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3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter may reveal that, as was the case with prehistoric women and girls, gender-related social and psychobiological factors could have determined the stress experienced by female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus in antiquity. The researcher will investigate the problem during the following periods of ancient Greece: Homeric ($\pm 1000-800$ BC); Classical Athenian ($\pm 800-338$ BC); Spartan ($\pm 776-338$ BC) and New Athenian ($\pm 450-146$ BC). The female participants in the primary and secondary milieus of ancient Rome (± 753 BC - 476 AD) will also be investigated.

Throughout the era of ancient Greek and Roman education, pressure was exerted on female freeborn native participants in educational milieus to fit sociocultural stereotypes. In contrast to boys and men who were led towards adulthood as citizens or soldiers of the state, girls were denied public status. They were brought up to take their place in the domestic sphere or to assume other female roles as concubines or working-class women. Thus, ancient Greek and Roman women and girls lived in a patriarchal society where many related stressors faced them at macro, meso and micro-level with resulting manifestations and attempts at stress management (Massey 1988: iv; Portland State University 1999a: 1; Williams 1998: 105; Clark 1989: 3).

Since the roots of Western education lie in ancient Greece and Rome, it may be relevant to investigate the problem of stress experienced by women and girls of Graeco-Roman culture to understand the problem in contemporary society, which is largely Westernized (Clark 1989: 2).

Like early female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus, girls and women in ancient Greece and Rome had to face stressors that were underpinned by gender-related social, as well as psychobiological, factors.

Rooted in Graeco-Roman culture, contemporary Westernised society still debates gender issues raised by the era, such as the ability of women to deal with the stress of social prejudice and child-bearing related conditions (Clark 1989: 2-3).

The negative perception of female ability to cope with the stressors of life was first challenged in antiquity. Kuiper (in Blok 1987: 21) speaks of the 'devotion and psychological attention paid by the ancient poets to woman's inner life...reflected in Plato's state'. Yet, the ancient perception that women are the weaker sex is still central to contemporary Westernised laws, conventions, personal influence, marriage-patterns, childbearing, life expectancy, medical problems, religion and ethical concerns (Clark 1989: 3). In other words, Graeco-Roman male

political, social and ritual dominance originating in psychobiological determinants remains today (Versnel 1989: 68). In the words of Versnel (1989: 68) ‘anatomy is destiny - which also holds good for ancient Greece’ and probably for past and contemporary Westernised society.

Faced with time-bound stressors mostly rooted in the realities and negative perceptions of female sociobiopsychological nurturing identity, girls and women in antiquity may have experienced stress. However, what they did with this stress may have made the difference. As Northrup (1998: 29) explains:

No matter what has happened in her life, a woman has the power to change what the experience means to her, and thus change her experience, both emotionally and physically. Therein, lies her healing.

Some coping mechanisms based on a positive acceptance of femininity would have helped women to deal effectively with distress in a society that seemed to despise females more than early society. On the other hand, other stress management techniques may have led to further deterioration of female mental and physical health and added to stressors that already faced ancient women and girls at macro, meso and micro-level (Northrup 1998: 35).

3.2 CAUSES OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE ANCIENT GREEK AND ROMAN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS

3.2.1 Stressors at macro-level in society and culture

Stressors at macro-level were often endemic to the social status of female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus and were rooted in a basic negative perception of female sociobiopsychosocial identity that underpinned their response to natural and man-made stressors. Direct spin-offs at macro-level of this patriarchal paradigm identity were: no public status; a lack of political rights; patriarchy; social isolation; belittling of exclusively female activity; pressure of religious life; exploitation by men and the threat of punishment by death.

3.2.1.1 Particular pressures placed on females during natural or man-made disasters

Women and girls in antiquity were particularly affected by problems due to natural conditions, including agricultural struggles. They were confined to the domestic sphere and unable to contribute to public decision-making regarding solutions to these problems. They could only gain a sense of control over their situation, by struggling with whatever consequences natural

calamities may have had on domestic life. They would have, moreover, had to struggle with hostile elements and failed agriculture from the home base. Therefore, they would have felt the pressure of having to satisfy dietary and other physiological family needs under dire circumstances (Peach & Millard 1990: 20).

Although Spartan females were brought up to mother soldiers of the state, man-made catastrophes of war and conflict may have been particularly irksome for female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus because, confined to the domestic sphere, they were unable to contribute directly to a military solution to the problem. Moreover, war meant loss of men and older boys and since women and girls were brought up to be dependent on them, they must have felt helpless (Cole 1950: 40; Allen 1974: 31).

3.2.1.2 No public status for females

Denied access to life beyond the boundaries of the domestic social sphere, female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus were subject to repression, suppression, marginalisation and denigration. Considered the inferior and weaker sex, cultural traditions and norms kept women submissive (Portland State University 1999c: 1).

Even though most writings about women and girls of ancient Greece and Rome were by well-educated upper class men, the latter's attitude probably reflects the generally oppressive attitude of society towards female participants (Graham 1999: 1). For example, Thucydides in the 5th century BC states that Greek women and girls should remain unnoticed by the public eye. He comments on what he considers 'good character' for the wife of a soldier or a widow who should remain inconspicuous. Thucydides says:

... people will think most highly of you ... if men say as little about you as possible, whether they are praising your good sense or criticising you for not having any.

(Thucydides 500 BC in Massey 1988: 1)

Male participants of the ancient primary and secondary educational milieus viewed female concerns as meaningless. Women and girls were regarded as physically, emotionally and socially in need of family-centred protection (Clark 1989: 3-4). Even when not involved with childbearing, pregnancy, menstruation, labour and lactation, women and girls were forbidden independence and restricted to a domestic life under male supervision.

Women and girls were not even given any status in the primary and secondary educational milieus. Only after they had produced their first child, were they considered a full member of the marital household, although of secondary status. Throughout ancient times, men considered women only necessary for producing children (Graham 1999: 2, 5).

If a women displayed ambition or intelligence, men did all they could to denigrate her character. A women's place was in the home, and any woman who felt or did differently was labelled as sexually promiscuous. Roman and Greek men believed women and girls were easily sexually active and capable of adultery. Although acceptable in men, promiscuity was berated in women. This included prostitutes and concubines, who were, however, expected to be available sexually and for entertainment to men and boys. Official wives, mothers and daughters were expected to be faithful and moral (Massey 1988: 25, 31). This negative perception of female sexuality must have been stressful to live with in antiquity.

The ancient Greek writer, Simonides even regarded women and girls as mere animals with chaotic and uncontrollable sexual urges. He believed they were the cause of evil in the world; nevertheless, essential for the procreation and continuation of the human race (Massey 1988: 23). Euripedes echoed these ideas, but wished that procreation could occur without the female gender (Graham 1999: 5). Even Plato, who revered women and girls in many of his writings considered women inferior to males (Massey 1988: 14). In his plays, Aeschylus reflects Athenian society's attitude to motherhood, which was considered inconsequential compared with fatherhood, although it was regarded as a women's main role in life (Massey 1988: 15).

Because they were perceived as unworthy of being seen in public, the ideal (upper-class) women or girl was restricted to the primary educational milieu. Women were only regarded as significant as caregivers of male citizens and procreators of females to breed with or entertain these men and boys. Female participants in the educational milieu of the home and the secondary educational milieu of formal ritual were only allowed out for a few religious festivals (Graham 1999: 4).

Apart from these religious festivals, visiting with a female neighbour was the only appropriate occasion for a woman to leave her indoor duties and this was rare. Athenian women and girls were not even allowed to watch the all-important Olympic Games (Portland State University 1999d: 1).

3.2.1.3 Lack of political rights

Whether freeborn, slave, metic (resident alien), upper or lower class, women and girls in antiquity were not allowed to participate in public decision-making or be citizens or soldiers. At every stage of their lives, they were under the control of men (Portland State University 1999c: 1; Massey 1988: 1, 3; Clark 1989: 1, 2; Graham 1999:2, 3).

Women and girls of antiquity were citizens only in the sense that they could make valid marriages. It was assumed that they were unable to make rational judgments in any other social sphere except the domestic milieu. Moreover, physically weaker than men in muscle power, if not endurance, they were not allowed to fight in defence of the state. They had few legal rights unless invoked by a male relative and no political status at all (Clark 1989: 1, 3, 4-5).

3.2.1.4 Male control of females

Girls and women were minors all their lives, whereas men came of age at eighteen, and were under the guardianship of male family members (Portland State University 1999c: 1). In Athens, daughters were *kyros* or the property of their fathers until they were married, when they belonged to their husbands, and they could even be sold (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 9-12). Women and girls were valued only in terms of service to males. Moreover, if they did not marry and remained the property of their fathers, they were considered unworthy and a financial burden (Portland State University 1999d: 1; Portland State University 1999e: 1).

Female participants in the primary and educational milieus had to give up all management and ownership of property to husbands or male relatives. In divorce, rights over any property went back to fathers or nearest male relatives. Even children remained with husbands, and women past childbearing age often stayed with their sons, whose legal obligation was to support them, since they had no property of their own (Massey 1988: 4; Graham 1999: 3-4; Portland State University 1999c: 1; 1999e: 2; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 12-15.). Although women and girls were central to the 'social system as transmitters of property, they had no control over that property themselves' (Padel 1983: 4). This helplessness would have prevented the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus from coping with other stressors of life and contributed to chronic stress.

In Athenian society, many women and girls who were not part of the upper class were forced into concubinage and prostitution in a patriarchal society. These women were exploited, abused and stigmatized by the same men who kept their wives in seclusion and virtual imprisonment

(O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 25-26). Often poor widows, slaves or girls, who had been left out to die by their parents when babies were open to all forms of sexual exploitation. They depended on men for survival, working in brothels and on streets or entertaining and living with men. Although more accomplished and educated than street prostitutes, *Hetairai* were also held in contempt. Their children were classified as illegitimate and had no rights. Yet, they were allowed to move freely in society, while shopping and attending the theatre. Frequently foreign women and girls, *Hetairai* were trained and skilled in playing musical instruments, dancing, singing, intellectual conversation and the art of pleasing men (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 25-26).

In ancient Greece and Rome, female slaves had no rights and were at mercy of their masters, as well as their mistresses. They were often spoils of a foreign war, pirate kidnapping, abandoned babies or from very poor families. Female slaves did all the housework as maids, nurses and cooks. They also did most of the work involved with spinning, weaving and cloth and garment making (Graham 1999: 6- 7). Moreover, slave girls and women were sexually abused and had to be available for their male owners' sexual pleasure. Although male slaves could buy freedom by saving meagre wages, females often remained in bondage because they were paid less. (Massey 1988: 7).

Poor women and girls in the ancient world were also exploited. They had to do housework, work in fields, market places or workshops, wet-nurse, cook, serve in bars and in brothels and serve men by providing sex, bearing children, looking after the household or providing entertainment. Yet, their efforts were not valued (Graham 1999: 6-7; Massey 1988: 30).

In Rome, actresses were used purely for the entertainment of men. Yet Romans disapproved of association with female actors, despite their public popularity and acknowledgment for their talent. Roman Law forbade a senator and his offspring up to four generations from marrying a freed female slave or woman whose parents were actors (Massey 1988: 30)

In Rome unscrupulous men abused older women for money and property. These women were usually elderly unmarried women or childless widows who had no heirs and would, therefore, bequeath their estate to fortune hunters. Although not participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus as mothers, they may have been indirectly involved as aunts or older sisters, who if under stress would have had a negative impact in the educational milieus (Massey 1988: 30).

3.2.1.6 Social isolation

Athenian females were most often secluded in the home, restricted to the *gynaecium* (women's quarters) and even curbed in their relationships with women, other than direct female relatives and female family slaves. Contact with male relatives was restricted and other males forbidden. Moreover, Athenian women and girls were not esteemed by other females or were educated in the kind of all female setting common to Sparta and Lesbos. Thus, the *gynaecium* would not have offered much alleviation of negative feelings of low self-worth as in these other Greek cities (Pomeroy 1975: 88; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 16-18).

Archaeological evidence indicates that wealthier families in cities (as opposed to the suburbs or the country) in Rome and Athens, chose 'domestic poverty', as well as 'cramped and dreary quarters' as an 'expression of ... the modesty required of ...wives and daughters'. In contrast, the *andron*, the men's dining room, was the largest room in the house, as well as the best decorated and furnished (Walker 1983: 91). Thus, the unpleasant female quarters may have been a stressor in itself and a reminder of female inferior status.

3.2.1.6 Belittling of exclusively female activities

Although normally excluded from public life, women in antiquity were allowed to participate in certain religious rites. Men made fun of these activities, especially when they were secret. Thus, male perceptions continued to reduce the importance and influence of women, even in their own permitted areas of control (Massey 1988: 11).

Even childbearing, an exclusively female activity and primary female role, was belittled. According to Demand (1994: 139-140), giving birth to infants was not as important as helping boys become men or participating in ancient male accomplishments such as making laws, establishing philosophical truths and creating literary works. The institution of homosexuality and pederasty in ancient Greece was another purely male pastime perceived as more valuable than a women's ability to bear a child. In fact, male homosexuality was perceived as 'a necessary means of creating masculinity' in boys who were thus initiated into male culture, although initially born of and raised by women (Demand 1994: 138-39).

3.2.1.7 Pressure of religious life

Even though women and girls were allowed some status and identity in a few Greek and Roman religious activities, Roman Vestal Virgins were granted particular honour. However, these tenders of the sacred flame of Vesta were under pressure to do their task and lived under the threat of death, should they break their vow of chastity (Massey 1988: 27).

If they disobeyed their oath, Vestal Virgins were buried alive. They devoted thirty years to a religious life. They were chosen from noble families to make sure that the flame, the living symbol of the life of Rome never went out. Ten years were consecrated to learning their duties, ten to carry them out and ten to instruct younger Vestal Virgins. Then they could retire and marry, but few did and the readjustment to a new way of life was difficult (Massey 1988: 27; Graham 1999: 4).

3.2.1.8 Capital punishment meted out to females

Roman law prescribed death very readily for women and girls. According to Lefkowitz and Fant (1982: 173), crimes worthy of the ultimate penalty not only included adultery, but also the drinking of wine in the case of laws attributed to Romulus, the founder of Rome (753-716 BC).

The Emperor Augustus in 18 BC enacted severe laws against adultery, according to which fathers could kill daughters and their partners if caught in the act of adultery (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 181, 187). Laws made in 3rd century Rome prescribed the death penalty for women 'convicted of having secretly had sexual intercourse with her slave' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 197).

3.2.2 Stressors at meso-level in the family, peer group and during puberty rituals

Women and girls in ancient society faced stressors in family life or the more formal situation of religious rites. As was the case with stressors at macro-level, stressors facing girls and women participants in educational milieus were underpinned by the general stressor of negative perception in their natural and nurtured sociopsychobiological female role as nurturers as well as psychological and biological vulnerability factors. Thus, like females in early society, women and girls in ancient Greece and Rome may have been stress-prone and, therefore, susceptible to distress when confronted with additional stressors often related to the patriarchal nature of society. Examples of these stressors at meso-level are: education as domination; patriarchal family structures; arranged marriages; unfair standards in marriage; general and sexual neglect;

infanticide and child abuse; pressure to produce male heirs; marital conflict and educational responsibilities.

3.2.2.1 Education as a way to further dominate females

Informal and formal education of ancient Greek and Roman women and girls was perceived in terms of a taming process. With the exception of the Vestal Virgins of Rome, the aim of female upbringing was marriage and motherhood. Moreover, in ancient Greece, the education of girls tended to culminate in specific puberty rituals, symbolising their submission to the yoke of Artemis, the virgin huntress and patroness of chastity. These rites prepared the girls for their future reproductive role (King 1983: 111).

Ceremonies celebrating a girl's arrival at the threshold of womanhood in antiquity emphasized the transitional state of pubescent girls. Ancient Greeks saw womankind as a 'contrast between *parthenos* (girl), the undisciplined threat to social order, and the controlled reproductive *gaené* (woman)'. The primary educational milieu of the home and the secondary educational milieu of puberty rites were expected to ensure the submission of the *parthenos*, as well as her transformation into a *gaené* (King 1983: 124). The limited education received by female participants in ancient Greek and Roman society, was aimed at restricting them within the boundaries of the domestic milieu. Only boys and men received significant amounts of formal education. Girls in antiquity were educated only to become a wife and mother and were usually illiterate. They were trained to behave well at all times to credit their male dominated families (Massey 1988: 21; Portland State University 1999c: 1; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 20-22).

3.2.2.2 A patriarchal family structure that undermined females

In antiquity, male participants constantly exposed the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus to the stressor of domination. Girls and women were always minors in the household, termed *kyrios* in classical Athens and *paterfamilias* in ancient Roman society. Females were regarded as the property of a father and then of husbands along with the dowry until death. Remaining unmarried did not alter the situation, since a single woman remained under the control of the head of her household for the rest of her life (Massey 1988: 3-4, 21; Portland State University 1999d: 2). Whether a woman was a widow, divorced, never married or beyond childbearing age, the assumption was that she should lead a domestic life under male protection for she was 'not suited to independence' (Clark 1989: 4). Moreover, in Roman families, a daughter's name was the feminine form of her father's name. If there were

more than one daughter, names like Tullia the Younger, or Tullia the Second abounded (Massey 1988: 18)

3.2.2.3 Arranged marriages

In antiquity, marriage was a matter of convenience. Girls were, generally, forced to marry very young (aged 10 - 14), remain married and remarry if widowed. They had no control over their own marriages. In ancient Rome, for example, Augustan marriage laws made it possible for the *patres* (heads of the household) to compel women and girls to marry against their will, even widows (Padel 1983: 4; Drijvers 1987: 248; Massey 1988: 20, 23). According to Demand (1994: 14), marriage for a girl in ancient Greece was 'a traumatic affair', although it was also 'much anticipated and desired'. Female children were conditioned to accept and were bred for marriage (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 15-16). After losing her virginity in marriage, an ancient Roman girl became a worthwhile and 'productive' member of society (Drijvers 1987: 254). However, the stress of having to marry a man much older than she was might have made the situation unbearable for a young wife in ancient times. Another source of tension may have been that she would not have had much or any communication with her future husband prior to the marriage. This was common practice in ancient Greece and Rome even if the bride and groom were related, which was often the case in both societies (Massey 1988: 2, 3, 23; Drijvers 1987: 253). Demand (1994: 14) maintains that 'at the heart of the trauma of marriage' was the girl's leaving her own *oikos* (household) to enter a new one, which was 'part of the hostile external world'. It may have been difficult for a new bride to transfer from the protection of her male guardian or father to a new household under the direction of another man. This dramatic change experienced by girls in ancient Greece and Rome was often expressed in literature and artwork that conveyed a sense of separation and loss (Portland State University 1999d: 1). Feelings of extreme marital stress are vividly expressed in *Medea*, the play written by Euripides in about 500 BC:

Of all living, thinking beings, we women are the most unlucky. First of all we have a dowry, which must buy a husband to control our bodies; not having a husband is worse...Women have no easy way out of marriage and cannot say no to their husbands.

(Euripides in Massey 1988: 3)

Unmarried women were considered to have failed their fathers, as well as incurring life-long dishonour for the family (Massey 1988: 3). Moreover, suspicion of promiscuity surrounded an unmarried woman who was capable of bearing children, whether widowed, divorced or never

married. Community gossip spread fast and society was ever alert for misbehaviour of any kind from a single woman. Widows and divorcees were encouraged to remarry instead of staying single, as it was thought best for both the community and their physical health (Massey 1988: 3; Portland State University 1999d: 2). Nevertheless, it was generally considered doubtful that a woman could care for a new husband, when she had been trained for an earlier one. Girls were generally very young when married and, although already trained in domestic tasks, such as weaving, spinning, cooking, cleaning and managing slaves, husbands would still train them for the style of life they were used to (Massey 1988: 4).

Divorce was not acceptable. Moreover, men did not easily sue for divorce in antiquity because it would mean the return of the dowry and the political alliance between upper class families (Massey 1988: 4). Thus, women and girls were expected to accept their marriages of convenience and maintain a working relationship with their husbands. (Massey 1988: 20).

Ancient Greek and Roman girls were expected at the start of their marriage to adjust in the interests of maintaining harmony with their husband. Plutarch gave advice from Boeotia during the 2nd century AD, regarding this 'proper care of marriage and family life' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 240). A female character in Sophocles' *Tereus*, written during the mid-century BC, bewails the lot of women and girls in antiquity who had to accept passively the status quo of marriage. She (in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 17) states:

Young women, in my opinion, have the sweetest existence ... But, when we reach puberty ... we are thrust out and sold away from our ancestral gods and from our parents. Some go to strange men's homes, others to foreigners' some to joyless houses, some to hostile. And all this once the first night has yoked us to our husband, we are forced to praise and to say that all is well.

3.2.2.4 Unfair standards in the marriage relationship

Although husbands were allowed extramarital affairs, women and girls in antiquity were required to remain faithful to their husbands and not look at another man. The greatest virtue of a girl and a married woman was chastity. If her husband even so much as suspected her of infidelity, he could divorce her. She had to stay away from public ceremonies, was forbidden to wear jewellery and considered a social outcast (Portland State University 1999d: 2). Yet, Greek and Roman husbands had sexual relationships with female slaves, concubines, prostitutes or a male partner. They were allowed to commit adultery as long as they did not seduce the wife of

a citizen (Massey 1988: 4, 5, 21, 24-26); Portland State University 1999d: 2; Portland State University 1999a: 2; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 23-24).

Another sign of imbalance in marital relationships and a possible cause of stress in females of ancient Greece and Rome was the ease with which men could divorce their wives if they could accuse them of adultery. A husband could divorce his wife by simply rejecting her in front of witnesses or sending her back to her family home. If a wife had committed adultery, the dowry would not be returned to her family. At times even death was meted out (Graham 1999: 3; Leftowitz & Fant 1982: 181; 187; 197). According to laws attributed to Romulus, the founder of Rome (753 - 716 BC), a wife was not allowed to divorce her husband, but he could divorce her 'for the use of drugs or magic on account of children or for counterfeiting the keys or for adultery' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 173).

3.2.2.6 General and sexual neglect by husbands

During antiquity, husbands emotionally and socially neglected their wives especially in Athens (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 18; Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 173). Furthermore, according to Pomeroy (1975: 87), sexual neglect was part of the picture for Athenian upper class wives. Pomeroy maintains that, when home from military campaigns, Greek husbands preferred to sleep apart from their wives, alone or with female slaves, prostitutes or homosexual partners. This was out of fear of unwanted pregnancies, abortion or infanticide. Athenian law stated that 'the husband of an heiress was to consort her three times a month...to produce an heir', and Plutarch (±50-±125) also advised this to reduce marital tension. The effect of these attitudes was to transform marital relations into 'an obligatory act - fulfilled by procreation - rather than an intimate emotional encounter' (Pomeroy 1975: 87).

3.2.2.6 Obligation to commit infanticide and child abuse

Golden (in Pomeroy 1975: 217) states that 10% or more of Athenian female babies were killed. Infanticide must have been horrific for ancient females since childrearing was central to their role. Moreover, more daughters were killed than sons raising questions about the value of female members of society (Pomeroy 1975: 208).

Mothers and other female relatives in antiquity had no control over the destiny of newborn infants. They were driven to accept the decision of the head of the household who had the power of life and death over recent additions to the family. For example, if a baby appeared

sickly, deformed or was an unwanted extra child, the *kyrios* or *paterfamilias* could order it to be exposed to the elements. This was often the lot of baby girls, as was stated in a papyrus letter sent in about 100 BC, from a Roman husband, stationed in Egypt, to his wife, who resided in Rome:

If - and good luck to you - you have a baby and it is male, let it live; but if it is female, expose it.

(Massey 1988:2)

Babies would often be rejected if illegitimate, unhealthy, deformed, too great a burden on family and often, if female. They were put in a clay pot or jar and deserted outside the front door of a house in the city or outside the city. The child would be found and made a slave or starve, suffocate or die of exposure (Graham 1999: 3). Girl babies often died a while after birth because of deliberate neglect (Demand 1994: 22; Pomeroy 1975: 218). A wealthy Roman father might have decided to dispose of an infant because of not wanting to divide the family property among too many offspring. Financial considerations would have inspired female infanticide to protect a father the future expense of a dowry.

Infanticide was an accepted method of family planning in antiquity. Even medical specialists supported the notion. For example, Soranus, a physician of the second century AD, gives a list of criteria in his *Gynecology*, by which midwives were to recognize which newborns should be discarded and which were worth rearing. (Pomeroy 1975: 47; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 18-20).

According to Pomeroy (1975: 46), female infanticide was even practised during the early Greek era (800 - 500 BC), as told in Homeric tales. These were first orally conveyed and, then, written down during the sixth century BC. Pomeroy maintains, moreover, that female infanticide was practiced in those days as a method of limiting population growth, as well as possible gender imbalance, by the destruction of the childbearing members of the group (Pomeroy 1975: 46).

There is ample literary evidence for infanticide from classical antiquity from, for example, Plato, Plutarch and Apuleius (Pomeroy 1975: 208). Moreover, Table IV of the Twelve Tables of Roman Law, traditionally dated at 450 BC, supports paternal power to immediately kill, at birth, 'a notably deformed child' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 174). Also, the Laws of the Kings of 7th and 8th century BC, attributed to Romulus, the founder of Rome, sanctioned the putting to death of cripples or 'monsters' at birth.

3.2.2.7 Distress due to infant illness and mortality

Apart from infanticide, particularly female infanticide, female participants of the ancient primary and secondary educational milieus would have had to witness the death or suffering of their own and other babies for other reasons. For example, babies were unnecessarily wrapped in swaddling bandages. Moreover, owing to the primitive state of medicine and lack of decent medical care, many children died at birth and during early infancy from disease. Malnutrition also led to high infant mortality (Massey 1988: 6, 23).

3.2.2.8 Obligation to produce male heirs

Greek and Roman women would have felt social and family pressure to give birth to sons. This emphasis on producing male heirs, the central duty of women in antiquity, might have caused stress, as a man could even divorce his wife for not producing a male heir (Graham 1999: 3). Furthermore, the associated belittlement and implied inferiority of female babies, might have added to feelings of tensions. Sons were desirable offspring because unlike daughters, they could legally inherit their father's property, which ensured that it remained part of the family estate. Moreover, females faced health problems by having an excessive number of children to produce sufficient male heirs (Graham 1999: 3)

In the words of Demand (1994: 21) 'there is evidence to suggest that childbirth was an area of potential conflict between husband and wife'. After a woman had given birth to several children, she may have been less willing than her husband to experience yet another pregnancy and childbirth. This is what her husband would have expected of her, especially if he was inclined to expose female babies and to want more sons. Thus, ancient Greek and Roman women often resorted to abortion despite the wrath of husbands if discovered. Hippocrates refers to this inclination of women to frequently abort their babies (Demand 1994: 22). The author of *Diseases of Women* addresses the problem of women turning to other women for help in terminating pregnancies 'in a conspiracy of female silence' (Demand 1994: 62).

Another cause of conflict in marriage was the tendency of female caregivers to exchange a female child for a male one or pretend to be pregnant before introducing a slave male baby into the household (Demand 1994: 22).

3.2.2.9 Educational responsibilities

Female caregivers were responsible for the every-day trials of caring for and rearing of small children of both genders as well as the domestic education of female participants. Even if upper-class women directed slaves in the completion of these duties, they were still held accountable. Older female family members directly taught poor girls household skills as well as how to earn money for their family (Massey 1988: 6). Female slaves usually bore the brunt of educating the young in middle and upper class families and their nursing duties included breastfeeding and general care of infants (Massey 1988: 7).

In Rome, where mothers were considered a powerful force in the education of their children, were encouraged to breast-feed their own child and supervise the early education of males and females, most middle and upper class women and girls still handed over the care and feeding of infants to wet-nurses (Massey 1988: 23). Thus, although these female participants did not have the burden of rearing the young, they may have felt tension at not being allowed to use their nurturing talents (Massey 1988: 22, 23; Graham 1999: 3). Although the domestic milieu was supposed to be the domain of women and girls, the wealthier classes did not have complete authority in this area of family life. Moreover, they would not have had any say in matters such as their children's marriages or the education of male relatives (Massey 1988: 6).

3.2.3 Stressors at micro-level within the female self

As with stressors at macro and meso-level, various causes of feelings of tension at micro-level in the individual female self may have been directly related to the female sociobiopsychosocio identity that was perceived as worthless. Examples of stressors are: emotional constraint, suppressed individuality, a negative self-concept, the child-bearing role, abortions, poor health, inadequate medical treatment, early death, physical weakness and learned helplessness.

3.2.3.1 Forced repression, suppression and denial of feelings

Although recognised as more emotional than men and boys, women and girls in antiquity were restricted in the expression of their emotions even during rituals regarding birth and death. Roman law prohibited women from fully expressing their grief due to bereavement during funeral celebrations (Padel 1983: 5; Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 175). The tenth Table of the Twelve Tables, the basis of Roman civil law, states: 'Women shall not tear their cheeks or shall not make a sorrowful outcry on account of funeral' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 175)

Generally, awareness and expression of feelings was not encouraged in female participants in ancient Greek and Roman educational milieus. Love, for instance, did not feature in the marital situation. Furthermore, upper and middle-class mothers did not maintain a close relationship with their children. Nor did anyone consider the feelings of brides when arranging marriages. In addition, males neglected or oppressed their wives or concubines and did not allow them any expression of emotion (Massey 1988: 22, 23; Graham 1999: 3).

In the light of the failure to process and release emotions, female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieu in antiquity may have denied emotions instead. According to contemporary psychological thinking, this is a 'strategy used to keep painful thoughts and feelings out of awareness' (Brizer 1993: 171). Lack of consciousness of emotions may have led to stress disorders in antiquity (Gray 1999: 264, 276, 281 -286, 322; Dumasio 1999: 79).

3.2.3.2 Frustrated actualisation of individual potential and identity

Women and girls in antiquity were not only discouraged from identifying and releasing emotion, they were moulded into stereotypes. Although sons were brought up with a view to a public life and various occupations, daughters of the upper class were trained only in domestic skills such as cooking, weaving, spinning and the running of a household. This was preparation, in the primary educational milieu, for their future nurturing roles as wives or mothers and ensured their desirability as a bride for a suitable suitor. Even though slaves did most of the domestic work, including child minding, respected upper class females kept busy with fabric making and related tasks (Massey 1988: 20).

Although female participants in working class milieus were allowed to work outside the limits of the domestic milieu, the careers open to them were limited. For example, many entered the sex-trade, performing arts or a family trade, such as: that of a gilder, helmet maker, brick maker, producer and seller of food, fabric or ornaments. Others cared for the sick or were midwives and nurses (Clark 1989: 13).

Although females are suited to these stereotypical nurturing domestic roles, lack of choice was firmly entrenched in antiquity. Thus, women and girls are only depicted on vases used as day-to-day utensils or ornaments. Often presented as prizes in athletic competitions or buried with the dead, these illustrations ensured the longevity of stereotypes. For example, females represented on ancient Greek pots were divided into two groups. The first group included 'respectable' freeborn wives and daughters, who performed domestic duties, such as fetching water, weaving, spinning and looking after children. These women and girls had to remain

chaste, modest, domestic, maternal and loyal to their husbands, fathers and male guardians. The second group was made up 'less respectable' slaves, ex-slaves, and foreigners, who partook in other activities, including those that involved entertainment, such as dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and erotic distractions. Moreover, both groups were perceived as serving men, each confined to particular limits (Massey 1988: 17). Roman art, such as sculptures, wall paintings and mosaics, show women and girls in these traditional roles. They are represented as dutiful daughters, faithful wives, caring mothers, lovers, entertainers and servants of men (Massey 1988: 33)

Ancient society rejected women or girls who showed qualities usually associated with men. For example, Roman men felt threatened, with regard to their male supremacy, if females developed talents in politics, warfare, business, technology or cultural pursuits, such as art, music, drama and literature. These were male-dominated and orientated areas. Female participation in them was considered improper and immoral (Massey 1988: 23, 30).

Although ancient Greek girls and women were given birth names, in public they were identified by the possessive case of the name of their father or their husbands. They were, thus, 'linguistically defined as the possessions of men' (Demand 1994: 9). In Roman families, a daughter's birth name was the feminine form of her father's name. If a girl had sisters, her position in the family would be indicated by adding terms such as *the Younger*, or *the Second* after her name.

A Roman girl gave up her spiritual identity, when she married. She had to replace worshipping her own family ancestors and gods with those of her husband's family (Massey 1988: 21; Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 240). Giving advice on marriage during the 2nd century AD, Plutarch in *Moralia* maintained that a wife should ensure that 'the first and best friends are the gods in whom her husband believe' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 240). Plutarch also stated that 'a wife ought not to make friends of her own, but to enjoy her husband's friends together with him' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 240). Individual female identity was not possible for female participants in the ancient primary and secondary educational milieu (Massey 1988: 18).

3.2.3.3 Negative and unrealistic self-concept

Ancient women and girls would not have viewed themselves in a positive or realistic light because of the basic negative attitude of patriarchal society towards individual female identity, thus colluding in their own oppression (Clark 1989: 1). Females in antiquity would have seen themselves as emotional, gullible, irrational, not in control of their reactions, interested in trivial

concerns, lacking in self-control, impulsive, weak, inexperienced in world affairs, dependent on men or sexually rampant (Padel 1983: 4).

This constant feeling of inferiority must have been stressful and led to depression. Even when a woman was considered to be an ideal wife and mother and publicly praised in ancient Rome, this probably only occurred when she was already dead as indicated by a gravestone describing a ‘good women, faithful and undemanding, brave, shrewd and hardworking, a blessing to their husbands and sons and a credit to their fathers’ (Clark 1989: 5). Furthermore, ancient Greeks did not publicly praise women at all (Clark 1989: 4; Portland State University 1999a: 1).

3.2.3.4 Childbearing role

The priority of childbearing in feminine identity would have brought pressure. In the words of Clark (1989: 4):

Conditions of life for women in the ancient world followed from one major fact and assumption ... women bear children

The strain of childbearing on mind and body and expectations from family and society may have been debilitating in ancient times, especially in light of the low opinion of female status only defined in terms of the nurturing role. There would have been few solutions for burdensome physical and psychological problems related to pregnancy, labour, post-natal menstruation problems and lactation. Frequent childbearing would have been difficult to avoid, as contraception was unreliable and varied from ‘moderately reliable pessaries and spermicides to mere superstition’ (Clark 1989: 4).

In upper to middle class society in particular, the strain due to ancient society’s most fundamental yet unappreciated expectations must have been a problem for female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus whose central duty, was to bear male heirs in order to continue the father’s name (Portland State University 1999c: 1; Massey 1988: 4).

Despite the pivotal role women and girls played in childbearing and rearing they were considered mere vehicles for successful breeding. For instance, the ancient Greek Hippocratic view, which is outlined in *Nature of the Child*, sees the child as the ‘active element in the birth process’, whilst the women is considered a passive agent (Demand 1994: 19). According to Demand (1994: 135), philosophers in antiquity supported this notion of the human female as being a mere incubator.

The threat of suffering and death due to childbirth would have made life difficult for women and girls in the ancient world, who were already under social pressure to fulfil their procreative role yet not esteemed for it. Medical assistance was not particularly helpful, as only female relatives and midwives were involved. Even if, at times, male physicians helped out, their knowledge would not have been of much use (Pomeroy 1975: 84, 85). Mothers frequently died while giving birth, and babies often did not survive the ordeal. There was also the pain of labour and post-natal problems (Pomeroy 1975: 84). A character in *Medea* by Euripides, a Greek writer of the 5th century B C, describes her (negative) perception of childbirth:

What they say is that we women have a quiet time, staying at home, while they are off fighting in war. They couldn't be more wrong. I would rather stand three times in a battle line than give birth to one child.

(Massey 1988: 6)

Some women had as many as ten or twelve children, yet in ancient Rome the average number of children who survived was one or two (Drijvers 1987: 257). A high infant mortality resulted in a tendency for couples to try to produce children many times. For instance, a woman who gave birth to ten children may have seen only four survive in ancient Greece. So much childbearing wore out women physically and mentally particularly since they were not encouraged to view their efforts with self-respect. Life expectancy was ten or more years less than that of men, about 35 to 40 years in ancient Greece. In ancient Rome, in particular, the average age at death of wives was 29,6 years (Massey 1988: 6; Graham 1999: 3; Drijvers 1987: 257).

Fear of their own or their baby's suffering and/or death must have also caused anxiety in mothers and other women in antiquity. Although the character in *Medea* acknowledged her fear, it is likely that ancient society would have not encouraged women and girls to perceive or give expression to their negative feelings (Louw & Edwards 1993: 162; 581; Serpell 1976: 38-41).

3.2.3.5 Abortion

Despite the fact that they were expected to, and found it difficult not to be pregnant, women in antiquity still attempted to avoid giving birth. Since birth control was not an effective option, abortion was their other recourse. This was dangerous and life threatening (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 18-20). The ancient Roman writer Ovid describes in *Amores. II xiv.27*, during

the 1st Century B.C (in Massey 1988: 22) the violence of abortion in the following question concerning the practice:

Why do you insert things and dig away at your insides, and give poisons to your unborn foetus?

Solanus, a Greek from Ephesus in Asia Minor who practiced medicine in Rome during the 1st century AD advised some horrendous procedures for inducing spontaneous abortion, in his work entitled *Gynaecology*. Methods included violent exercise, being shaken on horseback, carrying extremely heavy loads, using ‘diuretic decoctions’ to bring on menstruation and ‘purge the abdomen’, being bled, having injections of old oil and other substance (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 223). Women who had abortions would have experienced the stress of actual physical suffering and distress due to fear of the abortion procedure and its negative consequences.

3.2.3.6 Poor health

Particularly in Classical Athens, poor physical health would have lowered both physical and mental resilience to the pressures and traumas of life (Pomeroy 1975: 84). Ill health in upper and middle class Athenian women and girls would have been caused by a life spent indoors without adequate physical exercise. Household tasks, such as going back and forth before the loom whilst they were busy weaving fabric, would have been strenuous, but would have only used some muscles.

Poor nutrition was also a problem. For instance, mothers’ rations awarded to Ionian women in 489 BC in Persepolis, Greece, showed that twice as much wine, beer and grain was allotted women who had given birth to boys in comparison to those who had borne girls (Pomeroy 1975: 85). In Rome, food may not have been particularly nourishing for women. Moreover, dietary inadequacy was noted by Roman physicians in medical writings as a cause of female illness (Lefkowitz and Fant 1982: 234).

According to Demand (1994: 18) ‘years of undernourishment’ would have negatively affected not only a young wife’s pregnancy, but also her chances of bearing a healthy child. Generally, frequent pregnancy and motherhood at an early age would have led to ill health in the ancient world. The Hippocratic treatise *Epidemics* records many cases of women who suffered complications and distress for this reason (Demand 1994: 19). Being pregnant also exposed women to the risk of an associated suppression of ‘cell-mediated immunity’, which in turn

exposed them to contagious diseases that proliferated in the general population (Demand 1994: 18, 21).

Physical and associated mental ill health would have lowered resistance to stress experienced by the female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus of antiquity. Moreover, there is evidence of an understanding of symptoms of affective conditions and disorders in the history of hysteria and its psychological origins written by Galen, during the 2nd century A D (Lefkowitz and Fant 1982: 232).

3.2.3.7 Medical tests and treatment

Ancient society's single-minded devotion to childbearing as the central feminine role may have resulted in bizarre medical treatment. Once married, a young Greek wife would have been compelled to undergo ignominious and dangerous fertility tests, followed by numerous, equally distressing and sometimes fatal, treatments to foster conception, especially if there was a delay in falling pregnant. Often the tests would have been performed 'as part of the marriage negotiations' (Demand 1994: 18). Not only causing possible discomfort and embarrassment, tests and treatment would have reinforced stressful feelings of inadequacy in the bride, who while infertile, was considered to have not yet assumed 'her full status as a *gyne* (woman-wife)' (Demand 1994: 18).

Examples of fertility tests mentioned by gynecological treatises of the time involved inserting a pessary of bitter almond wrapped in wool into the vagina, or giving the fasting woman butter and the milk of a woman, who was nursing a boy. Treatments might have also entailed the application of various concoctions to the genitals and the consumption of bizarre objects, sea polypus and strange medicines (Demand 1994: 18).

According to Demand (1994: 19), 'Socrates in Plato's *Theatetus* says that midwives use drugs and incantations to bring on labor and to reduce the pain'. Demand maintains that drugs listed in the gynaecological treatises had abortive, narcotic or sedative properties. These may have further complicated the process of childbirth and caused distress to Athenian women, who were probably destined to give birth to more than six infants (Demand 1994: 21).

3.2.3.8 Probability of an early death

Females in antiquity might have also experienced a dread-filled life because of the probability of dying before the age of thirty-five. Not only was the period from approximately 16 to 26

years particularly hazardous and difficult because of frequent pregnancies and childbirth, the second half of a woman's life was perilous because of ill health. She was probably worn out by a life of giving birth 10-12 times (Massey 1988: 6).

Women and older married girls were often pregnant or nursing babies and few survived beyond their childbearing years. Although medical writings feature problems related to pregnancy and childbirth, there is little evidence in ancient writings of menopausal related problems, since females did not generally reach that phase (Pomeroy 1975: 85-86; Massey 1988: 23)

3.2.3.9 Physical weakness

Although women in antiquity endured physical hardship due to frequent pregnancies, childbirth and physical chores, they were perceived as physically and psychologically weak. Therefore, they were in need of male protection. Particularly in Classical Athens, less muscle power and assertiveness excluded women from public life and, thus, perpetuated their domesticity (Portland State University 1999a: 1; Clark 1989: 10).

Athenian women were not encouraged to exercise their bodies or minds for health. The Athenian gymnasium, which non-Geeks saw as the hallmark of Greek culture, was a men's club. Women did not even go out walking or riding. The character, Phaedra, in Euripides' play *Hippolytus*, fantasises about exercising, and longs to do so, but is as scandalized as the nurse and the chorus in the play, when she recovers her senses. Spartan girls did exercise, but this shocked non-Spartans as is evident in Euripides play, *Andromache* (Clark 1989: 10).

Roman life offered no more opportunities for healthy exercise than classical Athens, apart from some dance-classes for the élite. Domestic chores were a form of physical exertion that was tiring but used few muscle-groups. Middle and upper class females did not even do housework (Clark 1989: 11).

Women and girls were also neglected in respect of physical health because there was a tendency to diagnose any female illness in terms of gynaecological conditions called 'illness of maidens' and 'wandering womb syndrome'. This would have prevented diagnosis and cure of other physical and emotional disorders. This added to the risk of women and girls becoming unhealthy and unable to cope with the pressures of life (Demand 1994: 152).

3.2.3.10 Helplessness of upper class females

Ancient Greek and Roman women and girls were generally kept isolated in the domestic sphere and separated from the mainstream of life. This forced helplessness would have kept females in antiquity in a state of learnt helplessness and depression. Current research has shown that depressed individuals avoid social contact thus perpetuating a negative self-image of being helpless and marginalised (Louw & Edwards 1993: 453). Socially respected ancient Greek and Roman women were expected to lead restricted and protected lives. Therefore, when faced with trauma, they may have been inclined to react with passivity, hopelessness and a lack of initiative. Without an internal locus of control and a positive and realistic self-concept, they may not have coped with stress (Rohrbaugh 1981: 404).

There were assertive, active, competent and effective female members of the *hetairai* (professional courtesans or upper class prostitutes) and working class. However, these women and girls were regarded with disdain and rejected by society in general. Moreover, they were taught to ‘control their lives only indirectly, by appealing to or manipulating men’ (Rohrbaugh 1981: 405).

According to Rohrbaugh (1981: 395) ‘traditionally feminine characteristics’, such as non-aggression, non-competition, warmth and dependence, which were taught to upper class Athenian and Roman girls and women, are ‘detrimental... to a woman’s health’. In the words of Rohrbaugh (1981: 385-6), perpetual powerlessness’ is related to manifestations of female distress. The researcher agrees that helplessness is a problem with females, however, disagrees that female nurturing traits such as a lack of aggression, caring and sharing styles necessarily lead to this. Possibly female gentleness can be accompanied by an assertiveness and sense of control and status. Yet, in ancient society, feminine assertiveness was taboo in the same way as female individuality, being in control and having a realistic and positive self-concept were considered an anathema. Forced to accept and silently suffer their social, biological and psychological lot in life, the female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus of antiquity may have displayed manifestations of stress.

3.3 MANIFESTATIONS OF STRESS IN THE FEMALE PARTICIPANTS IN THE PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL MILIEUS OF ANCIENT GREECE AND ROME

Ancient Greek and Roman religion, mythology, literature and medicine show an awareness of manifestations of stress disorders, such as suicidal thoughts, mood swings, excessive distress

due to grief, a negative self-concept, various symptoms of depression and distress due to pregnancy and childbirth and sexual promiscuity.

3.3.1 Manifestations of stress from a religious perspective

Ancient Greek and Roman religion viewed negative affective conditions as being divine in origin. Emotionally troubled people were referred to the priest, since oracular healing and soothsaying were popular in ancient Greece and Rome. In classical Athens, affectively disturbed individuals, would sleep near the Aesculapian temple, and be 'visited by' a dream, supposedly sent by the god, who was going to produce a cure. Hence, dreams, visions and hallucinations were seen as divine in origin as well as depending on the whims of the gods. This belief led to widespread hatred and fear of the emotionally distressed (Brizer 1993: 5, 20, 21).

A Greek inscription on a shrine of the Greek god, Asclepius at Epidaurus, written during the 4th century B C describes case histories, where women in distress 'in fear and trembling' would sleep outside the temple sanctuary (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 122). They hoped for a dream of the god, Asclepius and a subsequent cure of their somatic or emotional illnesses, which included tapeworms, dropsy, barrenness and false pregnancies (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 121-123).

Greek mythology is full of tales of mental woe, which was seen as punishment inflicted by the gods (Brizer 1993: 20). With regards to females, myths have been read as 'preserving memories of matriarchy, or as voicing deep-seated anger and anxiety'. Mythology also defined the 'social patterns of kinship and exclusion' of women and girls in antiquity. However, there were also stories, as well as religious rituals, in which women leave home or make war, renounce or invite sex. These were possible 'safety-valves', which merely reinforced 'by contrast', the normally domestic female role (Clark 1989: 2).

Female distress in antiquity was often reflected in religion and mythology. According to Demand (1994: 14) the traumatic nature of marriage for a Greek girl was symbolised in Greek mythology by the goddess, Demeter's loss of her daughter, Persephone, as a result of the latter's rape by Hades, the god of the Underworld, to whom she was subsequently married. Demand (1994: 14) maintains that marriage and funerals were both perceived in terms of sorrow in ancient Greece, a tradition maintained in contemporary Greece. Moreover, heroines of the Roman myths sacrificed their lives in 'basic servitude' like the tragic heroines of real life in ancient society (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 8)

3.3.2 Manifestations of stress as depicted in ancient drama, narrative and poetry

Paul-Zinserling (1972: 7) maintains that ‘everywhere sorrow pervades the female characters created by Greek tragedians, who are also the heirs of Homer’. According to Padel (1983: 16-17), female figures in (Greek) tragedy are there ‘as a natural site for inner pain’. Padel refers to tragic drama, as well as poetic structures that find in women ‘a useful image of suffering...(and) literary exploitation of women’s victimised position’ (Padel 1983: 16).

Padel maintains that ‘female suffering ... is a useful tragic instrument’ and, thus, a ‘symbol of human injustice and misery’ (Padel 1983: 16). Female stress disorders were symptoms of the female experiences as ‘victims in the human system ... productive of such pain’ (Padel 1983: 16). Women and girls are ‘piteous symbols’ of pain and suffering in the historical narratives of ancient Rome compiled by Livy, Plutarch and Pliny the Younger (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 63). A ‘confusion of legend, myth and history’, these writings depict women and girls as key, yet passive, figures who embody human tragedy in one way or another (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 64). Moreover, not only do these writers describe the pain experienced by female characters, but also admire their repression of sorrow and ‘long-suppressed tears’ (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 65). Plutarch in *Caius Gracchus* 19 links long-term emotional numbness and deprivation with a socially advocated blocking of stress release. Plutarch speaks of Cornelia, a bereaved mother, who, in his opinion was ‘at her most admirable when she remembered her son, without pain and tears’ (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 63)

3.3.3 Medical understanding of manifestations of distress

Although the concept of *stress* is contemporary, the phenomenon was evident to medical practitioners in antiquity. Aware of various negative manifestations of affective conditions, ancient Greeks and Romans attempted a scientific approach to explain affective disorders that may have resulted from stress in the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus (Brizer 1993: 20). Many present-day ideas about psychology date back to the Greeks and Romans (Brizer 1993: 31). There is evidence of an understanding of symptoms of affective conditions and disorders, such as the case history of hysteria and its psychological origins written by Galen, during the 2nd century A D. His analysis was a rare example of thinking about this disorder. In the words of Lefkowitz and Fant (1982: 232), it was ‘not rediscovered until the twentieth century’. In ancient Greece, Hippocrates, the Epicurians and the Stoics studied and theorised on affective disorders. Asclepiades, a Roman physician of the 1st century BC, produced evidence of acute and chronic affective conditions. Cicero and Roman

law linked criminal and deviant behaviour and legal incompetence to affective disorders (Brizer 1993: 21, 26-27).

Hippocrates (460-370 BC), regarded as the father of contemporary medicine, compiled what are probably the earliest written descriptions and a coherent classification of symptoms of affective disorders with a special focus on female problems. His work includes observations regarding depression, mania, paranoia and hysteria (Brizer 1993: 21). Of approximately seventy works ascribed to him in the *Hippocratic Collection*, six may have actually been written by him including *Women's Diseases*. His clinical observations freed ancient medicine from superstition and the ascribing of diseases to divine origin. He was a pioneer in his conception of the brain as 'a core function in abnormal behaviour', as opposed to 'supernatural powers'. Aware of the sociopsychobiological factors underpinning female stress, Hippocrates linked the brain, 'the seat of consciousness, intelligence and emotional life', to physiological factors, including bodily fluids (humours) and, in the case of females, the position of the uterus (Louw & Edwards 1993: 684; Brizer 1993: 23 - 24; Portland State University 1999b: 1)

Hippocrates paid particular attention to female emotional disorders, such as hysteria, which he thought to arise from a 'wandering uterus' (Brizer 1993: 24). According to Rohrbourg (1981: 397) hysteria 'is *the* female disease' and the 'hysterical character is a personality style found in people who tend to respond to stress or conflict by developing physical symptoms that have little or no organic cause' (Klein in Rohrbourg 1981: 398). The term *hysteria* derives from the Greek *hustera*, which means uterus. Hippocrates believed that hysteria was caused by 'a uterus that became unattached and moved around the body whilst yearning for children, and finally lodged in a position that obstructed whatever bodily organ was afflicted'. Thinking that sexual problems were a cause of the problem, which included suffocation and visions, Hippocrates recommended marriage as the best cure in his work *On Virgins* (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 85; Rohrbourg 1981: 397). The *Peri Partheniōn*, one of a series of gynaecological treatises in the Hippocratic corpus, of 4th and 5th century BC, was another example of medical advice regarding marriage as a cure of the 'illness of maidens' (King 1983: 119; 124).

Like Hippocrates, the Roman Galen (130-200 AD) also appeared to be aware of affective disorders and developed the mind-body notion of 'affliction by consensus, or sympathy' that refers to symptoms in one part of the body, which may be due to disease in another (Brizer 1993: 30; Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 215). In particular Galen wrote in his *On Prognosis 6*, about the *Psychological Origins Of Hysteria*. In this analysis, Galen clearly defines what appears to be the concept of *stress*. He attempts to give his reader:

A clear conception of how the body tends to be affected by mental conditions...that the pulse is altered by quarrels and alarms which suddenly disturb the mind

(Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 232)

With regard to one woman in particular, he names stress symptoms such as: insomnia, melancholy, withdrawal, mental uneasiness and an irregular and disturbed pulse (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 233). Having 'diagnosed that there was no body trouble' and 'nothing physically wrong', Galen concludes that the woman was worrying and suffering from 'trouble about something she was unwilling to confess' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 232-233).

Soranus (1st century AD), Cappadocia (2nd century AD) and Celsus (1st century AD) were physicians in ancient Rome who diagnosed female affective disorders classified as 'hysterical suffocation'. Cappadocia subscribed to the basic Hippocratic doctrine of hysteria and the 'wandering womb'. Soranus clearly saw hysteria as a nervous outburst with physical manifestations and prescribed 'reassuring attention and physical therapy with soothing medicaments' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 228).

In his work, *Gynaecology 3*, Soranus acknowledges typical hysterical symptoms such as aphonia (dumbness), laboured breathing, seizure of the senses, clenching of teeth and a cool body (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 140). In addition, he draws a link between stressful female life events and hysteria. He mentions that:

the disease is preceded by recurrent miscarriages, premature birth, long widowhood, retention of menses and the end of ordinary childbearing..

(Soranus in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 140)

3.3.4 Suicidal thoughts

Suicidal tendencies are described in the medical writings and other literature in antiquity. In particular, Plutarch, a Greek writer, who wrote during the 2nd century in the Roman Empire, tells the ancient Greek traditional story of the mass suicide of a group of young women in Miletus. He describes the 'strange trouble (which) took possession of the women', which led to 'an alteration and derangement of mind...a yearning for death and an insane impulse toward hanging' (Plutarch in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 97). Plutarch tells of a Spartan slave who felt 'poignant distress' and 'committed suicide' (Plutarch in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 78). The Roman Pliny the Younger, who wrote during the 2nd Century AD describes the attempted

suicide of a woman, Aria, who felt life to be worthless without her husband, whom she followed when he was taken as a prisoner to Rome (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 142).

Earlier in ancient Greek history, Hippocrates, in his work *On Virgins*, mentioned the suicidal tendencies of so-called hysterical virgins who ‘try to choke themselves because of the pressure on their hearts’ (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 96). Hippocrates observed thoughts of suicide in ‘married women, ...who are sterile’. The anguish of not fulfilling their role as bearers of children, for which they had been prepared since childhood in both the primary and secondary educational milieus, may have caused unbearable stress in these women and girls in antiquity (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 96).

3.3.5 Mood swings

Semonides wrote, in Amorgos, Greece, during the 6th century BC, about moodiness, a possible manifestation of stress in women and girls (Pomeroy 1975: 52). In his poem, *On Women* Semonides, describes the female mind that:

...has two characters. One day she smiles and is happy; a stranger who sees her in the house will praise her ... But on another day ... she shows herself ungentle and contrary to enemies and friends alike... like the ocean, she has a changeful nature.

(Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 14).

3.3.6 Excessive emotional reactions

Although it was not acceptable for female participants in ancient society to mourn excessively at funerals, they were possibly allowed to mourn in private. They may have used this opportunity to release pent up stress via mourning (Pomeroy 1975: 44-45). For example, Attic vases give evidence of women lacerating themselves (Pomeroy 1975: 44). However, male observers believed female mourning customs were ‘ostentatious and unmanly’ (Graham 1999: 4).

According to Seneca, Roman Stoic philosopher, politician and tutor to Nero, women had been ‘granted the right to inordinate, yet not unlimited tears’ (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 140). In his essay *To Helvia on Consolation*, AD 41, in which he attempts to comfort his mother, Seneca writes of ‘the stubbornness of a woman’s grief’ and their ‘endless sorrow’, that he perceives as ‘the weaknesses of a woman’ (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 140).

Behaviour and physical manifestations of stress, such as: high-pitched and nervous laughter, compulsive hair pulling, frequent crying, loss of appetite, nausea and menstrual problems are linked to grief in case histories, described in Book III of the Hippocratic treatise, *Epidemics* (Demand 1994: 50). According to the writer of *Epidemics*, Book III case 11 (second set), the woman:

became sleepless and lost her appetite; thirst and nausea; convulsions, raving, fever, coma , deliriums.

(Demand 1994: 50).

In *Epidemics* Book III case 15 (second set), a second example of a grief-stricken woman is as follows:

She wrapped herself up; groped about like a blind person, without a word; plucked, scratched and pulled her hair, wept, and then laughed. She had rambling speech, then was sensible again; a slight fever was present. She died.

(Demand 1994: 50)

3.3.7 Low self esteem

In ancient Rome, females were considered to be the frail sex, *infirmitus sexus*, (Drijvers 1987: 267). In the words of (Clark 1989: 1,2), 'patriarchy not only bars women and girls from public decision-making, but distorts their way of seeing themselves'. Feelings of worthlessness are considered by theorists today to be a manifestation of stress (*American Psychiatric Association* 1994: 162-163; Louw & Edwards 1993: 708). It must have been difficult for females in antiquity not to feel worthless when medical opinion maintained, as stated by Galen, in his *On the Usefulness of the Parts of the Body* 14. 6 - 7, written in Pergamum, during the 2nd century AD that:

The woman is less perfect than the man in respect to generative partsand, as it were, mutilated...

(Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 215)

Aristotle declares in *On the Generation of Animals* during the 4th century B C that

A woman is as it were an infertile male; the female, in fact, is female on account of inability of a sort

(Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 84)

Even Plato who argued for more responsibilities for women in the *Republic*, spoke of the ‘general inferiority of the female sex’ (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 67). Plato believed that women and children were on the same level, a claim assumed by the Stoics (Clark 1989: 8).

Feelings of worthlessness to the point of self-sacrifice and martyrdom, which developed into suicide was ‘a standard way for a woman to achieve renown among men ‘ in ancient Athens. This image often appears in literature, for example Euripides’ plays. Euripides portrayed self-denying females, who sacrificed themselves for the good of their husbands or other reasons. For example, Phaedra commits suicide because she merely thought of adultery (Pomeroy 1975: 109).

The ancient writer, Alcman, wrote down various choruses sung by Greek girls, in particular, a 7th century B C Spartan puberty ritual. A chorus of young girls describe ‘themselves and their ceremonial role’ in a song that suggests underlying feelings of worthlessness and despair:

... young girl that I am; I shriek in vain from my roof like an owl, and I will say what will please Dawn most, for she has been healer of our troubles; but it is through Hagesichora that girls have reached the peace they long for...

(Alcman in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 119)

3.3.8 Symptoms of depression

Athenian women were made to lead the secluded life typically sought after by depressed individuals. Perhaps they were forced into a depressive state of mind (Pomeroy 1975: 170). Moreover, in Euripides’ plays when marriage proved unfruitful, wives feel inevitably guilty (Pomeroy 1975: 109). A lengthy Latin inscription on a tomb of a Roman woman, Allia Potestas, who lived and died during the 3rd century AD, describes what seems to symptoms of a generally depressive state of mind. In the words of the engraving:

... in her anxiety she never stayed still, but she moved her smooth limbs...

(Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 137)

3.3.9 Stress symptoms due to pregnancy, childbirth and other gynecological conditions

The Hippocratic work, *Epidemics*, contains various case histories of pregnant women and girls as well as those soon after childbirth. These observations include descriptions of symptoms, which resemble manifestations of stress. Examples of these symptoms, which were generally observed in clusters are: insomnia, loss of memory, speech problems, headaches, hysteria (including paralysis and loss of speech), excessive sweating, feelings of nausea, constipation, aversion to food, despondency, melancholy, irritability, anger, asthma and frequent crying (Demand 1994: 168, 171-172, 180).

As some women mentioned were as young as seventeen, extreme mental stress, due to the pressure of early and frequent childbirth in antiquity, may have made these new mothers and mothers-to-be ill to the point of a lowered immune system. Thus, they may have fallen prey to various infections and fever-related diseases such as puerperal (post childbirth) fever and malaria, prevalent in the area where the Hippocratic doctors were practising (Demand 1994: xvii and xix).

The Greek playwright, Euripides describes stress due to motherhood, in particular. A female Corinthian chorus speaks of this in the 5th century play, *Media*:

Those people who have no children have no idea whether it brings brightness or gloom to a family. Have no idea of the troubles and grief of being a parent. But those with children always seem to me to be fraught with worry and hard work...and even if, after all your effort, your children grow to adulthood. Death can carry them away before their time. What profit is there then in bearing children?

(Euripides in Massey 1988: 15)

In the words of King (1983: 117), with respect to the 5th century BC Hippocratic gynaecological *Peri Parthniōn* texts:

Perhaps there were real girls, seen by the author who exhibited symptoms for which there was no organic cause; perhaps these were the result of mental stress or perhaps there were real girls suffering from hormonal or glandular disturbances which could cause the same symptoms.

(King 1983: 117)

The *Peri Parthniōn* texts describe female conditions such as menstruation problems and delayed menarche with symptoms of mental disturbance, including *thanein eratai* (desire for death) (King 1983: 115).

3.4 COPING MECHANISMS

Although coping strategies for feelings of stress may have not reached the levels of positive practicality evident in early female participants in the primary and secondary milieus, women and girls in ancient Greece and Rome may have learnt and taught ways of accepting the status quo thereby avoiding stress. On the other hand, some may have been mere defense mechanisms, such as denial, repression, rationalization and isolation. These would have exacerbated negative perceptions of sociobiopsychosocial female identity making it a burden instead of a joy (Northrup 1998: 12, 40; Louw & Edwards 1993: 580-583; 662-674).

The following paragraphs outline ways, both adaptive as well as maladaptive embraced by women and girls in antiquity to deal with negative stress. These included the following: addictive behaviours; sexual promiscuity; focusing on social perceptions that endowed females with high status; prominence in art and drama; education; a role in the education of males; social support; physical exercise in Sparta; emotional release in religious rituals; contraception.

3.4.1 Addictive behaviour as a maladaptive coping mechanism

According to Shaef in Northrup (1998: 6), 'an addiction serves to numb us so that we are out of touch with what we know what we feel'. She maintains that 'anything can be used addictively, whether it be a substance or a process. Northrup (1998: 6) claims that in a patriarchal society like that of antiquity, women and girls are expected to suppress their need for 'self-expression', which causes 'enormous emotional pain'. To cope with this distress, says Northrup, female individuals use addictive behaviour that leads to further distress. Even sexual promiscuity of ancient Greece and Rome may have been an example of this addictive behaviour on the part of female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus.

To alleviate their gloom, emptiness and loneliness, some women in antiquity had casual love affairs. Wealthier women and girls in ancient Greece and Rome may have felt the frustration of a restricted domestic existence that included loneliness as well as emotional and sexual neglect in joyless and loveless marriages. They may have had a sense of failure and lack of fulfillment and satisfaction with motherhood when they did not have much direct contact with children, who were looked after by slaves (Paul-Zinserling 1972: 24; Pomeroy 1975: 87-88). Euripides

in *Media* sees female obsession with sex as female compensation for marital neglect (Clark 1989: 4)

Maaskant-Kleibrink (1987: 275-286) discusses ancient women and girls who were what contemporary society terms *nymphomaniacs* and ‘did ... exist in reality and ...characterised by their never abating sensuality and lack of respect for men and their social rules’ (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1987: 276). These female individuals attempted to gain control of their lives by seeing themselves and being perceived by others as nature goddesses or *nymphs* belonging to nature and not to men. The Greek word *mania* referred to power ‘instilled in humans - often females - by the gods’ (Maaskant-Kleibrink: 1987: 277). Sexually provocative renditions of *nymphs* featured widely in ancient art and nymph sanctuaries were established where unmarried girls were often buried (Maaskant-Kleibrink 1987: 276-280).

Although illicit sexual relationships may have numbed emotions and feelings of stress, they would have had negative consequences such as a heightened negative self-esteem, severe punishment, including death and being sold into slavery as well as life-threatening attempts to abort unwanted pregnancies (O’Faolain & Martines 1973: 18-20; Paul-Zinserling 1972: 24; Gardner 1986: 57, 127; 131; Pomeroy 1975: 86).

3.4.2 Positive cognitive appraisal of female identity

Louw and Edwards (1993: 666) point out that ‘making the right cognitive appraisal’ either of a stressful situation’ or of one’s ability to cope with stress, is an effective stress management technique. In other words, by managing one’s negative perceptions of a situation, as well as adjusting one’s emotional response to a stressor, one can reduce stress (Louw & Edwards 1993: 663). Women and girls in antiquity like early females may have tried to focus on positive aspects of their position in society and the family, instead of dwelling on the negatives features. By being optimistic, they may have come through the ordeals of their life and survived stress.

In learning about earlier ancient Greek civilizations, women and girls in antiquity would have been exposed to a more positive perception of womankind than they were used to. Minoan remains including frescos, legend and iconography (various pictorial representations including vases and figurines). Homeric poems also reflect the Mycenae civilization (1600-1100) BC. Describing women who managed to be figures of influence in the early male-dominated Greek society, these art forms were shown to children who recited the Homeric poems at solemn festivals. This encouraged female self-esteem when faced with the misogyny typical of ancient Greece, which only first appeared at the time of Hesiod (800BC) (Massey 1988: 13).

The years after the Classical period in Greece and Rome saw women's status improve a little. This would have raised the self-esteem of the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus. Although they were still subordinate, women joined professions, paid taxes, had some legal capacity and could sign legal contracts (O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 2-8; 28-32).

Being taught that she would be regarded as a heroine for her role in the domestic sphere as a wife and a mother may have also helped girls in antiquity to acquire self-esteem. An upper class Greek and Roman housewife was respected for controlling the household, family budget and the slaves, and for being the mother of citizens (Massey 1988: 21; Graham 1999: 4, 5, 6).

A girl would have also grown up with the notion that, if she died whilst giving birth, she would be regarded as heroic as men who died in battle. In Sparta, only the names of males who had died in battle and women who had died during childbirth were inscribed on tombstones. In fact, scenes of distressed women in the throes of childbirth were fairly common on monuments and gravestones throughout ancient Greece (Demand 1994 121, 124–127; Massey 1988: 23, 35; Clark 1989: 4)

Towards the end of the Roman Empire, many Romans thought highly of their daughters and some upper class girls received a proper education. Moreover, documents have been discovered granting large sums of money for maintenance of children, specifically girls (Massey 1988: 10).

Although respected middle-class women and girls in ancient Greece were generally excluded from public and economic life, some worked as midwives, physicians, nurses or grocers judging from gravestones. Female slaves, who were granted freedom, became seed-sellers, grocers, acrobats, perfume sellers, woolworkers, wet nurses, and worked at farming-related occupations, such as bringing produce to city markets. These were respected professions (Graham 1999: 2; Massey 1988: 7).

Wealthy Roman women could visit friends, go shopping, attend festivals and recitals and supervise their children's education (Pomeroy 1975: 170). One may conclude, therefore, that living with stress may not have been as much of a problem in Rome as earlier in Greek antiquity, when life was very cloistered for women and girls. Females who experienced some public life would have felt some stress relief (Louw & Edwards 1993: 664).

Women and girls who unconsciously or consciously felt despondent with their reclusive lifestyle may have found some relief in the knowledge that it was also endowed with some standing in ancient society. Walker (1983: 81) suggests that since the keeping of women in dependence and seclusion might have been economically burdensome in antiquity, it began to be perceived as a status symbol and the privilege of wealthy Athenian families. This perception may have made the dismal reality of a life of isolation from the main stream of society less stressful for the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus (Walker 1983: 81).

3.4.3 Access to legal rights

Generally, Roman women and girls appear to have been less legally oppressed than ancient Greek females. By the beginning of the 1st century AD, laws were passed freeing Roman women from guardianship by their husbands or male guardian. This meant that they could make important decisions without consulting the head of the household. Yet, the extent of their rights and responsibilities depended on the number of children they had. The laws of the Emperor Augustus (27 BC -AD14) stated that freeborn woman with three children need not have a guardian. In other words, female legal status and control of their own destinies, were qualified by the degree of actualisation of their maternal role (Massey 1988: 21)

3.4.4 Coping through art and drama

Seeing themselves depicted in art and featuring in drama and esteemed writing, may have led women and girls to perceive themselves in a more positive light than their status in ancient society would have normally allowed. Up to the mid-fifth century, women and girls in ancient Rome led what was probably distressing lives of total exclusion from all public life, even art and drama. However, conditions of war, including widowhood forced women a little out of their sheltered lives. Art and drama began to show interest in the lives and actions of women. For example, only one surviving classical Athenian play has no female characters: the *Philoktetes* of Sophocles (495-406 BC).

The female role became a focus for literary debate for many centuries. For instance, Plato's arguments on the waste of female resources were pitted against Xenophon's and Aristotle's attempts to justify and humanise the accepted oppressive patterns concerning the nature and role of women and girls in antiquity.

Everyday lives of females in antiquity were extensively portrayed on pottery, tombstones and in the literature of the time. Women and girls involved in cleaning, spinning, weaving, marriage,

child bearing, cooking, supervising slaves, playing games, bathing and other feminine or domestic activities were all given respect via artistic representation (Clarke 1989: 4,5; Portland State University 1999a: 1).

3.4.5 Access to education for some women and girls

A few ancient Roman women and girls received some formal intellectual education. This may have provided some relief from the stress of being marginalised and limited to a life of childbearing seclusion. These educated females included Theano, the wife of Pythagoras, Perictione, a pupil of Pythagoras, Diotima and Aspasia, both of whom taught Socrates, and poets like Sappho. There was also a girls' school on the island of Lesbos with Sappho as its head, but this was an exceptional occurrence (Boulding 1976: 70-71; 261-262).

In ancient Rome, the notion of formal intellectual education for women was supported by Plutarch (50-125 A D). However, he supported the education of Roman wives, if only under the guidance of their husbands, who were to be 'guide, philosopher and teacher in all that is most beautiful and most divine'. He rather patronisingly believed that education would 'take away a woman's appetite for stupid and irrational pursuits' (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 241). Although Athenian freeborn girls from wealthier families received no formal education, they did occasionally learn to read, write and play an instrument from a female caregiver. However, their education mostly involved learning domestic skills in the primary educational milieu (Peach & Millard 1990: 23,51; Tucker 1906:102-103; Allen 1974:13).

3.4.6 Participation in the education of sons

Ancient Rome clearly thought that mothers were a powerful force in the education of their children. Tacitus, the Roman historian (55 - 120 AD) wrote in *Dialogue on Oratory* during the 1st century AD that:

Every Roman's son, born to a chaste mother, was brought up, not by some wet-nurse hired for the job, but at his mother's breast and on her lap

(Tacitus in Massey 1988: 23)

3.4.7 Female social support

Contemporary studies reveal that social support minimises negative stress (Louw & Edwards 1993: 668-669). In the words of Louw and Edwards (1993: 668):

People with a good social support system believe that they are (a) cared for and loved, (b) esteemed and valued and (c) belong to a network of communication where others can be counted on to help.

In antiquity, women and girls supported each other and shared their common experience of powerlessness and misogyny. Whether they were involved in spinning and weaving or in delivering babies, they would have learnt to manage stress collectively (Graham 1999: 2; Walker 1983: 82). Yet, according to Louw and Edwards (1993: 670), research has demonstrated that ‘relying on social support and other external resources is not likely to be a successful way to manage stress in the long-term’. Individuals should eventually cope with the pressures that confront them by themselves. Women and girls in antiquity may not have had these personal resources.

Even though family weddings, funerals and festivals were the only occasions when Athenian women and girls had ‘a good reason to be ‘seen outside the house’, they visited and played with female relatives and personal friends within the primary educational milieu of the home (Clark 1989: 18). The writings of Aristotle, Plato and Athenian tragedy and paintings on vases give evidence for these emotionally supportive female social networks, among upper-class females. They were probably evident amongst upper-class women who lived in the country, the poor where there was more freedom of movement and in Roman society in respectable (as opposed to prostitute or courtesan) female circles (Clark 1989: 18 - 19).

3.4.8 Religion, mythology and rituals

Feelings of frustration and marginalization on the part of the female participants of the primary and secondary educational milieus may have found stress relief in ancient religion, mythology and rituals (Clark 1989: 2)

Puberty rituals for girls provided opportunities for the management of stress in relation to this time of transition for all concerned. Ceremonies like the Attic Arkteia, or Bear Festival of Artemis may have been an official and formal coming-of-age ceremony for ancient Greek girls. By pretending to be bears, noted in antiquity for their mothering skills as a tribute to the goddess, Artemis, girls became women during a ceremony as a prerequisite for marriage (Demand 1994: 107). Like similar rituals, elsewhere in classical Greece, this ‘communal and public’ rite, took place in Attica, at the goddess Artemis’ shrine at Brauron and at other Attic sites. The prestigious ceremony probably helped girls, aged somewhere between 8 to 14 years,

at different stages of physical and emotional development, to prepare officially for adulthood, marriage and motherhood (Demand 1994: 103, 108, 112 - 113). Depicted on vases, described in manuscripts and the writings of Aristophanes, in particular, the initiation ceremony of the Bear Festival of Artemis, allowed girls a public role, and marked the ‘vital transitional period between the end of childhood and the arrival of menarche’ (Demand 1994: 111).

The Bear Festival may, however, have brought additional stress upon a girl. For, if a girl ‘reached her service as a bear’ in the festival, without the menarche or other signs of physical maturity having yet appeared, then she would have been probably diagnosed as having ‘the illness of maidens’ and put under extreme pressure to marry and bear children, as the recommended cure. This may have, indeed, been the reality for many girls, since the onset of menstruation may well have been delayed because of poor nutrition (Demand 1994: 114)

Like the puberty rituals of classical Athens, those of Sparta may have been a cultural mechanism for coping with stress experienced by the female participants in the secondary educational milieu. The song of a chorus of 7th century BC Spartan girls, recorded by ancient writer, Alcman, describe their stressed state of mind and the relief and return to balance that was provided by a ceremony, marking the transition from girlhood to womanhood. Each girl expresses her suffering and her coping, due to the support of their group leader, Hagesichora, with the following words:

I shriek in vain from my roof like an owl, and I will say what will please Dawn most, for she has been healer of our troubles; but it is through Hagesichora that girls have reached the peace they long for...

(Alcman in Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 119)

The festival, *Thesmophoria* helped married women to cope with the socially correct goal of eventual early marriage for their daughters. The Thesmophoria festival was a ‘cultural force that spoke to the condition of the mother who resisted the marriage of her young daughter’. Moreover, it was the main Greek festival for married women and ‘was celebrated throughout the Greek world’ (Demand 1994: 114).

The Thesmophoria festival allowed married Greek women ‘to vent their frustration with their situation’ of being oppressed, and offered them a ‘temporary release ... from the dissatisfactions and constraints of their daily lives’ (Demand 1994:118). They departed from their usual constraining daily routine, their homes, their children and their men for three days. They participated in a temporary public life and female *polis* or public life where they behaved like

men and expelled feelings of resistance to the male-controlled status quo, which was thereby also, ironically, 'reasserted'. They were, however, possibly merely channeling their frustrations and not effecting any permanent changes in negative perceptions of the female role in society by, endorsing the superiority of male life-styles (Demand 1994: 118 - 119; Louw & Edwards 1993: 668).

According to Lefkowitz and Fant (1982: 113), women and girls were allowed to confront and release their frustration at being generally oppressed, in religious processions, sacrifices, rituals, secret cults, trances and magic. In this way they possessed 'the power they otherwise lack'. In the case of the ancient Greeks, rituals were performed, in particular, in honour of Artemis, considered to be the 'killer of women', and girls at puberty and pregnant women, who may have felt particularly vulnerable to suffering and stress (Lefkowitz & Fant 1982: 118-119).

Although Roman men dominated Roman religion as all other aspects of Roman public life, a young girl and her family could receive the great religious honour of a daughter being chosen for the high office of Vestal Virgin. Roman society considered vestal virgins beyond the control of a man. All other women were to be ruled by a father, a male guardian or a husband (Massey 1988: 27). Similarly, in ancient Greece, women were appointed as priestesses and many enjoyed great honours. (Massey 1988: 10). The following inscription from Delphi, from the 2nd century BC, describes one such priestess:

... the people of Delphi voted to honour Chrysis, daughter of Nicetes, and to give her the god's crown. They also voted to give her the right to consult the oracle of Apollo, safe conduct, freedom from taxation and a front seat at all public contests, the right to own land and a house...

(Massey 1988: 10)

Although still confined to the cult buildings or cult procedure, just as they were confined to domestic quarters in the home, religion and cults attracted women as worshippers in antiquity, since they offered a means of meeting together and feeling of importance. Male controlled society gave women a prominent public role in rituals such as those of birth, puberty, weddings, state religious festivals and death. Some religious events were reserved for females only. Mystery cults involved secret rituals and prayers which only female 'initiates' knew. Women were also given the task of guarding sacred objects like the *arrheta*, 'unspeakable things', in the Panathenaic festival at Athens (Massey 1988: 11; Louw & Edwards 1993: 666-667; Padel 1983: 5-7).

The Greek goddesses, Athena and Demeter, were regarded more highly by the men and boys of Athens than any real woman (Graham 1999:3, 5). On the one hand, the great significance of female goddesses would have been pleasing to women and girls. However, the fact that only idealized femininity was venerated may have been stressful.

Many Roman females turned to religions of other parts of the Empire for spiritual comfort and guidance as these allowed women to find a sense of power. For example the Egyptian goddess, Isis, attracted many followers. A prayer to Isis, written on papyrus from Oxyrhynchus, in the Roman Empire, during the 2nd Century A D states, in reference to Isis:

You give women equal power with men

(Massey 1988: 28)

The cult of Isis allowed women to be priestesses and bestowed a high status on them. Roman men resented this, as well as the fact that the early Christian church allowed women to assume important positions as deaconesses, for example (Massey 1988: 29)

The early Christian propagation of an ascetic and virgin life style may have given ancient Roman women a sense of control over their lives. By deciding not to marry, but to dedicate their lives to God, as brides of Christ, young girls of marriageable age, as well as widows could escape the horrors of endless pregnancies so much a feature of their time. Encouraged, in particular, by the church father, St. Jerome (347-420 AD), women and girls challenged the 'traditional Roman social structure', and 'damaged its very texture' (Drijvers 1987: 253). During the second half of the fourth century, the Church advocated the virgin life on a large scale and succeeded in drawing in candidates who could escape 'the burdens of marriage and women's responsibilities'. John Chrysotom, another early church father (344 -407 A D), wrote in *On Virginity* about 'escape from grief and sorrow' of family life (Drijvers 1987: 254). He states:

... woman has not just one death to fear ... she trembles on behalf of her husband, she trembles on behalf of her children, she trembles for their families...and by as much as the root extends itself into many shoots, by that much more are her anxieties more ... Virginity in contrast is not followed by death, but is always useful, always beautiful and blessed ...

(Chrysotom in Drijvers 1987: 224-255).

The women and girls who sought a religious or ascetic virgin life sacrificed all family relationships, even motherhood, as well as wealth, in the case of propertied women. The latter was often taken away from their Roman families and put to religious use (Drijver 1987: 261). Although by making this choice, ‘women found a way out of unhappy marriages, early pregnancies or being shut out of the larger world of experience and education’; they encountered other stressors. They had to lead a life of physical hardship, mental torture, lost sexuality and conscious suppression of sexual identity. Moreover, they had to remain subordinate to men, since they were not allowed to teach, preach or perform important religious duties in early Christian society, for example (Drijver 1987: 265-267).

3.4.9 Stress coping mechanisms in Spartan women and girls

There were mechanisms built into Spartan society to help females cope with a stressful life. For instance, girls were not restricted to the all-female domestic and religious milieu as were their classical Greek and Roman counterparts. Although Athenians regarded Spartan women as dull, unintelligent people whose way of life was slow, old-fashioned and unsophisticated, Spartan girls did, however, receive a similar primary and secondary education as boys. Evidence is sufficient that an attempt was made to minimize differences between the two sexes, especially in formal education and training (Portland State University 1999a: 1; Portland State University 1999f: 1).

Spartan girls learnt to develop, physical resistance and moral strength, as well as basic literacy. Although, only males of Spartan birth were regarded as future citizens, females were held in higher esteem than in Athens, and were spared domestic chores, receiving gymnastic training instead (Demand 1994: 9). Spartans respected women and girls to the extent of avoiding early childbearing, out of concern for the health and survival of both mothers and children (Demand 1994: 102).

Unlike Athenian girls and women, Spartans were encouraged to perform physical exercise and led a healthy and quiet life-style. Muscular in appearance, and forbidden to wear any cosmetic adornment, they were allowed to be proud of their destiny as wives and mothers of soldiers (Portland State University 1999a: 1). Freeborn Spartans of both sexes took part in intensive physical training: the boys, so that they would become efficient soldiers; the girls, so that they would be healthy mothers who produced strong and healthy children. During early pregnancy, Spartan women were encouraged to continue training and to eat and drink as they wished. Other Greek women were expected to have a quiet pregnancy with no exercise or excessive

eating. Generally, Spartans were probably more able to cope with the physical and psychological stressors of childbirth and life as a whole (Louw & Edwards 1993: 672).

Instead of weaving and spinning wool, or doing other domestic tasks within the confines of the primary educational milieus, typical of Athenian and Roman female duties, Spartan female physical and mental energies were directed to one single and esteemed goal, the good of the state. They were, thus, strong and full of self worth in the face of extreme stressors, even that of the death of a son, which would have been in the light of Spartan glory. During the 2nd century, Plutarch (50-125 AD) wrote the following in *Moralia*:

A Spartan woman was burying her son. An old woman approached her and said: 'You poor woman; such bad luck for you.' She replied 'Good heavens, no. Such good luck! I gave birth to him so that he would die for Sparta and that is just what has happened

(Massey 1988: 13)

3.4.10 Contraception

Contraception, if not always effective, was used in ancient Rome and Greece to prevent unwanted legitimate or illegitimate pregnancies. Although often physically injurious, contraception was a preferable means of lightening the onus of childbearing. Compared with abortion and infanticide, the mother avoided the burden and dangers of pregnancy and childbirth and the stress of murder. There was a long tradition of medical and scientific writing on contraception, as well as abortion. Techniques were numerous and some more effective than others. The use of various herbal medications, potions, amulets and the rhythm method was largely ineffective. However, the use of objects, which blocked the opening of the uterus, was more effective if harmful. The burden of preventing pregnancy was left to women, but relieved the stress due to fear of unwanted pregnancy and premature death (Pomeroy 1975: 167; 169; O'Faolain & Martines 1973: 18-20; Roberts 1993: 42).

3.5 SUMMARY

As was the case of females in early society, female participants in the primary and secondary educational milieus of ancient Greece and Rome manifested various symptoms of stress. Religious practices and mythology of the era revealed an awareness of symptoms of stress in females that were given various divine interpretations. Likewise, ancient Greek and Roman literature portrayed female stress which medical thinking of the epoch attempted to analyse and treat. The researcher explained these different perspectives of stress responses of the time in

paragraphs 3.3.1-3.3.3. A few examples of stress manifestations were described in this chapter, including the cognitive manifestations of suicidal ideation and low self-esteem, emotional manifestations such as mood swings, excessive emotional reactions and symptoms of depression and physical manifestations of stress due to female reproductive functions (Cf. paragraphs 3.3.3-3.3.9).

As was the case with women and girls of prehistoric society, women and girls in ancient Greece and Rome may have known of ways to manage their stress. These strategies involved to a certain extent their taking advantage of circumstances that allowed a positive perception of the female role played in certain situations including the domestic sphere, upper class daily life, the world of work, law, art, drama, rituals, the educational milieu of boys and Spartan society (Cf. paragraphs 3.4.2, 3.4.3, 3.4.4, 3.4.6, 3.4.8, 3.4.9). Females managed stress by means of female support groups and access to education in the case of some women and girls (3.4.5, 3.4.7). Yet, coping mechanisms included some maladaptive strategies that may have made female stress worse such as addictive behaviour and harmful contraceptive practices (Cf. paragraphs 3.4.1 and 3.4.10).

Perhaps, maladaptive coping techniques were a desperate reaction to the particularly severe suppression and rejection experienced by women and girls in the ancient world. This negative attitude to females underpinned many stressors that faced them. Particular pressure was placed on females during times of disaster, yet they had no public status or political rights (Cf. paragraphs 3.2.1.1 –3.2.1.3). In fact, females were controlled and isolated by men in society and the family, their contribution was belittled and they had no say even with regard to choice of marital partner (Cf. paragraphs 3.2.1.4 - 3.2.1.6, 3.2.2.2, 3.2.2.4). Moreover, they were oppressed, placed under duress and treated harshly in religious life, the educational milieu, the marriage relationship or when punished for misdemeanors (Cf. paragraphs 3.2.1.7, 3.2.1.8, 3.2.2.1, 3.2.2.4, 3.2.2.5). They were also cruelly treated as mothers. On the one hand, they were under pressure to produce male heirs and educate their small children; on the other, they were expected to cope with infanticide, child abuse, infant illness and mortality especially in case of female children (3.2.2.6, 3.2.2.7, 3.2.2.8, 3.2.3.9). Thus, although females did try to cope in the face of stressors that faced them because of the status of females in society, they were often overwhelmed by stress. Even their physical identity was often a debilitating cause of stress, more than it was in prehistoric times when women and girls were possibly physically healthier and stronger (Cf. paragraph 3.2.3.6, 3.2.3.9). Moreover, medical interventions were probably more harmful than helpful (Cf. paragraph 3.2.3.7). Female reproductive physical identity was a particular cause of stress at micro-level (Cf. paragraphs 3.2.3.4, 3.2.3.5, 3.2.3.8). Finally, females were emotionally weak in ancient times. They denied their feelings, did not

perceive themselves in a positive and realistic light, remained helpless and lacking in individual identity formation (Cf. 3.2.3.1, 3.2.3.2, 3.2.3.3, 3.2.3.10).

Whether adaptive or maladaptive, some mechanisms may have helped females in the ancient world cope with stress. Some of these strategies may have even continued into the eras that followed the ancient world. For example, the reverence of female virginity and denial of female sexuality that appeared in ancient times were prevalent during the Middle Ages. The following chapter will examine the problem of female stress in the educational milieu of the Middle Ages to further explore what may be a universal phenomenon.