

## Abstract

This study explored how women experience postnatal depression. The occurrence of postnatal depression is common in our society today yet there remains a veil of silence around it. The literature of Gestalt and Humanistic therapies echoes this silence. This led me to question how the historical, medical, political and social influences on the modern-day concept of motherhood play a role in postnatal depression.

A phenomenological method was employed for the purposes of this research and used with a social constructionist philosophical approach. Eight women were interviewed and their interviews transcribed. The research data was analysed using the Duquesne method of data analysis devised by Colaizzi (1978). The findings were divided into two sets of themes.

My conclusions were that 1) new mothers have to readjust their entire concept of self and mourn the loss of their old self 2) maternal ambivalence i.e. to love *and* hate their child is a natural part of motherhood and 3) our patriarchal culture contributes to the shame and silence surrounding postnatal depression. These findings are examined and the implications for Gestalt therapy, theory and practice are discussed.