Although Social Constructionism has been seen to neglect reality (Wyness 2006, Fonda, Eni et al. 2013) that reality is accessible through concepts and understandings that are socially and culturally constructed (Kjørholt 2004). So the constructions are not done in a vacuum but in relation to socio-structural factors. It considers the factors at play within a particular context in which the same constructions are formed. In line with this, (James, Jenks et al. 1998:27) advance, "knowledge of the child and its life world depends on predispositions of a consciousness constituted in relation to our social, political, historical and moral context." Social Constructionism therefore goes beyond the discourses or perceptions that describe and prescribe what childhood is, and analyses the underlying social-structural factors in which such perceptions are formed. In this case, childhood is not just a product of an idea, a thought in mind, but engages with the context in which such ideas are formed and/or applied. So children engage with the context and influence ideas or conceptions but are also influenced by the context. By considering the context a 'socially constructed child' discourse opens avenues for inclusion of not only historical factors but also "emergent collective perceptions that are grounded in changing politics, philosophy, economics, social policy or whatever" (James, Jenks et al. 1998:196). Thus all factors at play including the local and global are put in perspective in the 'socially constructed child' discourse. It is in this line that James, Jenks et al. (1998) see the four sociological discourses as fluid and overlapping.

Kjørholt (2004) extends this overlapping of the four discourses further and sees the other three discourses as subordinated to that of the socially constructed child. She advances;

> I also have some difficulties in grasping the logic of seeing the discourse of 'the socially constructed child' as being on a par with the three other discourses. From my perspective, having positioned myself within the discourse of 'the socially constructed child', I argue that at least the other two discourses, 'the minority group child' and 'the tribal child', are also socially constructed...I shall also remind the reader of the argument of the radical social constructionists, that every reality is socially constructed including 'the social structural child'. Based on this

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argument, then, from a position located within the discourse of the socially constructed child, the other three models cannot logically be seen to be as equal to it in the model, but as subordinated (Kjørholt 2004:26-7).

It is this version of Social Constructionism, in which both historical and emerging influences at local and global level and how they interact to influence the re-entry girl in school that is adopted in this research. Childhood is influenced by a multiplicity of factors which interact differently in different societies. Meanings which people attach to childhood in general and the pregnant school girl in particular, are formed within socio-cultural and economic context, and therefore social constructions. Kjørholt (2004) further advances that focus on how childhood is socially constructed by different discourses in time and in a particular context may reveal how a particular construction is connected to specific cultural notions of a 'good childhood'.

4.3   Social construction of childhood pregnancy and motherhood

Like childhood, early pregnancy and motherhood, are also socially constructed. In the particular context of Zambia, there are notions of what is good or bad childhood and motherhood, which are formed within the existing socio-cultural norm and values. Social constructions do not emerge out of a vacuum, but are intricately connected to numerous contexts and phenomenon. Teen pregnancy/motherhood in Zambia has historical, religious, socio-cultural, gender and childhood sexuality underpinnings as well as contemporary perceptions of childhood and children's rights. In fact, early pregnancy, commonly tagged 'teenage pregnancy' has generally been conceived as a 'social problem' in many societies (Murcott 1980, Pillow 2004, Bhana, Morrell et al. 2010) including Zambia (Katayamoyo 2010, Kabaso 2012). But what constitutes a social problem? How and why has early pregnancy/motherhood come to be viewed as such? Loseke (1999) writing about the American society identifies four features that constitute the characterisation of a phenomenon as a social problem and these are that; it should be *wrong, widespread*, create *worry* and that it can be *changed.*

What could be characterised as *wrong* or *right* is a morality question, very relative and dependent on the socio-cultural context and dominant beliefs. In relation to teenage pregnancy, these characterisations border on dichotomous divisions of what constitutes good /bad childhood or motherhood which are also informed by social, cultural and religious beliefs. I will argue that the *wrongness* of teenage pregnancy/motherhood in Zambia is bordered age, marital status, space and disruption of school, all of which are informed by common understandings of childhood and

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sexuality. Murcott (1980:1) also advances that "expressions of teenage pregnancy as a problem may be understood as a matter of social pollution, located at the intersections of ideologies of reproduction on one hand and ideologies of childhood on the other". Children are romanticised as sexually innocent (Murcott 1980, Ennew 2008) and loss of this innocence by pregnant girls makes their status in relation to age fluid and conflicting, both child and adult at the same time, or neither child nor adult. Pregnant /mothering girls are visible evidence of transgressed child-adult boundary in relation to sexuality, thereby making the phenomenon a social problem. Strong religious beliefs, which are very present in Zambia, also construct premarital sex as sinful and immoral. Bringing to light this perception, Bhana, Morrell et al. (2010:874) in their study in South Africa observe that "teenage motherhood and pregnancy are framed as moral problems playing on the broad anxieties around young people's sexualities". Therefore, teenage pregnancy poses a threat to the 'traditional' family and religious beliefs which continue to influence what is socially acceptable (Murcott 1980, Bwalya 2011, Fonda, Eni et al. 2013).

At play here are two contradicting discourses on childhood. On one hand lies the *Romantic discourse* and on the other, the *Puritan discourse.* Originally espoused by Jean-Jacque Rousseau (1712-78) the romantic discourse claims that children embody a state of innocence purity and natural goodness that is contaminated on contact with the corrupt world (Kehily 2004) calling for the protectionist stance. The other, *Puritan discourse* (Thomas Hobbes) sees children as potentially evil or wicked small devils. In a pregnant girl that childhood innocence is compromised and therefore regarded as a 'contamination' (Pillow 2004, Fonda, Eni et al. 2013) to other children resulting in stigmatisation of re-entry girls in school. Teenage pregnancy is also construed as a social problem because it is seen to be widespread or portrayed as such. Public documents and Media does not fail to portray high incidences in such headings as *Mwinilunga records 326 pregnancies* (Wangwe 2013) in one school term, are aimed at instilling an 'epidemic logic' (Pillow 2004) in the people. In line with such a portrayal, Murcott (1980:11) observes that "demography is not a neutral enterprise; inevitably it is actually socially located. Issues are identified as worth of focus prior to and beyond demography." Such statistics therefore endeavour to maintain the social construction of teenage pregnancy as a social problem and therefore instil *worry* in people and appeals of fixing or *changing* the trend.

The developmental based construction of childhood as 'becoming' rather than 'being' (Lee 2001) can also be linked to the social construction of teenage pregnancy, especially that of girls

in school. Referring to Silva (1996) McDermott and Graham (2005:60-1) observe that "young mothers are demonised as agents of social disruption...Early motherhood is not a neutral subject, it is embedded in a range of moral, political and economic discourses that construct young parents as both a social problem and a social threat". There are therefore controls that are politically or morally enforced to regulate teenage pregnancy in order to serve the various interests. CSO (2007:64) observes that "childbearing during the teenage years has adverse social consequences, particularly on female educational attainment, because women who become mothers in their teens are more likely to curtail/disrupt education". Although this curtailment of education has been partially addressed by re-admitting the girls, they still face many challenges in school that continue to highlight pregnancy as a disruption. For the pregnant girl-child in school, some of the constructions need to be deconstructed and questioned to determine "whether these are generated by the need to [overly] control or the need to protect children" (Wyness 2006:19).

4.3.1   Limits of social constructionism

Childhood as a social construction emerged to counter the positivist view and the biological determinism that was attached in explaining the socio-cultural factors influencing children. However, scholars have observed this social construction stands to play the same role; replacing one reductionism with another by ignoring the physical existence of the body (James et al., 1998). The actual physical presence of the child in a social context influences and is also influenced by discourses and notions of good childhood. Therefore, this study recognises the embodied nature of the child with the biological interacting with the social resulting in a particular construction of childhood. Particularly for the pregnant/mother girl in school, it is her embodied pregnant/mothering body that triggers socio-cultural and moralistic formations, especially in a context of high HIV/AIDS prevalence. These constructions work to include but mostly exclude her from the school environment. Further James, Jenks et al. (1998:154) argue that "modern children are indeed embodied, but we need to theorise the nature of that embodiment further through accounting for how children themselves view their bodies". How the pregnant bodies are perceived in the school environment matters.

4.4 Agency

Many recent sociological studies on children have used the concept of agency as an analytical category. This has been especially important in theoretical development in childhood studies that has shifted from viewing children as passive, innocent and dependent victims but active social agents in their life course who must be studied in their own right (James 2009). However there are varying conceptualisations and uses of the concept with some focusing on the individual determinism and free choice while others consider the context within which the individual actions have to be exercised (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). This study uses the later version in which it is recognised that children do not have complete autonomy over their life trajectories but to different degrees, act relationally to adults and constrained by other socio-economic structures at the macro level. Specifically in sub-Saharan Africa scholars have noted factors that can 'thin' or 'thicken' children's agency and include contexts, family relationships and authority which are largely influenced by age, gender , religion economy among others (Klocker 2007, Abebe 2008). Other scholars have also noted that children's agency should not be seen as essentially unmediated but a result of a combination of individual efforts and available resources (Biesta and Tedder 2007, Konstantoni 2012). But what is this agency?

Robson, Bell et al. (2007:135) conceptualise agency as "an individual's own capacities, competencies and activities through which they navigate the contexts and positions of their lifeworlds, fulfilling many economic, social and cultural expectations while simultaneous charting individual/collective choices and possibilities for their daily lives." They further emphasise that thinking of children as agentic actors is to view them as 'thinkers' and 'doers' who are able to take action in different circumstances that they find themselves in. They are therefore not only being shaped but also shaping their circumstances. However the influence and effect of the circumstances differ greatly constraining the actions at times while at others enabling these same actions. In such a case, the agency of the children is 'thinned' and 'thickened' at times (Klocker 2007). Expanding further on the 'thin' and 'thick' agency, Klocker (2007) avoids the structure-agency dualism but considers it as a continuum along which all people including children are placed as actors with varying and dynamic capacities. Therefore structures and context influence the agency of both children and adults except in different ways. In this case she identifies factors that 'thinned' the agencies of the children in her study of child

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domestic workers as age, gender and poverty (Klocker 2007). For the pregnancy re-entry girls in my study, age, gender, poverty, religion and constructions of motherhood are critical in examining thinning or thickening of their agency in school and at home

Similarly, the interaction of actors with the context and how this can thin or thicken agency has been noted by other scholars. They argue that agency is not just options or actions that one is in power to take, but that it is a process, constantly negotiated in a changing temporal orientation of situated actors (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, Robson, Bell et al. 2007). This conceptualisation of agency as influenced by time and circumstances also relates to three constitutive elements of human agency identified by Emirbayer and Mische (1998). These are *iteration*, *projective* and *practical-evaluation* which correspond to temporal orientations of agency towards the past, the future and the present respectively. For the pregnant girls in school, their navigation or expression of agency in the various challenges they encounter is as a result of the reflection on the past, motivated by the present towards a projected better future, not only for themselves but their children as well.

4.5 Gender equality and equity in education

The concepts of gender equality and equity in educational access and provision in Zambia are very critical not only as lenses of analysis but also for ensuring the welfare of the pregnancy re-entry girls in school. This is especially so in view of the recognised importance and centrality of women's contributions to national development. Scholars have observed that gender inequalities arise from unequal power relations between men and women that are socially constructed and should therefore be understood in relational dimensions (Subrahmanian 2005, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). The different positions from which men and women start should therefore, be equitably considered in order to achieve equality. For the pregnancy re-entry girl in school, her position is not only different from boy fathers who are pupils in school, but also other girl pupils that are non-mothers. Subrahmanian (2005) further contends that for gender equality to be meaningful, *equality of treatment* and *equality of opportunity* are important to ensure commitment to *non-discrimination*. While the Re-entry policy has been a step in the direction to addressing some gender gaps in the educational sector, the re-admission rates are still low (Ministry of Education 2010), an indication that other factors exist that the policy has not adequately addressed or lack capacity to do so. Moreover, even if the return rate was at 100%, it would not necessarily reveal the nature and quality of learning the pregnancy re-entry girls

experience. In accounting for gender inequalities in education using different feminist approaches, Stromquist (1990) also contends that while provision of 'education policies' is seen as a step further in addressing gender inequalities within liberal feminism, it ignores the economic/ideological connection that influence these inequalities. She thus attributes gender inequalities in education as both a result of patriarchy and capitalism. In relation to this, , Subrahmanian (2005) further notes that gender ideologies are encrypted in institutions that govern daily life and therefore translate into deeper structural inequalities. But what do gender equality and equity in education entail?

 Subrahmanian (2005:395) describes gender equality in education as

> The right *to* education [access and participation] as well as rights *within* education [gender-aware educational environments, processes, and outcomes] and rights *through* education [meaningful education outcomes that link education equality with wider processes of gender justice].

The rights *to*, *within* and *through* education entail not only being present in school, but equitable participation that ensures the removal of structural barriers that hinder quality educational outcomes for the re-entry girls. As such focus should go beyond access to social relations and how they are embedded in social structures. Similarly, Unterhalter (2005:78-80) identifies four approaches in looking at the meaning of gender equality in education. These are resourcist, structuralist, post-structuralist and capability approaches. She contends that resourcists, (an approach taken by governments, NGOs and policy makers) focus on providing resources to both boys and girls, such as places in school, resources and opportunities. The second, structuralist, understand inequalities as shaped by social formations such as social relations, politics, economy and cultural relations. It therefore goes beyond the school environment and considers other factors as major players in the existence of educational inequalities. The post-structural approach does not necessarily focus on inequality but the differences, and thus inclusive. The last one, capability focuses on denial of equality based on ascribed positions. Of interest to this study are the structural and post-structural approaches which transcend quantitative measurement of this gender equality by focusing on the nature of structural relations and how these influence educational inclusion or exclusion of the pregnancy re-entry girls. It is in this perspective that gender equality translates to equity.

Equity has been acknowledged as a difficult term to define but is understood as fairness and considers differences among individuals. In discussing the concept of equity in the Zambian educational context (Kelly 1999:268) contends that

> Equity's concern is not merely to promote school enrolment or attendance, but participation in all that goes on in school, continuation in a school to the end of a given cycle, satisfactory performance in school, genuine learning and school achievement, and adequate opportunity for a subsequent unrestricted range of education/training or employment activities.

This description of equity becomes particularly important in analysing the experiences of pregnancy re-entry girls in school as they fall under the group of 'disadvantaged children' in the Zambian context, who continue to experience and suffer 'hidden exclusions'(Lall 2007) in spite of the policy existence and its provisions. These exclusions compromise quality of learning and in turn quality of education received by these girls. Arguing for quality education through gender equality (Aikman and Rao 2012) suggest that analysis should start by asking how girls experience education, nature of discriminations and how this is informed by beliefs and attitudes within the school and the wider social context.

4.6   Social capital concept

Return to school and continuation for the re-entry girls is greatly influenced by the home and school environment as well as the resources and social networks within them. Thus the concept of social capital and its different forms advanced become useful. Referring to Coleman (1990) they describe social capital as resources that exist in relationships upon which individuals draw for productive activities. These relationships therefore, entail expectations and obligations by individuals involved and are also context-specific. In a similar line, Imandoust (2011:52) describes it as "the network of social ties that a person or group can call upon for resources or support constitute their social capital". In a school set up, social ties are created between and among actors within it where various resources both material as well as social support are exchanged. The quality of these relationships can therefore constrain or enable education advancement. For the re-entry girls, this social capital becomes even crucial considering their increased needs and demands at their hands. Imandoust (2011:53) observes that "people may need to draw different resources from different types of networks at different times, depending on their life circumstances." Similarly, Furnstenberg and Hughes (1995) also advance that social

capital plays a role in helping youth negotiate their way out of a disadvantage. Therefore categorisations of social capital into 'family social capital' and 'school social capital' by Israel and Beaulieu (2004) become important in looking at experiences of re-entry girls.

Referring to Coleman (1990) Israel and Beaulieu (2004) describe 'family social capital' as that which represents norms, social networks and relationship between parents and children that are valuable to children when they are growing up. The networks within the family are influenced by resources such as income, relations with parents and siblings, as well as educational attainment and aspirations. These may help or hinder education advancement. Therefore, 'family social capital' plays a big role in the re-entry girls' return as well as stay in school. Closely related to family social capital is 'school social capital'. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) view it as consisting of both the resources and its structure. They identify key attributes of school social capital as student enrolment, size and resources of school base and nature of the school climate. They note that these are likely to facilitate or impede social capital in school. They also observe that schools located in impoverished communities are likely to have poor facilities and that the school climate where teachers' expectations for and support academic performance is high tend to do better. The two schools in the study are located in an impoverished community and the teacher's expectations for the re-entry girls were mostly low.

Other scholars have also recognised the potential that social capital studies can provide in understanding norms and institutional arrangements in which the social networks operate and the benefits of these social relationships in offering both material and emotional support as well as economic prosperity (Imandoust 2011). He adds that;

> Taking into consideration the role of social capital (and the interactions between social relationships and policies) in a more systematic way in program design, implementation and evaluation can potentially make a significant difference in the achievement of policy objectives. Adopting a social capital perspective emphasizes the importance of paying attention to the value, usefulness, and dynamics of social ties (Imandoust 2011:53).

5   FAMILY BACKGROUND AND COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANTS

This chapter brings to the fore the characteristics that were very common among the participants and provides a background to a better understanding of the context and family situations in which they lived. Similarities in the characteristics of the participants exist in relation to age at pregnancy, lack of prior knowledge on sexuality or the re-entry policy, limited material resources and changed view of school among others. Much as this generalisation has been done, the study recognises that there is plurality of childhood(s) and those experiences that were peculiar have also been highlighted. By focusing on these general characteristics, it also helps to perceive the circumstances in which the girls live and how they interact to facilitate or impede their learning in school.

5.1   Age at time of pregnancy and causes of pregnancy

Most child participants in this study reported getting pregnant around the ages of 15-16 years and mostly in Grades Eight to Nine at Junior Secondary School level. However, there are others that reported pregnancies at a later age or Grade level. During interviews, the girls disclose;

> *I was 14 years and in Grade 8.* (Nelly, 17/R[3], **Interview)**

> *I was 15 years.* (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**)

> *At 16 years and I was in Grade 9.* (Carol, 19/R, **Interview)**

Both the age and Grade factors become significant as they point to the stage at which there is need for appropriate intervention and counselling which should be made not only by the schools, but also parents, in order to reduce the perceived high incidences of pregnancy amongst these children. This scenario of most pregnancies occurring around the observed age range and Grades are also supported by educational statistics which indicate much higher incidences of pregnancy especially at Basic schools (Grades 1-9) compared to High school (Grades 10-12). Ministry of Education (2010:96) for example indicates 1,073 pregnancies at Basic School level while there is

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[3] For quotations from participants, the number represents the age, while R stand for a re-entrant, a girl that has gone back to school. The letter /N is used to indicate non-re-entrant girls. For adult participants, HD/M is used to indicate male head teacher, GC TR indicates guidance and counselling teachers with /M or /F to indicate gender. For parents, PR is used with F or M to denote gender.

208 cases at High School level for the Copperbelt, the region in which my study area Ndola, falls. This is also the case for all the other provinces. Similarly, in their findings Mutombo and Mwenda (2010) indicate that sexual intercourse before the legal age of 16 was most common in urban areas, especially the Copperbelt Province, the region in which Ndola, my study is found.

The girls also point out that, one of the factors that led them to becoming pregnant was lack of comprehensive information about sex. They allude to these sex silences both in school and at home. Asked whether they had information about pregnancy, some of them indicate;

> *I knew nothing, just a little from friends* (Sarah, 17/N, **Interview**).
>
> *No, there was nothing. Mmmh, I had not known anything**. But sometimes in the assembly they do talk about it.* (Leah, 18/R, Interview).

The girls refer to lack of or absence of adult-child sexual discussions. This challenge of intergenerational sex silences remains a barrier in dealing with sexual issues relating to children (Ennew 2008, Chomba 2011). Culturally and religiously, children are regarded as sexually innocent, and discussions of sexual matters with children are seen as polluting this innocence. Particularly in Zambia, the Human Rights Watch notes "deep-rooted cultural taboos inhibit parents from discussing sex with their children and create obstacles to effective sex education" (Human Rights Watch 2002:20). Teachers also admitted presence of these sexual silences from both parents and teachers.

> *There are two things; their parents are actually not forceful with them, and two; people like teachers rarely take the challenge of telling the children the truth about sex. Though we have talks during assemblies about sex, children seem to take it for a joke. To them it is just talk, talk.* (GC TR/M, MWR, **Interview**)

There is general inertia in discussing sexual matters with children such that if they are done, it is in large groups, one-directional and without provision for questions. As the teacher points out the children do not regard such talks seriously, an indication that it is not only absence of information but also the attitude that the children have towards such information. Although some of the girls like Sarah and Leah (above) attribute their falling pregnant to intergenerational sexual silences and peer pressure as also indicated by (Bwalya 2011), there are other causes of pregnancy attributed to this age-group, adolescents, due to experimentation and misadventure.

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Teenage pregnancy can not necessarily be attributed to a single cause but influenced by social several factors. There is also wilful engagement in sexual intercourse, exploration and experimentation which may result in the children demeaning the talks in assemblies. Liche (2010) in (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010) argues that teenagers have high fertility rates and set on the path to discovering themselves physically and sexually. High poverty levels and limited support from parents also contributes rates of school pregnancies. For example, although Leah (above) mentions lack of information, later in the study, she also connects her pregnant as a socio-economic issue.

> it is difficult to have what you need or what you want in terms of soap your life. What was happened to that when I ask about soap, Lotion and other things that is required to a person

> I started going to that man and ask him every thing I want and he was not unfair he managed to gave me whatever I want that's what lead me to have pregnancy while I was at school.

> grace of God, and it was not my fort to have pregnancy I was lack of school requirements and other things.

Figure 7. Excerpts from Essay (Leah, 18/R)

Contrary to popular notions that emphasize pregnancy in school as mostly a result of traditional cultural breakdown and 'moral decay' among the children and youths, there are a variety of factors including a situation of lack in many families that compel girls to engage in sexual activity. As Leah articulates, it is not her fault, but the structures within society that are beyond her power to control. In a bid to meet personal needs and paradoxically, school requirements like books and fees so that she could stay in school, she became pregnant. Therefore, she constructs herself as a victim of circumstances, who exercises her thin agency (Klocker 2007) to obtain the life necessities. In order to access certain necessities of life, including school materials, some of the girls from economically deprived families engage in sexual activities and thus become pregnant and add extra burden on the already strained family income. The need to meet immediate basic life requirements in a way explains why most girls in the study were involved with older men who were working in manufacturing industries or mini-bus/taxi-drivers. Other studies have also noted the link between poverty, low economic status and pregnancy. Writing

on determinants of teenage pregnancy in Lusaka, Katayamoyo (2010:69) observes that "breadwinners' not being in gainful employment is another factor, as this leads to poverty or low socio-economic status which consequently predisposes to teenage pregnancy". Furthermore, ILO (1995) in (CSO 2007) notes that socio-economic levels largely determine educational attainment and contributes to larger gender gaps in schooling. Therefore, addressing school pregnancy incidences and ultimately gender disparities in education need a multi-dimensional approach. Attempts to meet daily needs and school requirements in some cases led the girls to engage in sexual relations older men for financial gain.

5.2   Persons responsible for the girls' pregnancies

The persons responsible for the pregnancies of most girls in the study are much older than the girls. Only one case is mentioned where the boy had just completed Grade 12. Mutombo and Mwenda (2010) had similar findings. In the eyes of society, it is the girls that are morally judged for engaging in sex and contributing to 'moral decay' of society. This is in the light in which pregnancy statistics are contextualised to the school and the sexuality of the girls. This puts focus on the sexuality of girls only, making them responsible not just for their own sexual behaviour but that of the men as well, men who are also older in most cases. Such focus also ignores the actual 'problem' of risk behaviour or sexual activity and dwells on the symptom; pregnancy. There are many school pupils (including boys) who are sexually active but get away with it because they abort or do not fall pregnant. So one can ask what the real issue is, whether it is pregnancy or sexual activity. Thus, such focus overshadows the men responsible, as well as the fact that most of them are adults. Moreover, both generation and gender power differences are at play here, with the girls in most cases failing to bargain safe sex because of being younger. Jewkes, Morrell and Christofides (2009) in (Bhana, Morrell et al. 2010:875) note that "gender power inequalities constrain young women's sexual choices...with young women being unable to negotiate condom use and being vulnerable to male pressure."

Further still, media headings like "*Mwinilunga records 326 pupil pregnancies*"[4] in one term are not only meant to portray the epidemic nature of pregnancies but are driven by deep-seated socio-cultural values that question female sexuality. In writing about the dilemma in the realisation of sexual and reproductive rights in a patriarchal society like Zambia, Shezongo-

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[4] The Post Newspaper, Tuesday 15th October 2013

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Macmillan (2008:62) notes that "Culture sets restrictive interpretations of beliefs and customs that curtail women's freedom of thought on sexual and reproductive matters." Therefore, such headings are aimed at inducing shock and panic because it exhibits the sexuality of the girls, both as female as well as children. They are aimed at constructing child-female sexuality as a problem by putting the blame on the girls. As such, even the responses that are given to pregnant and re-entry girls in school are highly generation-centred and gendered. Such statements like '*go and breastfeed your baby*' are commonly used in the school environment especially from their peers.

Although most men responsible for the girls' pregnancies in this study are reported to be older, and in some cases working, they rarely offer financial or social support to their babies. Except for non-re-entrant girls who are currently living with their children's fathers, there is little or no support both socially and financially towards the care of the babies. Although some of them helped in the initial stages, this help ceased as the babies grew older and it became the sole responsibility of the girls' themselves and their parents to provide for these babies. Reflecting on the changes in her life since pregnancy, Joan narrates that the teacher who was responsible for her pregnancy was helping initially, but later on stopped and even married a fellow teacher and moved to another place.

My child's father	I was loved by my childs father.	He was very happy to know that was pregnant, he did not want me to abort so he informed his relative thats I was expecting his child.	He was stopped loving me, he has stopped bringing support for his baby. and has decided to marry his fellow teacher.
Finances/sponsorship	I was sponsored by my parents.	I was sponsored by my parents.	parents.

Figure 8 Excerpt from Time-line (Joan, 18/R).

Hamusonde (2003) in (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010 :7) had similar findings where he observed that " while most men accepted the responsibility, they never took care of the babies and others relocated to other towns and were never seen by young mothers." Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :36) similarly; observe the same situation of lack of material/financial support from the

children's fathers and further note that "this phenomenon was more prevalent among children on the Copperbelt..." a region where this study was conducted. While the re-entry guidelines (Ministry of Education, FAWEZA et al. 2004:18) make it compulsory for persons responsible to "promise to support the baby and the mother... both financially and materially until the child is 21 years of age" this does not materialise easily as those responsible only consent initially. The schools only play a role in the initial stages and follow-up mechanisms on child maintenance are not available. Traditionally, such a role is not a responsibility of the school and negotiations are left to the family to handle. Highlighting this limitation on the part of the school, one head observes;

> *Sometimes even parent's consen,t may be even getting some bride price of some kind, and then they agree that this child will ultimately get married to this same man. So it is difficult to interfere as a school*. (HD MWR/M, **Interviews**).

The limited or non-existence of social and material support from the children's fathers in most cases posed a challenge to the girls. While most of these demands were met by parents, in most cases limited resources did not usually allow. Most girls reflected on this challenge prompting some of them to engage in income-generating activities to meet baby care demands like milk, detergents and clothes. This also subtracted from their already limited time for learning or study.

 The expectation of the father's support is informed by the cultural and gendered expectations in which the father is assumed as the provider while the mother is the carer. Without father support forthcoming, the girls therefore feel pressured to assume this responsibility that is normally a male one and therefore it presents itself as a burden especially in the midst of the pupil and mother role. Family support in this case becomes vital in ensuring the return and continuation of school for these girls.

5.3 Early pregnancy and family socio-economic status

The availability of family material and financial resources emerged as key in helping the re-entry girls to negotiate schooling and mothering. However, in many situations the parents or guardians were not in formal employment. There was no regular income that they could rely on to sustain themselves especially that most families had other school-going children who also needed various school materials apart from the daily provisions of food. This was also exacerbated by the fact that most of their parents or guardians were self-employed or in the informal sector where income was not on a regular basis. For example, the three parents that were interviewed,

(Figure 6 above) like many others were not in formal employment. Some were small-scale farmers involved in growing vegetables that they later sold. The most common income source was small business of selling foodstuffs like cooking sticks, vegetables, fish or groceries on a daily basis. This indicated a daily life of hardship which was mostly a 'hand–to-mouth' situation. In an interview, Linda revealed that her father does welding business, which meant intermittent income. Further, in expressing their financial challenges, others add;

> *He works self-employment as a bricklayer. But my mum does not do anything. He works and gets paid after a contract, it's not monthly. My mum is a farmer. She mainly grows for home consumption but when in desperate need, she sells some of the produce.* (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

> *Finances have also been a problem. Because he (husband) had actually promised to take me back to school, but money has been a problem.* (Mutinta, 19/N, **Interview**).

In describing poverty in the Zambian situation, CSO (2007) refers to lack of income and employment and access to basic goods and services as some of the indicators of poverty. Both cases reveal that meeting daily requirements like food, soaps and accessing basic services like school is a daily struggle. Mutinta, who is living with the child's father, was promised to be taken to school later but this did not materialise because of lack of resources. This indicates that return to school is not entirely facilitated by the existence of the re-entry policy but by consideration of other structural features.

The girl participants, parents and teachers all noted this burden that the girls and their families undergo economically and in a way militate against the children's attention in school as the mind is usually divided. The girls can therefore be said to be living in poverty due to their lack of access to basic necessities of life (CSO 2007).

The difficult in payment of school fees was a common occurrence such that two of my child participants were frequently sent away from school for the same reason. As such, this compromised on their learning time which was already limited due to baby care demands, like sicknesses or under five cares that made them miss school. One head teacher, when asked about the incidences of pregnancies in his school also alluded to the problem of irregular payment of school fees, not only by my participants, but generally the whole student populace, linking it especially to the residential areas they came from.

You know, like in these schools, we have a high number of pregnancies, probably due to the residential areas they come from. It is not like our friends in Mumana School (a school in a low-density area) where the numbers are low. That is why we also have problems with their payment of fees. It is difficult for them to pay. (HD LUA/M, **Interview**).

The Head perceives the high incidences of pregnancy to be surrounded by a complex of factors including the residential area, location of the school and the socio-economic status of these children. By comparing his school to another school located in a low-density area, with lower rates of pregnancy cases, he specifies that the socio-economic status plays a role in the high incidences of pregnancy observed. Similar observations are made elsewhere. For example, CSO in reference to their categorisation of income/wealth for people in Zambia, observe that "teenagers in the lowest wealth quintile are more than twice as likely to have started childbearing as those in the highest" (CSO 2007:64). Many other scholars have referred to the same links that exist between low-income status and area of residence as factors that contribute to incidences of pregnancy (CSO 2007, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). Most child participants in this study can therefore be fitted in the lowest wealth quintile, making (in some cases) their low economic status both a cause and result of pregnancy.

5.4 Early pregnancy as family socio-economic burden

As observed in the preceding section, most families had limited resources to sufficiently cater for their needs. This was further outstretched by the incidence of pregnancy and its associated material and financial demands. The coming in of a baby is usually regarded as an extra burden not only by the girls themselves but also the parents. This extra burden is explicitly expressed by Leah when she says;

They already have a problem of meeting your school demands, and then give them extra burden of worrying about raising the baby that you have brought in, because on your own, you're too young to meet all these demands of baby care and raising up a child.(Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

The mention of school demands by Leah as a burden also indicates the hardships that families with low-incomes face in sending their children to school. This was especially so because the family income was seen to be too limited to cater for the needs of the baby, required school materials as well as the needs of other family members. The parents in the study also allude to

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this extra economic strain put on the families. One parent when asked about the challenges her daughter faces in negotiating school with motherhood actually focuses on the economic burden. She narrates;

> *They are there and a lot of them especially on how to keep and take care of the child when she has no means of livelihood, no soap and just struggling, this and that and all that the baby needs. He has reached that age where he is to start on solid foods but she has no food to give him. All that (meeting baby care needs) is a big struggle and really a big problem.* (PR I/F, **Interview**).

This observation presents economic challenges of meeting baby needs as critical in the lives of the girls as they negotiate school and child care. In their findings, Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :36) argue that "the welfare of the children of young mothers is also an important issue as it affects not only the health of these children but also the academic progress of the young mothers." The parent's focus on this aspect in relation to school shows how much of a strain the arrival of a child brings and that it is a lived experience for most of these girls. Therefore, it should be recognised that the welfare of the babies is a key issue in balancing academic work and motherhood especially for a girl who comes from a low-income background. Yet, most of the girls are left without support in such areas but are counted as returnees when actually their learning is compromised as a result of this 'burden'.

Other participants also mention similar circumstances of hardship especially exacerbated by the extra demands of the baby. They narrate;

> *Life is hard, being a mother and the one with the responsibility. It has come with a lot of problems. It is true, because what I want, I do not manage to have them .Just means of livelihood, feeding the child, and clothing, all these are difficult to meet.* (Mutinta, 19/N, **Interview**).
>
> *Most of the children, girls that have fallen pregnant, their major challenge are financial. Taking care of their offspring as well as school requirements is a challenge. Most of them, even school fees become a problem.* (GC TR, MWR, /M, **Interview**).

From the experiences referred to, one can see that the economic situation of the family is worsened and pressured by the arrival of a baby and all the care demands that go with it financially. (Pillow 2004:117) also observes that "teens most impacted by teen pregnancy are

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young women who are already having impoverished conditions prior to becoming pregnant" .So much as the girls can be visibly present in school; they are also more likely to worry about the welfare of the children as well as meeting other baby demands. In literature, early pregnancy has mainly been constructed as a social problem because its economic negative economic impact on the families, welfare dependence and in the long run, the development of the nation as a whole (Pillow 2004, Kabaso 2012). However, girls draw support from their families who are also very willing to help them continue with school and ultimately escape the situation of lack they find themselves in.

5.5   The girls' family structure, relations and child care support

Family type and structure played a role in determining the kind of support that the girls received. The household composition and family structures differed widely among the participants ranging between 5-12 members. Most families were nuclear with parents and other siblings living in the same house, while a few others were living with uncles, elder brothers, sisters or grandparents especially the grand mothers. While some had small numbers of members in their households, the majority belonged to large families which in a way facilitated the quantity of social capital (resources exchanged in social networks) and support available to them in terms of baby care especially in families where they were more girls. Except for one participant, the rest of the girls also lived with their babies within the same household. In a discussion of her drawing of the eight family members that are in the house, Nancy points out how the younger siblings relieve her of child care and other household chores in order to give her time to study. Asked if childcare is entirely her responsibility when she is at home, she says;

> *Yes, mainly it is like that. But sometimes I tell them I have something else to do like homework, and they do help. So my mother gives to the young ones to play with him (baby) or she will put him on her back.* (Nancy, 17/R, comment on **Drawing**).

She furthermore describes this relief as important in allowing her to focus on school work. So not only is the mother's assistance relied upon to negotiate motherhood and studies for these girls but also assistance of other family members including siblings. Sibling relations are also noted in Monica's relations with her brother. In discussing her drawings and support offered by family members she notes;

When I am busy with studying, washing or cooking, my brother, who is in Grade 10, helps me with the baby a lot. But my other sister also helps me. (Monica, 17/R, comment on **Drawing**).

The way the girls relate with their families and siblings helps them to negotiate the dual role of parenting and schooling. This was particularly the case in which there were siblings who were younger than the re-entry girls. Because of their age, younger family members are usually relied upon to provide baby care and therefore free adults to do other kinds of work (Abebe 2007). Relying on age hierarchy, children can easily be tasked to do certain jobs for adults without question. As such, it was easy for the re-entry girls to draw upon this family social capital from younger siblings in order to negotiate their school work and other baby demands.

Mostly care work in Zambia, whether for the sick or children, is seen as primarily the responsibility of girls or women. It is therefore, highly gendered (Kelly, Msango et al. 1999) like most other African societies (Abebe 2007, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). While most participants refer to care work being done by women or girls, Martha's reference to the brother's help is peculiar. For the brother to help, especially that he is a teenager who would normally want to 'hang out' with friends in his free time was seen as great support which also motivated her to work hard at school. In fact, instances of sibling support with child care mentioned in the study by other participants only involved girls. Monica sees sibling support to be especially significant in her situation because she was living with her step-mother. Therefore, this might have influenced the close relationship with the teenage brother who helps with the child care work. While the step-mother was helping with child care when the daughter was at school, the responsibility shifted back to her when she knocked off from school. Monica observed that the care work her step-mother was offering seemed to have been forced on her. This situation could be categorised as 'crisis' care (Madhavan and Thomas 2005) not necessarily out of concern but necessity and obligation. She therefore felt that her step-mother was doing more than enough and felt like overburdening her especially that there was some tension in their relationship. This example shows that family units cannot always be romanticised as sources of support for the re-entry girls, as this offer of support depends not only on the nature of the kinship relation but also how the members actually relate. Describing her relationship with family members that she lives with, she says;

> *Mostly it is good, but I sometimes have differences with mum over money and other gifts that dad gives me. She thinks dad favours me. I also think she favours my step-brother and sister.* (Monica, 17/R, **Interview**).

This shows that family structure and composition in a way determines the nature of relationships that are likely to occur within the family. Much as family tensions occur in any other family, those that occur within one where there are step relations may mostly be attributed to family structure as the major cause. This is because generally, blood relations are deemed to be more closely connected. The *blood is thicker than water* saying seemed to have influenced the strong connection of the younger brother in looking out for the big sister and therefore overcame the gender norms that are often ascribed to. There is generally stereotyping of such non-nuclear families and preference for nuclear ones in many societies (Pillow 2004). So whatever differences occur between members, they are magnified because of the family structure. This is further confirmed by another participant, Leah, who lives in a non-nuclear family within which there are step-children. In describing who she mostly spends her time with when she is at home she says;

> *When I'm at home, I spend much of my time with my nieces. The reason for spending time with my nieces, mmh, my sister-in-law does not like talking, chatting or laughing with me. She likes avoiding talking to us, sit separately from the rest of us, the daughter follows and they start chatting and laughing when we're quiet when we're together.* (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

The two cases referred to indicate that the family situations from which the girls come are significant in enabling or constraining the handling of academic and child care responsibilities by the re-entry girls. Another factor that emerges from this situation is that it is the women mostly that can provide the emotional support that could facilitate the girls' learning in school. Living in a widely gendered society where care and emotional support is seen as the duty of women, the women or mothers in the households are seen as vital. This is because women, especially if not working (as in the two cases above) spend much of the time in the home environment and therefore have opportunity to interact regularly with the girls and in a better position to offer that kind of support. Morrell, Bhana et al. (2012:133) note that; "lack of careful consideration and appreciation of the familial relations by the school may act against the best interests of the

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learner." Therefore, family support emerged as important in the girls' daily negotiation of their dual roles.

5.6   Family education attainment and its influence on the girls view of education

One prominent feature in the discussions with both the adult and child participants in this study is the value that is placed on school and the education obtained from there. Education is highly regarded not only for its intrinsic value of providing knowledge but also the utility value that it potentially has. This is not just the case for these parents but generally in Zambia and the global world at large (UNESCO 2013, Tafere 2014). Tafere (2014:1) notes that; "in developing countries, education is accepted as a means to reduce poverty". Children are therefore expected to spend their time in school, concentrate and prepare for their future. This is especially so in cases of poverty where both the children and parents aspire for a much better future, potentially offered by education. Generally, school girl pregnancy has been seen as a threat because of the disruption of school that it causes hence the introduction of the re-entry policy (CSO 2007). This is reflected in the sentiments of the family members in the way they react to pregnancy. For example, when her friends and siblings came to know about her pregnancy, Leah notes that they were surprised and shocked. She notes;

> *They were just surprised and shocked. They were saying; "How can you become pregnant while at school? We were thinking that you will concentrate on school, become educated so that you can help change our lives and enable us to have better future."*
> (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**)

The family is disappointed in this case as their prospects of a better future are diminished. This shows that the education of even one member of the family can benefit many others within the family. There is general interdependence within the family such that the progress of one member is seen collectively as a benefit to the entire family, hence the concern of jeopardising that progress because of pregnancy. This kinship concern about welfare of others within the family has been called 'family reciprocity' or 'reciprocal relationship'(Axelsen 2005, Izuhara 2010). Specifically for Zambia, Axelsen (2005:26) observes that "there exists a reciprocal obligation between relatives through kinship statuses and bonds are bound together in a general net of mutual commitment...Reciprocal relationship is used between siblings who take care of their parents". Therefore, when the girls have a second chance to return to school, the family readily offers moral, socio-economic support to ensure utilisation of that second chance. It is such

situations that the re-entry policy is seen as positive move, as it offers the possibility of a better future not only for the girls but also for parents and the collective good of the entire family. This motivation and commitment to school is shared by both parents and the re-entry girls as indicated by the following quotes;

> *I was just thinking, the way we make our livelihood, struggling and doing the same jobs of farming and gardening. So, I thought that if I also stayed at home, I'll also rely on the same means to survive. But if I go to school, I can probably better our lives, I do some course, find a job to improve the situation at home.* (Linda, 18/R, **Interview**).

> *We sent her because we were very determined to educate her that is why we had to send her back to school. Most of the things that one may need can be obtained through education; because if she has no education things become tough.* (PR II/F **Interview**).

This shows that as the girls get back to school, they are already highly motivated on their own as they clearly see the value of school and the potential to improve their lives. The parents are also supportive as they share the same aspiration. They envisage a future where they will be able to use their education to find employment, rather than relying on farming. Moreover, this envisaged better future is not only for them but for the entire household and in turn the country as whole would also benefit from their economic contributions. To them, the certainty of their future is dependent on schools. But whether these aspirations are realisable depends on the way they are experiencing school now and the kind of support offered to them to achieve these aspirations.

Moreover, education attainment among members within the family contributes to the high levels of motivation for the re-entry girls. While family educational attainment among individuals in the family varied, two distinct categories emerged, that is, post-secondary education and secondary education. In the post-secondary category, the majority of the family members have completed secondary education and are either in colleges, universities or working. In the other category (secondary) it was the re-entry girls that had reached the highest level of education in the family. In both cases, the educational attainment worked as family social capital in favour of the girls' return or continuation of school. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) argue that the educational attainment of parents represents an important resource that can influence a child's academic aspirations and success. In this study both the presence and absence of this capital, not just from

parents but the whole family, influenced the aspirations of the girls. For example, Mutinta alludes to her desire to return to school as partly due to family influence or pressure on her to do so. Although the parents did not attain high levels of education, the siblings have all completed secondary school with most of them in university, college or working. Asked on how she feels now that she is not going to school, she states;

> *I still don't feel good about it, not at all. Because there are times when you have family gatherings and chatting, and in the process the school issue emerges and everybody are pointing fingers at you. "Yes you should even go back to school, things will always be tough for you," what and what. So the best is just to finish school so that everybody stops talking about me*. (Mutinta; 19/N, **Interview**).

Mutinta therefore feels or is made to feel like the odd one out, who is breaking the family trend of high education attainment by not returning to school. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) argue that the number of siblings who have dropped out of high school can indicate some disadvantage within the family. As such, the education achievements of other family members keep her determination of getting back to school very high and given chance, she would work hard in school if not to 'stop everybody talking' but also to escape the life of hardship.

On the other hand, this family social capital, though not present in the form that Israel and Beaulieu (2004) emphasize as parental education attainment, lack of it also worked in favour of the girls in most cases. Especially in the context of material lack, parents and other family members saw school and ultimately education as a route to escape poverty. Like PR II above indicates, their determination to educate the daughter against all odds is high because she is the one who has so far attained the highest level of education. This determination by parents can also provide encouragement and family educational expectations that would help the girls to work hard in school. Apart from ensuring that the school requirements are provided, the mother also offers child care support to free the daughter to attend school and take care of other academic demands. Furnstenberg and Hughes (1995) advance that social capital plays a role in helping youth negotiate their way out of a disadvantage. However, this family social capital is limited especially in terms of material resources.

This chapter has highlighted the structural conditions in which the girls experience the provisions of the policy. As the findings in this chapter reveal about the general situation of the girls, it is

clear that various structural factors are at play in relation to their non-return or return. Generally family social capital economically, socially and otherwise plays a very big role in ensuring the realisation of the aspirations of the policy. Parents and other sponsors are determined not only to educate their children, but also ascribe to the value and potential of education to provide a better future not only for the children but entire households. This view is shared by other family members including siblings who also offer support in child care in order to achieve such aspirations.

However, the provisions of the re-entry policy emphasise re-admission of these girls to school without necessarily considering the 'changed' school environment to which these girls return. Considering the intricate web of these factors and the manner they facilitate or hinder the achievement of the policy aspirations and ultimately gender parity and the development of the nation is critical. At the centre of all this is the gender and generation inequalities that are embedded in daily practices and perceptions of the network of people that interact with the re-entry girls. Some of these hinder equal access as well as equity in the education provision to the pregnant or parenting girl in school and therefore constitute 'hidden exclusion'(Lall 2007). It is these perceptions and how they influence the realisation of the right to education for these pregnant /parenting girls that I turn to in the next chapter.

6 PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL-GIRL PREGNANCY, MOTHERHOOD AND THE RE-ENTRY POLICY

The experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls in school are greatly influenced by how they are perceived by of school administrators, teachers, parents, peers and generally the public. While school administrators and teachers make decisions concerning the daily learning of these girls in school, the parents' and other people's reactions and responses towards them also determine the return and experiences after return. For example Pillow (2004:9) argues that "educational policy does not develop in a vacuum, but is affected by beliefs, values, and attitudes situated in discourses, which in turn affect school policy by creating or limiting educational policy options" These discourses, and whether they limit or enable educational options for the re-entry girls depends on how people use them. This chapter dwells on these perceptions and responses both in school and at home under the headings of school as a gendered moral space, pregnancy as disruption to school as well as policy limitations and ambivalences.

6.1 School as a gendered moral space

Alongside the home environment, generally school spaces are seen to be safe spaces for children (Prout and James 1990, James, Jenks et al. 1998). This social understanding is informed by child protectionist views in which children are normally regarded as vulnerable and should therefore be regulated and protected by adults (Qvortrup 2000). Homes and schools are therefore seen as children's safe havens because of the presence of this adult control, regulation and protection. As children are also constructed to be sexually innocent (Ennew 2008), the school is therefore a place in which this innocence of the children must be protected. Thus, this protectionist tendency extends to the protection of the school environment from social 'pollution' and 'contamination'. So the embodied body of a pregnant/parenting girl child in school is a representation of a child who has transgressed this sexual innocence not just of herself, but contaminating that of other children in the school as well. Thus there are internal exclusions based on morality, gender and constructions of motherhood played out.

6.1.1 Morality perceptions

Informing this perception were child-pregnancy ideologies and morality discourses ranging from moral values to the special needs of these girls. Unlike adults, children are generally expected to be sexually innocent and transgression of such boundaries is seen to be immoral, and a matter of

social pollution. Therefore early pregnancy is wrong, qualifying it to be a social problem (Loseke 1999). While it is a common belief that some youths are sexually active, and hence the target for sex education (Chambers, van Loon et al. 2004, Pillow 2004) their sexual activity must remain private, invisible and unseen. The presence of pregnant school girls in the school space, a public space, makes the sexuality of these children visible and challenges the sexual sanctity of the school space.

In the eyes of many, the girls must not be in school as their presence profanes not only the sexual sacredness of the school space but also provide evidence of high incidences of sexual immorality among children. Asked about his personal view of girls that get pregnant in school, one head teacher notes;

> *Personally, not as staff in the Ministry of Education, I feel probably we shouldn't allow them back. You know these cases; they were very few during our time. This is not a good policy. Because some girls feel probably; once they get pregnant then they'll still go back to school, so it is a very bad policy.* (HD MWR/M, **Interview**).

The head teacher clearly states that the presence of these girls in school is not desirable. This is because their presence in school is an indication of sexual permissiveness, where the girls can get pregnant and still come back to school. Therefore, school is portrayed as losing its sexual sanctity and control on the morality of the children by allowing them to come back. By linking it to *few cases in his time,* he is not only implying loss of moral values, but also the epidemic nature of the pregnancy incidences, to the extent of finding such cases in the school space. He therefore advances that society has lost grip or control on these children. While the school is the space in which the policy should be implemented and its provisions realised, presence of morality perceptions that are judgemental on the girls may continue to exclude them. By emphasizing that it is his personal view and not that of staff in the education sector, it goes to show that the policy, in many cases is an imposition on these school administrators and so they do not whole-heartedly implement it. There is no sense of ownership of the re-entry policy.

Similarly, Bhana, Morrell et al. (2010:874) note that "schools are expected to be spaces of sexual innocence and many teachers are unhappy with the challenge of a policy that brought to an end, the illusion of schools as sanitised sexual spaces." However, this scenario was not just a case of

school staff but also some members of the community. This is also indicated by reaction of one community towards advocators of the policy in the quote below;

> They (FAWEZA Officials)[5]were booed by the community saying that you are the people encouraging hooliganism in schools because you are the people bringing in back those girls who fall pregnant, encouraging mothers to get back to school.(HD LP/M, **Interview**).

Bringing the girls back to school was seen to promote sexual anarchy and hooliganism in school. The girls are therefore constructed as deviants who should not be allowed in school as they can compromise morals of other children and generally discipline in schools.

6.1.2 Gendered perceptions of sexuality

The perceptions and responses are not just exclusionary in relation to the sexuality of these children in school, but they are also highly gendered. In narrating the responses from the peers in school when they learnt that she was pregnant, Leah who was the school head girl at the time says;

> They (friends at school) were laughing and mocking me. Particularly, they were saying I was a fool to get pregnant (**ukupula ifumo**) while at school. (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**)

Going by the responses from the friends, it indicates that pregnancy is unacceptable in school, and therefore, a re-entry girl will not only feel out of place when they are in school but will also experience the same laughing and mocking from the people around. Much as the girls are perceived to be in school physically, their effective learning is greatly influenced by the reactions of the people around them.

This comment also has gender connotations attached to it. The foolishness that is emphasized is because of particularly being girl that her sexuality will be/is visible to everyone else in the school which makes people frown upon it. For a boy, his active sexuality remains hidden and so does not necessarily profane the sexually sacred school space. Elsewhere, Masuku (1998:38) in her investigation of peer perceptions of pregnancy in school observes similar gender informed sentiments and notes that "pregnancy was seen as a girls' issue and a result of girls foolishness and promiscuity." One reason for this blame on the girls has to do with the power that the girls essentially have to say 'NO' to sexual demands. However, the pregnancy issue is not entirely a

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[5] The Forum for African Women Educationalists of Zambia (FAWEZA), is a non-governmental organization that spearheaded the introduction the re-entry policy in Zambia and continue to advocate for it in the schools.

girls' problem. While for most boys who are fathers in school *'it is business as usual'* (HD, MWR/M, **Interview**), the girls are made a mockery and laughing stock. It is evident that the sexuality of boys and girls in school is differentiated not just on the basis of physiological functions but also on the social. This extends the moral and gender ideals of the patriarchal society (Shezongo-Macmillan 2008) to the school space making it a non-space for the re-entry girls, as they are shamed and ridiculed for their active sexuality and mostly, for being girls because they make it visible.

Moreover, the term *ukupula ifumo* has negative and moral connotations. Literally, *ukupula* is eating from outside your home or anywhere else where you have no right to eat. There is shame attached to it as it indicates poverty of morals. By linking it with pregnancy, it is a mockery and a shame for those that get pregnant from men before marriage or other men who are not 'rightfully' theirs. While in the case of males the term *ukupela ifumo* (literally giving, getting someone pregnant) is also used in the outside marriage context, it is more positive and more of praise for 'proving' or showing masculinity. Ministry of Education (2010:48) observes that "teenage boys that have fathered children are treated with a lot of respect in the community, in a way glorifying early parenthood." It is the sexuality of the girls that is presented as socially and morally problematic and therefore must be socially controlled and repressed. That of boys is natural. In comparing the teaching of sex education in separate single-sex schools for boys and girls, Chambers, van Loon et al. (2004:566) note that for the boys "the biological was separated from the 'emotional stuff', indicating that sexuality was not seen as a social, let alone moral issue. Boys are not constructed as problematic sexual objects." This shows that the gender and sexual ideologies about children and especially girls find their way in the school environment and thereby make the realisation of the re-entry policy provisions difficult, and ultimately perpetuating gender inequalities even in the education of these girls.

6.1.3   *Constructions and perceptions of motherhood*

Perceptions and responses to the girl mother in school are also influenced by the social construction of motherhood in society. While motherhood is generally source of pride for women (Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012), that of school girls is not seen to be so and frequently frowned upon. In relation to the re-entry girls specifically, motherhood is seen to be influenced by age, status, roles as well as space. With age, the girls are seen to be too young and incompetent to handle motherhood demands materially and socially. Moreover, the care giving roles are

primarily for women especially with the health care emphasis on exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months. Furthermore, this baby caring role is confined to the private space of a home. So, people's ideas of who a 'good' mother is has implications for the pregnant/mothering girl in school. For example, on the frequent absence of the re-entry girls in school, one teacher comments *baleonsha!* (They are breastfeeding) (Field notes, **Observations**). This comment implies that the girls are not just seen to be incompetent to handle the dual roles of schooling and motherhood, but should actually stay at home where they can concentrate on breastfeeding their babies. There is therefore more emphasis on motherhood as their primary role rather than school or carrying out both. For returning to school, these girls are therefore constructed as 'bad' mothers as they compromise the care that the baby should receive.

In some cases emphasis was made in terms of space, emphasizing that motherhood belongs to a private and not a public space. The girls are discriminated for bringing this role to the public space (Swainson 1995). Asked on the nature of stigmatisation the girls receive, the head teacher points out;

> *And then sometimes you see, we say that when they are actually breastfeeding sometimes you know, I don't know how I can put it. You know there is that physiological; it's evident that, they are breastfeeding.* (HD MWR/M, **Interview**).

The mothering teen body in school is constructed as a problem, with its physiological and reproductive function emphasised as undesirable in a public space of the school. Coupled with other negative comments on the girls like*, 'go and feed your baby',* it is evident that the presence of these girls and their 'maternal flows' (Chilisa 2002) in the school space is not desirable. Similarly, Pillow (2004:10) observes that "the pregnant teen body is a site of debate, alarm, fear , scorn and shame....used as a symbol of that is wrong...and is situated as a body in need of regulation, control, surveillance and reformation." Therefore the body becomes a source of discrimination; regulation and control in the school space. While motherhood was frequently mentioned as one push factor for their return to school, in order to secure a good future for themselves and their babies, it paradoxically becomes a push factor out of the school space. Similar observations are also made elsewhere (Chigona and Chetty 2008). Thus, the re-entry girls are internally excluded from this school space not just on the basis of gender but also

sexuality and the roles ascribed to motherhood. Moreover, there was strong advocacy for their spatial separation from the other students, which in a way is discriminatory.

6.1.4   They should go to special schools like Adult'; The disability discourse

Pregnancy and motherhood was also perceived as a disability, a ground for special attention elsewhere and not in the normal schools. This corresponds to Pillow (2004)'s 'disability discourse' in which pregnancy/mothering girls are treated as individuals with special needs and in need of separation from the regular school environment (Pillow 2004). In describing an ideal learning environment for the re-entry girls the teachers suggest;

> *Perhaps when a school is opened for them (pregnant/mothering learners). Normally what makes them not to do well is because of challenges, because you know when it is like, you have a deaf person in class of people that are able, it becomes challenging...So that's why if a separate school is created, a class is created... it can even help them.* (GC TR, MWR/M, **Interview**).

> *I still feel that maybe the way we can, previously like those that were taken to schools like Adult schools because in that environment, may be they are not the only ones, may be there they can do better. May be if we separated them from the rest and we take them to those schools where the environment is ok for them because everybody we have there is a mother, may be if they are taken to such places.*(GC TR, LP/F, **Interview**).

By equating pregnancy/motherhood to deafness, this disability discourse recognises the girls as rights subjects whose special needs have to be adequately met. However, it also constructs them as vulnerable and unable to handle the challenges they face in a normal school and hence the advocacy for their separation. Moreover justifications for this separation were presented that the normal school is a hostile environment from which the girls needed to be protected. While this separation in itself protects the girls, it also fails to deal with the source of the stigma that occurs and therefore, allow it to continue. The basis for this spatial 'othering' is the mothering role that the girls do, and so should be in a place where *everybody is a mother*.

However, the ministry of education has for a long time advocated and promoted inclusive education in which persons with different disabilities and special needs are integrated in normal schools (Ministry of Education 1996). But the pregnant re-entry girls are excluded from the normal school on the basis of 'disability'. This goes to show that it is not necessarily the specials

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needs of the girls that are of high concern here, but the nature of their 'disability'. So the separation is not totally in 'best interest of the of the girl child' but for the preservation of the school as a moral space.

 Moreover, sending them to Adult schools[6] labels them as 'adults' who cannot fit in the normal schools. It is interesting to note that this discourse came from teachers and the girls in the study did not refer to it at any point. Instead, they expected adequate support and services within the same normal school environment. So while the re-entry policy, at face value, is seen to prevent expulsion, invisible exclusion from these normal schools is still present on the pretext of the normal schools' inability to cater for the girls' special needs.

6.2   Pregnancy/mothering as a 'disruption'

Although the re-entry policy was aimed at addressing the disruption that pregnancy causes in relation to school access, pregnancy still remains a disruption to the learning process of the re-entry girls. This is in the area of delayed return to school, class attendance; focus or concentration in class, negotiation of study time as well as stigmatisation from other classmates or teachers. It is in this light that school girl pregnancy/motherhood has come to be seen as a social problem even when girls can still return to school. Pregnancy was perceived as a disruption by most participants in the study. Reflecting on her pregnancy and school, Leah attributes her delay in completing school to the incidence of pregnancy.

> *It is not good. Because if I did not fall pregnant I would have finished my school early, so what has delayed me in finishing school is because of having a child...From what I have gone through, it is not good to serve two masters at a time, it is better you take one thing and focus on it.* (Leah, 18/R, **Essay**)

The delay caused by the child is therefore experienced as disturbance to school. This is because; the baby had to be taken care of before decisions of returning to school could be made. In most cases child care demands and absence of alternative care givers delayed the girls' return to school. Elsewhere Leah compares herself with some of her friends who are in college while she is still doing Grade 11. There are several factors that were attributed to this delay including the

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[5]These schools/centres are found in urban areas, normally one per district and therefore inadequate to accommodate all the re-entry cases. The centres offer various skills training alongside academic education. However it is important to investigate whether sending the re-entry girls to such centres offers them same educational opportunities like other pupils in normal schools.

length of the leave, difficulties in meeting baby care demands as well as financial resources to return to school. Apart from this delay in moving Grade levels in school, there were also cases of school dis-engagement, resulting in difficulties in re-adjusting to academic work and usually resulted in poor academic performance as shown in the quote below.

> *I had difficulties when I returned to school, especially after staying home for one year without speaking a word in English.* (Linda,18/R, **Interview**).

The academic disruption was not only a case of dis-engagement but also irregular school attendance due to child sicknesses, and other baby care demands which compromised on study time as well. One parent emphasises this academic disruption caused by pregnancy and parenting when she says;

> *It is not good, we do not rejoice about it, because the child disturbs her education. It is difficult to manage both the child and school. Sometimes she may be required to study but the child may be crying and needs her attention.* (PR III/F, **Interview).**

The girls also mentioned lack of concentration in class due to worries about the welfare of the babies. Due to such disruptions, the roles of motherhood had become difficult to negotiate and in the end academic performance is compromised and future prospects diminished even when they have returned to school. Similar findings have also been made by other scholars, noting the tension created between parenting and schooling that lead to poor performance among the girls (Chigona and Chetty 2008, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012).

The concern about the 'disruption' is not just for now but also for the future. As childhood is dominantly viewed as a 'becoming' stage that should ultimately develop into an adult as a desired end, the 'disruption' jeopardises that future as well as the welfare of the country. Early pregnancy is seen to create social deviants (McDermott and Graham 2005) who would also fail to raise responsible children because of their compromised education. Early pregnancy is also viewed as a threat to the economy of the country because of its potential to mediate transmission of poverty (Bonell 2004, Kabaso 2012).

6.3 Manifest and latent functions of the re-entry policy

One intended function of the re-entry policy is to see pregnant girls re-admitted back into the school to continue with their learning. This is based on recognition of their right to education despite falling pregnant. All the girls, the three parents that were interviewed and some teachers recognised this right and applauded the policy as a good one. They saw the policy as

advantageous as it gives a second chance to the girls who otherwise would have lost out on the educational opportunity. Both parents and teachers advance;

> *I think it is a positive one in that it has given chance to a girl child to continue with their studies after they have given birth instead of roaming the streets.* (HD LP/M, **Interview**).

> *It is a good policy. The goodness with it is that, she disturbed school, diminished her future prospects but then is given chance to go back, and her future becomes a priority so that there is a better chance of living better in the future, because the future lies in having a good education... Those who oppose the policy can only appreciate it if it is their own daughters who get pregnant.* (PR I/F, **Interview**).

This goes to show that the policy has been appreciated and working to help girls who otherwise would have fallen out of the education system due to pregnancy. The emphasis on the goodness of the policy by the parent, who 'feels the pinch;' is critical here. Supporting the girls' return to school does not mean endorsing their behaviour, but helping out girls that have fallen out of the safety net. Moreover, others who saw it as a good policy observed that it contributed to the reduction of abortions among school going girls. Although it is not easy to determine this because abortion is illegal in Zambia, and so privately done, the teacher attributed it to non-existence of such experiences in school, or media reports or stories in the community. In fact some of the girls in the study indicated that they contemplated abortion at some point out of ignorance of the existence of the policy.

However, there is the latent function, unintended by the advocates of the policy which many people perceive, including teachers. This has made the policy to be ambivalent, seen to be helping the girls while at the same time 'encouraging' immorality. The teacher advances;

> *The re-entry policy has two sides I would say. First of all, it is very ideal for those that are unfortunate in terms of eventualities such as rape, abuse by any of the relatives... the re-entry policy is not being given to people that deserve it, but to people that have done it for the sake of pleasure. It is too open and too broad, I mean. It has to be re-visited.* (GC TR, MWR/M, **Interview**).

Children are positioned as essentially passive and vulnerable, with a lot of things happening to them that they cannot control. In the view of this teacher the policy is too broad as it encompasses even those that have exercised sexual agency and are in the same situation out of 'pleasure'. Therefore, he accepts the vulnerability of children in terms of those that have suffered rape as the only ones who should be entitled to the benefits of the policy and those who show sexual agency must be punished. This confirms that in society, it is acceptable for children to be vulnerable rather than exercise their agency. No girl from the study mentioned being raped or abused; they had done it out of agency or ignorance as discussed earlier. The big question should then be 'Do children have sexual agency? Should this agency have limits?

Similarly, noting the ambivalence of the policy an administrator expresses the dilemma of promoting the policy to pupils in school assemblies;

> *But to get to the pupils, and start talking about this policy in open, I feel a bit jittery, because it is like I'm promoting sex among them, you know getting into it and provide a platform, is like I'm advertising to say, you go out and do whatever, we'll receive you (amidst laughter). That's how tricky this policy is. That is why sometimes it is given a cold treatment, yes*. (HD LP/M, **Interview**).

While it is recognised that the policy has ambivalences, it is the social or morality part that is emphasised rather than the educational right aspect. This is reflected both in this study and also in media reports[7] where people feel that the re-entry policy is being abused by the girls. In fact, statistics (Figure 1) indicate that the majority of the girls that fall pregnant do not actually return to school (Ministry of Education 2010, Mutombo and Mwenda 2010). However, this concern for the children could be genuine especially in the light of HIV/AIDS high prevalence in the country and even among youths especially girls (CSO 2007).

6.4   The girls' views and responses to public perceptions of the policy

As the preceding sections indicate and the public perceptions in chapter 2, it is clear that early/school-girl pregnancy and how the girls are treated in school is informed by notions and local discourses of childhood. The ideal childhood is one that involves focus on school and

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[7] There have been many media reports both from within and outside the educational sector in which people feel the re-entry policy has been abused by the girls and led to increased immorality among them. However, the percentages of those that return to school after delivery is still low, an indication that the girls are not taking advantage of the policy.

abstinence from sexual activity. There are also local discourses of motherhood to be primarily a duty of females and a role that should be done in the confines of the home. The pregnant/mothering girls in school are therefore seen through the *Puritan* lens as evil, deviants and a source of social contamination to other children. These local discourses do not only influence the kind of treatment that the girls receive in school but indicate how far policies need to go in designing appropriate interventions. Much as these same notions may hold water in relation to the welfare of the girl-child, it is also important not to ignore the contexts and factors that led/lead to pregnancy including poverty, residence, lack of social amenities, lack of comprehensive sexual knowledge and peer pressure.

Moreover, how the re-entry girls perceive themselves in relation to these public perceptions matters. Although they are demonised and pushed to the periphery of the school and society, these girls also engage with their context, reflect on their situation of hardship and make decisions to forge a better future not just for themselves, but their babies. Asked on how they view themselves as parenting girls in school, most of them refer to it as a mistake and a disruption that has brought out many challenges for them. They state;

> *Yes, I feel bad, it was a mistake, but it happened. I think now I just need to concentrate, in the hope that when I finish school things can change for the better. My focus is to change life for the better so that even my child can have a good life.* (Linda, 18/R, **Interview**).

> *It hurt me badly, when I discovered I was pregnant. I was very angry at myself because I knew I was still at school and just being kept, and then add a child. One should wait, come and have a child when they have their your own house, own means of livelihood to enable them take good care of the child and meet all the needs.* (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

Therefore, the girls do not justify their action of falling pregnant, but present it as a mistake, something regrettable but nothing in their power to reverse. Leah expresses the challenge of providing for the material needs of the baby for a young person and appeals for patience and postponement of childbearing to the time when resources can allow. This indicates that her timing of having a child as *wrong,* making it a problem (Loseke 1999). However, they endeavour to do something about it. Part of the action needed is, as Linda indicates, re-focussing their efforts on school. Linda constructs the incidence of pregnancy as a past that has influenced her current decision of focusing on school, for a better future. She therefore reflects temporal

orientations of agency as influenced by past (*iteration*), present circumstances (*practical evaluative)* focus on future (*projective*) (Emirbayer and Mische 1998). It is in this case that the policy has been a good intervention. Yet, when they return to school, they still face many challenges that push them to the margins, when for them; school is one solution that can help ameliorate their circumstances. In fact, contrary to most of the public perceptions, all child participants and parents applaud the policy. Asked to comment on public perceptions that the girls are taking advantage of the policy to get pregnant, Nancy argues;

> *Hmmh, may be. I think, it's not encouraging that girls should get pregnant because they'll go back to school; it is encouraging those of us who have already fallen in the trap, not those who are not yet pregnant. It's encouraging those of us who are pregnant/have children not to lose hope but embrace it as a second chance to continue with school.* (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

The initial hesitation in Nancy's argument, in a way indicates partial agreement, also presenting the paradox of the policy. Yet she emphasises that it meant for the best interest of the girl child who has 'already fallen in the trap'. Another paradox also occurs in the same notions of childhood in relation to a pregnant /mothering girl in school. If notions of 'proper' childhood constitute children being in school, why should these girls be symbolically pushed to the margins in school spaces?

This chapter on perceptions has shown that while the presence of the re-entry girls in schools is granted by the policy and the rights discourse, many other ideologies influence people's responses to the girls both in and outside school. Strongly evident are the issues to do with morals of the younger generation and the preservation of the school environment as a sacred sexual space. Therefore, the angles of perception of pregnancy/motherhood in school are more social rather than educational and consequently negate the learning experiences of the girls in school even when they are visibly seen to be accessing this education. Due to these perceptions and responses from people around them, the girls' participation in education is therefore limited and their educational prospects compromised. There is however a glimmer of hope as schools and some teachers, as well as the girls themselves recognise this right to education and are able to navigate the challenges as the following chapter will show.

7 PREGNANCY RE-ENTRY GIRLS: VIEWS ON EVERYDAY CHALLENGES AND SUPPORT SYSTEMS

The school should make them stop talking about my situation, because they disturb me. Like, 'yes, this one has a child'. I would want them to stop them, and indicate that having a child is not a problem. (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

When they neglect me, it would mean I sit at home and stop coming to school. So I feel good that whenever I ask for school stuff, they provide, this also makes me feel confident and appreciated, that they are happy that I've gone back to school. (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

This chapter presents the everyday experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls both at home and school and how these interact to enable or hinder their learning. As the above quotes indicate, the focus on the perspectives of the girls and how they experience the policy and respond to the various situations they encounter. Presenting these experiences through the re-entry girls' voices shows their take on the matter and how this may confirm or deviate from adult perceptions presented in the preceding chapter. James (2007) argues that listening to what children say about their everyday experiences can provide vital information for social and policy change. This approach also takes into consideration that in a highly gendered society, the child rearing/caring role almost entirely falls on the girls. With such demands on their hands, it is interesting to know how they forge ahead and negotiate them with school demands. The chapter is organised into two majors sections, with one on home-based experiences while the other focuses on school-based ones both during pregnancy and after returning to school.

7.1 Home-based experiences

Many scholars have emphasized the role that the home environment and parental support plays in general education attainment of their children (Coleman 1990, Israel and Beaulieu 2004). Such a supportive environment is much more critical in the cases of the re-entry girls in school considering their huge burden in terms of time in negotiating the roles of motherhood and studentship. Other scholars have also emphasized how this is crucial, in not just helping girls to return to school but also to progress in their education (Meekers and Ahmed 1999, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). In this study, the parents' responses to the pregnancy and generally the home

experiences of the girls in a great way determined their return and continuation in school. Although most girls report anger and disappointment from parents upon discovery of their pregnancy, this was ameliorated by the way the girls negotiated disclosure and showed commitment to continue with school. Moreover, in most cases, this anger and disappointment diminished with time, with the majority of parents supporting the girls' return to school. This section on home-based experiences shows how the atmosphere at home influences the learning of the re-entry girls in school in various ways.

7.1.1 The girls' strategies of pregnancy disclosure to parents

All the girls particularly mentioned fear of their parents' reaction when they discovered that they were pregnant. This disappointment was expected and some girls therefore postponed the disclosure in order to prepare themselves emotionally in some cases or prolong their stay in school in others. They employed various measures to hide the pregnancy, extend this delay and confiding in other family members or other adult confidants. This strategy to conceal the pregnancy also enabled them to continue going to school. Others continued to refuse they were pregnant even when some physical changes about their bodies indicated so. This resistance can be interpreted as acknowledgement of their mistake, and a way of helping them to postpone the disclosure as well as offer enough time for them to prepare emotionally for the reactions from parents, peers at school and teachers as well. It however, did not work for too long. One girl, Nancy, alludes to the limitation of hiding the pregnancy and postponing the unavoidable outbursts from the parents. Asked about why she continued refusing that she was pregnant, she says;

> I was afraid that they would 'kill' me. They kept on asking me and in different ways, but I kept on refusing. But you cannot hide a pregnancy for too long. The madam at school also started asking me questions, but to her I accepted. So she talked to my mum, because she was also friends with her, so she is the one who told my parents. At home, I disclosed to my grandma, who then later told my mum. (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

Other girls also mention that they initially continued to dispute the suspicions until the physical evidence pregnancy could not actually be hidden. Therefore, the anticipated reaction from the parents initiated certain defences which enabled them to postpone or lessen its impact. By continuing to refuse, they were buying time with parents, who continued speculating on the possibility of their daughter being pregnant and therefore, lessen the anger when they eventually

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came to confirm it. The other strategy shown by Nancy, of confiding in other adults like the grandmother and the teacher also helped in reducing this tension and anger from parents. She later points out why she did so and the major role that the grandmother and the teacher played in quenching down the father's anger especially. Explaining her actions, she says;

> *Yes it was easier for me to approach these (teacher and grandmother), because even if I told them, there was nothing that they could have done to me. Not my mum or dad, for me, it was difficult to tell them directly. I told the madam and my grandma hoping that they would delay telling my parents the truth. But the madam and grandma told my mum who in turn told my dad.* (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

The other factor revealed in this statement, is the girls' fear of disclosing their pregnancy status to parents too soon. This is usually ignored by both policy guidelines as well as the teachers. Although the girl found the disclosure to other adults helpful in a way, she also expresses disappointment in their quick revelation to her parents. The policy guidelines also advise school staff to inform parents about the pregnancy as soon as possible. This quick revelation to parents creates tensions for the girls at home which can negatively affect their learning or withdrawal from school. So with their anticipation of disappointment from parents, the girls negotiated disclosure through prolonging confirmation of their status and using other trusted adults to extend their stay in school and also lessen the disappointment on the parents.

7.1.2 *Parental responses to pregnancy and return to school*

In most cases the fear of parents had to do with pre-warnings given to them based on disruption of school, age and marital status, as well as bringing shame to the family. In explaining why she thought her parents were disappointed, Sarah alludes to three things as the basis of this,

> *I think it is a combination of three things, that I disturbed school, was not married and probably too young to have a child.* (Sarah, 17/N, **Interview**)**.**

Even with the provisions of the re-entry policy, the pregnancy of the children is still a disappointment to parents based on the three things that Sarah mentions. Disruption to school is perceived not only in the difficult of going back but also the disturbances that child caring demands bring which compromise on learning time. There is also shame in the 'inability' of parents failing to exert control on the sexuality of their children and therefore bring shame to the family especially on the basis of age and marital status. This indicates that pregnancy is not just a problem of school disruption but also on the morals of the girls, an embarrassment to the family

and at the same time brings into question their parenting skills. Parents feel ashamed and worry about how the community will look at them because their child's actions (Chigona and Chetty 2008). Thus there is disappointment as well as anger. The two are further exacerbated by the perception that children are an investment for the future especially in economically strained societies like Zambia. Therefore, disruption of the school process diminishes the chances of reaping the fruits of that investment.

The fears of the girls in disclosure were confirmed by the parental reactions. The girls report that initial responses of parents and other sponsors were that of anger and disappointment when the pregnancy situation was revealed and all the three parents that were interviewed stating so as well as many other child participants. Six participants mentioned being sent away from their homes to live with other relatives or the responsible men. Joan indicates;

> *My parents were annoyed. I was taken to the man who made me pregnant. But I wanted to continue going to school. I lived with him until I was about to give birth, that is when I came back to my mother's place.* (Joan, 18/R, **Essay).**

Even in situations where the girl desired to get back to school, her decision was overridden by the parent's anger and disappointment leaving the girl powerless and into a 'forced' marriage. This was not the only case in which parents sent away their child to the men that were responsible. All the three girls that are non-re-entrants in this study were made to stay with their children's fathers although two of them still miss school and would grab the chance when it arises. Asked on why they had not returned to school, they narrate;

> *My parents made the decision because money was a problem for them.* (Mwewa, 16/N, **Interview**).
>
> *It is my husband. But I didn't like it. He just wanted his child to be taken care of properly. There was no one else to help at the time because my mother was sick.* (Mutinta, 19/N, **Interview**).
>
> *I was waiting for the child to grow. But I don't feel good. Now, some people say I just forget about school especially my child's father; he says I should just stay home.* (Sarah, 17/N, **Interview**).

The above excerpts from non-re-entrant girls indicate that it was initially the parental response of taking them to their husbands or their father's children that triggered other barriers to return to

school. As girl-children, their wishes remained doubly suppressed both by the parents as well as the husbands. This reflects the double impact that a girl-child suffers in patriarchal and adult-centred societies. Mutinta, alludes to the absence of any other help because the mother was sick. This shows that, just providing lee way for these girls to return to school does not it itself help in some situations, more services like childcare, should be provided to facilitate their return. Sarah's 'waiting for the child to grow' also indicate the need for child care services to facilitate this return. Decisions to make them live with their father's children also diminishes the chances of return as the policy does not allow married girls to return to school. It also appears that the longer they take in returning to school, the slimmer the chances of return become. Even where they do, there is a likelihood of disengagement with school hence the discouragement in Sarah's case to 'just stay at home'.

Parents and other relations in the household are therefore crucial in facilitating not just the return of the girls' to school but also their continuation. In the view of the girls, acceptance and forgiveness by the family is the basis of the support that would follow in facilitating the return as well as continuation in school. Similarly, other studies observe that "family support (including resources and logistical, relational and emotional assistance) appears to be critical in determining whether a young mother will successfully continue with her schooling" (Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012:146). As described earlier in chapter 5, the girls return and continuation of school was dependent on family responses and support, including that of parents and siblings. The re-entry girls drew upon a lot of social capital in various ways through these networks at home.

7.2   Main challenges at home

The main challenges that the girls mention facing at home were to do with household chores and baby care demands, finding time to study, finances both for school and the child especially in the midst of limited resources, lack of or sporadic support from the children's fathers and unquenched anger from parents. The other challenge mentioned by the girls in the study was stigmatisation from the community. How they negotiated this, using the social capital available mattered greatly and influenced their learning at school.

7.2.1   . Baby care, gendered roles and finances

Baby care demands were a major constraint on the girls' return to school as well as continuation. While some returned soon after delivery, others could not due to lack of care givers for the baby.

Baby care demands are various including social attention, washing of nappies, preparing food, feeding and bathing babies as well finances that went with acquisition of baby materials. While in some cases this support could easily be offered by the relatives, some demands like breastfeeding could only be specifically handled by the mother. Moreover, these demands were further exacerbated by the gender expectations in which certain roles must be done by females only. These demands competed for time and attention from the re-entry girls. In handling baby care needs for her eight months baby, household chores and school, Milika, who stays with her elder sister narrates;

> *On a normal school day I wake up at 05:00hrs do household chores like sweeping the house and washing plates. I also make sure the food for the baby is prepared and I breastfeed him before I go to school. My sister who remains with him then feeds him and also gives him super shake (energy milk drink) before I come back at 14:00hrs. I breastfeed him and go for extra lessons at 16:00hrs before I come and help my sister with preparing supper because she has been busy the whole day with the baby.* (Milika, 18/R, **Interview**).

The excerpt above shows the challenges that the re-entry girls have in negotiating the limited time for the competing demands of baby care, household chores as well as school. Even with the help of the sister with baby care while she is away at school, a typical day is fully packed and requires strategic negotiation of time. By the time the girls settle down, they are exhausted and have little time to put in extra study or homework but concentrate on baby care. This is especially complicated by the gender biased demands of household chores. Even with all much of the burden of baby care falling on her, and presence of other family members, as a girl, she was still expected to do her share of household chores. This therefore compromises on the study time. Swainson (1995:20) particularly notes that "the extra labour expended by girls in particular on domestic chores affects school work in terms of time lost, concentration levels in the classroom and available time for home work". In the case of a mothering learner, the burden is even heavier as Milika's case indicates. The girls are expected to carry their role as mothers, girl children with their own share of domestic chores as well as learners. Elsewhere, scholars have noted similar demands of gender oriented chores as a hindrance to the advancement of girl-child education generally (Kelly, Msango et al. 1999) and much more specific in the case of pregnancy re-entry girls (Unknown 2010, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012).

Gendered baby care work and support was also dominantly observed in the study. Not only were the girls expected to do their share of daily chores but even the help they received in relation to baby care was gendered. As referred to earlier in the family background characteristics, gender roles are mostly played in the private sphere of the home but also extend to the public space to influence their learning experience. Morrell, Bhana et al. (2012) advance that knowledge on how gender is played is valuable in deepening understanding of the specific needs of parenting learners and also the extent to which they are challenged. For Milika as a mother, she is obliged to wake up early and prepare food for her baby even when there is the sister to do so. In this case, she affirms the construction of motherhood as a responsibility and commitment, a role that is expected from 'good' mothers. She is also challenging the normative view in which teenage mothers are constructed as deficient.

The baby care support that was extended to the re-entry girls was mainly from females like sisters and mothers and all were from the maternal side. The fathers of the babies were not only absent in material support but also care work. At no point did the girls mention fathers to the babies, or their relatives to be involved in care work. The girls also did not question this state of affairs. This is also legally enshrined with mothers as key custodians of children until the age of seven. In fact, some of them did not see anything wrong with learner fathers that still remained in school as they were not directly carrying the pregnancy or involved in baby care work. Asked on what should be done to learners who impregnate fellow learners, Sarah argues;

> *It is just to leave him in school; he is not the one who is actually carrying the pregnancy, or caring for the baby, so how do you make him stop school?* (Sarah, 17/N,**Interview**).

The reproductive function is therefore directly linked to the caring function. In Sarah's view and many people in Zambia's patriarchal social environment the two cannot be separated. This in a way 'naturalises' the baby care role as a woman's duty which in turn negates the girls' return to school. Gender biased support was also exhibited in relation to school support. Mostly the male parents or guardians were not involved in payment of fees or offering of moral support to the girls. Mostly, it was mothers that initiated this return and continued to offer consistent social and financial support. This also shows the common binary ideology of males as tough and females as caring as the following quotes indicate;

That time also was difficult because my parents were still upset with me, so I was not sure I would even go back to school. Even when my mum used to mention school, my dad always refused to be involved on the issue of fees, even now; it is my mother who mostly pays for me. (Nancy, 18/R, **Interview).**

My mum, in my view, if I had no mother I wouldn't have gone back to school. Moreover, there was no other source of encouragement for me to go back to school. My brother was still angry with me, and he never used to visit us where I was staying with my mum. (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**).

Therefore, female parents were more directly involved in ensuring that the girls returned to school and were supported in every way possible. Although there were a few cases in which the male parents offered financial support, it was mostly female parents that were instrumental.

In terms of finances, as shown in chapter 5, most participants illustrated it as the major challenge. Another study, (Unknown 2010) also shows that finances were a major problem among re-entry girls with some of them unable to return. For example, reliance on super shake (Milika, above) instead of milk reveals the compromise on the health of the child because of economic burden that goes with meeting baby care demands coupled with attending to school as well. Other girls also indicated the burden of buying baby formula milk and the 'punishment' that was given to the baby when they were away at school. Carol explains;

Things like leaving your child and going to school maybe where the child has remained, things are not ok, no milk and the child is crying and suffering. You are not really at peace because you are not sure how they are taking care of your child. So while you are at school, your mind is still at home thinking about the child and how she is doing. (Carol, 19/R, **Interview**).

Lack of resources to meet baby care needs even when social support for baby care is available can militate against the girls smooth learning in school. Much as she may be present in class her mind is drawn away from concentration because of worrying about the welfare of the baby and how those caring are coping. The health of the baby is as well compromised due to irregular breastfeeding and inadequate food supplements (Unknown 2010). So, granting the re-entry girls access to education are not adequately met by the provisions of the policy. Much as some of them are able to return they still worry about the welfare of their babies at home. It is important

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to recognise that the factors at home greatly influence their learning. So although a lot of support (materially and socially) from parents was noted, this was limited. The financial challenge is further illustrated when Leah narrates;

> *Before I came back to school, my mum and I were thinking, like, if there could be somebody who can take me up, keep me and pay my school fees, so that when I finish school I can also work for them equivalent to the amount spent on my school. Then if there can be somebody also ready to support the child, and devise a way of paying back whatever was spent on the child. It is especially support both for me and the baby. This can help me to have a settled mind and focus only on school.* (Leah, 18/R, **Interview**)

This shows the strain on finances as well as limitation of family resources. While many would view offering such support as 'encouraging misbehaviour' it is one way of ensuring the realisation of the girls' right to education especially those in financial difficulties. In the girl's perspective, it frees her mind from other demands in order to focus on education. It is important to note that not all the re-entry girls would need this support, but the majority of them actually do, as revealed in the study by the parents, teachers, administrators as well as the girls themselves. None of the girls in the study mentioned any support from welfare organisations. Although FAWEZA extends such help to the re-entry girls, like the girls, the official from this organisation also confirmed that they do not have capacity to sponsor most of the re-entry cases. Unknown (2010:61) also reveals that; "in Zambia, there is no government or NGO involvement in the welfare of teen mothers who leave their children when they re-enter school." Support systems at home may therefore not be adequate to enable the re-entry girls negotiate their dual roles.

7.3   Support networks at home

Embedded in some of the home challenges highlighted in the preceding paragraphs are some forms of support and sources from which the re-entry girls benefit. Support discussed under this section can be categorised as social, emotional, as well as material and financial support the girls receive. In the view of the girls, social support includes logistics to deal with baby care demands which can be among others attention to babies and resource of time to feed, bath, wash nappies and cover other needs of baby care. Emotional support constitutes sentiments, encouragements, and other forms of comfort and consolation to the girls. Financial support covers school fees and books, material needs like clothing, and food for both the girls as well as their babies.

In a drawing and ranking activity, all the girls referred to financial support as the most critical in their lives as it did not only cover payment of fees and buying of school requirements, but also ensured that material needs for the baby were supplied. In my design of the tool, the taken for granted assumptions were that there are different forms of support including emotional, social as well as economic support. However, I was challenged as the participants' definition of 'support' was mainly economic. Most of them regarded financial support as the most significant support. The word 'support' is commonly used in everyday discussion and mainly means financial. In this case the participants seemed to regard the other forms of support such as emotional, and social as less significant, because the Zambian culture is generally relational, with one person looking out for the other socially. As such, it would have been viewed as obligatory and 'normal' to receive that kind of support from family relations. The emphasis on 'economic' support can also arise from the general poverty situation around (see chapter 2 on economic background) and therefore, people's focus is 'who brings bread and butter to the table'. As such, such a person becomes crucial in their lives.

So, financial support became vital in meeting material needs for baby care and facilitating return to school through fees and other requirements especially in strained economic status (CSO 2007, City of Ndola 2008). In cases where this financial help was not sufficient within the household, extended family relations like uncles, aunties and elder brothers and sisters outside the household helped. In discussing her ranking of people who supported her and why she regarded their support to be important, Nelly who lives with her grandmother explains;

Figure 9. Family Support Circle

My grandmother just sells in our small shop. Most of financial support comes from my uncle and aunt

who also stay in Ndola. The money helps us a lot because I pay my school fees, buy books, food

at home and also soap and clothes for the baby. Without them, my grandmother was not going to manage all this and I may not have come back to school. (Nelly, comment on **Drawing**).

The significance of financial support was frequently referred to by the participants. Other personal care needs such as detergents for washing nappies was mentioned as very critical. At times some girls had to miss school to work for money to buy such necessities. So drawing on family support to meet those needs, even outside the household, facilitates return and continuation of schooling. Imandoust (2011) emphasizes the consideration of such social networks of extended family and friends in facilitating effective implementation of social policy.

Financial capacity does not in itself cover the support required in negotiating motherhood and schooling. Other forms of support were also mentioned as significant in enabling the girls to realise their right to return to school. Leah summarises emotional and social support from the family as she describes a supportive home environment for a parenting learner. She says;

> *At home, we should all be happy, and we should encourage one another with other school-going children at home. The parents also should take interest in what we exactly do at school, encourage regular attendance and ask us what we are thinking when we don't attend school. Our parents should lead the way in encouraging us to go to school. Then also staying happy at home, because if you are happy, even the things that you'll be doing at school will just add on according to what happens at home. It's the same as staying worried, you lose concentration on school, such that even when a teacher is teaching, you'll still be recalling the bad things you're told and miss what the teacher is teaching, when your other friends are concentrating.* (Leah,18/N, **Interview**).

As Leah indicates a supportive home environment is necessary in facilitating the learning of the parenting learners in school. It helps them to focus. It is not just parents that should be involved but other family members and school-going siblings. Most girls in the study confirm drawing on different forms of support from the family members. Encouragements were also consistently mentioned as a source of morale to soldier on amidst the many challenges that the girls face. This has been referred to as interactive social capital in which there are nurturing activities provided by family or friends that enhance success in school (Israel and Beaulieu 2004). This emotional support was seen as necessary by the girls because of mainstream thinking in which school and motherhood are perceived as mutually exclusive and the girls face a lot of stigmatisation.

Therefore, the girls tend to ascribe to this and their morale need to be boosted by positive comments. The emotional support provided by parents, siblings, friends and other people in the community matters. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) also refer to community social capital in which the community has high expectations for the children's academic success and actually nurture it.

7.4   School-based experiences

The in-school experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls were surrounded by both challenging and supportive experiences. The challenges which consisted mainly of stigmatisation and passing of negative comments were more common during pregnancy and less after delivery. While the girls reveal many challenges in relation to the people's perception of school girl pregnancy and in fact face indifferent treatment within the school, they were also pockets of support from school administrators, some teachers as well as fellow learners. Although support was offered it was sporadic and dependent on the good will of individual teachers than deliberate policy by schools to help the girls. So in an environment of limited support, the girls' learning becomes affected making their school experience hard. Therefore, I discuss the challenges and support efforts within the school set-up.

7.4.1   *Stigmatisation and discrimination during pregnancy*

Despite the existence of the policy for so many years (since 1997) the girls in school mention taunting instances of stigmatisation during pregnancy making some of them isolated or stop school altogether. These experiences during pregnancy in some cases instilled fear in girls, discouraging them to return to school. All the girls reported they were being laughed at, by fellow learners in school. Teachers and administrators also confirm presence of stigmatisation of varying degrees in their schools. In one of the schools, there is a poster that discourages pupils from stigmatising others. However Linda narrates;

> *In class, other students were mocking me, talking about me every time. For example, one would stand; write on the board that "Linda, from this class is pregnant." This was happening even when I'm there in class, whenever there was no teacher in class. "In this class, there is someone who is pregnant, we know her", even mentioning my name, and "it's Linda." In the initial stages, they were not mentioning the name, but later on they started. "It is Linda, in case there are some of you that don't know, she is the one who is pregnant in this class". This was mostly done by boys... With girls, for example if you go*

playing, they'll be setting you like "Me, I can't get pregnant". So I even stopped playing with them and became a loner. There was no one who was supporting or comforting me among them... It used to pain me a lot, such that I had to stop going to school in the end. (Linda, 18/N, **Interview**).

Such bold intimidation was aimed at embarrassing and making the girls feel guilty about the pregnancy, to feel out of place. This confirms the perception that the school environment is a non-space for pregnant re-entry girls. By shaming and embarrassing them, they become isolated, socially pushed to the margins, and this slowly ensures their exit from the school environment. The stigmatisation was also mentioned to be mostly perpetrated by boys, highlighting the gendered aspect of sexual regulation. The boys, even if sexually active are aware that they cannot suffer similar circumstances because their sexual activity will not show. Because of this social exclusion that she faced, Linda reports that she had to stop coming to school when the pregnancy begun to show. The other problem with stigma, even when it is forbidden, is that it mostly happens in the absence of teachers and is rarely reported, and if it is, there are no effective measures in place to deal with it. Another participant mentions the difficulty of reporting such stigma. Asked why she was not reporting it to teachers, she responds;

But I was just finding it difficult on my own to approach them, I was very emotionally affected. So I was very afraid, I was thinking a lot, that everyone was against me because I had made such a big mistake; no one was on my side. I felt like everyone hated me. (Monica,17/R, **Interview).**

The continued perception of pregnancy as purely a social-moral issue rather than a gender equality and educational rights issue continues to influence the learning experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls in school. Other scholars have also reported presence of this stigmatisation and discrimination in various schools not just to pregnant girls but also those that return (Mutombo and Mwenda 2010).

7.4.2 . Stigmatisation of the girls after return

The responses that the girls receive in school during their pregnancy, are in a way determinant of their later return. The girls mostly reported to be a 'laughing stock' in their schools especially from peers. Thus, most girls reported anxieties over similar responses when they returned. However, they simply had to return in order to achieve their aim of advancing in education. They also relied on the provisions of the policy which guarantees their presence in school. Many of

their fears were confirmed. Although negative comments on the re-entry girls were reported to have reduced when the girls returned to school after delivery, they were still present. This reduction was attributed to the 'invisibility', non-show of physical evidence of their sexuality. As such, the girls generally reported that things had eased off. While the taunting stigmatisation before pregnancy was reported to be concentrated among peers, it weighted more on teachers after returning. This varied from mere comments on their status as mothers to scolding them for absenteeism and low performance in class as well as inertia to support them.

There was general isolation or exclusion of the re-entry girls. Although they were others that had non-parenting pupils as friends, their friendship networks were with desk mates, fellow parenting students or simply no friends in school. As such they were mostly withdrawn and isolated. But this isolation could be due to both individual factors as well as the responses that other pupils gave. In the case of Monica above, she felt estranged and that 'everyone was against' her. Like the way many other girls were positioned, Monica (above) felt that she had 'wronged' all people. They thus maintained marginal positions assigned to them during pregnancy. Other practices were perpetuated by what the girls called 'insensitivity of the teachers'. Nelly narrates of an incident during a lesson in which a teacher (who even knew of her status as a mother) required the learners to discuss the topic "Should pregnant girls or mothers be allowed in school?" For her, it was a direct personal attack. It also emphasised the hidden exclusion that occurs in schools. Nelly reports to have been affected so much that she walked out of the lesson to talk to the school counselling teacher. A similar observation was made by (Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012:142) in which they note that "young mothers subjected to this attention felt accused of doing something wrong in the eyes of the school." So they felt pushed to the margins, emphasising the boundaries of school and motherhood.

Moreover, the girls were expected to be strong enough and face such instances of stigmatisation. In another case where a girl reported an incidence of stigmatisation she was told "*you have to be strong, these things happen and you just have to face it*". (Linda, 18/R, **Interview**). While it may be true that the child must be strong enough, such responses also shift responsibility of dealing with the stigmatisation from school authorities and put it squarely on the girls to 'face it'. As such stigmatisation is constructed as expected and normal, and therefore inevitable. Moreover,

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this acceptance of stigmatisation confirms that these girls deserve such responses because they are the ones who brought it upon themselves, by getting pregnant and bringing motherhood to the school environment. Pillow (2004:74) also argues that placing education as a responsibility of the learners operates under an ideology of "equal to what they deserve" and therefore, nothing much can be done about it. The schools therefore escape addressing the structural and institutional factors that hinder smooth learning for the girls, limiting the girls' access to quality education. Therefore, these are the hidden exclusions that still exist in schools. Pillow (2004:74) further argues that such a discourse of responsibility situates the girls as "unfit and unentitled educational subjects in need of separation" from this school environment. This is further indicated by other challenges and the limited support systems in school as the following sections will show.

7.4.3 . *"Just stay at home and take care of your child;" Re-entry girls and school attendance*

Irregular school attendance was observed as a serious challenge to the girls. Although a few were consistent, depending on the welfare of the baby at home, most of them were regularly absent from school. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, the girls were difficult to access at school because of their absence. Teachers interviewed also confirmed this as a common challenge. The girls attributed this poor attendance to the demands of baby care at home such as sicknesses. In explaining her absence from school, for three consecutive days Milika states;

> *I have been sick and the child also fell sick two days ago. So I could not come to school even when I felt better. It's hard to concentrate in class when you have left a sick child at home... Even when the child is not sick, I sometimes worry about how he is doing or if he is being taken care of properly.* (Researcher's notes **Observation**).

Sicknesses affecting their babies determined their attendance of school. In the case of Milika, it was a double impact. Therefore, this increased the possibility of being absent for an extended period depending on the nature of the sickness as well. In some cases this absence was caused by travel of baby care givers or sickness. Another participant, Nelly had been absent for the whole week because her mother, who assisted with baby care had travelled to attend to a sick relative. Monthly Under Five Care Clinic also subtracted learning time from the mothers. This absence in some cases made teachers to pass negative comments on the readiness and/or seriousness of the girls to continue with school. Linda refers to a teacher who commented on her absenteeism; "You *should just stay at home and concentrate on taking care of the child. There is nothing that*

you are doing here; you are just wasting your time." So instead of encouraging the effort that the girls have made and support them, they are constructed as hopeless, wasting time and their coming to school as an effort in futility. Chigona and Chetty (2008) also note such poor school attendance by the teen mothers due to baby care demands or absence of other care givers. They further observe that the girls are rarely supported by teachers. Moreover, even when physically present, like Milika emphasizes, their attention in class is compromised leading to low academic performance.

7.4.4   "What good things can come from mothers?" Re-entry girls and academic performance
The irregular school attendance of the re-entry girls' also discounted their learning time and ultimately compromised their academic performance. Both the teachers and the girls also confirm the reality of this. In the time-line where they are asked to compare their academic performance, the majority of the girls declared it to have declined and attributed this to long stay away from school, absences due to baby care demands as well as low expectations from teachers and fellow pupils. One girl specifically refers to this low expectation expressed by a teacher when he commented on her poor performance. Linda notes;

> *There are certain teachers who do like when you fail a question or make a mistake, they comment negatively like; "Some of you are doing this when you have left children at home. Anyway what good things can come from mothers?" So when they tell you this in the presence of other pupils, it does not feel good*. (Linda,18/R, **Interview**).

She expresses displeasure with such comments from teachers especially in the presence of other pupils. Many girls noted this as a common occurrence among certain teachers who endeavoured not only to embarrass and shame them, but also construct them as underachievers because of one particular incident or mistake that occurred in their lives. Many girls observed that people were still angry with them such that whatever they did irritated them and was mostly linked to their status as mothers. The comment from the teacher presents the girls as hopeless with 'nothing good' to enhance studentship because they are mothers. Moreover, society generally has low expectations in regard to girls performance in school (Kelly, Msango et al. 1999) making it a double impact on the re-entry girls.

 However, one of the reasons frequently mentioned by the girls for returning to school was actually their motherhood status, ensuring that a good future is secured for them and mostly their

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babies. So such low expectations of the re-entry girls simply demoralises them especially in the midst of other challenges that they face. Israel and Beaulieu (2004) refer to Lee & Smith (1996) who observe that students found in an environment where teachers expectations for academic performance are high tend to do better academically. As such, the low expectations expressed tend to limit and discourage the girls. Other scholars have also observed that teenage mothers in school are constructed as poor students, incapable of making it in school because of a 'disruption' that occurred in their life (Pillow 2004, Chigona and Chetty 2008, Mutombo and Mwenda 2010 , Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). So in most cases, instead of encouraging them, the re-entry girls are ridiculed and constructed as poor, unfit students.

7.4.5   Shifting identities, double dilemma; The mothering-schooling interface

The dual role of motherhood and schooling presented a double dilemma in some cases mentioned by the girls. This was in different circumstances and situations in which the girls' identities shifted, emphasising one rather than the other. For example, while the girls advocated to equal treatment like any other learner in school, they also drew on their status as mothers to appeal for differential treatment. As such they found themselves in a double dilemma, as the following quote shows;

> *For me it is just negative comments and discrimination that should be stopped. They should not be treating us separately like, "no these have children, these don't have", they should not be doing that. We are all pupils; they should treat us the same way, accept us as learners.* (Linda, 18/R, **Interview**).

In emphasising the learner status, Linda is resisting the negative labels that are associated with motherhood in school. At the same time, she is also denying special services that she may need as a mother learner. Although it is correct and important to appeal for equal treatment on the basis of being learners, this would also ignore the special needs that as mother learners, the re-entry girls would require in a school set-up. Therefore, it calls for equity issues to be put into consideration (Kelly 1999). Motherhood is not something that can easily be taken off and left at home, but it continues to influence their learning experience as well.

In other situations the girls chose to emphasize their identity as mothers rather than pupils. But this focus also negated their status as pupils. For example, in referring to an encounter with a female teacher, who she knew had no child, Leah comments to her friend;

She was not supposed to treat me like that (shouting at her). After all I have a child when she does not, so I deserve some respect. (Leah, 18/R, Researcher's notes, **Observations**).

So while in certain situations Leah would want to be treated as any other pupil in school, she emphasises her status as a mother in this case. More specifically, she creates a social ladder in which she has assumed a higher status than the female teacher who has no child. In this case, it creates generational-status conflict between her and the teacher. While the teacher uses the authority she has in a school set-up, the re-entry girl draws on her higher social status. Teachers and administrators also mentioned this as a big challenge as the girls become 'stubborn' to teachers when they return. Similarly, teachers in Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :44) study note that "the girls that re-entered school were quite rude and arrogant, especially to young teachers or any teachers that did not have children." Much as the girls would want teachers to treat them purely as learners, they themselves also ascribe to their social status and bring it to the school environment. So, there are always interferences between the two identities which on many instances negate the learning experience of the girls.

7.5   School-based support

School support was frequently mentioned by the girls in facilitating their return and stay in school. This support includes encouragement, counselling, facilitation for return, brokerage between the girls and parent as well as material and financial support in some cases. The girls particularly referred to the instrumental roles played by teachers in ensuring their return. Nancy explains;

A madam at my school told me that being pregnant no longer meant the end of school. She told me I can still come back to school after delivery. She also rang my parents to encourage them to bring me back to school and not let me stay at home after delivery. So my parents also agreed and were willing to take me back to school when the time came, and here I am. (Nancy, 17/R **Interview**).

The teacher mentioned also plays a brokerage role and ameliorates the situation for the girl at home. Many other girls mentioned this role played by teachers especially upon discovery of the pregnancy. Moreover the guidance teacher in one school attributes a 90% return rate in her school (for 2013) to vigorous counselling done before the girls go on leave as well as follow-up efforts to ensure their return.

Although the teachers mention extending financial and material support to the girls, none of the girls mentioned this in our discussions. Moreover the girls mention that support from school was mostly restricted to facilitation of the girls return to school rather than dealing with the challenges in their daily learning experiences both during and pregnancy and after return. This highlights the fact that the policy has been seen to focus only on returning and the numbers that go with it, rather than the actual experiences of the girls in school. Instead of schools re-adjusting to accommodate the needs of the girls when they return, they are expected to simply fit in. Mutombo and Mwenda (2010 :67) observe that "the school system has not been adjusted to support girls who are re-admitted after delivery." In line with Subrahmanian (2005), the *within* aspect of gender equality is not addressed. Much as the girls are seen to be physically in the school and thereby accessing education, the school environment does not adequately support their learning. Although regular counselling is advocated in the policy, it does not always happen on the ground. This sporadic support could be attributed to lack of regular programmes in school to specifically address the re-entry girls' challenges. The support depended more on the goodwill of individual teachers rather than a deliberate school programme. The girls observe that it was mostly the guidance and counselling teacher who was involved in their welfare and not other teachers. Worse still the guidance and counselling teachers were not always available to attend to the girls because of teaching duties.

Another area in which the children noted inadequate support was especially in relation to their academic work. The main aim of ensuring their return to school is to enable the girls advance academically. However limited or lack of support in this area defeats the achievement of this aim. Many girls refer to difficulties fitting in due to school dis-engagement or absences and strongly appealed for support in this area.

> *They should be helping us to revise in the many areas where we are behind. Because some of us stay for many days away from school, so we forget some of the things. So from teachers, like I said they should provide extra lesson to help us revise in those areas, where the other teachers are not able to meet our needs as they teach us together with those that have never had children.* (Carol, 19/R, **Interview**).

To enhance their learning experience and academic performance more support needs to be provided in his area.

7.6 'It's hard'; negotiating motherhood and schooling

Handling the dual role of motherhood and schooling were generally viewed and experienced as hard by the re-entry girls in the study. The girls were often times in the dilemma of prioritising one over the other. With competing demands on time from both, the girls still resisted the view that prioritising one meant neglecting the other. As seen in the preceding chapters pregnancy is seen as 'disruptive' to academic life and thus reduces the prospects of educational advancement for girls. The girls are also constructed as 'bad' mothers incapable of meeting the emotional, social as well as material demands of baby care. This section therefore shows the agency exhibited by the girls in both roles and how they resisted the dominant constructions of them as incapable mothers or students.

7.6.1 The girls' agency in relation to motherhood

Despite the many challenges that the girls faced in their daily negotiations of the two roles, they showed their capacity as actors who can navigate these difficulties and find alternative ways of dealing or responding to them. In relation to motherhood, they indicated this agency through child care work, maturity and encouraging others. Child care work involved provision of baby care materials, social support and attention as well as emotional care. Considering the income status of most of the families, only three girls were not directly involved in providing for baby requirements. Although the majority of the baby requirements for the re-entry girls' babies were provided by the parents/guardian, the girls also engaged in some income generating activities to supplement these parental efforts. The activities frequently mentioned were hair plaiting, gardening and running small kiosks among others. This enabled them to meet requirements like clothes, detergents, lotion, sugar and snacks for babies that were older. The girls also made sure that they used every available time they were free from school work, to be with their babies and therefore gave them social and emotional attention. Asked why she does not do any extra-curricular activities after school, she says;

> *I do not do any activities after school. I rush home to wash some nappies, breastfeed the child and just be with her. When I am home, I make sure I spend much of my time with her.* (Monica,17/R, **Interview**).

Creating time and attending to the care needs of the baby shows responsibility on the part of re-entry girls. Most girls, especially those with younger breastfeeding babies mention rushing home

to give time for their babies. In fact, although most of them refer to the incidence of pregnancy as a 'mistake' they also have that joy and pride of motherhood.

The girls also frequently referred to accelerated maturity and the sense of responsibility that had dawned on them since the occurrence of the pregnancy as Maggie advances; *what has changed is that I'm now more mature; my thinking is no longer that of a child.* They viewed themselves as 'adults' even when their years did not indicate so. This therefore brings in the social age aspects (Clark-Kazak 2008) in which circumstances around have influence on how individuals perceive themselves. They emerge from the experience as mature individuals who have a responsibility not only for their babies but also the family and therefore constantly check their actions. For example they made appeals to fellow learners to concentrate on studies and not to abuse the policy. One girl said she was very open about her status as a mother and actually assumed the role of a counsellor to other girls. Similar observations were also made in other studies (Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). Others also became a source of strength and support to other family members. Nancy narrates;

> *My brother stopped school at one point. He was not sure whether he was going to pull through because he had failed before and sort of, gave up hope. So he wanted to stop but I continued encouraging him, gave him my example and the long break that I had sitting at home and yet I was still determined to go back to school. I told him that "failing was not final, you don't even have disturbances like pregnancies or a child, and it is just failing". So I encouraged him to go back, and that is how he decided to start. I told him people even fail up to five times, but they never give up, so that is how he started, and he finally managed to pass.* (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

This excerpt is a powerful example of the influence and experience of motherhood. Due to what she has experienced, Nancy becomes a source of support and inspiration for others in relation to continuing with school. Therefore, the re-entry girls 'maturity' can be relied upon even in the sensitization of other pupils not only in regard to the perceived abuse of the re-entry policy but also importance of education. This is also exhibited in Leah's concluding remarks of the interview when she emphasizes;

> *It is that, us girls, together with boys, should not take advantage of the policy, we just become pregnant because there is this policy to go back to school, there are many*

problems in falling pregnant, or impregnating someone...We should also focus on school only rather than other things that simply distract and disturb us. (Leah,18/R, **Interview**).

The re-entry girls can therefore be used as peer educators, openly share their experiences with others who may not have encountered such a situation. This openness can only come if the stigma in school is reduced.

7.6.2   *The girls agency in relation to schooling*

Agency in relation to schooling was shown by initiating return to school, fundraising ventures, ignoring negative comments and creation of social networks to deal with their academic work. Most of the re-entrants in this research report taking the initial step concerning return to school even in cases where the parents were still too upset to consider this. This was mostly negotiated through female parents. Some also report engaging in fundraising activities to show their seriousness and willingness to go back to school. The prompting factors for this initiative were especially the challenging experiences with baby care demands and responsibility to secure a better future for themselves and the babies. Asked on the reasons for returning to school, Joan responds;

> *Life is hard at home. I don't want to continue living the way we are living at home. I want to complete my school with good results so that I can have a good job, take care of my child and take him to a good school. So I must work hard.* (Joan, 18/R, **Interview**).

Their sense of responsibility towards their babies not just for now but also for the future remained a big motivator to working hard at school. They therefore extended this agency to creation of networks that could help them in negotiating their challenges with school work. They drew upon the social capital of friends and teachers, with serious studying and consultation. Nancy, despite mentioning that her academic performance had gone down because of the pregnancy and baby care, she had not lost the determination to soldier on. Asked on how she deals with her current school performance she narrates;

> *I also study very hard, I ask those that understand to give me ideas, I ask several people until I come to solve that problem. This time I am picking up. I ask like teachers, follow them after a lesson and find out and they show me. Or I ask my friends, they show me. So I come to know some of the stuff. You should just have confidence, always soldiering on, because for anything to work, one should have determination.* (Nancy, 17/R, **Interview**).

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The networks of friends, classmates and some teachers were frequently mentioned as a source of support in dealing with academic challenges. As such, Nancy attributes her 'picking up' to her persistence to use these networks to solve her problems. She understands that negotiating motherhood and schooling is not easy, but one can achieve it with hard work and determination. This determination, and focus on what they wanted out of school also in some cases made them ignore the negative comments from fellow learners and teachers. Most of the girls mention ignoring the comments which otherwise would make them lose their focus. In all these ways, the girls' exercised agency in dealing with various circumstances in relation to their schooling, it shows that they are not completely vulnerable or incompetent (Klocker 2007, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). Therefore, they challenge and deconstruct the various constructions which portray them as victims of vulnerability. This agency can be exploited and enhanced with appropriate support mechanisms to help them access quality learning in school. It is only in such a way that their return to school will not just be about quantity, but also address the various barriers of access to learning that they face within the school environment.

This chapter has shown the actual experiences of the pregnancy re-entry girls both in school and at home. By presenting them from the girl mother's perspectives, it shows how they dispute or confirm the widely held views about motherhood in school. Presenting it from their standpoint provides insights on their views and responses to the many challenges that they face. It is clear that negotiating the two is not an easy venture. But in most cases, there has been strong support from home. This has kept the girl's motivation very high. Challenges in the school environment have also been highlighted. In the girls' view, stigmatisation and negative comments only demoralise them and symbolically pushes them to the margins of the school. Their appeal is to be accepted as learners, who are primarily in the school environment to acquire knowledge. They desire to be treated as 'normal' pupils, without labels that negatively impact on their learning. They also reported pockets of support from teachers. Various forms of agency in navigating motherhood and schooling have been highlighted. This agency helps them in negotiating the two roles even if it is not easy. The new dawn of motherhood responsibilities motivate them o soldier on. Therefore how the girls respond to the challenges can be used as a resource which, with the right kind of support can greatly bring to reality their right to education.

8 CONCLUDING DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter focuses on the main findings of the research which was done to explore the learning experiences of pregnancy re-entry girls in school. The aim of the research was to look at how the learning experiences, challenges and strategies that the girls use in their negotiation of the time-intensive roles of mothering and schooling. The work was an attempt to get the views of the re-entry girls and how they perceive the policy, experience it, and respond to public perceptions and challenges. By getting the voices of the people who actually experience it, it hoped to gain insight on how the policy can be implemented or enhanced in their best interest.

The findings reveal that simply allowing girls to return to school in itself is not adequate as there are various structural factors that influence their learning and mostly constrain it. These constitute socio-economic factors, notions of childhood and motherhood, and public perceptions of pregnancy which in turn determine and influence the nature of support they receive both in school and at home. There is much more that can be done by the schools and other stakeholders to enhance positive learning experiences which will in turn ensure not just equality of access to educational facilities for these girls, but also equity and quality education for them. Ultimately, this would provide the girls with a variety of options for educational advancement which in turn addresses the current gender disparities and allows them to contribute to national development. Within the existing school environment and the multiplicity of challenges revealed in this study, the full realisation of the educational right of the re-entry girls is far-fetched.

8.1 Dominant perceptions of early pregnancy

One of the objectives of this research was to find out how childhood in general and early pregnancy in particular is constructed. The findings in the research make it clear that local notions of childhood and reproduction greatly influence the learning experiences of the girls in school. It is important to note that these perceptions are not just moral but also highly gendered. Some scholars have noted that experiences of children generally and the re-entry girls in school are determined by who we think these girls are and what they deserve (Pillow 2004, Jenks 2005). From the empirical data in this study, it is clear that the pregnant / mothering girls in school are perceived in the negative light. This is because they have transgressed the local perceptions of good childhood and studentship. The construction of children as 'sexually innocent' is frequently

relied upon to judge those that fall out of this frame. Predominantly informed by traditional, cultural and Christian beliefs where sex is separated from childhood, the pregnant/mothering girls therefore transgress these norms become social misfits, deviants and are discriminated. The presence of the re-entry girls in school is seen to challenge these local notions of childhood.

Therefore, these girls are viewed within the Puritan discourse in which children are essentially evil. This brings in the social pollution and contamination aspect (Murcott 1980) from which other children in school must be protected, leading to the internal and spatial; exclusion of the girls from the school environment. Social meanings are drawn upon by the public and the schools to include, but mainly exclude the re-entry girls in school. The child is being discriminated not for engaging in sexual activity (which many other pupils/children do), but for falling pregnant and bringing it to the school environment. It therefore becomes a gendered discrimination. As such the school becomes not just an institution for academic learning, but a site where social and moral values are perpetuated, pushing those that fail to conform, to the periphery. This makes the school a 'non-space' for the re-entry girls, and thereby negates their learning experiences.

However, it can be established from the findings of this study that the notions of childhood are not only local but also global. This is especially so in relation to the link between school and childhood. There is a high value placed on school and generally formal education by all participants in this study. Education is valued not only for its intrinsic value but also for its utility value and high potential to better lives especially in an economically deprived situation. Thus, children are expected to be in school and avoid everything that is likely to jeopardise learning. It is in this perspective that pregnancy is seen as a problem for the disruption that it causes to the girls' academic life. However, in the re-entry policy, there is a conflicting childhood. While on one part it supports the education of children, it is also seen to promote sexual activity among children in school. It is this conflicting childhood also embodied in the pregnant/mothering girl in school, making some to seeing her as a child, and therefore entitled to education while others emphasise their concern for the morality aspect. So the policy gets 'cold treatment' as it is deemed to ignore this transgression. Therefore, this becomes the conflict between the local child and its socio-cultural aspects against the global rights holder child, who also has the right to education despite getting pregnant. I assert that the concern for the policy is 'rescuing' this child

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by granting her right to education despite the pregnancy, as denying her educational rights on the moral basis will not only fail to reverse the situation but further jeopardise her future and that of the baby. This will also hinder achievement of gender parity and negatively influence national development in the long run. Nevertheless, this does not mean supporting the children's sexual behaviour but helping those that have fallen out of the safety net. This would also mean adopting a pro-active approach to the pregnancy issue and save those that have not yet fallen in the same dilemma. This pro-active approach may mean capitalising on the experiences of the girls and use them as peer educators.

8.2   The gendered burden of pregnancy/mothering

Apart from childhood links to pregnancy, gendered notions of the society also greatly influence the experiences of the re-entry girls in schools. Although the re-entry policy has existed since 1997, recognition and realisation of the girls' right to education in schools remains unclear. As scholars have argued elsewhere, there is need for transformation of patterns in order to realise educational achievement especially for the re-entry girls (Pillow 2004, Morrell, Bhana et al. 2012). This means going beyond policy provisions. It is clear that the existence of the policy, though it has some benefits, is greatly hindered by broader society views and expectations of girls in general and motherhood in particular. These expectations are present both at home and school. Firstly, female sexuality and especially that of girl-children is seen as a social rather than a natural issue, and therefore prone to regulation and control. As such, females bear the larger burden of shame and child care making it difficult to fully experience their entitlement to education. While school-boy fathers are also given leave ('punishment') for their sexuality, the pregnancy returnee girls suffer more stigmatisation and exclusion because of their gender. For boys when they return, its 'business as usual' while girls are ridiculed for making sexuality visible and bringing 'maternal fluids' to the school environment. So the physiology of the females becomes a social issue, a ground for spatial and symbolic exclusion from the school environment. This focus on the social rather than the educational entitlement implicitly denies them their educational right. So, quantitative improvements in return rate[8] though helpful do not actually reveal these hidden exclusions that occur.

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[8] Although the national re-admission rates have been improving over the years since the introduction of the policy (Figure 1) this rate has reduced in the past three years, with a lesser percentage of those that fail pregnant returning.

Secondly, gender roles and expectations in relation to household chores and child care (Kelly, Msango et al. 1999) also limit their learning time and attention on academic matters. This negated their school attendance and consequently, academic performance. As the girls narrate their various experiences in this study, it is clear that early pregnancy is a huge disruption on school and brings with it many challenges due to time-intensive demands of baby care and school which are difficult to balance. They were frequently disrupted by baby care demands such as washing nappies, feeding, sicknesses, Under Five Care Clinics. These care demands subtracted from the girls' study and learning time. This was especially exacerbated by the fact that most of them came from low-income families where meeting basic necessities like soap, detergents, formula milk where frequently difficult to acquire. Moreover, there is little support recorded from the fathers of the babies, placing even an extra burden on the already outstretched family income. Being primary care providers, many girls mention lack of concentration in class due to worries on the welfare of their babies at home. This gender influence extended to decisions on whether and when they returned to school, with husbands (in the case of non-re-entrants) having the final say. Most of the girls also report disappointment/abandonment by their boyfriends who only verbally accepted responsibility but were mostly absent in the lives of their babies. Therefore, in a gender biased society, the larger burden of baby care falls on the girls. I posit that ensuring a positive learning experience for the re-entry girls would need considering and addressing these gendered notions and requires concerted efforts of various stakeholders.

Moreover, girls should also realise the gendered burden of pregnancy and baby care and be able to use their initial power to say NO to sexual advances. They are the ones who suffer more stigmatisation as well as negotiating baby care demands with school. Like most girls in the study confirm, pregnancy presents itself with various challenges that jeopardise educational advancement. Much as this may be gender discrimination in relation to girls' sexuality which is mostly sanctioned and highly regulated, the moral concerns of adults may also be genuine. This is in recognition of the embodied nature of children, with the natural interacting with the social and presenting complex challenges including the danger of sexually transmitted diseases, HIV/AIDS and other medical complications associated with labour. This is especially so in an

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This also shows that the girls are not necessarily abusing the policy. This reduction could also be attributed to the still hostile school environment or complete loss of faith in the value of school.

atmosphere HIV/AIDS, which has been reported to be high among teenagers especially girls (CSO 2007). Therefore, morality perspectives may not entirely be out the need to control children but concern not only for welfare of the girls but also the babies that they bring into this world.

8.3   Family social capital and return to school

Another aim of the research was to establish factors that influenced girls to return or not to return to school after delivery. This was essentially determined by family relations and material resources. These were very crucial in determining their return and continuation of school. These resources have been referred to as family social capital and play a significant role in educational aspirations and advancement of children (Israel and Beaulieu 2004). Family relations especially with parents or other guardians were strained because of the incidence of pregnancy. Many parents express disappointment with their children and in some cases, leading to anger and forced marriages. This diminished prospects of returning to school for these girls as they had to depend on their husbands to allow them. However, for those who maintained residence with their parents, relations later improved allowing for the girls' negotiation of return to school. So there were various forms of the family capital that were relied upon to facilitate this return. This constituted emotional, social as well as financial support. Emotional support mostly consisted of encouragement from parents and other siblings. These encouragement were specifically viewed as significant to their continuation of school especially in the midst of many challenges that could easily demoralise them.

 Family social capital was also crucial in meeting baby care demands with most baby care provided by mothers and sisters to the re-entry girls. Therefore, this freed the girls not only to attend school but also be able to study at home. Family financial support was important not only for the girls' school fees and other related requirements but also for their babies. Return to school was determined by provision of food supplements and formula milk for babies in the absence of their mothers. In a few cases, the fathers to the babies also provided some food materials although it was not reliable. So because of unavailability or limited forms of support, most girls report delaying or not returning to school at all.

This support given in various forms helped to thicken their thin agency in view of the many challenges and discriminations faced. The girls' agency in making decisions to return to school

would not have been possible without the support of their families. However, this family social capital cannot be over romanticised. Limited financial resources in the families were commonly mentioned leading to failure to pay school fees, meet baby requirements and causing pregnancy. This makes it a strong link to low-education attainment among low-income families (CSO 2007). In some cases family relations were strained with frequent references to their mistake of falling pregnant which kept the girls worried and failing to concentrate on school. This was because of limited financial resources within most families. I argue that family social capital plays a crucial role in facilitating or hindering return and continuation of school and also quality of learning. This means that despite the existence of the policy, many girls may not be returning to school or experiencing quality learning because of limited family capital. Therefore, improving the performance of the re-entry policy should not only focus on the numbers that return, but also factors that indirectly hinder this return including the financial aspect. It becomes vital to consider this family capital in ensuring educational equality and equity for re-entry girls.

8.4   School support systems and quality of education

Though seemingly imposed on the schools, the policy continues to be recognised by not expelling the girls but allowing them to continue and return later after their leave. There are pockets of support from some teachers in relation to facilitation of return, brokerage, counselling, encouragement and material support in some cases. The brokerage role bridged the gap between the schools and home environments and in some cases worked well to lessen the anger and disappointment of the parents. This support also enabled the girls to keep their pregnancies and abandoned their earlier ideas of aborting. The counselling sessions before their leave also helped them in contemplating return. This therefore kept their aspirations high.

However, the support was limited and mainly confined to facilitation of return and not dealing with stigma incidences in school or their welfare after return. While the re-entry girls bemoaned the absence of regular programmes specifically tailored for their needs, the teachers alluded to the lack of capacity by the normal schools to cater for the special needs of the girls. As such, while equality of access is recognised and efforts are made to support it, equity issues are neglected based on the incapacity of the schools. The internal structure of the school continues to exclude re-entry girls as adjustments have not been made to accommodate them. Moreover, the counsellors are also teachers and find it challenging to negotiate their teaching duties and

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attending to the social aspects of the re-entry girls. Some teachers are also reported to be insensitive revealing the inadequacy of sensitization done to equip teachers to handle re-entry girls in school (Chigona and Chetty 2008). So like other scholars in Zambia have observed (Unknown 2010, Mwansa 2011) the policy was made in an ad hoc manner, ignoring the particular environment to which the girls return. There is need to sensitise teachers and re-adjust the school environment to accommodate the new needs of the girls when they return. The views of the girls indicate that more help can be done by the teachers. They suggest that teachers should not ridicule and embarrass them in the presence of other pupils and appeal for extra lessons to enable them move at the same pace as others considering their frequent absences and dis-engagement due to leave which in some cases was extended for various reasons including finances.

Contrary to the negative light of incompetence and vulnerability in which the re-entry girls are mostly reflected by society, the girls also exhibited agency in dealing with their circumstances. Although they generally admit that negotiating motherhood and schooling is not an easy task, they devised ways in dealing with both. In relation to motherhood, they create time to be and attend to baby cares by waking up very early to prepare food or wash or rushing home after school. Much of their free time at home was also spent with their babies. They also engage in economic ventures like hair plaiting, gardening and selling of small items (perfumes, snacks) that help to supplement material requirements for baby care. They are also a source of inspiration to other learners in their determination to continue with school despite the many challenges. Within school, the girls make consultations with fellow learners and helpful teachers in dealing with their school work. Time for study is also negotiated by using tea and lunch breaks as well as staying longer after school in some cases. This agency can be enhanced to help them 'pick up' in their academic work. It is however clear that their agency in dealing with motherhood and schooling is greatly thinned (Klocker 2007) in some cases completely constrained.

In conclusion, mothering and schooling are both time-intensive ventures and negotiating them requires agency and support systems that can help in overcoming the numerous structural barriers and help to create a positive learning environment for the re-entry girls. It can be said that while the introduction of the re-entry policy has been a step in the right direction of

recognising the pregnant/mothering girls' right to education, it does not adequately address the socio-structural aspects that negate quality learning in the schools. Thus mothering and schooling becomes challenging and difficult to negotiate in the light of socio-structural barriers that still exist in schools and the wider society. The school environment continues to 'distance' itself from dealing with issues and challenges affecting the learning experiences of the re-entry girls. Early pregnancy is seen as purely a social problem, a private matter that schools should not concern themselves with. As such, the conceptual distance created culminates into pushing the re-entry girls to the margins of the school both symbolically and spatially with a strong advocacy against their presence in school. Much as the social nature of the pregnancy cannot be denied, its strong consideration as a gender and educational equity issue should take prominence especially in school. Therefore, there should be shift from focusing on simply allowing the girls to return to school, to concerted efforts on creating an environment conducive to learning. Creation of such an environment will require de-construction of dominant perceptions of negativity and stigmatisation. Moreover, the agency of the girls in returning to school and determination in the midst of challenges can also be capitalised on to enhance their quality of learning and educating other girls on sexuality issues. Not until the re-entry policy is seriously considered as a gender equality and educational equity issue, rather than a social 'problem', the re-entry girls' quality of learning will continue to be compromised. Allowing them back to school reduces the long term consequences that the incidence of pregnancy can have on their lives compared to when they are pushed out of school. Therefore, the 'best interest of the child/children' principle should be paramount.

8.5   Recommendations

For the policy to perform effectively and fully benefit the girls that it is intended for, the following recommendations can be adopted

a) Capacity building for all teachers on how to best deal with re-entry girls. While the girls are allowed to return to school, the schools have not adjusted to provide mechanisms for support especially after the girls return. One such area is empowering teachers on how to deal with the re-entry girls so that the efforts that they make to return to school are enhanced.

b) Sensitisation of fellow learners in school on stigmatisation. The re-entry girls spend much of their time in school in the company of other pupils making their

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social support critical for the re-entry girls in school. Measures should also be devised to make it easy for the re-entry girls to report stigmatisation and schools to find effective ways of dealing with it.

c) Compulsory sex education classes starting as early as Grade 8 in order to provide sexual and relationship information to the children. Such lessons could use re-entry girls as peer educators. This would make it easy for other children to easily relate to them. The experiences shared will therefore offer insight and chance for reflection on choices available and think carefully about relationship decisions.

d) Harmonisation of re-entry policy and Examination Council regulation on validity of examination numbers. Most girls stay away from school for at least a year or more and this sometimes affects the validity of their exam numbers making it difficult to write GSCE examinations or receive their certificates.

8.6   Further Study

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of the re-entry girls both in school and at home and how this influences their learning. As the findings indicate, certain aspects in relation to the challenges emerged that were beyond the scope of this study and would need focus and in-depth investigation. They thus need to be explored further. The studies should be on

a) In-school experiences of school-boy fathers

b) Specific support services and facilities that need to be provided by the schools for the re-entry girls

c) General performance of re-entry girls in school and national examinations and their admissions to tertiary institutions.

d) Experiences of re-entry girls in rural schools

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview guide for participants

Biographical information

These include: Age, sex, grade, age of baby, sex, and who they live with.

Perceptions of teenage pregnancy/motherhood

At what age and in which grade did you fall pregnant?

Has there been anyone else in your family that fell pregnant around that age or while at school?

How did your family react to that pregnancy?

What was your reaction when you discovered you were pregnant?

How did your boyfriend/ friends/classmates/siblings/parents respond to your pregnancy?

Has there been any difference in reaction to your pregnancy and that of the other person in the family?

What would you say has changed about your life after the incidence of pregnancy or the birth of your child?

How do you look at yourself as a mother and student?

What do you think are people's views about girls who fall pregnant while at school?

Returning or not returning to school

How would you describe yourself as a student before pregnancy?

What activities/ subjects did your enjoy at school before pregnancy?

Has anything changed about the activities you used to do in school before pregnancy?

Who made the decision that you should return/ not return to school?

What do you think are the reasons for that decision?

How do you feel about your attending /not attending school at the moment?

How do people around you react to your presence/ absence in school as a mother?

Both at home and at school, what factors would you say have hindered/ motivated you to return to school?

How do you see yourself and your child in future?

Challenges faced by the Re-entry girls

(School related)

Tell me about your typical day in school

Who do you sit with/ play /study?

How would you describe your performance in class now and before pregnancy?

What activities do you do in your breaks/ after classes?

What is it like to be a mother and learning at the same time?

Do you feel treated differently or the same from the other students in school?

What do you like /dislike about school at the moment?

Of the things you dislike, which ones would you say are easy to handle on your own?

How do you handle these things you dislike about school?

Are there any other practices in school would you regard as problems to you?

As a mother and student, what kind of things that happen in school, do you find hard to handle by yourself?

Whom/how do you think such matters can best be handled?

Generally, how would you describe the way classmates/teachers address or relate to you?

What changes if any, would you prefer to see in the way these people relate to you?

How would you describe a perfect learning environment for a mother and student like you?

(Home-related)

Tell me about your normal day when you are at home

Who do you spend much of your time with?

How would describe your relationship with the other family members you live with?

Do you feel you are treated differently or the same from the other members of your family?

What do you like/ dislike about the way you relate to the family members?

How do you respond to those things you dislike?

How do your family members react to your attending/ not attending school?

In your view, how would describe a supportive home environment for a student-mother?

Children's views of school and parent support

What practices are available in your school that you think support you as a mother and student?

As a mother in school, what kind of support do you expect from friends/ classmates/teachers/ siblings/parents regarding your schooling?

How would you describe the support actually offered by friends/ classmates/teachers/ /siblings/parents if any?

Financially, who is responsible for your child's needs/ your school needs?

How do you or others handle/meet these financial needs?

Who is responsible for the care of the child during the day/ night /when you are at school or studying?

How does this help you to deal with school work?

Schools and parental responses

Interview questions for teachers/heads

- What are your views about the re-entry policy and what difference (if any) has it made for the girls?
- How would you describe the experiences of the returnee girls in this school?
- What do you think are the challenges that they encounter in school/at home?
- What services are available in this school that help to deal with such challenges?
- What kind of assistance do you expect from the girls/parents/other teachers /community to deal with these problems?
- What would describe as an ideal learning environment for the re-entry girls?
- In your view, how best can the re-entry policy be implemented in schools?
- Any other comments that you have?

Interview guide for parents

- What are your views about the re-entry policy?
- What were your reactions when you discovered about your child's pregnancy?
- What influenced her to return to school?
- What difficulties do you think she faces as a mother and student?

- Does she share with you the challenges faced at school and how do you react?

- How do you help her to deal with these difficulties?

- What kind of support do you think the schools are offering?

- In your view, how best can the re-entry policy be implemented in schools?

- Do you have anything else to say?

Appendix 2. Ethics Approval

TILBAKEMELDING PÅ MELDING OM BEHANDLING AV PERSONOPPLYSNINGER

Vi viser til melding om behandling av personopplysninger, mottatt 09.05.2013. Meldingen gjelder prosjektet:

34501	*Mothering and Schooling: Experiences of Pregnancy Returnee Girsl in Secondary School in Ndola, Zambia*
Behandlingsansvarlig	*NTNU, ved institusjonens øverste leder*
Daglig ansvarlig	*Douglas Tendai Phiri*
Student	*Fridah M. Chunga*

Personvernombudet har vurdert prosjektet, og finner at behandlingen av personopplysninger vil være regulert av § 7-27 i personopplysningsforskriften. Personvernombudet tilrår at prosjektet gjennomføres.
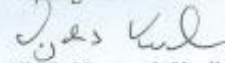
Personvernombudets tilråding forutsetter at prosjektet gjennomføres i tråd med opplysningene gitt i meldeskjemaet, korrespondanse med ombudet, ombudets kommentarer samt personopplysningsloven og helseregisterloven med forskrifter. Behandlingen av personopplysninger kan settes i gang.

Det gjøres oppmerksom på at det skal gis ny melding dersom behandlingen endres i forhold til de opplysninger som ligger til grunn for personvernombudets vurdering. Endringsmeldinger gis via et eget skjema, http://www.nsd.uib.no/personvern/meldeplikt/skjema.html. Det skal også gis melding etter tre år dersom prosjektet fortsatt pågår. Meldinger skal skje skriftlig til ombudet.

Personvernombudet har lagt ut opplysninger om prosjektet i en offentlig database, http://pvo.nsd.no/prosjekt.

Personvernombudet vil ved prosjektets avslutning, 15.06.2014, rette en henvendelse angående status for behandlingen av personopplysninger.

Vennlig hilsen

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