BALANCING THE ROLE OF STUDENT AND MOTHERHOOD: THE EXPERIENCE OF STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

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Declaration

I hereby declare that 'Balancing the role of student and motherhood: the experience of students at the university of KwaZulu-Natal' work is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Master of Social Science, in the College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Discipline of Psychology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg Campus, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination at any other University.

Cebisile Kubeka
Student Name

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Signature

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Date

Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to all the students who are parents and pursuing higher education. I wish all the students who participated in the research all the best for their studies.

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I would like to thank God for everything. Kea leboga Modimo!

I want to thank my family for the continued support for my studies. My supervisor for all her support and dedication to this work and my research partner (Wendy Corfe) for all the ideas we shared together. I learnt a lot from the both of you.

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Abstract

The conceptualisation of a mother's role is often accompanied by various ideas about how and what should be done. Therefore, paying attention to the subjective experiences of this role in various contexts is of great importance. This understanding will add to the exploration of other roles played by women in society, such as being a student. It is evident in research that pursuing tertiary education and being a mother places great pressure on many women in South African universities. This study explored the experience of student mothers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (on the Pietermaritzburg Campus) to understand their roles and how they balance being both a student and being a mother. This study provides a detailed account of the experience of student mothers, including the ways in which student mothers manage their dual roles, utilise available services and ultimately try to balance their dual roles.

This study employed an interpretivist approach, which argues that people's perspectives can be understood through their subjective experiences. Interpretivists assert that there is no specific route to knowledge and that there is no one reality. A qualitative approach was used with a purposive and convenience sampling strategy. One focus group discussion and eight individual interviews with student mothers were conducted and thematic analysis was used to analyse the data.

The key themes from the study revealed that student mothers' experience of motherhood is characterised by time constraints and the inability to find a balance between the two roles. Further, it was found that students' plans changed after they became mothers. Other students also reported challenges that were related to managing time between the two roles. Concerning coping strategies, student mothers discussed the support that they anticipated from their institutions of higher learning as well as the actual support they received. Other themes highlighted the impact of motherhood on academic work. Lastly, student mothers expressed some guilt about their situation and this raised the need for reparation with their family members.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Women's paths to higher education are more likely than those of men to be interrupted by family formation (Funiba, 2011). Many female students give birth either in high school or during their university studies. Student pregnancy has raised concerns about youth sexual practices and the effectiveness of educational sex education programmes in South African schools (Shefer, Bhana & Morrell, 2013). While issues centred on youth sexual practices are vital, it is also crucial to explore the context in which students fall pregnant and their experiences thereof. All said there are numerous reasons why the current study is important for highlighting the issues that student mothers face while pursuing higher education. This research is about the experience of student mothers at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). It explored the challenges that student mothers face while juggling motherhood and tertiary education, and focused on the ways in which student mothers cope with the demands of being a student and of being a mother. In addition, it explored the possible support systems that student mothers use in order to manage their roles of motherhood and student. This research acknowledges previous studies that were conducted on this topic and further aims to add to existing knowledge about the experiences faced by female students who fall pregnant while pursuing tertiary education.

In African countries, research on the subject is growing, reflecting the difficult yet manageable lives of student mothers (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo, Langa & Kiguwa, 2009; Sekgobela, 2008; Shefer, Bhana & Morrell, 2013; Taukeni, 2014). Numerous overseas studies conducted with students who are parents have highlighted the difficulties that student mothers face while pursuing tertiary education (Brown & Amankwaa, 2007; Estes, 2011; Hoffnung, 2004; Howitt & Cramer, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Pinilla & Munoz, 2005; Ricco, Sabet & Clough, 2009; Richardson, 1993; Springer, Parker & Leviten-Reid, 2009; Trepal, Stinchfield & Haiyasoso, 2014; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). As such, research in the South African context needs to explore the experience of students in tertiary institutions while pursuing their studies. While literature on the experience of student mothers has increased, in South Africa this has not always been the case. It is worth noting that research has also highlighted a significant public health issue that is related to youth sexual behaviour. Shoveller and Johnson (2006) state that youth sexual behaviour is a major public health issue. They assert that youth sexual behaviour requires attention especially in a context of HIV/AIDS infections among the youth. In South Africa, much research has been done on youth sexual behaviour at basic and tertiary education levels aiming to explore the dynamics that put youth at risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and

HIV/AIDS. In addition to the current research on youth sexual behaviour, the current study hopes to explore youth who are at tertiary level and have fallen pregnant while completing tertiary education.

The lived experiences of student mothers at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg Campus) were explored using qualitative methods with the aim of accessing individual accounts of motherhood experiences. Eight unstructured individual interviews and a focus group discussion were conducted with female, African single mothers from UKZN. The interpretivist paradigm as well as attachment theory were used to understand the various socially accepted and practiced ideals about being a student and mother respectively.The thesis argues that it is the universities' role to ensure that students achieve their goals and are provided with good support systems while they do so. The results therefore, reflect the kinds of challenges that student mothers encounter during their academic endeavors.

1.1 Overview of the chapters

In Chapter one (the Introduction) the topic of the dissertation and the importance of the study is introduced. In Chapter two (the Literature review) literature relevant to the current study is discussed. In Chapter three (Research aims and rationale) the aims and rationale for the study and the research questions of the study are presented. In Chapter four (Methodology) a detailed description of the study design, sample, methods and approaches to analysis are presented. In Chapter five (Results) the results of the study are presented   Chapter six, (Discussion) discusses the results of the study in relation to the literature reviewed. Chapter seven (Conclusion) concludes the study and discusses the study strengths, limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Chapter 2 Literature review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on presenting the relevant literature, which is appropriate for the issues under investigation. This study firstly discusses the experience of motherhood by student mothers from research. The discussion will begin with research conducted abroad, and secondly focuses on research done in the South African context. It then discusses the significant studies applicable to students who become mothers while pursuing tertiary education. The challenges faced by student mothers at university are then explored. Theories of motherhood, mother–and-child relations and adequate mothering will also be explored. Further, a discussion about balancing the dual roles of mother and student is presented and lastly the support systems used and needed by student mothers are discussed. Throughout the review of literature this research gives an understanding of motherhood from the subjective experience of students using the interpretivist paradigm. This paradigm helps in understanding the negotiation of mother and student roles by female students in the context in which they experience these roles.

Motherhood is a well-documented human experience. This role does however, have many challenges that often arise because of the nature of the demands that being a mother has on an individual. Studies by Funiba (2011), Taukeni (2014) and Mamabolo, Kiguwa and Langa (2009) have reported on students and student mothers' perspectives on the experience of motherhood and tertiary education in the African context. The various demands of motherhood have been highlighted in their research, and some researchers, like Mamabolo et al, (2009) argue that mothers often play a mothering role in accordance with their societies' ideals. The experience of motherhood seems to highlight that mothers need to be able to provide consistent nurturing and care for their children, despite having other roles as women. Some of these perspectives draw on psychological theories, such as "attachment" which was introduced by Ainsworth (1969), Bowlby (1988) and Winnicott (1971).

While communities may conceptualise attachment differently, research shows that common ideals exist and that community's value, reproduce, and maintain these ideals. One of the ideals is the nature of the woman's role as the primary caregiver of the child (Mamabolo et al., 2009; Mayer, 2009). Another ideal is the importance of the mother's involvement in the child's healthy development (Mayer, 2009). This creates the assumption that only a woman who has given birth to a child can take care of the child. In some cultures, it is evident that mothers have historically played the role of caregiver and their role remains central in the home (Mamabolo, et al, 2009). Women's roles as mothers are of crucial

importance to humankind and have been widely written about in popular media. Most women embrace their role and attend to it, as their social surroundings and background deem appropriate. It is therefore of great importance to pay attention to the conceptualisation of motherhood and the many attached values of this role in various contexts and how it influences women's lives. This understanding will add to the exploration of other roles played by women in society, such as being a student. Previous research has indicated that motherhood is related to 'good' and 'bad' mothering ideals (Bosch, 2013; Estes, 2011; Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo et al., 2009). Some student mothers seem to conform to this notion, presenting both good and bad mothering ideals. Other studies, however, have shown that motherhood ideals depend on the context in which they occur (Hoffnung, 2004; Mamabolo et al., 2009; Taukeni, 2014).

Nelson, Froehner and Gault (2013) assert that student mothers are common and worldwide their experience has been explored. In their study, Nelson et al. (2013) confirm that most students with children have to meet an economic need through attaining education. Nelson et al. (2013) further state that student mothers place their children and families at better odds for financial security, while also having greater involvement in their child's education. However, the research on single student mothers in universities show that the experience of mothering while at university is often a difficult role (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Estes, 2011; Sekgobela, 2008). This is primarily because the roles of being a mother and of being a student are often seen as incompatible (Estes, 2011). Previous studies have described student mothers as a disadvantaged group of students, who rarely acquire their qualifications on time (Brown & Amankwa, 2007). Student mothers are presented as likely to drop out of university, and fail to balance their roles of student and mother (Mamabolo et al., 2013; Taukeni, 2014; Wolf-Wendel & Ward, 2006). The experience of student mothers has been presented as unfulfilling, as it is difficult to give time and attention to these competing roles. Most research has commented on the role of social, religious and cultural ideas of motherhood and other roles for women (Buteau, 2007; Mayer, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). Furthermore, it is worth noting that the South African context presents specific ideals of motherhood, and these are reported to play a vital role in the lives of many young women (Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo et al., 2009).

Research by Funiba (2011), Story (2011) and Taukeni (2014) has discussed the challenges that student mother's face and the benefits of being supported by family and friends to manage the student and mother roles. Other research (Brown & Amankwaa, 2007; Funiba, 2011) has also looked at how student mothers balance their roles, as well as exploring the support systems student mothers employ (Taukeni, 2014). The transition to motherhood has also been widely reported on, highlighting that when there is a

life-changing event coupled with a first-time experience of being a mother, the effects of that experience could become significant in one's development (Buteau, 2007; Mayer, 2009; Sekgobela, 2008). Students who are first-time mothers while at university have a specific experience of motherhood (Nelson et al, 2013; Story, 2011). This is to say, it may be a different experience when it is compared with that of working mothers or stay-at-home mothers.

2.2 The experience of motherhood by student mothers

Students with children are common in tertiary institutions across the world (Barnes, 2013; Nelson et al, 2013). Student mothers' experiences of tertiary education are different from those of traditional students and are worth exploring in order to understand the nature of their dual roles. Previous research has described the many challenges they face, including balancing the role of student and mother (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011, Mamabolo et al., 2009). Most research has described their two roles as incompatible and unfulfilling, as the roles are both demanding (Mamabolo et al., 2009). This puts pressure on individuals to try to meet the standards of good mothering or ideal mothering as per dominant ideologies. However, less research has described the experience of student mothers in South African universities, particularly focusing on how they balance their dual roles (Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo, 2009). It is worth noting that female students will reproduce at various stages in their development and the spaces or roles that they occupy at that stage often determine their experience of motherhood. Therefore, the experience of student mothers is unique and needs exploration to understand their worldviews and their life experiences. It is evident in literature by Barnes (2013) that pregnancy among university students has been a controversial issue in most universities and given the history of South African tertiary institutions, students with children have had many challenges with the two roles.

Barnes (2013) reports that the University of the Western Cape (UWC) had a policy that pregnant students were not allowed living in residence. Policies, which reject the idea of students being pregnant in the university, are unlikely to consider university services for students who have children while they study (Barnes, 2013). Although this means that student mothers cannot access university services, there are also cases of students mothers being successful students, as well as being resilient and motivated (Barnes, 2013; Ricco, Sabet & Clough, 2009). Barnes (2013) argues that the ideal student is conceptualised as rational, male and childless, and only concerned about educational attainment. This conceptualisation neglects women's biological capabilities and the possibility of women falling pregnant while pursuing education. Under these ideals, women find themselves in difficult situations

within institutions that value the ideal student and when they might have negative experience of motherhood and of being a student (Barnes, 2013). Students who have children while pursuing higher education are seen as belonging to the non-traditional student population because they are different from the ideal students. Further, the notion of not having 'pregnant bodies' in intellectual spaces recreates the idea that women belong in the home and that is where children are taken care (Mamabolo et al, 2009). When there is a change in one's life course several life plans are often affected (Mamabolo et al, 2009). Students who fall pregnant while pursuing tertiary education experience specific life changes that come with challenges. Juggling motherhood and tertiary education involves many changes in one's development and means that experience of these two phases in life becomes different.

2.3 Motherhood and tertiary education

The enrolment of female students at tertiary institutions has increased across African universities (Funiba, 2011; Taukeni, 2014). Students who have children include those who gave birth while in high school and those who had children while at university (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Nelson et al, 2013). Although previous research conducted with student mothers has not reported statistical evidence of the number of students who have children while pursuing their studies, there are indications of their presence.

Women who pursue tertiary qualifications while parenting have a different experience of university compared to women who do not have children (Mamabolo et al, 2009; Nelson et al, 2013). Although there are many perceptions of motherhood, studies also discussed student mothers in relation to the impact that the romanticised mother imposes on their experiences (Mayer, 2009). Being a mother presents one with constant worry about the wellbeing of one's family, particularly one's children. The process of motherhood can be very difficult for a woman, and it affects her physical and psychological well-being (Buteau, 2007). Despite the difficulties of motherhood, many women understand their role as women in accordance with what society believes to be acceptable and ideal (Barnes, 2013; Mamabolo et al, 2009).

Buteau (2007) assert that mothers often carry the 'burdens' of motherhood in fear of being seen by society as 'bad mothers'. The notion of the ideal mother imposes great pressure and judgement on mothers, largely because the expectations are hard to fulfil (Mamabolo et al., 2009). Widely accepted notions of what ideal motherhood is continue to put strain on many women, who are not only taking

care of their children, but are also actively involved in work and academic activities (Ajandi, 2011). Each society has its own ideal and accepted notion of what and how motherhood should be.

In some social and cultural contexts, motherhood may be perceived as a practice centred on the home, with full attention and care given to the child (Mamabolo et al., 2009). This is largely influenced by the gendered expectations of women in most African contexts: for instance, student mothers reported that their experience of motherhood was negative because they lived in fear of criticism and stigma from other people (Taukeni, 2014). Further, in Taukeni's (2014) study, participants reported that it was hard for them to perform everyday duties freely in their social and educational spaces because of this stigma (Taukeni, 2014). Women felt judged by people who did not acknowledge motherhood carried out in conjunction with studying and not as the only, or primary, role. In Taukeni's (2014) study, some participants reported a different experience to this: one student reported that she chose to be a student exclusively when in university and would leave the role of being the mother to the child's nanny, at home.

From the above examples, it is clear that mothers are affected by the dominant ideals of what constitutes motherhood as defined by society, institutions and popular media (Barnes, 2013, 2007; Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). Story (1999) suggests that the beliefs held by different sectors of society determine the kinds of behaviours that people from that context should associate themselves.

Several studies have further reported that gender norms influence ideals of motherhood (Barnes, 2013; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Motherhood is also socially entwined with notions of femininity and enforces women's gender identity (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Many women strive to meet the socially valued ideal of motherhood, while they fulfil other social roles (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Mamabolo et al. (2009) and Taukeni (2014) explain the ideals of motherhood, as considering the needs of the child and the family before the needs of the mother. Women are expected to stay at home and care for the children, while men secure employment and provide for the material needs of the family.

Barnes (2013) explains the notions of gender identity in detail, commenting that female bodies have no space in intellectual spaces, especially in institutions heavily influenced by Western masculine ideals. Barnes (2013) comments that Western masculine ideals favour male bodies based on the idea that a scholar is solitary, dispassionate and disconnected from the needs of his body. Therefore, because female bodies are responsible for reproduction, it is considered less vital for women to participate in

academic spaces, because their role as mothers 'tampers' with their intellectual functioning. Additionally, Monk (2013) has accused medical and psychological studies of framing mothers and their children as mutually exclusive, as if the child's needs are not met without the mother's full presence.

Brown and Amankwaa (2007) comment that mothers go through a process of creating their own identities while at the same time trying to live up to the expectations of the dominant ideals, thus leaving them conflicted. The social and cultural contexts in which mothers raise their children tend to guide their parenting styles and the ways in which they relate to their children (Mayer, 2009). In some studies, mothers have asserted that they value being able to contribute economically to their households while at the same time being a mother to their children (Mayer, 2009). The way in which mothers balance these roles reflects the kinds of experiences they go through in order to maintain a good relationship with their family and their academic careers. Early theories by Ainsworth (1969) and Bowlby (1988) have stated that motherhood is natural and desirable for women; having children is proper and beneficial for women's status in society (Mamabolo et al., 2009). Motherhood is a role and an ideological practice and contributes to a person's spiritual and personal growth (Mamabolo et al., 2009). The view of motherhood as positive and as fulfilling for women is seen in the way that society has normalised motherhood as emotionally rewarding. In each society, various traditional and social expectations of motherhood are valued and passed on from generations. However, there are criticisms of the idea of 'good' mothering (Estes, 2011; Mayer, 2009). Motherhood comes with many challenges, but a woman's role as a mother is portrayed as one that nurtures and enables children to grow up healthy and strong. This notion is largely attributed to the many theories about mothering and the upbringing of healthy children because of good attachment and good enough mothering (St. Clair, 1996). Although such theories and ideals exist, the intensity of the experience of motherhood still brings many challenges for mothers.

2.4 Challenges faced by student mothers in university

Student mothers can experience a positive or a negative change to their lives (Youngleson, 2006). They have to perform dual roles, because the commitment that is required in motherhood is also required in their studies (Mayer, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). Many of the challenges experienced by student mothers arise from the fact that the traditional stereotype of a student is one who is single, childless and focused on the role of being a member of the academic community (Barnes, 2013; Mayer, 2009). This representation of the ideal student may not include the population of students who are balancing the roles of student and mother. In this sense, universities only cater for the traditional stereotype of a

student and its policies, practices and services serve the ideal student (Mayer, 2009; Shefer et al., 2013). In reflecting on one South African university, Barnes (2013) argues that the university services were initially established in order to cater for students who are male, single and white especially in the South African context. Furthermore, Barnes (2013) comments that students who fall pregnant often do not have recognition by universities; this means that their challenges and needs are not seen. For example, Funiba (2011) comments that in Namibia, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture stipulates that women who fall pregnant while at university should take 12 months off university and take care of their child, indicating that pregnant bodies do not belong in spaces of learning. At the University of Namibia, students are expected to provide proof of expected delivery date and to request absence from classes before they can go home and deliver, which suggests recognition of student mothers by the university, but not the provision of institutional support (Funiba, 2011). While the recognition that female students are likely to fall pregnant while at university is a step towards a favourable shift in policy, it is still a concern that students do not get the recognition they deserve from institutions of higher learning.

This means that student mothers still have trouble accessing relevant services that will cater for their needs, such as psychological and health services (Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009). The services that are available on the campuses were created to meet the needs of 'ideal students', which include a campus clinic and a student counselling centre (Barnes, 2013). The educational institution's norms and expectations of students influence the kinds of policies that guide the availability of services to meet the needs of the university community (Shefer et al., 2013). A similar argument proposed by Barnes (2013) is that the culture of the university determines the kinds of behaviours women and men should display, for instance, students should be rational and disconnected from the needs of their bodies.

Many students face challenges on the way to a degree, but single mothers face an especially overwhelming journey (Barnes, 2013; Mayer, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). They must manage classes, coursework and childcare, and some even run a household and work, and all of this is not easy (Ajandi, 2011). As a result, many single mothers depend on a variety of support systems and services (Buteau, 2007). Academic work at university adds to their already demanding lives and the experience of being a first-time mother can be overwhelming (Mayer, 2009). Single mothers often live a life of multitasking demands across family care, schoolwork, employment and social activities, making it difficult to manage even small-unexpected changes (Ajandi, 2011). This raises the need to explore the context in which female students fall pregnant and the decisions that follow in terms of either retaining or terminating the pregnancy (Nelson et al, 2013; Shoveller & Johnson, 2006). The notion of student mother's challenges at university is well presented by Barnes (2013), with concerns about the way in

which university students can help researchers to understand the dynamics that place them in the positions of being student mothers. Further to this are the emotional requirements that theories place particular importance, such as attachment. There is the focus on the child's psychological well-being as dependant on the mother's own functioning presented in literature by Ainsworth (1969), Bowlby (1988) and many others.

2.5 The psychological impact of good mothering

Research on mothering is epitomised by prominent British psychologists (Ainsworth, 1969; Bowlby, 1988; St. Clair, 1996; Winnicott, 1971). Their theories have laid the ground for the conceptualisation of a woman's role in the development of psychopathology as well as its prevention. Mothers have an important role to play in order to develop secure attachment patterns with their children (Bowlby, 1978; St. Clair, 1996). The mother-child relationship, according to Winnicott (1971), has to be 'good enough' to ensure that the child grows up psychologically healthy, from childhood up to adulthood.

The notion of a good and a bad mother has been widely researched following the theories of Winnicott (1971) and many others on the relationship between an infant and his or her mother. St. Clair (1996) argues that Winnicott's (1971) theory on good enough mothering and transitional objects were shaped by the way society conceptualised motherhood in 19th-century Britain (St. Clair, 1996). This theory argues that the relationship between the infant and his or her mother is one of the essential relationships that humans form (Bowlby, 1988; St. Clair, 1996). Winnicott (1971) asserts that good enough mothering is the primary prevention strategy for all human development deficits and difficulties, especially pertaining to personality development. Other developmental theorists such as Freud, Fairbairn, Melanie Klein and Otto Kernberg (St. Clair, 1996) posit similar theories in terms of the roles played by parents. Winnicott (1971) argues that mothers should provide a good enough holding environment for their children in order to nurture their development. Mothers should be present to provide a secure base for the child to lean on and to develop. This is facilitated by the mother's attunement towards the child's needs, anxieties and happy moments (Winnicott, 1971). This means that the foundations of good child development are reliant on the mother's relationship with the child. The mother has to provide enough care and love for the child to feel secure, which Winnicott (1971) calls a holding environment. The mother's style of holding the child, including breastfeeding and other necessary caring techniques, determine the child's conception of relationships later in life (Winnicott, 1971).

Winnicott (1971) further suggested that if a child does not receive adequate care and a holding environment from his or her parent, he or she could develop anti-social tendencies. This child is characterised by a sense of loss of integrity and inferiority and this may result in oppositional behaviour (Winnicott, 1971). Winnicott's (1971) theory places great emphasis on the role of women in shaping human development and assumes that a women's role is central to the home environment.

Winnicott's (1971) theory is similar to other theories of childhood development such as object relations and attachment theory. It also suggests that mothers need to be good enough to provide a secure and nurturing relationship for their children. This seems to support the notion of the stay-at-home mother who is always available to meet the child's needs (Mamabolo et al, 2009). All of these theories assume that women are biologically predisposed to provide nurturing and care for their children. However, this notion ignores women's socio-economic status, health, and marital status, as well as the support structures that are needed for one to take care of a child (Silva, 2003).

While there is evidence about the impact of good mothering on a child's well-being, it is also evident that societies have their own perceptions about what constitutes good mothering (Mamabolo et al, 2009; Taukeni, 2014). There are also internalised notions about what a good mother should be able to do for her children. This focus draws on the medical and psychological theories that a mother should be able to achieve these goals (Mayer, 2009). In taking this focus, they problematise mothers who perform dual roles because of the intimacy that is emphasised between the mother and her child (Springer et al., 2009). Other aspects of these mothering difficulties are evident for those women who have other roles to perform and some have to try to balance their roles in order to adequately cater for each of those roles. Women who perform roles such as taking care of the house, the children and work outside the home face many difficulties with meeting all the demands of mothering, such as 'bonding' and being ever present (Estes, 2011; Mamabolo et al, 2016; Story, 1999). Therefore, the notion of balance of different roles deserves exploration and mothers' experiences need to be heard in order to deconstruct the dominant notions of motherhood.

2.6 Balancing the dual roles of student and mother

The roles of being a student and a mother are highly demanding and stressful; together these place high demands on one's body and mind (Springer et al., 2009). Balancing the two roles and facing strain with respect to time, finances and academic duties only increase pressure for student mothers (Mayer, 2009;

Ricco et al., 2009). Students need to deal with academic tasks, such as assignments, group projects and examinations, while mothers have to perform maternal duties at home. According to Taukeni (2014), these include taking of the child's physical, psychological and emotional needs. These roles require not only a person's presence, but also attention and dedication to the needs of both the studies and the child. The demands of the student and mother roles place pressure on women and create a sense of failure when trying to meet the ideal criteria, a reality which is not always possible (Springer et al., 2009). In essence, student mothers are not only striving to balance their dual roles, but are doing so under particular societal pressures, because of the images of the idealised mother and the idealised student. Springer et al. (2009) argue that one cannot truly be a student and mother at the same time.

Despite several studies reporting on the difficulties that student mother's face, some studies have presented positive results (Buteau, 2007). Results in these studies show that it is possible to perform the challenging acts required of student mothers, because of their determination to secure a better future. In Buteau's (2007) study, student mothers reported that education is their way of achieving a stable and secure life for themselves and their children. Although faced with time constraints and deadlines, most student mothers manage to meet the requirements for completing their higher education. This indicates the commitment they have to securing a better future for their families which entails sacrificing important personal needs (Buteau, 2007).

Student mothers are also in a process of learning and changing, and deserve attention (Funiba, 2011). In this sense, university resources should enable student mothers to pursue their academic work in a way that will benefit them. This means that the tertiary institution should be aware of the challenges faced by student mothers and should provide guidance and constructive support in the nurturing of student mothers (Barnes, 2013; Mayer, 2009).

Funiba (2011) and Mayer (2009) argue that student mothers view education as important as having a family; although these roles are demanding, the mothers reported that they have contributed to their learning process (Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009). The academic world is one that is highly demanding and requires intensive work, which entails devotion and hard work in pursuing and completing work on time. Students go through a process of socialisation for them to be ideal students who can meet the demands and handle them accordingly (Springer et al., 2009). First-time mothers are also socialised into motherhood and expected to become better at their role as time progresses (Mamabolo et al, 2009). When these roles are combined, this socialisation occurs simultaneously and the pressure increases when one is to perform in a certain way.

The dual role of mother and student requires time, dedication and patience, as well as emotional, psychological, and physical involvement with the child (Mayer, 2009). The mother as the primary caregiver of the child is conventionally the key person to commit to the child or children. The mother provides a safe, healthy and balanced development of the child (St. Clair, 1996). On the other hand, being a student has high demands and requires a great deal of self-discipline. When infused together these roles may seem overwhelming and almost impossible to manage (Bosch, 2013; Story, 1999; Sekgobela, 2008). The practices involved in motherhood may clash with the practices involved in student life, for example, the time needed to perform duties as a mother and as a student. This means that difficulties are likely in one or both roles, which speaks to what most studies have said about the incompatibility of the roles (Brown & Nichols, 2012; Estes, 2011). The care of the child and the academic tasks at university can be viewed as two jobs, which both require the attention and the work of one person, the student mother. It is therefore inevitable that students would be pulled in opposite directions by the things that they value the most, and have mixed feelings about how to balance and eventually satisfy them both (Buteau, 2007).

While research on student mothers has generated varied views on motherhood and pursuing academic responsibilities, it has also raised concerns about the conflict that comes with balancing the two roles. Student mothers face a dilemma that in most cases threatens their dual role as student and mother. This dilemma shows itself in the idea of being a good student and good mother at the same time, while adhering to personal cultural and social expectations of both roles (Mayer, 2009). This is the most difficult task for any individual who is trying to succeed in demanding and emotionally draining tasks, whether they are student mothers, working mothers, or stay-at-home mothers (Estes, 2011; Mayer, 2009). The stress that is experienced by a person who is involved in balancing these two separate roles has negative consequences for the individual and potentially creates conflict in the person's general functioning.

Taukeni (2014) reports that it is likely that student mothers value their roles and they find their conditions challenged within the social contexts in which they reside and study. He found that student mothers place value in their roles despite having to face challenges, such as feeling overwhelmed and helpless. Examining the balancing of and conflict between the roles could generate knowledge about how student mothers are successful in both situations. It is worth noting that research has explored the

ways in which student mothers find support systems within their contexts, but few studies have elaborated on how student mothers balance their roles (Ricco et al., 2009).

Barnes (2013) argues that women are disadvantaged solely because of their biological makeup. Despite the fact that the creation of humans involves two people, this is largely ignored among societies and in institutions of education. Women are disadvantaged because they bear the results of intercourse, while in many cases the father of the child can continue to live without evidence that he is a father. This contributes to the reproduction of gender inequality and the perpetuation of stigma towards young women in higher education. Therefore, it is because of the demands of both student life and otherhood that mothers require support from available sources in order to balance their lives.

2.7 Support systems

Motherhood is an individual experience of the person(s) who are directly involved in taking care of a child (Story, 1999). While motherhood has often been described as 'fulfilling', it comes with many challenges, especially if the woman plays other roles, such as being a student. Student mothers face specific obstacles, while they focus on their academic commitments. In Brown and Amankwaa's (2007) study, student mothers reported that having a support system helped them to manage their dual roles and taught them responsibility in being both a mother and a student. Students who are first time mothers and first time university students face two transitional periods, which are both highly demanding (Brown & Nichols, 2012). The transition to motherhood from being a student is a stressful developmental process that has many physical, emotional and psychosocial stressors (Bosch, 2013; Mamabolo et al, 2009). Likewise, the transition to university from high school is also as stressful for most people. As such, these students need support within universities such as the student counselling and health clinic available within universities. Instead of using immediate university support structures, research shows that students rely on immediate family and friends for support (Brown & Amankwaa, 2007; Funiba, 2011; Youngleson, 2006).

Shefer et al (2013) reported that students at university spend most of their time away from their home. Also presented in research is that most student mothers stay away from their hometowns (Funiba, 2011; Sekgobela, 2008). As such, it would be feasible for student mothers to access support within the university as most continue with their studies and only leave when they are due to deliver (Funiba, 2011; Taukeni, 2014). In Taukeni's (2014) study, students reported that they managed their dual roles

because of the support they received from family and friends. Similarly, a study by Buteau (2007) shows that student mother's main source of support was from their family and friends.

Students find it difficult to access student services available in their respective campuses (Barnes, 2013; Brown & Nichols, 2012; Sekgobela, 2008). Brown and Nichols (2012) comment that student mothers are likely to have difficulties with accessing or using the available resources because the services do not seem to be family friendly. Sekgobela (2008) poses a different view and asserts that cultural beliefs related to motherhood among young people seem to a barrier for student mothers. Sekgobela (2008) adds that the beliefs are that young females should not have children unless they are financially stable and have a partner to help them. When young females fall pregnant while at university, it becomes difficult for them to access services, because of the shame and guilt they feel about their acts (Sekgobela, 2008). Buteau (2007) asserts that the reason why students seek support is the intensity and the difficulty of managing the roles of being a student and a mother, especially when one is a first-time mother, therefore universities should respond to this need.

Pregnancy is not a new phenomenon in places of education or in places of work and more women are participating in public spaces, which were previously designated for men (Mayer, 2009; Nelson et al, 2013; Story, 2011). It is evident in research done by Barnes (2013) that universities are aware of the female students' reproductive nature, but there are little changes made in the provision of services that cater for these needs. Such resistance is seen in various studies (Funiba, 2014; Taukeni, 2014; Sekgobela, 2009) reporting that certain university policies that prevent students with children from experiencing motherhood in the educational context. Students report evidence for the experience that they feel that they do not belong, once they fall pregnant (Funiba, 2011). Another concern raised in most research has been the issue that universities rarely acknowledge that students have children or that students are likely to fall pregnant while pursuing their studies (Barnes, 2013). Barnes (2013) and Funiba (2011) both argue that student mothers exist in universities, but the policies concerning services for students do not acknowledge students with children. The authors also reported that student services would only acknowledge the need to support student mothers if they are open to make the services 'family friendly'. In addition, Barnes (2013) and Sekgobela (2008) argue that student services only acknowledge universities as spaces of knowledge production and falling pregnant while in university is outside of this 'norm'.

Few, if any universities have established comprehensive policies to support student mothers (Funiba, 2011; Sekgobela, 2008; Taukeni, 2014). Research by Barnes (2013) and Funiba (2011) found that a university in South Africa (University of the Western Cape) had a policy that prevents pregnant student from residing in campus residences (Barnes, 2013). According to Barnes (2013), this means that students were conceptualised differently, thereby making them intellectual bodies rather than individuals with feelings and desires irrespective of the space they occupy. The reality is that many universities do not even have the most meagre means of support, such as student counselling services, campus clinics and various campus programs aimed at supporting student mothers (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Sekgobela, 2008). Further to this, most research has put forward suggestions for the implementation of services that cater for non-traditional student's needs, such as student mothers (Brown & Nichols, 2012; Brown & Amankwaa; Estes, 2011; Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Sekgobela, 2008; Youngleson, 2006).

Concerning the need for university support, Estes (2011) argues that universities should be open to accepting the diverse nature of the students who come to study at their institution and this includes students who are mothers. This means that university policies as well their services should also be open to hearing about student needs within the university, which will address specific issues for specific students so that students feel that they are valued and included in the university community (Estes, 2011). Other researchers, such as Sekgobela (2008) and Taukeni (2014) have suggested that universities offer onsite support services, such as support groups, which could be run by personnel that cater for student's emotional/psychological needs. The rationale for presenting the above suggestions is because accessible health services might help students to address emotional, physical and financial needs.

Brown and Nichols (2012) assert that universities should provide subsidised student services, such as childcare, health care, legal aid and other services that are explicitly directed at helping parenting students. Much research has suggested that student resources for parenting students be available at universities and be user friendly (Bosch, 2013; Brown & Nichols, 2012; Funiba, 2011; Sekgobela, 2008; Taukeni, 2014). The university resources include student clinic, student counselling, day care centres for students with children and support groups. Other supports included financial assistance and allowing students with children to live in residences with their children (Brown et al, 2012).

Mayer (2009) argues that universities need to create an inclusive system where diverse students can feel represented and valued. This can be done by allowing university structures, such as clinics, support

services to be more accessible for students who are parents (Mayer, 2009). In response to the needs of student mothers, Mayer (2009) created an on-line discussion forum for student mothers. Mayer (2009) further reports that a single parent support group was widely identified as important, single mothers expressed that belonging to the group gave them a chance to receive validation from other members (Mayer, 2009). Another study by Shefer et al. (2013) indicates that institutions create support systems when they identify with the norms and the importance of the need they target to meet. Therefore, Shefer et al (2013) argue that it is important that support directed to assist student mothers be recognised as an important necessity for the university to implement. Support systems such as counselling centres and health clinics can provide a safe space to share frustrations and possible solutions to balancing the demands of academic work and mothering (Buteau, 2007; Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Sekgobela, 2008; Taukeni, 2014). Institutional support for all student mothers has the potential to attract and retain a diverse and intellectually rigorous student body that includes talented traditional and non-traditional students.

Evident in the aforementioned studies (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Taukeni, 2014) is that mothers have spent time with their children and are therefore able to talk about how having a child has affected in their lives as students. Further, research in South African universities (Barnes, 2013; Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo et al, 2009; Youngleson, 2006) shows that there is an increasing interest in the lives of parenting students, which is an indication that more people are creating awareness for student mothers need for support. The overall argument from research shows that student mothers need support services within their universities, but are hesitant to access them. This is because most universities are structured in ways that allows 'traditional students' to utilise the services, while not accommodating other students who fall out of this criteria.

Chapter 3 Research aims and rationale

This study explored the experience of student mothers at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg Campus) to understand how they experience their roles and how they balance being both a student and a mother. This study also aimed to investigate the services that student mothers make use of within the university.

There is no available official data on the number of students with children in public universities and thus these student mothers are not identified as a social group among university students in South Africa. However, based on the literature review, it is evident that student mothers are common and that little research has been conducted that explores their experience. There is compelling evidence to suggest that the experience of single student mothers at university often involves incompatible identities. The aim of the current research was to access the experience of students who fall pregnant and become mothers while pursuing tertiary education. It further aimed to explore the challenges that students face in terms of being a mother and a student. The support systems used by student mothers are explored as well as their attempts to balance the role of being a mother and of being a student.

3.1 Research questions

In order to explore the lived experiences of single student mothers at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg Campus), the following questions were the focus of the study:

- What is the student mother's experience while pursuing higher education?
- How do student mothers experience motherhood?
- What are the challenges that the student mothers face?
- How do student mothers cope?
- What is the impact of being student mother on the students' academic work?

The next section will discuss the research methodology of this study. This will include the paradigm used to guide the selection of participants, data collection instruments and data analysis.

Chapter 4 Methodology

4.1 Research design

This study employs a qualitative research design. Qualitative research is flexible and has interests in presenting reality through participants' eyes (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This research employs a qualitative approach to gain insight into how people make sense of their experiences of being a student and of being a mother.

The current research further adopts an interpretivist paradigm, which claims that human experiences are best understood in their natural contexts. Paradigms are systems of interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The interpretivist paradigm stresses the importance of placing analysis in context and understanding the world as it is seen from individual accounts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). The interpretivist paradigm differs from the positivist stance, which views the world as based on objective and neutral facts (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Interpretivists assert that research must capture the in-depth experience of subjects and understand this experience in its natural context (Myers, 2009). The researcher positions him/herself in the data, and is the instrument of the research (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). It relies on meaning rather than measurement oriented methodologies, such as interviewing or participant observation. This kind of approach to research magnifies and relies on the relationship between the researchers, and subjects (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Kelly, 2006). Qualitative research allows researchers to access subjective reasons and meanings that lie behind social action. The meanings attached to experience are explored and explained in the context in which they occur.

A qualitative method of conducting research is useful for studying the phenomena in context or natural settings. A qualitative approach allows for flexibility of the research process and allows the researcher to ask follow-up questions, while also allowing the participants to explain their stories. The qualitative research method does not restrict any party in terms of exploring the phenomena in different ways; it allows the researcher to follow any idea that seems complex, interesting or worth exploring with the participants (Howitt & Cramer, 2011).

4.2 Sampling

This study used convenience and purposive sampling techniques. Purposive sampling entails selecting participants with specific information that will be investigated, and convenience sampling selects people because of their availability (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Participants selected for the research are typical of the population the research seeks to study and they are easily available. Purposive sampling

was useful for the study, in this case, students who are mothers. Despite limitations, such as less generalisability, purposive sampling provides the research with criterion-centred cases focusing specifically on the information that the research is seeking. Furthermore, purposive sampling enables the researcher to define the target sample and gives succinct inclusion criteria to determine which participants to include in the research. Convenience sampling meant that students, who were willing and available to participate in the study, were recruited.

Participants were recruited by using posters advertised on the university and residence notice boards as well as in restrooms, and permission to advertise was given by Risk Management Services (RMS). Participants responded to the adverts inviting them to participate and replied using an email address in the advert (Appendix 1).

By way of email, the researcher ascertained whether the students who responded met the criteria for participating in the research. Convenience and purposive sampling criteria were suitable for this study, as persons above the age of 18 years can give consent. The study also needed people who had an experience of parenting; therefore, children from the age of five months were selected.

4.3 Participants

The study was carried out at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The venue for the individual interviews and for the focus group discussion was the Discipline of Psychology research laboratory. Participants included full-time, single student mothers, either undergraduate or postgraduate. The students had children from the age of five months and six years, because the study required students who had the experience of being a mother. Below are the students' demographics, including their ages, years of study, ages of the children; whether they lived with the child (LWC) or away from the child (LAC); and whether they were involved in a focus group and/or an individual interview. Students who were interviewed individually or who were in the focus group discussion have been given pseudonyms, for example, "Khanyisile". Students who were in both the focus group and interviews are specified in the table below under the heading "focus group/Interview".

Pseudonym	Age of student	Living with child (**LWC**) or living away from child (**LAC**)	Level of study: Undergraduate/ Postgraduate	Child's Age	Focus Group/ Interview
Nonhlanhla	24	LWC	UG	8 months	INT
Khanyisile	26	LWC	PG	4 years	INT
Lihle	28	LWC	PG	5 years	FG/INT
Zethu	25	LAC	PG	2 years, 7 months	FG
Nomvula	27	LAC	PG	2 years, 7 months	FG/INT
Zandi	24	LAC	PG	5 years	FG/INT
Thando	24	LAC	PG	2 years	INT
Thulisile	21	LWC	UG	18 months	FG/INT
Lulu	24	LAC	PG	15 months	INT
Lindi	24	LWC	PG	1 year, 3 months	FG

Table 1: Participants demographics

Participants who were involved in the research were African student mothers at undergraduate and postgraduate (Honours and Masters) levels of study. Children's ages ranged from five months up to six years of age. Five students were living at home with their children and five students lived far away from their home and had to live in the university residences.

4.4 Data collection procedures

For the purpose of this study, one focus group discussion with six student mothers and eight individual interviews were conducted.

A focus group is a planned discussion session among people who are chosen based on research criteria to provide opinions about a topic of interest (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). A focus group discussion was ideal for this study, as it provided the researchers with an opportunity to observe an interaction on the topic in a limited amount of time (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). Focus group discussions provide a space for participants to come together and discuss a topic of interest, and will help to generate information that is influenced by the group experience of creating meaning and sharing experiences (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). In this study, the focus group also provided information about the differences and similarities in the participants' experiences of being a student and of being a mother.

The facilitators of the focus group were the researcher and another Honours level student (Wendy Corfe), who is doing a similar study. The current research topic drew the two researchers to conduct the study together and this was useful for both parties in terms of data collection and analysis. Further, it was useful to explore research ideas as a team in order for different perspectives to emerge throughout the study.

The first part of the focus group required participants to draw a simple genogram (which was modelled for participants by the researchers) detailing familial relationships, including that of the child/children's primary caregivers. This genogram was used as a basis for a discussion of each participant's situation and childcare arrangements.

The focus group took roughly two hours and involved a general discussion of their views on being a student mother, the knowledge they have about what student mothers go through, and their experiences. These discussions were guided by an open-ended set of questions based on the research objectives (Appendix 2). During the focus group discussion, the researchers noticed some participants with particularly interesting personal stories. Flyvberg (2001) states that such critical cases, whose lived experience provide rich stories, have strategic importance for understanding the research problem. A critical selection criterion was used to identify these participants (Lihle, Nomvula, Zandi and Thulisile) and involve them in individual interviews (see Table 1).

The focus group discussion was recorded and consent was sought from the participants (Appendix 3). Participants were requested to sign a confidentiality pledge in order to ensure that the information discussed in the focus groups is not shared with anyone outside the discussions (Appendix 4).

4.4.2 Interviews

In addition to the focus group discussion, individual interviews were conducted with student mothers. Interviews involve one-on-one interaction between the researcher and a participant. The purpose of the individual interviews with student mothers was to explore the general comments from the focus group further by gaining an in-depth understanding of individual experiences.

An interview allows an interactive conversation to occur between the researcher and the participant and allows the participant to express his/her feelings (Crowe, Inder & Porter, 2015). It also allows both the participant and the researcher to establish a rapport that creates an environment for openness and trust (Crowe et al, 2015). Therefore, the individual interviews draw out issues, which would not be addressed in the focus groups due to their sensitivity.

Six students participated in the focus group and a further four students from the focus group were interviewed individually for an in-depth understanding of their experience. From the focus group, five students who seemed to present interesting experience were chosen for individual interviews. In total, nine individual interviews were conducted. Individual interviews were useful in gaining in-depth information on the personal experiences of student mothers, as well as for allowing time for the participant to express her views and concerns privately.

A semi-structured interview schedule was used for the individual interviews (attached in Appendix 5). Questions that were relevant to the study aims and objectives were formulated in order to access students' experience of motherhood and tertiary education. Other questions related to academic work, support structures and the challenges that students face. For all interviews and focus groups data collection occurred in English and *isiZulu*. Participants who wished to use their own language (*isiZulu*) were allowed to do so. Interviews were audio recorded using a digital recorder (permission to record was obtained from the participants, see Appendix 6)

4.4.3 Ethical Reviews

All standard ethical procedures for research with human subjects were followed. The research was granted ethical clearance by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (see HSS/0826/015M in Appendix 7A). In order to access students for data collection, the university registrar's office (see Appendix 7B) granted a gatekeeper's approval.

To ensure that participants are fully autonomous, participants were briefed on the research aims and what will be expected of them. This was done verbally, but they were also given an information sheet (Appendix 8– for students). This information sheet assured the participants that their privacy is protected. Their identity would remain confidential with the use of pseudonyms or codes throughout the research process and the dissemination of the research results. The participants were informed that there is no specific risk associated with participating in the study and were informed of the limits to confidentiality in-group discussions such as focus groups. Participants provided their consent to be interviewed individually and in a focus group discussion by signing a consent form (Appendix 9 students).

Participants were informed that the potential benefits of their participation in the study are an opportunity to hear others' views about being a student mother, and to potentially learn about coping strategies employed by various students to balance their dual role. An indirect benefit is that the results of this study could inform health interventions among students, which will focus on student information and support regarding pregnancy and childbirth. Students were informed about the availability of psychological assistance should they experience any distress during the study. An information letter containing details about research with students and potential risks was submitted to the Child and Family Centre (CFC). This means that participants would be able to consult in case they need assistance (see Appendix 10).

They were also informed that the data from this study might be used to present a workshop to the participants on the research results. This will also encourage discussions about motherhood and studying, childcare practices, support services, and the lessons learned from being a student and a mother. Participants were also asked at the end of the research if they would like to be part of the workshop.

A brief summary of the results will be made available to the participants on request. The data from this study (in written and digital form) will be kept securely in a locked cabinet in the supervisor's office for five years, and after that, it will be incinerated. Data that is in electronic form will be stored in password-protected files, which can only be accessed, by the researcher, the supervisor, and the researcher's partner. All audio recordings will be erased after the study.

The student participants were compensated for their participation in the focus group and/or interview. This compensation was not meant as payment, but was due to them for giving up their time and effort to participate. They each received a voucher worth R25, redeemable at the campus coffee shop. The participants in the focus groups were provided with refreshments at the end of the discussion.

<u>4.4.4 Data processing</u>

Recordings of the interviews and the focus groups were transcribed verbatim by the two researchers (me and Wendy Corfe) using Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004). The conventions are given in detail (see Appendix 11) and all isiZulu words were translated into English during transcription.

4.5 Data Analysis

The thematic analysis used in the present research relies on the assumption that patterns of meaning are presented in the data through a process of interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The first step in the analysis entails familiarising oneself with the data, which included reading and re-reading transcripts and noting down initial codes. The second step involves generating initial codes across the data set. The third step entails searching for themes, the fourth step is about reviewing themes, and the fifth step is about defining and naming the themes. Finally, a selection of clear extracts is selected, related to the literature, to produce a report of the analysis. Braun and Clarke (2006) report that these steps do not assume a linear process of moving from one phase to the next; rather, it is a recursive process with back-and-forth movements.

The transcripts were analysed using thematic analysis, a qualitative method used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). On analysis, the focus group and individual interviews were coded using a step-by-step approach suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), and this report is structured in terms of the main themes that were identified in the process of analysis by the researcher, according to what she deemed interesting cases of data in relation to the literature.

Thematic analysis allows the researcher to determine accurately the relationships between concepts and compare them with the whole content of the data. Themes are phrases or sentences that identify what the data means. They consist of ideas and descriptions with a culture that can be used to explain

fundamental events, statements and morals derived from the participant's stories (Crowe, Inder & Porter, 2015). Themes do not require any calculations, and present ideas that are most salient in the data (Crowe et al., 2015).

Familiarising one with the data entails a vigorous analysis of the data, reading and re-reading (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This means that the research attempts to get a sense of the data objectively, without any preconceived ideas about the data.

4.6 Ethical issues in the research process
4.6.1 Autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons

The principle of autonomy and respect for the dignity of persons expresses the need for research to consider the value of having voluntary participation for all respondents. This is related to the Nuremberg Code, and requires that all participants give full consent to the research and are given the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any stage (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

4.6.2 Informed consent

Research participants need to be informed of the purpose of the research, the methods, and intentions for the use of research results. Participants must be informed about what their participation entails and what risks, if any, are involved (Broom, 2006).

4.6.3 Confidentiality

The research has to ensure that the information supplied by the respondents and their anonymity are respected. The current research ensured confidentiality by anonymising participants' names; pseudonyms were used to identify participants. For the focus group, participants signed a confidentially pledge, which is an agreement among participants in a group to keep the information discussed during the research confidential and not share it outside of the group.

4.6.4 Beneficence and non-maleficence

In terms of beneficence and non-maleficence, the researcher needs to ensure that no harm befalls the participants during the research. Harm includes all forms of wrongs that research could do to

participants, which exploit or break research promises to participants. Research reserves the obligation to present accurate data from research participants and to protect respondents' vulnerabilities (Broom, 2006).

This research aimed to minimise harm and risks to the participants. During the data collection, one participant experienced discomfort associated with research questions, and the following procedures were employed: the student was advised to visit the Child and Family Centre (CFC) or the Student Counselling Services. At the campus clinic, students could also obtain information and assistance on HIV testing, pregnancy testing, social and psychological distress, sexual advice, information and contraception. Furthermore, the participant was given the opportunity to withdraw from the research to minimise harm.

4.7 Data collection techniques to maximise the quality of data and results

As an attempt to ensure that the current research presents quality results and adheres to producing scientifically valid knowledge, measures were taken to maximise the quality of data and results. Qualitative research terms to ensure the quality of research results include credibility, dependability and confirmability.

4.7.1 Credibility

Credibility in qualitative research seeks to ensure that the study found and reported what it intended to explore (Babbie & Mouton, 2005; Wassenaar & Mamotte, 2006). Babbie and Mouton (2005) stress that the concept of credibility is used to assess the extent to which the results are congruent with reality. The current research followed qualitative methods of data collection and analysis, which were informed by previous studies. Furthermore, a detailed process of data collection and analysis is provided and all data have been presented as it was received from participants. Silverman (2010) suggests that qualitative research is vulnerable to presenting multiple realities. He asserts that credibility is the extent to which data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. This implies that for the qualitative researcher, credibility is based on their understanding of the research and extent to which they are able to judge it. Silverman (2010) further states that to ensure credibility, researchers have to inspect and analyse all parts of data. He argues that a comparative data analysis must be done and that all data cases need to be incorporated in this analysis. Silverman (2010) also adds that deviant case analysis must be taken into

account when analysing and presenting data, because it proves significant results from the research and presents a different hypothesis.

To ensure credibility, the study ensured that all participation was voluntary in order to speak to those who were genuinely willing to share their experience. Iterative questioning was used in the focus group discussion and interviews, to get a clear understanding of information provided by the participants and to avoid making inferences about data. All data collection methods have to be accurate and produce results that are valid in order to attain consistency and repeatability.

4.7.2 Dependability

Dependability is concerned with the consistency of the research results. It questions the extent to which results would be similar, should the study be repeated in the same context with the same participants and methods (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). This study upheld dependability by providing extensive descriptions of the study context, participant demographics and location of the study. This ensures that other researchers who might want to repeat the same study will find it easy to replicate it with the information provided.

4.7.3 Confirmability

Confirmability seeks to ensure that the results presented by the study are a true reflection of the participants' experiences and opinion and not those of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2005). The researcher is the main instrument of data collection in qualitative research; however, it cannot be stated that the researcher remained objective in collecting, analysing and reporting research results in qualitative research. This is largely influenced by the researcher's style of interviewing, extracting themes to present and results. In order to achieve confirmability, the study ensured that participants were not asked any leading questions during the interviews, and all responses were transcribed in verbatim.

Transferability is the extent to which it is possible for study results to be applicable across different contexts, including settings and populations (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006). This study ensured transferability by proving specific details about the setting of the study, participant demographics, and methods of data collection as well as the means of data analysis.

Chapter 5 Results

The purpose of this study was to explore the experience of student mothers at UKZN (Pietermaritzburg Campus). It further investigated the ways in which student mothers approached balancing the roles of student and mother. It also sought to find out about the challenges student mothers face as well as the impact of motherhood on academic work and lastly, the ways in which student mothers cope.

The following themes and subthemes were identified in the data. First, the theme about changes in life course in students' lives before they became mothers is discussed, and the subtheme details university life before motherhood. The second sub-theme is about university life and motherhood. The second theme is challenges in managing time between the two roles. The subtheme is time spent away from the child, the second subtheme is sacrifices made by student mothers. The third theme discusses the support systems used by students and the subthemes is available university support systems. The fourth theme details student mothers' experiences of motherhood. The fifth theme is about the impact of motherhood on academic work. The final theme is about guilt and the need expressed by student mothers, for reparation.

Participants were full-time female undergraduate and postgraduate students enrolled in different courses. All the participants were African and single, their ages ranged from 18-30 years, and their children's ages ranged from five months up to six years. Three participants from the focus group (FG) live with their children (LWC) and three of the students live away from the child (LAC). In the individual interviews (Int), five participants reported living with their children and four of them live away from the child. In order to protect the participants' identity, pseudonyms will be used to present extracts from the interviews. The reference will be abbreviated as follows: Dee, Int, 24, 6 months, LAC. Participants from the focus group are named as "Khanyisile, "Zandi" etc. and participants from the interviews are presented with pseudonyms. For details about each participant, see Table 1.

5.1 Change in life course

<u>5.1.1 University life before motherhood</u>

Participants reported that they had ideas about what university life would be like and before they had children and most students had plans of completing their qualifications and taking care of their immediate families.

A student in an interview discussed her plans for when she first came to the university. Thando comments on what she had imagined for the progression of her life: to study, then work and be independent, with no dependents.

Thando, Int, 24, 2 years, LAC
I think for me it was gonna be like ok, I'm gonna go to school, study, get my degree after that I would just go and work and be an independent person with no one, you know just take care of my mo(h)m and my dad nje (just)...yah

Most of the participants mentioned having free time for leisure activities, such as going out with friends. This indicates the life that students had for themselves before they become mothers. The following extracts show what students envisioned university life to be like. This is before students had a child and they expressed how life changed after they became mothers. . Another student expressed that she had plans as a first-time university student to have fun and do things at her own pace, as she explained:

Lihle, Int, 28, 5 years, LWC
(.) I thought it would be f::un, >a bit of fun<, I would have just, I can do anything <u>anytime</u>, do my work <u>anytime</u>, go out with friends <u>anytime</u>, yeah↑ I thought it would be lots of fun

An undergraduate student expresses a similar expectation towards her first time at university:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC
Hhhh, ↑↑I dunno, honestly like I (.) don't (.) know (.), like I just thought I'm going to varsity and, >you know<, I thought varsity was just a whole lot of fun [hhh] like this [heh, heh], yeh, I'm gonna get my

degree, but while I'm in there, I'm just gonna have fu:n, I'm gonna get dru:nk and I'm gonna go pa:rty [yeah], whoa,↓whoa, ↓↓whoa::: ((cartoon music effect)) [heh, heh, heh], heh, heh.

Similar notions are expressed below concerning being a student who is childless, free and has plenty of time for oneself. Another undergraduate student explained:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC
it was so ea:sy, (0.3), it was (.) all by myself, >you know, it was just me alone↑< so I could (.) >manage my time very well<, I never had to split it with other, any other thing

The above extracts indicate the views and expectations of student mothers about being at university for the first time. The idea of having fun and being free seems to be what most students had planned before they had children. Four of these mothers explained that they expected to have some fun, by attending parties and having drinks, and most of them mentioned completing their studies and becoming independent. The expectations held by student mothers seem typical of any student who goes to university and looks forward to living by their own rules. They mentioned doing things in their own time and making sure that they have time for their studies, as Thando and Nonhlanhla mention attaining their degrees at the end.

The participants also reflected on how they had personally changed after they had children. In the focus group, a student elaborated on the personal characteristics that later changed when she became a mother. She suggests that her focus was on herself, and that she acted on her own needs:

Thulisile, FG, 21, 18 months, LWC
Before, I (.) I was very self centred, everything, I, if I wanted to do it, I did it, no:↑w I have to think 'How will it affect (.) my daughter?' and whether it's a positive or a negative impact on her, °that is how it really changed me°

Further, Thulisile elaborated that her character went through some changes when she brought a child into the world. Before, she was particular about how things were done; she suggests that she was not so rigid after having a child. She was also more accepting of help, and she became calmer:

Thulisile, Int, 21, 18 months, LWC

Usually, like before, I was very impatient, and I, I used to get irritated a lot, now, it's, it's kinda moderated [okay] because I don't get irritated as much. I stay calmer, a lot, and, and it's, that's positive. Because I (.) before, I, I <u>felt</u> like, everything must be done by me, in a particular way, and when you have people that are helping you with a baby, uum, I started to accept that usually I never ask for help

The above extracts present the students' experiences of transitioning from high school to university and the hopes and dreams they had planned for their lives. These extracts reflected a picture of how students had envisioned their future before they had children and they show how students had not considered having a child before completing their studies. It shows that their expectations of life at university had to change. In addition to this, they seemed to undergo personal changes.

5.1.2 <u>University life and motherhood</u>

Becoming a mother, especially for the first time, changes one's life and how each person adjusts to the new role is determined by many factors. One of these factors is the inevitable change in one's life plans, including goals one has for one's self and for family. Lulu, illustrates the kinds of plans that one has to make in order to manage university demands, her child, as well as the involvement of her family.

it is complicated, because, (.) maybe you are busy studying, there are things, when you are studying you know there are things that are stressing you and all that and it happens that maybe the child is sick, so when the child is sick, you will have a stress that you have to find money to send back home so that they can take her to the doctor, and you are always stressed about how the child is doing also, you wish that maybe to be close to her and know how what is happening .(Lulu, Int, 24, 15 months, LAC)

In the above extract, Lulu's account shows that student mother's lives change when they have a child and stressful situations, such as the baby falling sick can affect their academic progress as well as their plans, including financial plans for themselves and their family.

Another student in the focus group discussed her realisation that life was never going to be the same again. Her description captures most of the students' experiences after they faced the possibility of bringing a child into the world. She explains:

Lihle, FG, 28, 5 years, LWC

Okay, for me, when, I found out that I was pregnant, I was about to (.), I was in my first year, so I was planning to go to res and stay, uh, uh, inside the school, so, but my plans >had to change< because now I had to >stay home<, and take care of him at home. And, it's even <u>more</u> difficult because you come at school, you get a lot of work to do, you go back home, already, I have my siblings that I have to take care of <u>plu::s</u> him. So now I go home, it's <u>him</u>, it's my siblings, it's my studies. You can just imagine all that all together. Yeah, it's been, it's been tough, but, yeah, I've been able to (0.2) °come out of it°. (0.2)

Another factor is the possibility of facing drastic life challenges while pursuing one's life goals. Students commented on the changes that they went through after they became mothers. For some, life changed drastically and this affected certain areas in their life and those of other family members, such as their siblings. In addition, students mentioned how their attitude towards being a university student changed compared to what they initially felt about being at university.

In an individual interview, Lihle reinforces this point by commenting on the change in her everyday life including having to limit the time she spent at university in order to make sure that her role as a mother receives time. She had to take full responsibility for childcare when she was at home and had to manage her time to fulfil responsibilities, as she explains:

Lihle, Int, 28, 5 years, LWC

What changed is that (0.3)when my child was <u>born</u>, I had to take full responsibility for him, to be there full time as I am living with him, so in the morning, I take him to crèche↑. Every day I have to be back home before <u>two</u>, because he comes back from school around two so I had to give <u>more</u> time to him than to myself

Concerning their personal lives, students expressed how they had to behave in ways that not only serve their needs, but to consider the child's well-being. Postgraduate student Nomvula from the focus group discussed changes her spending and personal habits after becoming a mother:

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

my freedom went away, because I, I am one of those that really enjoys take-aways (.) and >going o↑::ut,< just buying food, a lot of different kinds of foods and expensive food, so now I cannot do that anymore,

Thulisile, FG, 21, 18 months, LWC

There is not much that I did before, bu::t maybe (.) >sometimes< (.) I go to the mall once or twice a month or like almost every weekend, no::↑w I can't and <u>for me</u> that's °that's a setback°, but I have learned to live with it.

The same participant comments further:

Thulisile, FG, 21, 18 months, LWC

I like planning, and then when I had a baby, my plans were blown out and I've started plan(h)ning [heh heh] heh, heh again. And it's, it's, I've even started planning which schools I could take her to, you know those things that you do when you're bored and you're alone and it broadens your thinking

Thulisile referred to the changes that she had to experience after she had a child as a 'setback'. She goes on to explain how having a child changed her outlook on life. She said her initial plans were disrupted after having a child. She had to re-plan to include her child's plans as well. The extracts above give an indication of how life plans were suddenly affected by students becoming mothers. Students reflected on their personal experiences about becoming first-time mothers and the changes in their daily lives as well as the changes in the way they spent their leisure time. These accounts provide a distinction between the ideal student in university who is childless and carefree, and more multitasking student who now has a responsibility of a child.

5.2 Challenges in managing time between two roles

Student mothers value the time they have each day as it means they have an opportunity to fulfil their role demands of being a mother and of being a student. With this said, one important aspect of their attempt to balance the dual role is their use of time. Time in this sense pertains to the time student mothers have to achieve all that they set out to do. Time relates to the time they have as students, time they have for their children and time they have for self-care and other roles. The data that was coded in the individual interviews is grouped into two subthemes: the first account was that of before they had children (participants did not have to share their time with any duties or role demands), and then after they had children (they had to divide most of their time between motherhood and university demands).

<u>5.2.1 Time spent away from the child</u>

After having a child, student mothers went through drastic changes in their lives. Some of the students report added responsibility in their lives, which was not there before they had a child. Students report that their time is now split between two important roles; mother and student. Each role has specific goals to meet, such as examinations and childcare. Students who live with their child (LWC) explain that they spend more time being mothers than being students. For instance, postgraduate students Zandi explains that she goes through emotional challenges as she spends more time at university than she does at home with her son. To illustrate this, Zandi and Nomvula expressed their concerns:

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC

I think the biggest challenge is the emotion that comes with it being a student mom. You know how you can't be there for everything that happens in your baby's life, you know their first steps, their first words, you'll miss like half that stuff because you <u>aren't</u> there, >you're at school (university)<.

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

<For me it is emotionally difficult because (.) .hhh, I miss my child so much, and (.) I think I spend too much time wondering if she's fine> (.), if she's being taken care of well because you, I always feel like I'm the best person to take care of her

Students report that they had to trust family members with their children, but being away from their child meant that they constantly worried about their child's safety. Similarly, students explained that with these responsibilities, they have less time to themselves and they engage less in leisure-related activities, such as going out with friends.

In the focus group, several participants spoke about the changes students had to make after they had their child. When asked about how their lives were after they had children, Zethu talks first about how she had to spend her money wisely and think about her child:

Zethu, FG, 24, 1 year & 3 months, LWC

Uhm aft: er (.) I gave birth to my son, I learned how to be responsible, like I don't use money as I used to even <u>before</u> he was born, like okay, I have my money, my momma gave me my allowance, so the baby's daddy supports the child financially, but <u>I</u> as a mother, >I feel it<, like it, I should also do it, like maybe, maybe like take some small portion from my allowance and send it back [o↑kay] to my baby, maybe buy him some clothes and other thing, yeah just learned to responsible, yeah

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC

..I think that's the <u>biggest</u> challenge of everything cause maybe some days you can make up for, but you can't exactly make up for missing someone's first steps and what not, and even those our parents will try to compensate for that, for instance by calling u::s. <u>Still</u> the fact that you aren't (.) there and uum, the if's and should haves. Should I have waited like 10 years later, I wouldn't miss this so it's just like the whole emotional, I wouldn't say baggage (.) per se, okay, maybe baggage. Just like the whole emotions that come with it are the biggest challenges [°okay°].

Students who do not live with their children seemed to experience the opposite. They are more students than they are mothers because of the distance that there is between themselves and their children. These students experience emotional stress due to missing out on their children's development. Three participants reported that beyond the challenges of time and schoolwork, the emotional 'baggage' of missing critical parts of her child's life, was the hardest experience. In the extract, it is clear that living away from her child leaves her with feelings of guilt and some doubt about her child's care. She worries about her child most of the time when she is at university.

Lindi expressed similar feelings about having to leave her child and go back to university. Her distance from her child created inconsistencies in their relationship, shown by the child's refusal to speak to her when she calls after she had left him to go to university. She explained:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

Yeah. Emotionally, yeah, I would agree with that. Because sometimes you <u>call</u> and then he just would not want to speak to you. [All: Aahh, heh] AND THEN I'D BE SO <u>S↑AD</u>

The above illustrates how a student with an older child experiences similar emotional difficulties with her child: the child is at the age where they understand that their mother has to leave and the child feels sad, and possibly angry about the separation.

The above extracts show the emotional difficulties that student mothers face while they think and worry about their children's well-being. They also illustrate their thoughts about the kind of role they should play with their children and their stories seem to suggest feelings of guilt about having to be away from their children.

5.2.2 Sacrifices made by student mothers

There is a common experience about managing to cope with the dual role of student and motherhood for student mothers. Even though students reported struggles with time, most of them seem to have adapted to their role and used their experience as both mother and student to make their lives less stressful when it comes to time. The common theme alongside challenges is student's account is about sacrifices they had to make in order to meet their role demands.

Furthermore, participants mentioned that their use of time had changed after having a child and new ways of managing their time have been adopted. However, despite this, they all seem to agree that their dual role cannot be fully balanced.

Nonhlanhla comments on how time is extremely limited, now that she has a child:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC
 ...yeah, you've got no time for anything else, besides your school work and the child.

Similar to Nonhlanhla, Nomvula expresses her guilt about spending on herself; she would rather buy for her child, she states:

Nomvula, Int, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
I was out shopping with my friends like, for, for ALL 3 of them ran to adults clothes (.) and I I had to take that away to go look for children's clothing. >Not that she didn't have clothes< but [yeh] the guilt, heh, heh [yeh, yeh]. Aah, so (.) I feel like we get to save, I get to save more than they do. <I don't buy alcohol anymore; I don't buy expensive dresses or shoes. I don't>, >those things no longer interest me<.

In the case of Nonhlanhla and Nomvula, the sacrifices that they have to make for their children, including financial and social sacrifices are significant in accessing their experience of motherhood. They admitted that their decisions are not solely focused on their own needs, but now include the well-being of the child. They expressed that it is difficult to do things that they did previously, such as being with friends and spending money only on themselves. Now that the students have children, the children's needs always come first.

Similarly, another student expressed that she had to find ways to get income, since she was now splitting money between herself and her child. One of the ways in which she managed to take care of her child was through her small business. She states:

Lulu, Int, 24, 15 months, LAC
I am raising my baby singlehandedly so every time, that (.) because my child lives on social grant, so I tell them to use it to buy food and stuff and I will provide clothes so when I provide with clothes, I have to do people's hair to get money, so↑ I have to be stressed whenever I go home, because I have to find somebody to braid, so I can buy clothes for my <u>baby</u>...

However, Zandi was insistent that one should take a step back from the responsibilities and sacrifices that have to be made to take time for oneself:

Zandi, Int, 24, 5 years, LAC
... you need some time for yourself, and to relax, to rewind and rejuvenate so you can be that person...

The tension in terms of having too little time meant that time had to be managed differently. However, for Khanyisile making time for important things is crucial and she mentioned that she has learned to manage her time better.

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years & 4 years, LWC
 I've learnt to manage my time, very well as a student mother.

One of the strategies used by the mothers to attempt a balance in their dual role was to be consciously organised and make considerable plans for their day-to-day activities. These include planning for the child at home before they leave for university and then at university plan their study timetable, group activities and submissions. However, there seemed to be a challenge with making plans because of the unpredictability of their life events. For Lihle and Thando planning days i.e. study time, assignments, group work and examinations seemed to help and they found that these plans could be disturbed by other unforeseen events related to childcare.

Lihle, Int, 28, 5 years, LWC

...because when you get home, you cannot do as you like, you cannot do your assignments, because you find that when you get home, you have to do the washing, you have to prepare him for school tomorrow, you have to take care of him, you don't have like your own time ...

Thando, Int, 24, 2 years, LAC
it's just that I don't. know if going home during weekends is enough, do I give my child enough time, on weekends and holidays. School time. okay with school, I have a lot of time in my hands, I wouldn't complain about that yeah, it works for me, but spending time with my child, I feel that there is little time I spend with him

However, for Thando, this use of time seems to create a sense of guilt ("do I give my child enough time"). This feeling of never being able to get it right or to find a 'perfect balance', is also expressed by Zandi, who lives away from her child:

Zandi, Int, 24, 5 years, LAC
there is no perfect balance, I think, you know with school work. Unless I'd be a stay at home mom, studying at UNISA, and what not, but like for now I don't think there is a perfect balance, <u>especially</u> being far away from, like I said. When I was closer if my son is sick and I feel like let me just go home I have the time and everything, then I can just get up and go home. Now I can't do that, I cannot get on a bus and drive ten hours just because of that you understand, yeah, so (0.3) [mhhh]

Khanyisile expressed her concerns about the time she spent in her role of mother and student:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC
it depends uum, on the situation somebody is in. But generally (.), being a mother and a student (.), you have to balance the two first but the balancing won't be 50/50 [ye:h]. Would be 60/40 [heh, yeah].

Other participants, stating the difficulties of managing two roles, also reported the feeling of not being able to balance the dual role:

Nomvula, Int, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
it's not necessarily that you <u>don't</u> have. > I don't think it is possible to get a 100 % balance where you dedicate 50/50 on each side<. I think even when (.), it gets to a point where, I'm overloaded with work

but I'm well aware that my daughter needs my attention so I need to put this aside for a bit and <u>give</u> her that attention. >I think what I, usually when I get home, it's I focus on her

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC
there is no perfect balance

In the focus group, Nomvula commented that trying to balance her role is affected by many factors in her life:

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
Yeah, I'm also finding it difficult to strike a balance, I don't know if it is possible. Maybe after I complete my studies, I can try to balance that because now I'm dealing with (.) school issues, I'm dealing with (.) relationship issues, family issues, my <u>child</u>, so every area of my life is affected by.

Lulu also explained that there is no balance between the role of student and mother:

Lulu, Int, 24, 15 months, LAC
there can never be a balance, they want to be a mother is a>full time job<, being a mother and at the same time being a student, you are here and you are also thinking about someone else back home, That she has eaten↑, she is <u>dressed</u>

That there is a sense of not being able to balance the dual role indicates the participants' engagement in time-demanding tasks. Participants felt that they could manage their time well, now that they are mothers, because their responsibilities and priorities have changed since the birth of their children. They feel that they have to prioritise tasks and maximise time. There were different views among participants concerning the experience of being student mothers in the university, however, the overriding view was that the role of student and motherhood could not be balanced. In general, most participants felt that these roles are incompatible and cannot be carried out equally.

One of the ways that students managed their time was to draw on support. Students explained that they are able to meet everyday demands because of the support they receive from immediate family members and from friends.

5.3 Where do student mothers access support?

Accessible health services and places of support seemed to play a significant role in the lives of student mother. Here, student mothers were asked about various places where they could receive support. The available services that were presented by the students included support from family and friends, on-campus and off-campus support.

A participant states that she did not face significant struggles with motherhood and university because she received support from her sister. She adds:

Zethu, FG, 24, 1 year & 3 months, LWC
ahhh (.) for me I wouldn't say it's difficult, because I didn't get like to, to (stuttering), my child; <u>everything</u> is done for me you know? Because everything that I need, everything he needs actually, my sister takes care of it. Yah, like basically, I didn't feel the heavy burden of being a mother, it is better, because I have somebody to help me

Another participant reported that she received support from her family with child responsibilities and with the support provided, she was able to focus on her academic work. Thulisile, Int, 21, 18 months, LWC states:

Yah, they were supportive. Very supportive from the start and <u>she</u>, my grandmother (.) she actually (.) said, like, for my mom, I think, she was like, >at first<, when she found out, she was like <u>why</u>, why didn't I tell them at the beginning so that I wouldn't have to be distracted in my schooling career and I was like, no, I would survive and then my grandma was like, "It is better (.) that she has already started".

Similarly, Lihle, reported that her mother assisted her by allowing her child to stay at home with them and with childcare. In addition, her friends at school assisted her with managing her studies, by forming a study group.

You can be a mother and a student at the same time, all you have to do is find su::pport at home and also find friends who can help you with your school work, yeah for here in school, study groups helped me a lot and my mom home↑, even though she does not live with us, but her allowing my child to stay

with us at home, it was helping, it helps if you plan how you will handle things at home (Int, 28, 5 years, LWC)

In addition, Zandi commented that she accesses support from family and friends in order to cope with her dual roles. Zandi explained that she finds support from her family and friends and went on to describe how much she talks about her child to her friends:

Zandi, Int, 24, 5 years, LAC
I've got a sister, so she also like has a baby, so yeah [it is better] the baby is also at home and she is in Cape Town and I also talk to my mo(h)m, and friends never hear the end of everything, how I am like constantly on their case about my son

Finally, Nomvula states that she receives support from her mother in-law, and from her individual therapy (private):

Nomvula, Int, 27, 2 years, 7 months, LAC
Okay, my source of support is my mother-in-law. She understands. I don't know if she's overcompensating for that the fact that I'm a student mother a::nd me at my house but she is one person that is <u>very</u> supportive. I trust her, would call there, going to town for yeah, but we talk and she's wonderful, she's always there. And (.) >recently, therapy.

The above extracts draw on the students' responses concerning support they received from their family and friends. For most students, help with child duties comes from family, and help with studies is accessed from friends. It is evident that primary support for students would come from their immediate family environment, because they are the people that students normally rely on for support. Although support from family and friends helped student mothers to cope with the demands of their roles they managed to access other supports from within the university. Here, students spoke about using services, such as the campus clinic.

5.3.1 University support services
When asked about services that cater for student mothers, some students were not aware of specific services for student mothers. They could identify other services available to students generally on campus. Lihle commented:

Lihle, Int, 28, 5 years, LWC

I don't think I have heard of any services for student mothers, I have used the clinic and the counselling, but they are for students, not student mothers

Some students indicated that they have not used any of the services in the university. Another participant mentions that she is aware of the university clinic and that she knows about the services that are offered for family planning. She explains:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC

°°I don't really use that clinic°° [okay]. I, I really don't know, you know they, they said that they do have (.), you know the, the pill and I'm not sure of the contraceptives but you know the morning after pill, they do have it, they give it to you. I'm not sure if they hhhhh, I, I don't know, I don't know. If they have nurses, on campus. I really don't know.

She further discusses how she has experienced the university's advertisement of services for students, saying:

>Other than knowing where things is, you actually know (.) the services that are available to students<. Because, even if uum, you go onto the student's, the current student's page, it, it's not on the services. You just know, okay, I'm sick, I'm having a headache, I can go to the clinic. But for something else. If you went there during the time that, of orientation, because there's been a lot of changes since we came in for orientation, >which are positive< and if you went there during that time,

Students stated reasons for not using the university services, such as not seeing the need to use the services at the time. One participant asserted that she has never seen the need to use the services. When asked what that need would be, she explained:

Thando, Int, 24, 2 years, LAC

No I <u>never</u> needed that, student counselling or something like that? I haven't been there I always tell myself that >I'll go I'll go<, but I never see the need (soft voice), because I am fine

In these comments, it is evident that students mothers link campus clinic services to illness, but they do not see themselves as having a 'need' for other services, such as the student counselling service. This

seems to be present across the student mothers' accounts. This is despite having previously highlighted the emotional burden of being a student mother.

One of the students hesitantly suggested that she would only use the university support services after considering other support. When Zandi was asked about when she would go to use university support services, she explained that she might go if she was feeling overwhelmed:

Zandi, Int, 24, 5 years, LAC
I think when you feel overwhelmed, like fa:milies aren't the same Fr:iends aren't the same, so when you feel a bit overwhelmed, or not even that they aren't supportive or whatever, when you just feel okay, I need to talk to someone (.) who doesn't know they can just give their own insight, blah blah blah, [mhhh] yeah maybe you can do that (0.3)

Thando expressed a similar approach to help seeking at university support systems, focussing on practical support to sustain her, and only turning to other services when 'overwhelmed':

Thando, Int, 24, 2 years, LAC
I need to maybe I think when I get to a point where I feel overwhelmed, I'll definitely use it. But like you see, the support systems that I'm talking about, like really how are you to this one, like this point in time, they are still (.) sustaining me. So, if I ever got to a point where like I feel like I need to talk to someone, who doesn't know me or that's in a professional environment, then I'll definitely use them.

Thandi in the extract above feels that going to one of the student services is a last resort, and she would go there even when she is fine, to gain insight into her situation. She mentions the support of her friends and her family before mentioning the university support services.

When asked if she knew about the university services such as the Child and Family Centre and the Student Counselling Centre, Thulisile said that she knew about them: Another participant reflected a slightly different response to the use of support services. She participates in individual therapy, as part of a requirement of her course, but interestingly she does not discuss the issue of being a student mother with the supervisor.

Thulisile, Int, 21, 18 months, LWC

With the Child and Family Centre, yes, I am aware of that. And, the counselling, I've always thought that counselling, for me, I think it's if you, like when they put you on, when you HAVE to go for counselling. [So Poor Academic Progress, that sort of thing?] Yeah. So I always associate it with that.

It seems that she would use the counselling services in cases where she has to or by direction, instead of doing so voluntarily. The university services are presented as being used only when compelled or under pressure, which confirms the notion of accessing the services under required procedures by the university, but voluntarily:

Lihle, FG, 28, 5 years, LWC
Yes, but then, I, as part of the Master's Program we are supposed to go and see a therapist. I am seeing one, I just haven't discussed the details with him.

In the focus group, participant 4 explains that she receives support from her supervisors:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
I'm very thankful that I have two supervisors who are <u>very</u> supportive, both my case supervisor and my research supervisor so I know that I am supported by well, whichever one.

Lindi further states that she receives support from family, friends and from therapy (private):

We::ll (.), well, .hhhh, <u>I have</u> (.) support, like (.) from my family, friends and <u>therapy</u>. Yeah (0.3)

Another student mentions her family as support structure, but asserts that financially she takes care of the child's needs:

Lulu, Int, 24, 15 months, LAC
ey, even at HOME they are supportive, but financially I have to be the one who provides for the child, so even though they are support, but sometimes↑ I don't cope, what they have to do is to stay with the child, but everything else is done by me, so it is hard for me, I don't cope sometimes, but I have to (.)

Similarly, Nomvula stated that her support comes from her supervisor at the university. She mentions that it helps to be open about ones' issues concerning university and personal life then one can be assisted:

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years, 7 months, LAC

Also having a supportive supervisor, it's, it's important, uuh, because, sometimes you would, you'd get, you'd be caught up with focusing on what the child is doing, you would be caught up emotionally and you would miss (.) your deadlines, so if you were to explain to your supervisor and at least be <u>honest</u> about it, and they would understand it's, it's, it's okay.

Nonhlanhla mentions using the Campus Clinic for her physical needs:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC

Yeah, no, I go to the Campus Clinic like if I'm sick. Like today, I'm going to go as well, just to like get some cough um stuff and some, what's this, like anti- [congestent stuff, okay].

It seems as if the student mothers do not see the campus counselling service as a potential support service. Nomvula comments on how it would need to be specifically related to her needs, for her to use it as a student mother. She phrases her problems as not in the realm of those addressed by the counselling centre, who deals with 'serious issues':

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

Eish, maybe support groups or, or I don't know, somewhere where you know that you can actually go for someone to understand you because sometimes my , the problem is not fit to go to counselling, this person is going to think, >you are wasting my time< but then it would be fit for someone who is specifically <u>there</u> to say, I need to talk to student mothers. You know [mmm] because sometimes those counselling services that are available are there for rather serious (.) issues, a::nd it's not really comfortable to make use of them to say I miss my child, [°all – heh, heh°]. And it really wouldn't make sense.

Zandi also advocates seeking help from students with whom she would identify. She comments that the focus group process represents a support group, of people who are 'in the exact position as you':

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC

And groups like this, you know, although you don't get help much, it's nice to be around some people that [Lindi: understand you], that understand you. Of course you have your housemates, you have your friends but to be around some people that are in the exact position as you, <u>that</u> also helps emotionally.

Zandi adds that having a support group would be beneficial for student mothers as a way to release stress:

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC

But I think it would, even if we didn't, it's not as if our days are SO:: full, as in packed, it would be like a stress reliever, you know. Something just to, just get away from, everything else and just spend that time speaking about something that's important to you.

Lindi supports the idea of drawing support from a student support group and suggests a time frame for the sessions:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

Like even if it's not for a whole hour, even if it's just for 30 minutes, yeah [okay]. Even if it's not for every day in the week, at least a da::y in the week, yeah.

It is evident from the above extracts that students access support from friends and family first, before seeking support elsewhere. Only one of the students shared an experience where she consulted with the university support services. Most students felt they did not need to use the services (specifically, student counselling services). Furthermore, students commented on how they could seek support, the kind of support they would expect and the function of this support.

5.4 Students' experience of motherhood

To understand student's experience of motherhood, students were asked about their experience of motherhood since the birth of their child. Thulisile commented on her experience of motherhood in an academic setting, detailing how she is expected to play her mothering role at home rather than at university. She mentioned that she would not tell her lecturer about her personal struggles as a student mother, because there would not been understanding of her situation:

Thulisile, FG, 21, 18 months, LWC

With me he would really say that. I have a professor who just wouldn't take anything. People say that, even if I'm talking, people say, okay, you can be a mother till the front gate of the University,[all – heh, heh], then when you come in, you are a student, you can worry about the child when you get home but just make sure that everything is done.

Zandi above mentions supervising staff when she talks about her experience of motherhood while at university and expresses that motherhood ends at university gates. When she enters university premises, she becomes a student. This highlights the kinds of 'private suffering' that is endured by student mothers while negotiating dual roles. There is a need to fit into the student ideal and to do so without burdening other people, such as peers and teaching/supervising staff. Zandi talks about her experience of motherhood as a student and comments that she often misses motherhood, because of her role as a student:

Zandi, Int, 24, 5 years, LAC
uhm, it's quite sad for a student↑, it's rather sad. Uhm its more sad on the fact that I miss out on most of motherhood, a::s opposed to my working counterparts, you understand, so now I <u>don't</u> get to experience every <u>single</u> moment in my child's life, because I am at school, I have a te::st, and what not, and also I don't get to do all extra murals as I want, because I must also consider that somebody else needs my care, as a mother

Nonhlanhla mentions that her experience has been a challenging one. She comments that being a student is difficult as it is, and it is even harder when one is trying to be a good student, and has other responsibilities:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC
It's, it's challenging, even though people, understand that this is something that is out there, it's, you have a, as an individual, you have to try and (.) find ways to, to fulfil your mother (.) responsibilities [mmm]. At the same time make sure that you are a good student, and hhhggg(.) even if you are just a student, that <u>is</u> hard and imagine if you have to have this extra (.) responsibility.

The same participant, Nonhlanhla, comments on the challenges of being a mother such as attending to a child who is sick:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC
It's tough, hey. It's >so, so tough< because like, my mom's working and we've got the nanny, but like <u>if</u> my child falls sick during the day, like my nanny, >I've got to go back home, I can't get hold of my mom and this and the other<.

In addition, another student explains that she tries to give her child attention by spending time with her and she further describes things that would make her a "good mom" to her child, including putting her university assignments aside, and ensuring her child does not feel 'neglected'. She elaborates here:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC

Hhhh, just the timehh, like (.) trying to balance. Getting home now and trying to be a good mom to her, and trying not to make her feel like neglected when I come ho:me and, you know, just all of (.) that stuff. It's, I've gotta, like I've gotta be a mom, like sometimes, I'm like, okay, I don't have to like rush this assignment but with her, it's as soon as I get through the door, [heh, heh] she:'s running towards me [heh, heh] you know, so yeah, those are like the challenges. Everything's just tough and you've gotta get things done ((clap, clap to indicate urgency)) and there's no other way and (.) yeah, you've got no time for anything else, besides your school work and the child [yeah]. °Yeah° [Okay] (.) Specially with me, like living so far as well, it's the taxi's, the this and the that, I'm trying to get home and you know [Ye↑↑ah, and when time is so preci(h)ous [heh, heh] and there is so much of it wasted [yeah] travelling, hey?]

5.5 The impact of motherhood on academic work

Students discussed the challenges they had as student mothers in trying to balance their dual roles. They reported on the stress associated with full-time academic responsibilities and motherhood and the challenges they faced in attempting to cope with these demands. Some students reported having made considerable sacrifices to balance their commitments in university and as mothers.

Students who lived with their children while studying full-time felt that they spent more of their time as mothers than as students. The demands on their time in the mother role superseded the time they had to spend at school. Students found that it was easier to plan for assignments and other university work, because there was a timetable and everything was planned according to this, but at home, the responsibilities were unpredictable. At home, students do house chores and attend to their child's needs, and this follows no strict guideline because of the demands that children have and mothers feel that they end up having to suspend all their university work and attend to their child. When asked about her challenges as a student mother, Lihle explained:

Lihle, Int, 28, 5 years, LWC

sometimes I get time to study, sometimes I don't, so once I get home I don't find time for ANY studies,
so I had to like do, >as much as I can< when I am still at school and I only had a few hours at school

When asked how motherhood influences academic work, Thando explains that it has been positive:

Thando, Int, 24, 2 years, LAC
Interviewer: has being a student been affected by motherhood?
it has, because like, 2010, before I took a gap year, I wasn't performing well, I was just passing with
50s, but now I get high marks!, because I know what I want in life!, so it has, extremely it has. I have
improved a lot, there is an improvement in my academics

Another participant explains that she had to make some changes to her schedule, in order to make time
to go home early to spend some time with her child. She explains:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, LWC
Hhhh. When it gets to the hectic test season, I naturally but at least I try to cut off at the library. So
that, I, I, somehow try to get her in bed earlier, and so that I can carry on later because (.) if she, like if
I'm working on the tab, or a laptop. For her (.), that is GAMING time [ye(h)s, heh, heh] so to try and,
and stop her from having , >I try to get her to bed at first<, then do it after and then you stay up (.) til
like 2 or 3 and then get some 2 or 3 hours of sleep and then come back again to school.

Similarly, in the focus group discussion, a participant 2 expressed positive outcomes in her academic
work after she became a mother:

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC
I was an <u>average</u> student 2010, 2011, and yet from 2012, that's when my baby was present in my life,
my, like my marks are like above average, really high marks [okay] so for my studies, because
especially I was away from home, having a baby didn't really <u>affect</u> my studies that much because then
I'd go home maybe after a month or after like two weekends, and what not, so I wouldn't say that that
gave me much obstacles in terms of the study

When asked about the impact of being a mother on her studies, Zandi reported a positive performance
in her studies, despite the pressure of being pregnant and the stigma surrounding this among other
students:

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC

...With me, it was, it wasn't necessarily proving myself to my family but it was just disregarding the status quo that when you're pregnant, you act in a <u>certain</u> way, you're going to be sleepy so obviously then, your marks are not, so then, I actually wanted to prove the status quo wrong [okay]. So in 3ʳᵈ yearhhh, my marks were actually <u>very</u> high.

Some positive aspects about being mothers have been raised by students. Despite having trouble with meeting the role demands of student and motherhood, mothers felt that they were motivated to study hard and excel after they had their children and for some, during pregnancy. Participant (Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC) explained that she needed to challenge the status quo, in other words, the idea that pregnant students sleep during class and are likely to perform poorly at school.

Lihle mentions difficulties with fulfilling her academic demands because she lives at home with her child. Her chores include those of her family; therefore, her academic work is not completed at home. This means that at university, she has to maximise the time she has in order to complete all her work on time and not rely on doing her work at home:

Lihle, FG, 28, 5 years, LWC

And, it's even <u>more</u> difficult because you come at school, you get a lot of work to do, you go back home, already, I have my siblings that I have to take care of <u>plu::s</u> him

Nomvula expressed her need to persevere, even 'with tears' get through her education, despite the challenges that she has as a student:

 Nomvula, Int, 28, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

[°Okay°] <And with my school work, °I try my best to <u>finish</u> like I thrive, even when I feel like it is not doable, I try with tears because I know I've got to get through°> [okay].

Lulu also mentions that her being a mother impacts on her academic progress, as she worries about her child's well-being most of the time:

Lulu, Int, 24, 15 months, LAC

it is complicated, because, (.) maybe you are busy studying, there are things, when you are studying you know there are things that are stressing and all that and it happens that maybe the child is sick, so when the child is sick, you will have a stress that you have to find money to send back home so that they can take her to the doctor, and you are always stressed about how the child is doing also, you wish that maybe to be close to her and know how what is happening

Nonhlanhla mentions the need for her to work through the hardship of motherhood and the need for one to get through the experience no matter what. She states:

Nonhlanhla, Int, 24, 8 months, LWC
You know what? It's, at the end of the day, it's, you've just gotta make it work, uum, you're not gonna inconvenience every, like it's, it's, you're not going to inconvenience everybody else >because you've got a child<. People have children, people do it, it's you've just gotta fig…, like I've just got to figure out a way of doing it myself, you know. It's, I'm not the first mother in the world to be at varsity, people get through varsity and I'm not going to be asking for special favours now and, 'This is what you need to do for me as a student mother', you know, it's, I don't know.

The level of study is of significance for students because it influences the heaviness of their academic load and having to take care of their child. For a student (Zandi) who lives away from her child, she felt that her worries would be fewer if she had to live with her child.

For students who live with their children at home and travel to the university, it is difficult to get their work done at home. On the other hand, for students who live away from their children, worrying about the safety and care of the child occupies the space they should be using to study. These feelings also bring about a sense of guilt and longing to be with their child that ultimately makes them lose focus on their studies. Lindi explains that some events are unforeseen and that she is unsettled because she constantly worries about the health of her child:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
it's not the work that's giving me a problem, because my son is asthmatic, so I constantly think, whenever I hear him on the phone coughing, I think, I worry, "My God, maybe today, he'll have an asthma atta::ck" and (.), yeah, especially during this time of (.) the cold season

Similarly, Nomvulaexplains that she is constantly worried about the safety of her child and this prevents her from focusing on her academic work:

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
So the guilt feeling is just (.) dominating right now an<u>d</u> (.) >when I came here she wass two years old at least, but the distance between us now is draining for me (.) it:'s too <u>much</u>, I (.)think about her too much, because I wonder if she is oka::y, but I hear she is sore or she is not feeling well, and I wouldn't be able to go home, even for just a weekend because it take me the whole day and night to get home and another day and night to come back,

The thought of being away from one's child also seems to act as a distraction for most students, as Nomvula explains:

Nomvula, FG, 27, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
I miss my child so much, and (.) I think I spend too much time wondering if she's fine> (.), if she's being taken care of well because you, I always feel like I'm the best person to take care of her so (.) I, I keep on wondering if she's okay and I desire to go home most of the time that we're here. So that in itself would distract me a little.

The environment in which the child lives plays an important role in determining the level of distress those students experience while they are away from their children and the impact this worry has on their studies. For some students, family dynamics are different and this has implications for how their children will be managed. For instance, Lindi stresses her worries about the safety of her child and declares that she places no trust in anyone to take care of her child but her:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC
Yeah, and because they don't live with you, so they're not really, going to always going to, "Mummy, mummy, mummy" = [I: They aren't used to that] Yeah, so, it's, it's really awkward and for me it's even cause I, I have to <u>go</u> with him because he's so young, so I hhh [all: heh, heh, heh]. I cannot trust people with my child.

Khanyisile, who feels at ease to focus on her university work because she trusts the people with whom she has left her children at home, presents a different experience:

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 14 months, LWC

Maybe because I have a separate family [mmm hmmm], like I left my kids with my husband and my mother, so I <u>would</u> say it's a, it's a <u>unique</u> experience, those who are very close to you, look after your kids by then you know that, aah, your kids are in safe hands and with the people you trust, unlike maybe, other student mothers who don't have maybe those who are very close to them might be looking after their kids

There seem to be similarities among the experiences of students who live with their children and those who live away from their children, because they both experience disruptions in their studies. They both have the sense of owing something to the child. For the students who live with their children, their presence and their care for the child are given to the child, instead of returning to their books after they come back from university. One participant became very emotional in the discussion when talking about the tension between meeting her demands at the university, and responding to her child, and being a 'good mother': Thulisile, Int, 21, 18, months, LWC

Well, with, even if, just like (.) the challenges of being a mother. One thing that has (.) uum (.) that I (.), that I have <u>faced</u> is, <one>. After having a child, I am now <u>terrified</u> of having another one [okay], I am <u>really</u> terrified and I guess it's, it's the timing issue of having a child while you are still (.)trying to be (.) this young adult and you still exploring with everything a:nd I <u>feel</u> that and (.) sometimes, I sit down and ask myself, "Am I a (.) <u>good</u> mother?" since I've got school most of the time and that's a challenge of being a student mother because (.) you can lose it sometimes if you have to rush to a 7:45 [yeh] and you, when you walking you think, ~I could have spared (.) >10 minutes<~ to make her (.) something and that's the one challenge, the concern of being a >good mother< for baby. [Participant begins to cry] (0.2)

On the other hand, students who live away from their children explain that particular acts that they do, such as calling home to ask about the child and to talk to the child, give them a sense of being present in the child's life. There is a level of involvement, whether in person or through communication, which takes place which is valued by students and which brings a sense of 'doing' mothering. For some, thinking about the child, reaching out to the child's caregiver to ask about the child's well-being, sending money, or calling the child makes them feel at ease and makes them feel like they are part of the child's life. In addition, the response by the student presents an emotional difficulty and she begins to cry during the interview, indicating the difficulty of her roles. Most students presented emotional

difficulties, but indicated that they accessing university support is no considered for 'student mother's needs', but are for traditional students.

5.6 The need for reparation through excellence

There are various reports by student mothers about the need to repair their relationship with family members, especially their mothers. Student mothers seem to feel guilt and shame for having children out of wedlock and their mothers are the primary people mentioned in this regard. There is a sense of disappointment that the participants felt because of the hurt they caused their parents by having children while at university. Zethu and Zandi felt that they needed to redeem themselves with their families, especially their mothers.

Zethu explained her need to repair her relationship with her mother:

Zethu, FG, 24, 1 year & 3 months, LWC
Because while I was pregnant I had this thing that okay, I have disappointed my mother, then what I can do to regain her trust again, and then I had to work hard ( ) and to like pass everything, yeah, like just to, for her to regain the trust and everything that she had for me so I had to work ha::rd

Another participant expressed feelings of guilt about her experience with her mother. She expresses the need to be a 'better' daughter to repair to regain her mother's trust. She refers to her 'single mother' who raised her in comparison with her status as a single mother:

Zandi, FG, 24, 5 years, LAC
Uu::m, I kinda feel more like she felt because then with, like you know, being raised by a single mother and what not and you still bring a baby into the house so for me also it was like, I want to, >for the fact that I've disappointed my mum<, by you know having a baby, can I just make it up to, like by being a better daughter (.) of some sort.

In the focus group, Lindi felt strongly about her academic achievement and contrasts her motivation with other students who are not mothers:

Lindi, FG, 25, 2 years & 7 months, LAC

I don't know about other people, but I'm not here just to:: graduate (.) for (.) me. I'm here to make
something out of myself >for someone else< so that I, he can have a better life than I did, growing up.
[Yes]. So for other people, I think it's all centered on (.) just them.

Another postgraduate student Khanyisile stated that she feels the need to prove to her children that she
is hard working and that her children motivate her to succeed.

Khanyisile, Int, 26, 4 years, LWC

NOW I am alright, I know like I have an obligation to them, to really work hard (0.2), like paying back
to them because I'm like (.) not giving them what they need, right now [mm]. So, it's like I'm, I feel
obligated to work hard to prove to them that I'm (.), I'm very successful and they, they like (.) >pushing
me< (.), to move on.

The students expressed that they have a responsibility to create a life and future that is bright for the
benefit of their children. Most of them mentioned hard work and dedication to their role as a means to
redeem themselves and ultimately to lead a successful life. The analysis of the above results illustrates
the kinds of concerns that student mothers have about their relationships with family members. Most
students expressed their guilt in relation to the maternal side of the family, specifically towards mothers
and grandmothers. The need for reparation is directed towards the mother or the grandmothers, more so
than towards any other close family member.

5.7 Summary of results

Overall, results represent student mothers' experience of motherhood and university. The results show
that while student mothers have competing roles, they continue their education because they can access
various support structures and services to manage both their lives and those of their children. Some of
the themes, which illustrate their experience, as addressed above, include: the expectations they had of
university before and after motherhood, challenges in managing time, the support systems used by
mothers to manage their roles including friends and family and services within the university, and the
overall experience of motherhood by students and its potential impact on academic work. Lastly,
themes about feeling of guilt were reported, as well as the need for reparation by student mothers
towards their close family members, especially to their parents.

The themes identified during the process of analysis represent the experience of student mothers at university. The overall results also speak to the exploration about how students balance the role of student and mother.

Concerning students' expectations of life at university, most students reported that they envisioned that it would fun and free, without much responsibility. Students further reported that they only had themselves to think about and they had time to pursue personal interests and to engage in leisure activities. On the other hand, there was a shift in their lifestyle when they became mothers. They had to split time between roles, spend less time with friends and going out and split their finances to cater for their children.

Secondly, students reported some difficulties with managing time between their dual roles. Most students reported that spending time away from their child kept them from being there for their child's development milestones, such as their first steps. Participants who live away from their children, like Zandi (24, 5 years, LAC) and Nomvula (28, 2 years, 7 months, LAC) commented that they went through many emotions because they missed their children and the distance between them made things harder to bear. Participants spent a lot of time thinking about the well-being of their children as a result and further expressed wishes to be closer to their children. Most students faced challenges with having to split time between roles. Students who live with their children needed to maximize the time they had at university for assignments, group work and other commitments because when they get home, childcare needs dominated their time. Students who live away from their children felt that they had less time with their children because of the distance.

Thirdly, regarding support systems used in order to cope with dual role demands, students expressed that family and friends were their immediate source of support. All of the students interviewed reported that they received support from friends, mother, sister, and grandmother and mother-in law. Support within the university came from some supervisors who were presented as understanding of students' dual roles. Further consultations were made with the campus clinic, but none of the students has used the Student Counselling Centre, or the Child, and Family Centre as sources of support. Some of the students mentioned that the student services are for students who are in more need. This suggests that students believe that their experience is not very important and that they do not need attention like students who are financially or academically at risk.

In terms of the experience of motherhood at university, mothers reported that it was emotionally painful to be away from their children to miss their child's development. They further reported that they had to focus on their student role while at university premises and during lectures, they would resume the role of mother after they finish with their studies. For mothers who go home to be with their children, it was reported that they had to complete most of the work at university in order to afford the child enough time at home.

Students further reported the need to repair their relationship with their immediate family members, especially their mothers. Students reported that they felt guilty for falling pregnant and that they needed to prove to their parents that they would not fall pregnant again. One of the means to repair relationships or trust from their parents was to perform well academically. Good academic performance was seen as means to create a path to a brighter future for family and for their children.

Students reported that their university performance was not negatively affected by their pregnancy and by having a child. Students reported that despite challenges with balancing two roles, they were impressed by how they performed academically during pregnancy and after they became mothers. None of the students reported any failures or difficulties with assessments and examinations as mothers.

It seems that for the students, becoming a mother had an impact on the way that they had planned their lives at university. While they reported that being free and having fun was part of their expectations, being a mother took away these fantasies, and for some mothers this was accepted as part of their sacrifice for their children. Mothers identifies with their role within and outside the university as they would differentiate themselves from students who were not mothers, using comparative phrases such as they were 'working harder than' them and 'being more responsible' than other students. This shows that while students identified with their initial role like other students, there were instances where they saw clear differences between themselves and other students, which brought many emotions for them.

Chapter 6 Discussion

This study explored the experience of motherhood by mothers who are pursuing tertiary education at UKZN. The study also explored the strategies they used in order to balance their dual role. The results show that student mothers face many challenges in terms of being full-time students and mothers. The analysis identified several themes in relation to the results found on the experience of motherhood by students. The analysis will be presented as follows: the experience of motherhood by students will be discussed; then the shame associated with being a mother while at university. There are several issues noted in the study related to feelings of guilt by student mothers. Guilt is expressed in relation to child-mother related factors and about good mothering ideals. In the midst of experiencing these feelings of guilt, the analysis revealed that students find it hard to consult with university services and thereby engage in 'private' coping systems. Lastly, the analysis will discuss the various ways in which students try to balance the roles of student and mother and coping.

6.1 The experience of motherhood at university

Women who perform many roles have to find a balance between their roles in order to achieve life commitments and goals. In this study, the women who studied faced many obstacles with their dual roles making their experience of motherhood a challenging one. Funiba (2011) reported that student mothers identified strongly with being mothers as a natural role, which gives them a sense of purpose. It was expected that a theme about motherhood as a natural role would be found in the data, as has been reported in other research (Estes, 2011; Funiba, 2011; Mamabolo et al, 2009). However, in this research mothers did not report a mothering role as one that is natural and fulfilling. Other results speak to the management of dual roles by student mothers. Student mothers expressed their experience in ways that made it 'shameful' to own, because of the circumstances in which they fell pregnant. Further, when a role is deemed unacceptable in certain spaces, such as the university, it becomes harder for the individual to experience the role freely. Therefore, it is possible that student mothers did not feel entitled to experience motherhood in the university context.

In a related study by Sekgobela (2008), students reported that their experience included physical complications during pregnancy as well as emotional difficulties. Interestingly, none of the students in this research discussed any difficulties during their pregnancy. Perhaps the idea of talking about such issues in the university setting meant something different for student mothers since the study was conducted on university property. This touches on the issue of the structure of the university as a place where mothering concerns are not talked about. As seen in the above extracts, students commented that

their mothering role is left at the university gates when they attend classes. This may well speak to the issue of specific spaces in which motherhood can be practiced. The environment in which it is practiced shapes the experience of student mothers at university and results show that students normally hid their experiences. In addition to this is the few studies (Mamabolo et al, 2009; Sekgobela, 2009) that have been done within universities about student mothers, show how this experience 'belongs' in the home. A consequence of this is that, students have to separate their roles, between home and campus, and then felt guilty about this. Other concerns are related to student mother's feelings about children as they pursue university qualification. This included the time spent away from the child and the moments in the child's development which are considered important by attachment theorists (Ainsworth, 1980; Bowlby, 1971), but which are missed by the mother.

6.2 Shame of being a student mother

The ideals of what constitutes 'good mothering' have an impact on the way that student mothers behave, for instance some mothers reported that their supervisors were not aware of their motherhood identity. Although the issue was not explored, it seemed that students felt that their mothering identity should not interfere with their student identity. One of the mothers mentioned that when she goes to university, her role as 'mom' is left at the gate and she becomes a student. Barnes (2013) talks about the student bodies and the university space as separate worlds. She argues that the traditional masculine ideals created norms that prevented women from occupying intellectual spaces and deemed their role as central to the home. Psychological literature by Bowlby (1980) and Ainsworth present the idea that mothers need to constantly nurture their children to ensure adequate development. Sekgobela (2008) mentioned that mothers Student mothers function under many ideals of motherhood and feel guilty for not being present to nurture their children and see their developmental milestones. Student mothers hid their identity when consulting the student-counselling centre and the campus clinic, which indicates that they possibly expected negative judgment from health professionals. Some reported having used the centres, but not as a student mother and some reported never having used the centres. Some of the student mothers felt that they could not use the university services because they should live with the consequences of their actions, i.e. having a child while at university. However, it is evident that while they are trying to create their own identity as mothers who pursue tertiary education, they feel the pressure of, and try to conform to, the dominant ideals of motherhood.

The notions of good and bad mothering are subtly evident in the mothers' accounts. Mothers do not explicitly address the issues of what it entails to be a good mother, but in their accounts, statements about what constitutes a good mother are evident.

By managing their roles privately, student mothers are pressured by these dominant ideals to manage the consequences of having a child and fulfilling their roles in an acceptable manner. Indirectly, student mothers support the dominant 'good-enough' mothering ideal by attempting to be good mothers while refusing to admit to shortcomings. The role of being a student is primary for student mothers when they are within university premises and using university services. That they have a hidden identity serves to reflect the shame that students feel which prevents them from reaching out for help whilst being a 'student'. Students also seem to expect judgement from the student services and therefore refrain from using university services. In addition, student mothers also feel that the university community does not need to be aware of their role as mother. The possible reasons stated by students relate to the notion of presenting oneself as a student and competent, and keeping the mothering role to contexts outside of university. This may be a way to prevent being further stigmatised for being a student mother, and possibly not being a 'good mother'.

6.3 Guilt related to mother-child factors

This study has shown that student mothers seem preoccupied with the notion of 'good enough' mothering in their accounts, and some nuances about what constitutes a good mother are portrayed. For example, there are indications about a mother needing to be close to her child, providing for her child, raising her child and being there for the child at all times, all of which are indicative of good mothering (St. Clair, 1996; Winnicott, 1971). Present in the results are issues related to life events that seem to interfere with good mothering. Students seem to feel that they are not meeting the ideal of what good mothering ought to be. Students mention factors such as the distance spent away from their child, missing developmental stages, being the "only one" who has to take care of their children, and providing for the child's needs at all costs. Mayer (2009) also reports accounts where mothers reported feelings of guilt concerning the inability to fulfil their roles as they wish.

Some students felt the need to be present in their child's life to give their children good nurturing, and foster their development accordingly. Because of their role as students, this is highly demanding, especially for student mothers who are at their postgraduate level of study, this may not always be possible. The consequences of the inability to be present in their child's life are guilt and constant worry about the child's well-being. Student mothers reported being overly concerned about the day-to-day development and experiences of their children. To show the internalised 'attachment' ideals as mentioned by Ainsworth, (1969), students demonstrated several concerns for their children and showed

attunement towards their children's needs. This attunement could be related to the maturity of the students and the kinds of responsibilities that they internalised concerning 'good mothering'.

The study established that students seem to feel guilty for not being present to nurture their children and the roles are passed on to significant family members, such as the child's grandmother. This poses many questions about the mother's role in the child's life and the consequences of separation from one's child in terms of what is discussed in psychology literature (Bowlby, 1980; Klein, 1958; Winnicott, 1971). For instance, Bowlby (1980) focused on the importance of consistent bonding between the child and his mother, which fosters a good attachment relationship and is beneficial to the infant's physical and emotional survival and development. Bowlby (1980) further states that attunement and attachment are related in that an adult, who is available, attuned and responsive to a child's needs, beginning in infancy, establishes a secure attachment for that child. This raises concerns about the applicability of the above theories in contemporary societies and if they can be applied across societies. With the increase of women participating in public spaces, it could be said that early theories about women's roles need to be reconsidered, as the modern woman is distinct from pre-industrial women. In addition to this change, women seem to have children at earlier ages and marriage seems to be postponed or not regarded (Mamabolo et al. 2009).

6.4 Guilt related to good mothering

In Funiba (2011) and Sekgobela's (2008) studies, student mothers expressed that they felt guilty for not being able to meet popular expectations of motherhood. Mothers in Funiba's (2011) study commented that they are familiar with societal expectations of them and about motherhood in particular. His results found that mothers felt bad for not being able to reserve enough time to perform their mothering roles. Mothers in Sekgobela's (2008) study expressed similar concerns and felt inadequate because at their age, they felt judged because they were not seen as 'mature' enough to have families. Mothers in this study also felt that they had disappointed their families by falling pregnant and therefore did not enjoy their mothering roles. This raises concerns about the intensity of commitments mothers have to make for their children in order to meet the ideal of good mothering. Mothers in the current study also expressed guilt in relation to not being able to meet the 'good mother' ideal. Some of the students felt bad about being away from their child, which ultimately affects their student role. Some even tried to meet the ideal student roles more than the mothering role because of the need to 'get one role right'. Students in this study commented that they often felt that they were not meeting their child's needs. For instance, students who live with their children often left their children at day care centres or with their mothers, which made them feel like they were not doing enough for their children. Similarly, students

who lived away from their children felt that they spent more time at university than at home, which meant that they spent less time with their children and families.

This ultimately leads to feelings of guilt and some regrets about being a mother and at the same time pursuing university studies. This raises the question of whether these commonly held ideals serve women well in their expectations for good mothering or whether they constrict women in experiencing motherhood in the way it occurs.

6.5 Ideals of mothering and change in women's roles

Various theories by Bowlby (1980), Klein (1958) and Winnicott, (1971) on mothering highlight the need for constant engagement of mother and child. In addition, theorists (Bowlby, 1980; Klein, 1958; Winnicott, 1971) have expressed that the relationship between the infant and its mother during the first five years of life was most crucial to socialization. Bowlby (1980) believed that disruption of this primary relationship could lead to a higher incidence of juvenile delinquency, emotional difficulties and antisocial behavior.

The attunement between the mother and her child creates a strong foundation from which that child can explore the world (Bowlby, 1980). This poses certain concerns for women who give birth and then return to university and thereafter spend less time with their child. 'Ideal' mothering in this sense creates feelings of guilt in mothers because of difficulties with time spent with and away from the child. Seeing that attachment emphasizes the mother-child bonds particularly between the child and o the biological mother of the child, several scholars (Harris, 1998; Sekgobela, 2008) have responded to Bowlby's theory and questioned the applicability of the attachment theory across societies.

Looking at women who are studying and have to divide their time between their students and mothering roles, the theories seem to suggest that mothers fail to provide for this need. The idea of being a good mother does not only receive attention is psychological studies, certain societal expectations of mothering play a role in reinforcing this ideal. This is observed in patriarchal societies where women are expected to focus on the home, while men go out for work and other public activities (Barnes, 2013). Therefore, women are likely to feel guilty in various spaces where they feel that they are not meeting the 'good mother' ideal. A sense of failure and inadequacy follows which makes it hard for mothers and puts them in a double bind because they seek to perform well in both the student and mothering roles.

Harris (1998) argues that the emphasis on the mother-child relationship by attachment theory is not relevant to all women and across societies. He argues that peers have a lot of influence on a child's emotional development. He asserts that attachment relationships are not fixed in the immediate home environment alone, but can be explored and experienced outside of the home. He further states that he agrees that a child needs a consistent caregiver in order to form secure attachments, and adds that once that attachment is formed, the child would feel safe to explore other relationships. Therefore, this means that mothers who spend time away from their children are not necessarily endangering their children for the time that they are away. The mother is the infant's base of exploration and thereafter the father, siblings and other members form a relationship with the child. Because mothering roles at university and within communities receive little attention, such issues are rarely explored. Evident in literature (Mamabolo et al, 2009; Funiba, 2011) is that most women seem to hold societal dominant views concerning motherhood and they rarely question or debate the context in which this role has evolved across time. The experience of motherhood would not be the same today as it was during pre-industrial society. Although most people acknowledge this change in mothering roles, there are rarely spaces for women to engage with these issues. As seen in the current study, student mothers would rather experience motherhood in private spaces, alone, with significant others, but not in spaces where it seems that their role is not accepted or not 'fitting'.

Theories about good mothering (Klein, 1958, Winnicott, 1971) have raised expectations about the role of mothers and these expectations seem hard to manage. This is largely because in reality, mothers have other roles to play in their family and in society, and raising children is one part of many other roles. Some students feel the need to be present in their child's life to nurture their children well, and to foster their development accordingly. Student mothers reported being overly concerned about the day-to-day development and experiences of their children. Some mothers even reported trying to find ways of having their children live close to them, but due to financial constraints could not attain this goal. Funiba (2011) reports on the importance of the dominant ideals in determining student mother's behaviour in their role as mothers and questions the contexts in which these ideals prevent women from experiencing their roles in the spaces they find themselves.

6.6 Guilt and reparation
Results about the importance of reparation are significant in the current research and few studies have reported on academic performance and reparation. Most studies (Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Mamabolo et al, 2009; Taukeni, 2014) have reported on academic performance in relation to a brighter future for students and their families, which was also found in the current research. The idea of

achieving one's goals through hard work is dominant in this study and reflects the attempts made by student mothers to repair their relationship with significant people in their lives. Participants mention their mothers as people they need to reconcile with and people to whom they need to prove themselves. This is mainly because feelings of shame they have for dishonouring their parent's advice and becoming single mothers.

Also noted in the findings are the students' needs to persevere with the difficulties as though they are a punishment for falling pregnant. Some students reported that they feel that they have to 'prove' to their loved ones that they have learned their lesson, referring to the fact that they were not expected to fall pregnant while pursuing tertiary education. Some mothers even reported trying to have their children live close to them, but due to financial constraints, they could not attain this goal. Feelings of guilt arose as mothers tried to negotiate roles and to balance them as efficiently as possible.

Mothers feel guilty for not being present to nurture their children and when the role of mothering was passed on to significant family members, such as the child's grandmother. Similar experiences were also found in literature (Buteau, 2007; Estes, 2011; Funiba, 2011; Taukeni, 2014). This suggests that mothers found support in their immediate environments and that mothering falls in the hands of both the student mother and their parents. Now in order to prove to their parents that they would not repeat their acts, student mothers presented responsible behaviours and good academic performance. This pressure seems to be internalized by student mothers as a way of redeeming themselves; they need to assure society that despite their mistakes, they can still excel in their schoolwork, that their intelligence is not determined or dependent on their mistakes. Student mothers mentioned that after having the child, their academic performance improved because they were now more responsible, goal oriented and made critical decisions that took into consideration the future of their children. Participants reported that they felt motivated to excel in everything they do, because they had a sense that they 'owe' their children and families for falling pregnant. They felt responsible for bringing shame onto their families, therefore in order to rectify this; they had decided to perform well academically.

6.7 Resistance to using university support systems

Although most of the South African research has focussed on the issue of teenage pregnancy, there is a need to understand the specific issues related to student mothers in university. The societal structures seem to support the idea that those women who have had children outside 'expected ideals' should manage the consequences of their actions. This idea is perpetuated through the lack of interest shown in the well-being of women who fall pregnant outside of societal ideals, the alienation of these women and

the rigidity in terms of support structures seen at universities. Perhaps women who step out of the 'norm' threaten societal ideals and therefore people feel the need to preserve the ideals. In this study is seems that universities are indeed intellectual spaces and there are systems or ideals that make the university policies unchanged, and that they do not meet other needs.

Further, students indicated that receiving support from family and friends makes the challenges manageable. However, there was an indication that student mothers are sceptical about using university support services because of the perceived stigma. Students do not consider their needs related to being student mothers as important enough to bring to the support services. Student mothers commented that the support services seem to cater only for general students. This categorization clearly creates a distinction between 'normal' students and 'students who are mothers', making it hard for student mothers to take pride in their student roles, while they are pregnant or a mother.

The participants reported that they feel undeserving of receiving care from the relevant university services. This includes the university clinic and the student counselling centre and sites that are likely to receive student mothers for their needs. One of the participants alluded to that the university does not have services for student mother's needs, which shows that student mothers feel different to traditional students at university. There is a need for student mothers to prove themselves academically and a constant comparison to other student without children having minor responsibilities. There is also less pressure and more emphasis on student mother's academic excellence to prove themselves as 'good' students.

6.8 Coping student mothers

Students views and experience of 'balancing' the roles of student and mother are consistent with previous research results in that students see no perfect balance of the roles but they manage (Estes, 2011; Funiba, 2011; Story, 1999). Previous research (Bosch, 2013; Buteau, 2007; Brown & Amankwaa, 2007; Estes, 2011) has shown that students have managed to perform their roles despite the challenges they face, such as not having enough for themselves or their child. Students spoke about the need to move on and 'be fine' despite having difficulties because they needed to complete their qualifications.

For example, Khanyisile felt compelled to succeed because other students expect her to know her work. Another participant mentioned that she feels that she needs to work harder, to prove to her children that she successful. Students needed to push themselves to find a balance between the roles, but for those

living away from their children they had to put more emphasis on the needs of their student roles. For students who lived with their child at home and still attended university, it was the opposite as they felt that their mother role received more attention.

Most studies have found that that student mothers value education and see their qualifications as paths to a good career path (Funiba, 2011; Mayer, 2009; Story, 1999; Taukeni, 2014).In this research, mothers asserted that they valued being able to contribute economically to their households while at the same time being a mother to their children. The balancing the student mothers do is evident in the way they try to maintain a good relationship with their family and perform well in their academic careers Student mothers are in a role where the demands can be rewarding and motivational. This suggests that they are at an advantage to influence the way in which their roles are portrayed and exercised. For student mothers, it would be meaningful in a sense that attaining university education opens a new world of opportunities for both mother and child. The experience of student mothers is also meaningful in that understanding it potentially contributes to the creation of effective university strategies and programs to help student mothers achieve their goals in higher education. Student mothers play a role that is different and possibly the hardest role to play while pursuing tertiary education. Blending the two roles of student and mother is especially significant in determining the resilience of women and serves to challenge the perceptions of women as naturally fragile, dependant and irrational beings. Becoming a mother for the first time is particularly significant and poses many challenges for the new mother, however, research shows that students have managed to do both roles (Buteau, 2007; Estes, 2011; Story, 1999).

Student mothers stated that they do cope despite the many challenges that come with their dual roles. Despite the feelings of shame and guilt associated with the ideals of mothering and being 'non-traditional' students, student mothers use private coping systems to meet their demands. As stated in the literature above, societies reinforce and recreate dominant ideals for generations. Although the dominant ideals serve the greater good and could be said to encourage 'good morals', it should be noted that generations of women have changed and so have their social circumstances. This means that the context in which women fall pregnant and start families has also changed, and societal structures should acknowledge the transitions this recognition might mean that students do not suffer at university by only accessing private support. Students should be enabled to exist with their dual identifies in the spaces they occupy, that is at home and at the university.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study, which explored the lived experiences of student mothers at UKZN, Pietermaritzburg Campus. The study is important because it provides new insights into the lives of African female students who fall pregnant while at university.

In this research, several factors have been identified that affect the way in which students perform their roles. Two of the major factors that interfere with the role include the distance away from their child and access to services (whether needed or not). Each of these will be discussed below.

The study highlights the importance of attachment theory to illustrate the ideals of motherhood that students hold in relation to parenting. Attachment theory provides a basis against which the student's experiences can be understood in the context of mothering while pursuing other roles. In the current research, mothers who stay away from their children reported a similar emotional experience to mothers who live with their children. There were two types of 'guilt' that student mothers experience – guilt related to not being a good enough mother, and guilt related to having to 'pay for' the sin of having a child while a student

Student mothers are faced with two roles where the demands can be rewarding and motivational. This means that they are at an advantage to influence their immediate structures and potentially make their roles even more meaningful. Student mothers are in a position to attain university education, and this opens a new world of opportunities for both mother and child, as has been found in the other studies (Buteau, 2007; Mayer, 2009; Story, 1999). It is interesting that despite the challenges student mothers faced being a mother seemed to have little negative effect on student academic performance. This is testimony to the perseverance and determination of these student mothers. It also raises the question of the costs that might be related to the 'concealment' of mother identity, and the self-sacrifices that these young student mothers make.

In relation to challenges and supportive processes, it is of concern that student mothers prefer to endure the struggles that they face rather than seek assistance. There are many instances where student mothers reported that they persevere in difficult times. They report that they will be 'fine' and that they do not need to consult with the counselling centre within the university, even if the reported difficulties could be catered for at the centre. The act of staying away from university services speaks to the self-sacrifices that are evident in the student's narrative and the idea about the 'student' and 'mother'

identities being incompatible. Although various studies have highlighted the need for universities to make support structures available to student mothers, these research participants seemed resistant to use the support services at the university.

Future research could explore the kinds of difficulties or dilemmas that student mothers find them in while trying to negotiate their roles and seeking support within the university. It could also focus on how the services that are available for students currently or could potentially accommodate students who have children.

Despite the resistance to using university facilities as sources of support, it seem that student mothers managed to use other means of support for their benefit, which included immediate family members and friends, and for some, private therapy spaces. Somehow, the emotional, psychological and other difficulties experienced by student mothers seem to be handled 'at home' where motherhood historically belongs. It would be interesting to explore what it is about the support provided through these avenues that student mothers feel is 'better' than that provided in a university context.

Female students are likely to face challenges related to their reproductive nature whether in places of education or of work. Students with children face many challenges in institutions of higher learning and because universities do not acknowledge their existence, their challenges are difficult to manage. It may be that students utilise support from their home because of lack of family-friendly services within the university. However, universities need to consider ways in which they could provide services that will accommodate all students, including students with children.

Female students, whether in high school or at university are more likely than male students to face interruptions in their pursuit of success. Despite this knowledge and the increasing number of women is places previously designated for males, there has been little change to accommodate women. Concerning female university students, pregnancy is a life experience that most women go through regardless of the place and time it occurs. Universities, schools or work places need to recognise that women will fall pregnant regardless of the spaces they occupy, because of the nature of their biological roles. Therefore, systems that prevent women from practicing this role seem to put women in difficult spaces as women end up hiding their mother identity in order to be accepted in the spaces they occupy.

It has been argued that female students were not recognised as people who can occupy 'rational' spaces such as universities, which catered primarily for 'the rational male student'. As such, most structures

within universities fail to accommodate the possibility of reproduction by female students. A pregnant female student is likely to face many more challenges than the man who impregnated her because she bears the evidence, and ultimately she is made to assume the responsibility of managing the roles of motherhood and doing academic work.

It seems that universities have not changed any policies for student services to accommodate students with children. Secondly, students with children fall outside of the criteria for a 'traditional student'. This means that the current student services are not fashioned to meet student mother's needs and student mothers have specific issues that the student centres are not accommodating. It could be said that student mothers hesitate to use student facilities within the university because they feel that they are no longer 'counted' as students.

Study limitations

Interviewing people about something, they feel is a challenge, and may feel 'guilty' about means that they might try to show the researcher how they had performed the task well. It is possible that the participants presented the more positive experiences of being student mothers. Therefore, the results might not be accurate experience of student mothers.

It is worth noting that the current research included a sample of students who were in their postgraduate level of study. This means that the students are likely to be mature and have managed to overcome some of the challenges of motherhood over the years, and have learned to cope. Future studies could address this by ensuring that the range of students sampled included undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Strengths

Two researchers who had an interest in the topic conducted the current research. The benefits of this are that research conceptualisation and implementation was discussed as a team, with the supervisor, making it more manageable. Data collection was also done jointly (for the focus groups, but not the interviews), and the two researchers were able to discuss the analysis of the data and compare research ideas from different points of view.

The current research took place in a university environment exploring the experience of students. Accessing student mothers was convenient and thus data collection was cost efficient.

The study research results could be transferrable to other similar contexts and populations. Specific data collection procedures are provided in the research design chapter for other interested parties to conduct similar studies in other contexts.

Recommendations for future research

Researching the experience of student mothers could contribute to the creation of effective university strategies and programmes to help student mothers achieve their dreams. The findings of this study about the experience of student mothers develop the knowledge we have about the contemporary mother. This could be used to develop university policies to assist students.

Current and previous research stated in this study highlights the lived experience of student mothers who are currently pursuing their tertiary qualification. Students, who went through the same experience but left the university because of having a child, were therefore not included in the study. Further research could explore the challenges that these ex-students face.

Future research could also explore the circumstances in which students fall pregnant and how these instances could be understood in relation to the services that universities offer concerning family planning, HIV/AIDS, psycho-education about contraceptives and other issues.

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CALLING ALL STUDENT MOTHERS

Would you be interested in participating in a discussion about being a student mother?

Are you a full time undergraduate or postgraduate student from the University of KwaZulu-Natal over the age of 18 and have a child over the age of 5 months?

IF yes,

We are looking for students to participate in a study.

If you are interested or would like more information, please email: studentmotherproject@gmail.com and we will contact you

Appendix 2: Focus Group Questions

Activity 1: Drawing of a Family Genogram including Child/Children's Father

● On the piece of paper provided please draw a simple family genogram of your immediate family.

● On the same piece of paper please write what your childcare arrangements are.

● If you would like to, please participate in the discussion by sharing this information with the group.

Schedule Questions

1. How does a student's life change when she has a child?

2. Does being a mother make one feel different to other students?

3. How does having a child affect a student's studies?

4. What impact does motherhood have on academic achievement?

5. What stressors do student mothers encounter?

6. What are the sources of support for student mothers?

7. Does the University (teaching and administrative staff) make any allowances for student mothers?

8. Could the University support student mothers better?

Appendix 3: Consent to audio record focus group

In order to be able to understand clearly what has been said in this interview/focus group, and to remember it, we would like to record the discussion on this small digital recorder. We will then listen to the recording and write it down word for word.

After this transcription has been made, we will then delete the recording on the digital recorder.

We assure you that your name will not be linked to the recording or the written information from the recording. We will give you a code name, using numbers, for example Participant 1_Interview 3. Or Focus group 3.

Do you consent to the recording of this discussion?

Yes_____   No_____

If yes, then please sign here _____ Date _____

Appendix 4: Confidentiality pledge

As a member of this Focus Group, I promise not to repeat what was discussed in this focus group with any person outside of the focus group. By signing this pledge I hereby promise to keep the comments made by the other focus group members confidential.

Signed _____   Date: _____

Appendix 5: Individual interview questions

1. How would you describe your experience as a mother in University?

2. Please describe some of the difficulties you have encountered.

3. Please explain some of the positive factors about being a student mother?

4. Do you feel that your childcare arrangements are optimal for your child? What would you change if you could?

5. Can you describe your understanding of the term "mother"?

6. Can you explain where you think this understanding came from?

7. What in your opinion is the most important thing a mother should do for her child?

8. Do you think the University (Staff and administration) is aware that you have a child? Why? Why not?

9. What could the University do to make life easier for you?

Appendix 6: Consent to audio record individual interviews

In order to be able to understand clearly what has been said in this interview/focus group, and to remember it, we would like to record the discussion on this small digital recorder. We will then listen to the recording and write it down word for word.

After this transcription has been made, we will then delete the recording on the digital recorder.

We assure you that your name will not be linked to the recording or the written information from the recording. We will give you a code name, using numbers, for example Participant 1_Interview 3. Or Focus group 3.

Do you consent to the recording of this discussion?

Yes_____   **No**_____

If yes, then please sign here _____ **Date** _____

Appendix 7A: HSSREC Letter of Approval

UNIVERSITY OF ™
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

03 August 2015

Ms Cebisile Kubeka (210515290)
School of Applied Human Sciences – Psychology
Pietermaritzburg Campus

Dear Ms Kubeka,

Protocol reference number: HSS/0826/015M
Project title: Balancing the roles of student and motherhood: The experience of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 02 July 2015, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and the protocol have been granted **FULL APPROVAL**.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

I take this opportunity of wishing you everything of the best with your study.

Yours faithfully

....
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)

/ms

Cc Supervisor: Dr Mary van der Riet
Cc Academic Leader Research: Dr Jean Steyn
Cc School Administrator:

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximbap@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

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Appendix 7B: Registrars' letter

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL ™

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

8 April 2015

Cebisile Kubeka
Discipline of Psychology
School of Applied Human Sciences
College of Humanities
Pietermaritzburg Campus
UKZN
Email: 210515290@stu.ukzn.ac.za

Dear Ms Kubeka

RE: PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH

Gatekeeper's permission is hereby granted for you to conduct research at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) towards your postgraduate studies, provided Ethical clearance has been obtained. We note the title of your research project is:

"Balancing the roles of student and motherhood : The experience of students at the University of KwaZulu-Natal".

It is noted that you will be constituting your sample by interviews and focus groups with student mothers in all Colleges on the Pietermaritzburg campus.

Data collected must be treated with due confidentiality and anonymity.

You are not authorized to contact staff and students using 'Microsoft Outlook' address book.

Yours sincerely

MR B POO
REGISTRAR (ACTING)

Appendix 8: Information sheet

The Study

We are conducting research on student mothers enrolled at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. We would like to know about student mother's experiences, use of coping strategies and student support services within this university.

A potential benefit of participating in this study is that you will hear others' views about balancing the roles of being a mother and of being a student, and to potentially learn about their employment of various coping strategies that help them balance their dual role. An indirect benefit is that the results of this study could inform health interventions amongst students.

You might be asked to be involved in either an interview, or a focus group, or both.

The focus group

The focus group will take about 2 hours. It will be held in the Psychology laboratory in the Psychology building. It is a private setting. The focus group will be conducted by a research assistant of the same race and gender as the participants.

The questions will focus on the lived experiences of being a student mother, management strategies and lessons learned. The questions will be broad and not directed to any individual in the group. There are no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to express yourself freely and informally. You can answer questions you are comfortable to answer and leave the ones you wish not to comment on.

In the discussion we will not use your name or student number; instead we will use pseudonyms (false names). Each person who participates will choose a pseudonym, so that his or her name will be protected. This means that in the final data from the project no one will be able to know who said what in the interviews or focus groups.

Because you are in a group setting, you will be requested to sign a confidentiality pledge saying that everything discussed in the focus group will be kept confidential. By signing, you are agreeing that you will not reveal and discuss what was said in the focus group. You will be also asked to choose a fake

name during the discussion. However, be advised that we cannot guarantee confidentiality even if a pledge is signed. For this reason, you will be asked general questions as a point of discussion. You are advised not to disclose any sensitive personal information about yourself during the discussion.

After participating in a focus group, you may be asked to participate in a separate, personal interview.

The interview process

The interviews will take an hour. It will be held in a room in the Psychology building. The researcher will ask you questions about your experiences as a student mother. The study wants to find how you understand motherhood, and what impact motherhood has had on your studies. There are no right or wrong answers. You are encouraged to express yourself freely and informally. You can answer questions you are comfortable to answer and leave the ones you wish not to comment on.

Recording

With your permission, the interviews and focus groups will be recorded so that the researcher can transcribe and analyse what people have said.

Please be advised that your participation in this study is voluntary. You are free to leave the study at any time of the process.

After the focus groups and interviews

After the discussion we will take the recordings and transcribe them into a written form. In this process you will still be referred to by your pseudonym. The transcription will be analyzed and reports will be written.

The information may also be used in future research projects. The information collected in the research process may also be used to write research articles, and to present at conferences so that other people may learn from the experience of our research. These written documents, and conference presentations, will use only pseudonyms and not reveal any identifying information related to the participants in the study.

A synopsis of the results of the study will be made available to you on request.

Storage of Information

The information will be kept for future research purposes. It will be stored in a secure location – locked filing cabinet for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Anything else?

If you need advice on further health management or the research raises other social or psychological issues you can visit the Campus Clinic or the Student Counselling Services. At the campus clinic you can get information and assistance on family planning and reproductive health at the clinic you can book an appointment to either Sr Govender or Sr Peters via email govenderna@ukzn.ac.za and petersi@ukzn.ac.za. You can also approach the Child and Family Centre at the University, for an appointment with an intern psychologist (contact that secretary Ms N Naidoo: naidoon2@ukzn.ac.za; 033 260 5166).

If you have any concerns about this study you can also contact Ms Phume Ximba of the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics Committee (031 260 3587; email ximbap@ukzn.ac.za).

If you have any questions about this study, then please talk to the researcher and or email the supervisor of this research study Dr Mary van der Riet (tel 033 260 6163; email vanderriet@ukzn.ac.za).

Appendix 9: Consent form for focus group and interviews

I hereby agree to participate in this study. I have had an opportunity to read and understand the information sheet given to me.

The purpose of the study has been explained to me. I understand what is expected of me in terms of my participation in this study and the time commitment I am making to participate.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I know that I may withdraw from the study at any point, without negative consequences.

I understand that there is a limit to confidentiality in a focus group setting as the researcher cannot guarantee that the other students will adhere to the conditions of the confidentiality pledge.

I understand that my data will be stored securely for a period five years and may be used for future research. I understand that measures will be taken to ensure that my identity is protected and my participation in this research will be completely confidential in this regard. I understand that no identifying information about me will be published.

I have the contact details of the researcher should I have any more questions about the research. In the unlikely event that any personal issues should arise during the research, I have been given contact details for Student counselling and the Campus Clinic services.

I have also been given contract information of the Humanities and Social Science Research Ethics office.

Signature of Participant…………..   Date…................

Appendix 10: **Child and Family Centre letter**

6 March 2015

To whom it may concern

This letter serves to provide the assurance that should any interviewee or member of a focus group discussion require psychological assistance as a result of any distress arising from the approved research process conducted by students in the Discipline of Psychology, School of Applied Human Sciences, Pietermaritzburg campus; it will be provided by psychologists and intern psychologists at the UKZN Child and Family Centre.

Yours sincerely

Professor D.R. Wassenaar
Academic Leader

Discipline of Psychology
School of Applied Human Sciences

Child and Family Centre
School of Applied Human Sciences

Postal Address: Private Bag X01, Scottsville, Pietermaritzburg3209, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)33 260 5166 **Facsimile:** +27 (0)33 260 5809 **Email:** Naidoon2@ukzn.ac.za
Website: psychology.ukzn.ac.za

Appendix 11: Transcription Conventions

Originally developed by Gail Jefferson (cited in Hutchby and Wooffitt, 2002, ppvi-vii) the transcriptions of my data utilise the following conventions:

(0.5)   Number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.

(.)   A dot enclosed in brackets indicates a pause in the talk of less than two-tenths of a second.

=   'Equals' sign indicates 'latching' between utterances.

[ ]   Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.

(( ))   A description enclosed in a double bracket indicates a non-verbal activity.

-        A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior sound or word.

:   Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter.

(Inaudible)   Indicates speech that is difficult to make out. Details may also be given with regards to the nature of this speech (eg. shouting).

.   A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the end of a sentence.

?   A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question.

↑↓   Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intentional shift. They are placed immediately before the onset of the shift.

Under   Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.

CAPITALS   Words in capitals mark a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.

° °   Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk they encompass is spoken noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.

< >   'Less than' and 'More than' signs indicate that the talk they encompass was produced noticeably slower than the surrounding talk.