

**Relational Processes Enabling the Balancing
of Academic Work and Motherhood:
A Grounded Theory Study with Academic
Women at a South African University**

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ABSTRACT

Through the use of contextual data, this research study aims to explicate a theory about the experiences of academic women, who are also mothers, employed at a South African University. The research is interpretive in nature as it explores the women's accounts of the conflicts they face in striving to satisfy the demands of both their scholarly work and family responsibilities within multiple intersecting factors related to their personal/familial circumstances, and the strategic processes they engage in to manage the balance between these competing roles. The study followed a constructivist grounded theory design in an attempt to test the hypothesis (emerging from a prior pilot study) that the most significant enabling factors at work in the lives of these women comprise various relational support processes. The findings indicate that balancing academic work and mothering is a delicate activity that is sensitive to a number of facilitating as well as hindering factors. The participants revealed that they experience work-family role-conflict as a result of competing desires to dedicate themselves fully to both of these roles. The relational factors most prominently cited as being critical to enabling a work-family balance include the presence of a supportive partner, a support structure in the home in the form of an employed domestic helper, and the support derived from a 'shared experience' with other working mothers. Non-relational factors emanating from the unique quality of life afforded to mothers by employment within the particular case institution also emerged as being significantly enabling of a work-family balance for this group of academic mothers.

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For Rosie

*“Ma wami, uthisha wami, umngane wami. Uyaphila
enhliziyweni yami zonke izinsuku”*

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CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION & OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 Background to the study

In many societies, an historical trend has existed that perpetuates the under-representation of women in positions of power, responsibility and leadership. Despite a dramatic global increase in the formal employment of women in the last five decades, this continues to be the case and South Africa, with its legacy of inequality and discrimination, is no exception (De la Rey, 2005). Higher Education is an institution in which this gender imbalance is particularly evident and the reported gender demographics for senior level academic staff at many South African universities remains a cause for concern (Orr, 2007). Prior research in South Africa has shown that a great majority of women in Higher Education are concentrated in lower- or middle-level and temporary lecturing positions and predominantly in the support sector (Walker, 1998; Mama, 2003; Shackleton, 2007). Given the move toward globalisation in recent times and the financial strain placed on households by an unstable global economic environment, more women are steadily entering the workplace (Orr, 2001; Ntuli, 2007). However, despite this transformation, women are yet to become noticeably represented in industry and in sectors such as Higher Education. South African research on the issue of why women have failed to advance through the academic ranks has indicated that “a host of interconnected structural, social, cultural and psychological factors are woven together in a pattern of disadvantage” that has been instrumental in complicating the career paths of academic women (Orr, 2007, p. 164).

The societal development toward increasing numbers of women in paid work has had a profound impact on the traditional role of mothers (Farel & Dobelstein, 1982). Along with new opportunities of employment for women have come the resulting shifts in household and childcare responsibilities for mothers. For middle-class women, this entry into sustained workforce participation has brought with it concerns of work-family balance, especially as they consider whether and at what points in their careers to have children (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). It is apparent that the increase in the number of women in the labour force represents a departure from the long-held, patriarchal stereotype of the ‘appropriate’ roles women ought to occupy – namely those of child-bearers and home-makers – and they are now taking on the additional role of being working women. Workplace pregnancy, maternity leave and childcare issues constitute transitions

in the lives of all working women, but identity and role struggles are conceived to be particularly acute for professional women because their careers and their traditional feminine roles seem to be at odds (Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). The processes involved in managing the work-family balance between a demanding full-time career and the responsibilities of mothering can place emotional and physical strain on women and may lead to experiences of 'role-conflict' (Blair-Loy, 2003). Professional women have reported experiences of exhaustion and guilt over time and energy conflicts between competing public (work) and private (home) realms (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). A career in academia is an especially challenging occupation for a mother given that the exceptional demands on one's time, amongst many other characteristic traits of academic work, often conflict with the demands of raising children (Sader, Odendaal & Searle, 2005). Meeting these work demands may come at a sacrifice of family time and the career-driven academic mother faces many difficult decisions in her attempt to integrate her scholarly and maternal ambitions.

From an outsider's perspective, an academic faculty position may appear to be an ideal work environment for women who are mothers: a flexible schedule, autonomy, interaction with other adults, and opportunities for research on topics of interest (Swanson & Johnston, 2003). However, studies conducted both in South Africa and internationally have found that academic women often perceive traditional academic careers and research agendas to be incompatible with having and raising children (De la Rey, 1999; Mama, 2003; Swanson & Johnston, 2003). Mama (2003) urges that the under-representation of women in South African universities, the conservative gender ideologies that persist in these tertiary institutions, and the markedly unequal gender division of labour between the domestic and professional spheres makes academic women a group of interest for study. She asserts, however, that "the experiences of women faculty have remained largely un-researched, with a few notable exceptions" (p. 118). Research focusing on women's issues is of particular importance in South Africa given its complex history of racial and gender discrimination under the apartheid regime (1948-1994).¹ The South African context presents various historical, political and socio-economic issues that make doing research in this country on topics such as women in the workplace and mothering markedly different from doing it elsewhere. Such issues include: racism, women's rights post-apartheid, workplace dynamics resulting from social redress initiatives like affirmative action, poverty, the spread of disease and HIV/Aids, the prevalence of woman-headed households, and concerns about scarce skills as a result of the 'brain drain'

¹ Racial segregation and the supremacy of whites had been traditionally accepted in South Africa prior to 1948, but in the general election of that year, D. F. Malan officially included the policy of Apartheid in the Afrikaner Nationalist Party platform. The legal basis of Apartheid was largely repealed in 1991-1992 but the first fully free elections were only held in 1994 (Columbia Encyclopedia, 2008).

phenomenon. This study seeks to build on the limited existing South African research about mothering in academia (e.g. Walker, 1998; De la Rey, 1999; Orr, 2007; Pillay, 2007) and, in doing so, to draw out those specific issues that are relevant and unique to the experience of working and mothering in the context of a South African Higher Education institution. Through an investigation into the multiple hindrances and facilitating factors which may reduce or exacerbate an academic mother's experience of role-conflict, this study seeks to provide insight into those critical processes that enable these mothers to manage the delicate work-family balance.

1.2 Institutional context of the study

Rhodes University in South Africa was chosen as the specific site for this research study and it provides a constant institutional climate in which to examine the activities of South African academic women. The choice of a single organisational context is an important aspect of the research design because it allows for the subtle nuances of each woman's lived experience of working and mothering in academia to be elucidated. This is because each of the women's unique individual circumstances and career trajectories interact with the particular organisational framework provided by this University's policies, ideals and institutional culture to dictate her experience of managing her career and family responsibilities.

An historical analysis of the university system in South Africa shows indisputable evidence of gender and race discrimination (De la Rey, 1999; Mama, 2003; Shackleton, 2007). In 1994, women comprised only 29.8% of the total academic and research staff of South African universities (De la Rey, 1999), and by 2007, more than three decades after independence, it is reported that women still filled fewer than 30% of the *senior* positions in South African universities (Shackleton, 2007). Although there have been increases in the participation of black people and women over this time, there is still a majority of white men at the upper levels of academia and in certain fields of study which carry more prestige (De la Rey, 1999). As such, despite a progressive national policy environment in South Africa (Riordan in Shackleton, 2007), women in academia remain a minority and are under-represented as "intellectual leaders" in universities (Mama, 2003; p. 118). This provides further motivation for why research on women in academia is of particular importance in the South African context.

In congruence with this national trend, the equity profile of Rhodes University can be regarded as having profound inequities along both racial and gender indices. This bias reflects the predominant

pattern evident across university systems on a global scale (Walker, 1998). The *Rhodes University Employment Equity Report* for the period 2009–2010 reveals that, as of October 2009, the full-time academic staff included a sum total of 171 senior academics (Professors, Associate Professors and Senior Lecturers); of these, 46 were women – only seven of whom were black women (Employment Equity Report, 2010). Similarly, according to the *SETA Workplace Skills Plan and Annual Training Report* for 2009, which provides the most recent information regarding the personnel profile at Rhodes University, of the 38 department heads at Rhodes University, only six were women, all of whom were white (SETA, 2009). This document goes on to report that out of a total of 319 university lecturers for the year 2009, only 121 were women and a mere 30 of these women came from designated race groups (SETA, 2009). Once again, the race and gender bias towards white men in academia is evident in the recent Rhodes University statistics.

Rhodes University as an organisation, however, is regarded as being supportive of women's advancement in academia and women's rights (WASA, 2008). The Women's Academic Solidarity Association (WASA) is an organisation that is affiliated to Rhodes University, and that exists to provide women with a supportive academic network and to advance women's issues on campus (WASA, 2008). This group has made various suggestions and appeals and has motioned for policy revisions regarding childcare options available to working mothers at the University. As an employer, Rhodes University considers itself a 'family-friendly' institution and its parental benefits and leave policy is situated within a framework that recognises that it is most often women who bear the dominant responsibility for child-rearing and that this impacts on a woman's career (Policy for Parental Benefits and Leave, 2009). In this regard, the framework attempts to provide women with opportunities for balancing their multiple responsibilities. The institution also recognises the need to be "supportive and non-judgmental" of individuals regarding their decisions to become parents; the University asserts that its leaders understand the "interplay between work and family responsibilities" and attempts to promote a healthy balance and therefore the well-being of its staff (Policy for Parental Benefits and Leave, 2009, p. 2). This policy was recently amended with significant improvements being made and the updated version was effected in January 2009. The policy is said not only to meet but to improve upon the minimum legal requirements as outlined in the *Labour Relations Act* of 1995, and the *Basic Conditions of Employment Act* of 2002 (Policy for Parental Benefits and Leave, 2009).

In a further attempt to provide women academics with options for balancing their careers with childcare, Rhodes University provides a Day-Care facility for the children of parents working and

studying in the University. This facility is said to support and implement family-friendly policies (Policy for Parental Benefits and Leave, 2009). The services of the Rhodes Day-Care Centre are paid for by the individual staff members who utilise the facility but these costs are subsidised by the University. This facility was started in 1994 as an initiative of the then Rhodes University Staffing Association (RUSA), which no longer exists (Averbuch, 2010a). Recent changes were made to extend the opening hours and periods of availability of the Day-Care Centre as a result of the need for these changes being identified at the Gender Imbizo held in November 2007. In addition to this, Rhodes University has committed itself to providing an after-hours childcare service to parenting faculty members in the event of official University occasions such as meetings and functions held in the evenings, on weekends or on public holidays (Averbuch, 2010b). This service is a recent development and such support was previously only offered to staff members through WASA. This commitment by Rhodes University has been made in view of their acknowledgement that childcare issues may contribute additional strain on an individual's capacity to attend meetings and events after hours, and thus a range of childcare solutions needed to be provided to parenting staff (Averbuch, 2010b). While this support yields obvious benefits for the individual beneficiaries, it is also seen as a necessary contribution to the University's transformation initiatives (Averbuch, 2010b).

In light of the above, it is evident that Rhodes University has, in recent years, made progressive moves toward better recognising and managing gender issues that affect academic women, and acknowledging and providing for the needs of parenting faculty members. Despite this apparent institutional support, the aforementioned faculty statistics would suggest that there are historical features, characteristic not only of Rhodes University or South Africa but of Higher Education as an institution (as reflected by the worldwide prevalence of this phenomenon), that persist in complicating the career paths of women in academia and making it relatively more difficult for them to achieve status and recognition.

1.3 Rationale for the research

One might expect that the supportive structural aspects of the institutional climate cultivated at Rhodes University would significantly aid in a working academic mother's ability to more effectively balance a career with her family roles and responsibilities. However, in questioning what it is that enables a work-family balance for academic mothers, this study seeks rather to draw attention to those influential elements in women's lives that are of a more relational nature and

over which the employer/institution itself has little control. The significance of such relational enabling processes to the management of work-family role-conflict were alluded to in the findings of my own prior research (Poulos, 2009) with successful senior academic women at Rhodes University who are also mothers. This preliminary research formed the pilot study for the current research and was instrumental in revealing the possible constructs to be further investigated and developed, and in defining the focus and scope for this research.

1.3.1 The pilot study

The pilot research I conducted at Rhodes University in 2009 as part of an Honours degree in Organisational Psychology was exploratory in nature as I sought to develop an overall understanding of the lived experiences of working academic women with young children with respect to a wide range of influences rooted in all aspects of their working and mothering lives. Based on what I gleaned from studying prior research in the available literature, I hypothesised that *senior* academic women are a rare group in South African universities. I chose them to be the focus of my inquiry on the basis that they could best represent academic mothers who had been 'successful' in balancing their working and mothering roles. The aim of the study was two-fold: firstly, it explored the 'career narratives' of these women, focusing on how their demanding professional careers, in terms of their scholarly development, productivity, research and teaching practice, had been balanced with mothering of their children, highlighting the conflicts they experience as a result of managing their multiple roles. Secondly, it sought to examine the notion of Rhodes University as a 'family-friendly' institution from the perspective of its senior academic women. As such, the study involved gathering qualitative accounts from a small group of senior academic women about the institutional support provided by Rhodes University by way of parental benefits and leave, assistance in childcare, and attention to women's issues. The outcome of the research proposed a broad, contextually-based theory of the experience of this group of women in balancing their competing roles and the various strategies that they employ to manage this balance (Poulos, 2009).

Based on my findings, and consistent with research findings in other contexts, I theorised that work-family role-conflict is indeed something that is experienced by academic mothers working at Rhodes University. The participants revealed that their conflict is caused primarily by the feeling that they are not dedicating enough of their time to either their work or their family role (Poulos, 2009). Another significant finding generated by this research was that Rhodes University is

perceived to provide a supportive institutional work context for academic mothers in principle; but in practice, it was felt that certain policies do not translate into provisions and benefits that reflect this supportive culture (Poulos, 2009). Furthermore, it was found that despite Rhodes University positioning itself as a 'family-friendly' institution (Policy for Parental Benefits and Leave, 2009), some of its senior academic women who are also mothers perceive that the policies and facilities put in place to assist them in managing a work-family balance do not provide adequately for their needs in order to sufficiently reduce their experience of role-conflict (Poulos, 2009).

1.3.2 Refining the research problem

My aim with the current study was to build on the above preliminary findings based on areas that I identified as gaps or limitations in these findings. Such limitations are to be expected with research in an area such as this that is especially broad, rich in complexity and covers a large number of themes and intricate relationships. It was not possible to adequately capture, or do justice to, the complexity of this field in a single, brief study with a small, homogenous participant group. What this pilot study has enabled, however, is the unearthing of many unexpected themes and under-researched avenues that may now be followed up with more focused and rigorous research, as well as refinements that can be made to improve the process and methods of my research. As such, the findings of the pilot study have helped to raise further research questions in this area. Examples of such questions include:

- Can we assume that work-family role-conflict is a typical experience of *all* academic mothers based on this being the case for a group of white *senior* academic women?
- May the level of conflict experienced by senior academic mothers be, in part, ascribed to the added demands and commitments that come with a higher status position and so limit their time for family more so than an academic mother in a position of lower rank?
- If the most senior academic women at Rhodes University feel that their needs as working mothers are not being adequately supported by the institution, is it possible that these conditions may be even more difficult for women in the lower ranks?
- If the structural support (policies and provisions) provided by Rhodes University does indeed contribute very little towards enabling academic women to balance their working and mothering roles and responsibilities, what are the critical enabling factors that make this lifestyle possible and how do those processes operate?

My aim is to pursue the above questions and refinements through the work of the current study with the intention of building onto the developing theory around academic mothers' work-family balance at Rhodes University. The first step I have taken toward building a more comprehensive theory has been to employ a wider sampling strategy to incorporate the views of a broader range of academic women at Rhodes University into the analysis for this study. The use of a wider participant base and a greater number of interviews allows me to evaluate the 'hypotheses' raised by the pilot study and to assess whether they hold for a larger, more heterogeneous sample of academic mothers. In addition to this, incorporating a more varied sample of women allows me to address some relevant issues that were not dealt with previously. The sample for the pilot study comprised only white senior academic women who, it was noted, are likely to be in a much stronger position within a university to negotiate for what they want than perhaps women of other statuses and ethnic heritages (Poulos, 2009). As such, the extended and diversified sample of women in this study allows for comparative analysis to be conducted between the experiences of academics of different racial/cultural backgrounds, as well as between academic women at different levels in the institutional hierarchy and at different stages in their careers.

As implied above, the second and most significant contribution made by the findings of the pilot study was to illuminate and refine the particular research focus for this study. As a result of the broad scope of the pilot study, there were certain aspects of the participants' lives that emerged during the course of the interviews but could not be elaborated on in sufficient detail, despite the relevance of these factors to the process of managing work-family balance and my own keen interest in these themes. Consequently, for the central focus of this research, I do not intend to reiterate the same fundamental points dealt with in the pilot study but instead I have chosen to accentuate one specific area of interest that, although recognised as important, was dealt with only marginally in the previous study. As has been suggested, this study focuses on determining and examining the specific relational processes that provide support to academic mothers at Rhodes University and enable them to balance their academic careers with their family responsibilities more effectively. My prior findings indicated that these relational enabling processes include the support received from: a spouse/partner, a collegial relationship with a Head of Department/mentor, and the employment of private domestic helpers and childminders (Poulos, 2009). These findings are corroborated by numerous international studies (e.g. Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Hochschild, 1989; Parasuraman, Greenhaus & Granrose, 1992; Parson, Sands & Duane, 1992; Maume & Mullin, 1993); however, these studies and the available literature in this area are largely outdated, suggesting that there is a paucity of contemporary research on these issues. My intention is to

expand on this prior research as my previous study did not adequately investigate the various sources of social support available to academic mothers in a uniquely South African context. This study aims to evaluate the tentative hypothesis that the most critical forms of support received by academic mothers are *relational* and that their effectiveness in managing a work-family balance is dependent on the dynamics of their multiple personal relationships.

1.4 Theoretical framework of the study

Throughout every stage of the research process, this study was guided by the overarching framework of grounded theory as both a theoretical perspective and a methodology, and the principles of grounded theory research dictated the overall structure, paradigm, implicit assumptions, research question formation, and methods of the study. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) describe the grounded theory approach as a ‘theory/methods package’ with deep roots in symbolic interactionism and an interpretive/constructivist epistemology. In the discussion that follows in this chapter (and is further built on in Chapter 3), the coherence between the paradigm, theory and method of this study will be explicated. This introduction to grounded theory has been placed in this chapter in acknowledgement of its central role as an approach that has shaped all phases of knowledge-gathering and -production in this study.

1.4.1 Research paradigm

I approached the research problem by placing the study within an interpretive/constructivist paradigm (Ogina, 2007; Creswell, 2009). I combined insights from the interpretivist and constructivist paradigms because these two traditions focus on the processes of interpreting and creating meaning from participants’ accounts of their unique lived experiences (Ogina, 2007). Crotty (1998) states that within the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, reality is subjective and constructed. This indicates that the ontological stance underpinning this study is that reality exists through peoples’ experience of the world – what the participants themselves construct as their experience of working and mothering in an academic environment is real (Ogina, 2007). Furthermore, the reality that exists is socially constructed through symbolic processes among people and the meaning of experiences is transmitted through social interaction (Berg, 2007). It follows then that, since people attach different meanings to things and the participants each had different experiences, multiple realities emerged (Ogina, 2007). In order to understand the behaviour of a person, a researcher is required to see the world of meaning through the person’s

eyes so as to gain a deeper understanding of how they construct their reality (Berg, 2007). As such, the ontological assumptions of reality, the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the participants, and the methodology of this study are embedded in interpretive/constructivist epistemology (Ogina, 2007). The aim of research procedures embedded in this epistemology is to explain the subjective meaning and motivation behind social action and to show how the different versions of reality that are produced influence the actions that people take (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006).

The methodological approach prescribed by the interpretive/constructivist paradigm proposes guidelines that seek to explore the realities people construct to make sense of their lived experiences (Creswell, 2009). Consistent with the theoretical and epistemological stance, I adopted grounded theory as an appropriate methodological approach for this study because I intended to generate a substantive theory based on the multiple realities of the experiences of the academic mothers in this study (Ogina, 2007). In keeping with these assumptions of what is held as 'real', grounded theory methods are able to generate theory through interpretive processes that is fitting with the kind of knowledge revered by the interpretive/constructivist paradigm.

This research also falls under the broad approach of feminist research which may be used within this paradigm. While there are no specific methodological prescriptions within this approach, feminist research is characterised by a focus on studying women's lived experiences from their own perspective and on validating their experiences through the research (Harding, 1987; Burman, 1994; Marshall, Woollet & Dosanjh, 1998). The study fits within this approach as it aims to develop an analysis based on exploring the lives and experiences of the women participants and to generate theory that is *grounded* in those experiences (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). Furthermore, a feminist approach positions women's experiences, ideas and needs as different from those of men and aims to understand the complexity of their lived experience within the power relations of patriarchy (Marshall *et al.*, 1998; Squire, 1998). Given the significance of such gendered subjectivities, the feminist research agenda endeavours to make the voices of women heard (Wilkinson, 1997; Squire, 1998). This research recognises that women's experience of motherhood in the academic context is unique and complex and serves to represent their subjective experience of the processes in which they engage. It also posits the same notion as referred to by Wilkinson (1997), that women inhabit a more 'relational' world than do men, and that this impacts their actions in response to these processes.

From the above discussion, it is evident that considerable design coherence (Durrheim, 2006) can be shown between the interpretive/constructivist paradigm (and its emanating assumptions), the feminist underpinnings of the study, and the methods of grounded theory research. Similarly, there is a great deal of overlap and consistency between the tenets of interpretivism and constructivism that lends them to being merged together as a useful paradigmatic framework (Creswell, 2009). The interpretive paradigm is characterised by an emphasis on understanding rather than explanation (Charmaz, 2006), the representation of reality through the eyes of the participants, and the importance of viewing the meaning of experience in context (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993). The interpretive approach holds that all social life is based on socially constructed meaning systems (Neuman, 1997). As such, an interpretive researcher seeks to learn what is meaningful to the people being studied, and how they experience daily life, by getting to know their particular social setting, sharing their feelings and interpretations, and seeing the world from their point of view (Neuman, 1997). The interpretive definition of theory-building assumes multiple, emergent realities, 'interdeterminancy', truth as provisional, and social life as a process (Charmaz, 2006). Similarly, constructivism celebrates firsthand knowledge of empirical worlds; it assumes the relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of participants' meanings (Charmaz, 2003).

As will be revealed through the review of literature in Chapter 2, a large portion of the seminal research studies in this field have been conducted following very similar methodological frameworks (e.g. statistical or narrative-qualitative studies). This sort of practice brings with it certain epistemological implications in that the nature of the knowledge that can be generated through research using one particular kind of theory/method interaction is limited. In light of this, it was my intention with this study to step outside of the established ways of doing research in this field and attempt to generate a new and refreshed kind of knowledge about the phenomenon of working and mothering in academia through the use of grounded theory. Moreover, given that there are multiple versions of grounded theory, each peculiar in the way they view/use theory and their methodological prescriptions, the application of a specialised strand of the grounded theory research design – that of Kathy Charmaz – makes the kind of knowledge that is to be produced even more specific. As such, the characteristics of *constructivist grounded theory* according to Kathy Charmaz guided the research process in this study. It was my intention that I should gather validity for the study – and the resulting theory – through following an established technique and aligning my research design with a recognised theoretical framework like that of Charmaz.

1.4.2 Assumptions of grounded theory

The defining characteristics of the constructivist grounded theory approach and the ways in which it has emerged out of (and diverged away from) the traditional, more objectivist, approaches to grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Glaser, 1978; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), are discussed in depth in Chapter 3. More generally, however, grounded theory as a qualitative research tradition can be defined as a systematic process for gathering and analysing data for the purpose of generating or discovering a theory about a particular phenomenon (Addison, 1989; Creswell, 2007). The theory that is developed remains, at all stages throughout this process, 'grounded' in the data from which it emerged (Willig, 2008). The following points highlight some of the key assumptions and characteristics of the grounded theory method so as to show how it is particularly suited to the nature of this research:

- Grounded theory research examines situations in which individuals interact, take action, or engage in a process in response to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). As such, the emphasis is on examining processes and making the study of people's 'activities' central to the research (Charmaz, 2006). This characteristic of grounded theory is relevant to my study because it focuses on the actions or 'activities' of working and mothering performed by academic women, looking specifically at the dynamics of the relational processes involved in supporting these activities, and the effects of multiple interactions between people, their situations and the environment.
- In a grounded theory study, reality is represented from the perspective of the participants and it is their subjective meanings, experiences and perceptions that are held as important (Charmaz, 2003). This principle of grounded theory is appropriate for my research because, given its feminist underpinnings, this study seeks to position the unique issues of women in academia as worthy of study in their own right, to venerate the 'voices' of the women who participated, and to represent their experiences from their own point of view in an attempt to develop an insider's understanding of this experience and the processes involved.
- Grounded theory assumes an active, not a neutral researcher, whose decisions shape the process of the research throughout the study (Charmaz, 2003). This characteristic of grounded theory was applicable to my research because, through the interview questions I chose to ask and the topics I probed for further elaboration, I played an active role in

directing the research process. Furthermore, through my interaction with participants and the interpretations I engaged in throughout my analysis of the material, I was an active agent in the meaning-making process (Charmaz, 2006).

- Grounded theory research recognises the importance of the specific context and social structure surrounding and affecting the phenomenon under study (Addison, 1989) and theories are closely related to the contexts in which they were developed (Creswell, 2007; Willig, 2008). This assumption of grounded theory is particularly relevant to my research given that this study was conducted within the unique institutional context of Rhodes University and, as such, the actions, interactions and processes around working and mothering for the academic women in the study are contextually situated in time and place as well as bound up in the particular culture or ethos of this environment. The theory developed through this study will thus be highly contextually relevant.
- Grounded theory methods aim to build theory from empirical data, rather than rely on analytical constructs or variables from pre-existing theories (Willig, 2008). In response to this feature, Charmaz's technique specifically proposes certain ways in which grounded theorists may incorporate extant theory into their methods. She states that a researcher's background assumptions and disciplinary perspectives may alert them to look for specific processes in their data; and these guiding interests may be used as *points of departure* for developing their ideas (Charmaz, 2006). As such, her constructivist approach works from what is known (existing theories), uses this to guide the empirical processes of induction and deduction throughout working with the data, and then moves back to reworking and building on theories. This aspect of Charmaz's technique was applied in my research as I drew on various established feminist theories as well as the findings from the pilot study in setting up the initial design for this research.

The nature of these 'points of departure' and the ways in which they were implemented are further elaborated on in the chapters that follow. The other techniques, challenges and innovations that Charmaz has brought to the field of grounded theory, and which I have incorporated into this study, are also expanded upon in Chapter 3 under the discussion of research design. At that juncture, I also provide an overview of the contemporary critique of Charmaz's ideas and methods.

1.5 Scope of the study

In describing what is covered in this research study, it is also necessary that I clarify what has not been incorporated within the scope of this study so as to establish the parameters for this research. This study focuses on middle-class² women working in academic careers who are mothers of young children. The focus of this study was limited to investigating the lived experiences of academic mothers employed at Rhodes University in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa. The study and the theory emanating from it does not include the perspectives or opinions of the administrators or representatives of Rhodes University, nor does it incorporate the experiences of childless academic women or any men employed within this institution. Furthermore, the experiences of women balancing motherhood with careers in other professions outside of the university were not considered for this research and their experiences of this process, which may have been different from those of mothers in the academic profession, were thus not explored. Despite the 'family-friendly' policy framework of Rhodes University having been delineated in order to provide a context for the forthcoming analysis of institutional experiences, this research does not intend to directly explore academic women's perceptions (or experiences) of the University's provisions or facilities, and as such, participants were not specifically asked to relay such information in interviews.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

Chapter 1:

In this chapter, an overview of this study is provided. This includes a brief background and rationale of the study, the institutional context for the research is described, and the process through which the research problem was developed and refined was explained. Following this, the theoretical framework guiding the study is mapped out and the suitability of the chosen research method to the nature of the research problem is advanced.

Chapter 2:

The following chapter presents an extensive summary of the insights gleaned from a review of the existing literature in the broad areas of research related to the topic of study. This includes

² Despite some of the women who participated in the study presumably having come from previously disadvantaged backgrounds on the basis of their race and their having grown up in South Africa during the Apartheid era, it was felt that there was sufficient evidence to show that they have all led largely middle-class lives and aspire to middle-class values such that they may collectively be referred to as 'working middle-class women'; however, it is noted that this assessment was made entirely on the basis of my own interpretation of the available evidence as the researcher.

attempts to evaluate the findings of prior research studies on this topic, and detailed accounts of the relevant feminist theories that inform this research.

Chapter 3:

The research methodology of this study is described in detail in Chapter 3. The theoretical grounding for the research methods employed is provided as well as a step-by-step account of my personal experiences of the grounded theory coding process. This chapter addresses issues of sampling, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and my role in these processes as the actively engaged researcher. Lastly, the various ways in which I sought to enhance the quality and ethics of this study are described.

Chapters 4 and 5:

The analysis of categories and presentation of results has been divided into two chapters for the purposes of clarity. This was an ad hoc design decision made to meet the specific needs of the data as the analysis unfolded (which is explained in the lead-up to the analysis). The coded interview material on the participants' experiences of working and mothering is presented and interpreted. The emerging themes and patterns are then identified and tentative hypotheses to account for specific experiences are proposed.

Chapter 6:

In Chapter 6 some of the key findings that emerge from this study are discussed in relation to established theories and the findings of previous research. This discussion seeks to determine the extent to which the emerging theory extends, confirms or contradicts what is already known about working and mothering in an academic environment and the effects of relational processes of support. Finally a theory grounded in the foregoing analysis of materials is posited that seeks to answer the research question guiding this study.

Chapter 7:

The findings and outcomes of the research process are presented in Chapter 7 where they are evaluated in terms of their ability to sufficiently answer the research question. A commentary on the overall research process is provided and the study is summed up and assessed in terms of its strengths and limitations. Finally, I offer recommendations for further research in this field of study based on gaps in the research area that were identified.

1.7 Summary

Established theory suggests that when women who are employed in the demanding academic profession strive to balance their career responsibilities and development with mothering of their young children, they are at risk of experiencing a degree of emotional and/or physical strain referred to as work-family role-conflict. Women have been relatively unsuccessful in securing high-status academic positions in South African universities when compared with men who dominate the Higher Education sector. It is likely that motherhood, family care-giving and household maintenance – traditionally accepted as feminine tasks – have constituted major obstacles to academic women's (especially mothers') career development given the investment of time required to accomplish these daily duties. Despite the fact that this phenomenon has been widely problematised in international literature, the research conducted on mothering in the academic context in South Africa is limited. The intention of this study, however, is to identify and investigate the enabling processes that provide critical support to these academic mothers in maintaining the daily grind of balancing their multiple work and family roles and reducing their experience of role-conflict. South African research on *this particular* aspect of academic mothers' work-family balance is virtually non-existent. Methodologically, I applied a constructivist grounded theory research approach as it allowed me to incorporate the findings from prior research and extant theories in setting up the initial research questions. From there, this method has enabled me to generate a theory about the process of working and mothering that is grounded in the data and which is contextually relevant to the research setting of Rhodes University.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter serves to provide a review of the broad trends in much of the existing literature on the conditions of working women in Higher Education, the roles of motherhood, and the issues around work-family balance and support for working mothers globally and particularly in South Africa. This discussion aims to address the major debates in this general area of research and also to highlight the gaps in the existing research in the field. This chapter builds on the previous chapter by further contextualising this study within a background of South African societal influences and workforce dynamics, conditions of work in academia, and the Rhodes University context specifically. Also following on from the previous chapter, this discussion introduces the various established theories which this study has drawn on as ‘points of departure’ for formulating key elements of the research design, framing research questions, and operationalising constructs for this study.

2.2 Women in the workplace

Post-apartheid South Africa is widely reported to have witnessed an ongoing feminisation of its labour force (e.g. Casale & Posel, 2002; Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Ntuli, 2007; Potgieter & Barnard, 2010). While in 1995, 38 percent of all South African women between the ages of 15 and 65 were working or actively seeking work, by 1999 this had grown to 47 percent and women’s proportionate share of total employment in South Africa had increased over this period (Casale & Posel, 2002). Ntuli (2007) reports that the labour force participation of women continued to expand to 48 percent in 2004, but that their participation had remained persistently lower than that of men whose participation rate was 62 percent for the same year. Finally, the results of the Quarterly Labour Force Survey (Statistics South Africa, 2010) show that women’s labour force participation in South Africa remained stable at approximately 48 percent from the end of 2009 into the first quarter of 2010. The apparent growth in the number of women involved in paid work in South Africa since 1995 resonates with international workforce demographics such as those of the United States of America, which reveal that for the year 2004, approximately 60 percent of women over 16 years of age were engaged in paid work of some kind, and 73 percent of mothers

with children under the age of 18 years were formally employed (U.S. Department of Labour, 2006). Moreover, the United States Bureau of Labour Statistics (2007) reported that the 2006-2007 annual average employment rates for women with children younger than six years old was 63 percent, and for mothers of children between the ages of six and 17 years it was 77 percent. In America, it is thus apparent that the unemployed woman – or one who chooses to stay home to be with her young children on a full-time basis – is more the exception rather than the rule (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005).

The convergent international trend being suggested by the above-reported statistics would appear to indicate that the South African economy is on track toward meeting the desired feminist standard for the equality of women in the workforce being established in other countries. However, in the case of South Africa, the quest for a realistic picture of labour force composition is far more complex than a mere analysis of census data. The data on which all of the above analyses and conclusions are based were obtained from the national October Household Surveys and Labour Force Surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa (Casale & Posel, 2002; Borat & Oosthuizen, 2005; Ntuli, 2007). The major problem with these data sources is that they have failed to make a distinction between formal and informal sector employment, and their results have thus concealed the shifting composition of women's employment over time (Casale & Posel, 2002; Ntuli, 2007). In addition, South African society is characterised by vast inequalities between races, mainly as a result of its political history, and these inequalities necessitate dealing with women of different races separately (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). Largely as a consequence of poverty, black³ women in South Africa are overrepresented in domestic work, sex work, and self-employment in the informal sector. Casale and Posel (2002) demonstrate that, although there is some evidence to suggest that the feminisation of employment is partially associated with an increase in the demand for female labour, much of the growth in women's employment seems to derive from an increasing number of women 'making work' in the informal economy. They propose that more than half the growth in female employment between 1995 and 1999 may be attributed to the increase in women working in the informal sector, work that usually provides low returns and very little security or protection for the worker, and that it is probable that informal sector activities have been largely underestimated (Casale & Posel, 2002). The implication of this is that the apparent

³ Racial terminology is fraught in the South African context, signifying the replication of oppressive practices. However, for the purposes of clarity and specificity, the term 'black' in this chapter is used to denote those who are of African descent and belong to one of the traditional African ethnic and cultural groups. As such, black may be used interchangeably with the term 'African'. This designation does *not* include Indian, 'Coloured' or 'non-white' populations (unless specifically stated otherwise); but it must be noted that this is not necessarily the standardised definitional practice that applies to all the chapters in this report.

evidence of a growing feminisation of the South African labour force may reflect not simply an increase in work performed, but also the better collection of data on informal sector work (Casale & Posel, 2002). This raises the possibility that increasing numbers of unskilled, black workers in the informal sector are perhaps inaccurately swelling the statistics on labour force demographics while the numbers of skilled managers and professionals may be remaining constant or even shrinking.

The many reasons women hold for entering and remaining in the workplace may be understood as universal and similar to those of men – for income, for personal satisfaction, and for social purposes (Farel & Dobelstein, 1982). Universally, these reasons will be largely dependent on a woman's class and socio-economic status as these variables will likely determine whether a woman works out of personal choice or as a result of financial necessity. Her socio-economic status is also likely to determine her access to education which enables such personal career choices (see more on this below). In an American study by Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) on middle-class women's feelings about work-family issues, many women reported that they continued their employment after having children for reasons of self-fulfilment, challenge, and contribution to family finances, stating that it was their choice to continue working. As well-educated, white collar workers, these women would be considering their careers, professional reputations, and work opportunities as they became mothers and, in contrast to less affluent women, they would likely have the financial resources to choose to stay at home with their children if they wished or to move into different employment situations (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005).

However, the South African work context for career women is markedly different in many ways. Most significantly, the post-apartheid constitution of South Africa regards women as a designated group for affirmative action (Mathur-Helm, 2005). This means that in the pursuit of employment equity women may be given preference in selection procedures, are often promoted more quickly, and may have a greater earning capacity than men. This is particularly true for highly educated, professional women. As such, it is possible that a South African woman's reasons for returning to work after having children may include that it is financially viable for her family that she should work full-time in a highly paid career while her children's father works reduced hours in order to be more available for childcare. However, it cannot be presumed that affirmative action is always an influential factor. It is believed by some that gender issues are being marginalised and affirmative action is serving to primarily redress racial inconsistency in the workplace (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Research in the South African work context has uncovered that many companies are not committed to advancing women through affirmative action and that, despite the rising number of

employed women in industry, significant barriers to women's advancement persist (Mathur-Helm, 2005). It remains evident that few women are seen holding the top-most positions in South African organisations and, despite gender equity and affirmative action having been implemented in South Africa, inequality in career advancement and job segregation still remain (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

When one considers the above proposition, that the majority of South African women entering paid work are doing so as unskilled workers in the informal sector, it becomes evident that women's reasons for working are especially raced and classed in South Africa. It is unlikely that poor and unskilled working-class women have been concerned with career opportunities and self-fulfilment, or have been fast-tracked by affirmative action policies. The widespread poverty in South Africa has meant that poorer men and women have had no choice but to seek paid work in order to provide for the basic needs of their families, and this is what causes African women to look for jobs and to stay in their jobs (Cock, 1981). This supports the assertion made by Casale and Posel (2002) that women are predominantly being 'pushed' rather than 'pulled' into the South African labour market. In such unskilled (usually black) populations, it has been far easier for women to secure employment than for men given the earning opportunities they have in the likes of domestic work, informal selling, and sex work; sectors which are highly feminised in South Africa (Bhorat & Oosthuizen, 2005). In addition to this, it is said that women are being increasingly forced into paid employment as a result of their declining access to male income (Casale & Posel, 2002). Several reasons may be suggested for why one might expect women's access to male income in the poorer black communities of South Africa to have decreased in the last few decades, most of which relate to changes in household structure and particularly the observed increase in female-headed households. National census data reveals that the overall percentage of households in South Africa headed by women increased from 26 percent in 1995 to approximately 33 percent in 1999 but that African households in particular are more likely than other households to be headed by women, with some 37 percent of all African households reporting a female head in 1999 (Casale & Posel, 2002). While it was noted that decreasing marital rates over this period paralleled the increase in female-headed households, suggesting that many of these cases may reflect greater numbers of women choosing to remain unmarried, more than 60 percent of the women reported as household heads were either widowed or the victims of male desertion. It is possible that the prevalence of deleterious social conditions such as poverty and the spread of disease and HIV/Aids in the poorer strata of the South African population may have led to many

widowed women and orphaned female children being left to maintain and provide for households through informal labour.

Other variables that have significantly affected women's labour force participation are their level of educational attainment and the number of children they have (fertility). Once again, it is evident that these variables have had a different effect for South African women depending on their race and class. It is generally accepted that "education expands women's opportunities in the labour market" and it is therefore theoretically plausible that education should have a strong positive influence on labour force participation (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001, p. 10). This is because the career choices, better quality jobs and higher earnings available to educated women mean that the value of their time spent in paid work is increased in relation to the alternative of engaging in housework. The only situation in which it is expected that this view would not hold is when "home productivity gains", resulting from the importance placed on nurturing one's children, outweigh "labour market productivity gains" (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001, p. 10).

In addition to this, it is generally expected that fertility has a negative effect on women's labour force participation as raising children is a time-intensive occupation that demands more time the more children there are (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). The findings of an analysis of national labour statistics by Mlatsheni and Leibbrandt (2001) supported these expectations: Firstly, it was clearly observed that the percentage of women engaged in the labour force increased steadily as their level of educational attainment rose; and secondly, the average number of children for women participating in the labour force was lower than that of women involved in housework, who displayed the highest fertility figures (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). However, it was found that once the data were analysed in terms of the women's race, the relationship between education, fertility and employment was not as clear cut. When comparing women engaged in employment with those who did not work, it was found that for black women who were lesser-educated but engaged in full-time employment, there was a surprisingly high rate of fertility, whereas for highly-educated white women who did not participate in the work force, fertility rates were lower (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). This introduces the possibilities that, firstly, women's fertility may be dependent on both their level of education as well as being a culturally-based variable; and secondly, that women's race and associated socio-economic status may determine the degree of choice they have in whether to work or not. The variable of fertility appeared to have little effect on whether or not black women were engaged in paid work, and when one considers that the majority of these women are poor it is not difficult to understand that they would seek

work regardless of the presence of young children (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). In general, poorer black women do not have adequate financial support that would enable them to spend significant amounts of time not working and, given their financial constraints, having more children would necessitate greater income and black women would thus be compelled to seek work (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). For white women on the other hand, the likelihood of their employment decreased by as much as 18 percent with each additional child, a trend that was not observed in the case of black women (Mlatsheni & Leibbrandt, 2001). It may be proposed that the relative affluence of white women, in terms of their middle-classed buffering within nuclear familial households, affords them to choice to stay home and look after children while their husbands work as breadwinners (cf. Ziehl, 2003).

It is evident that the reasons for women's increased entry into wage employment in South Africa cannot be explained by any one set of determinants and are greatly influenced by the women's diverse classed and raced experiences of employment. The findings of Ntuli (2007) support the notion that the presence of young children in a household will increase a woman's value of her time at home and is thus negatively related to the prospects of her participating in the labour market. As has been argued above, such a theory will only hold true for women of a certain socio-economic class who are able to choose this valuation of their time, and even then, many more middle-class professional women are still choosing to remain involved in paid work now than ever before (Brink & De la Rey, 2001). However, considering the statistics that the largest growth has been observed for women in self-employment in the informal sector, where they are likely to be engaged in low-paying survivalist activities, it is unlikely that the feminisation of the South African labour force is associated with the feminist ideal of women's increased mobility and opportunity in the labour market (Casale & Posel, 2002). This progress has likely only been the case for a small proportion of skilled (and probably mostly white) South African women.

2.3 Defining the role of motherhood

As was introduced in the previous chapter, the steady increase in the number of women participating in the paid workforce, observed on a global scale since the advent of the industrial revolution, has consequentially shifted societal expectations of women and particularly mothers. In western societies, motherhood is generally situated, constructed and lived within a socio-cultural context in which dramatic social changes have occurred over the past quarter century, with one of the most important of these being the emergence of the second-wave feminist movement (Lupton,

2000) (see more on this below). However, despite this apparent deviation from patriarchy and the full-time 'stay-at-home' mother having become something of a rarity (Lupton, 2000), from a feminist perspective, the social roles assigned to men and women have not changed that much (Forcey, 1994). According to Heiss (cited in Carr, 2002, p. 106) a social role is defined as "a set of expectations in the sense that it is what one should do as an employee or a parent for example". Women have been moulded by society into their nurturing roles through modelling their mothers who were taught by their mothers, and it is generally accepted that women are more suited to childcare than their male counterparts (Hochschild, 1989; Carr, 2002). Motherhood is thus socially intertwined with notions of femininity and mothering is said to reinforce a woman's gender identity (Arendell, 2000; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Even in contemporary western societies, a patriarchal ideology still exists at the core and the home and childcare have been constructed as feminine activities (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). Forcey (1994) defines mothering as "a socially constructed set of activities and relationships involved in nurturing and caring for people" (p. 357). By describing mothering as 'socially constructed', Forcey illustrates the importance of societal tradition and cultural precedent in prescribing who will fill the role of nurturing in a household, how and why. Similarly, Kruger (2006) speaks of women's experience of motherhood as being mediated by their interactions with institutions and discourses, and as being shaped by their culture and society.

Despite women's increased participation in the workplace, western social attitudes, largely informed by contemporary developmental psychological theory about the 'needs' of children, have remained critical of mothers' work-related absence from their children (Arendell, 2000; Burman, 2008). As Lewis (1991) noted, early psychological research in the field of maternal employment was primarily concerned with the impacts on children and their development, with little or no attention being given to the women who did the working and mothering. While in the past few decades the focus of research on mothering has shifted dramatically toward the mother and her subjective experiences of mothering as the focus, the research is still profoundly shaped by the fact that all women who mother have been exposed to powerful ideologies of motherhood that impact on their experiences of it (Kruger, 2006). More than any other role in society, mothering has been impregnated with ideological meaning and cultural significance (Braverman in Kruger, 2006); however, the meaning and significance attached to motherhood is not universal and in different social contexts and cultures, different sets of expectations are associated with the role of motherhood (Collins, 1994). Kruger (2006) suggests that "it is often because of societal expectations that motherhood is such a stressful experience for women" (p. 183). Kruger and

others have offered a discussion of some of the popular ideologies that have been identified as the 'dominant discourses of motherhood' in psychology, each of which are outcomes of historical developments specific to a period in time.

With the standards for mothering being socially determined, young mothers in contemporary western societies have long been bombarded with popular psychological literature advocating the socially acceptable standards for 'good mothering' (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). This literature was largely generated by the early works of behaviourist psychologists such as Watson and Skinner and psychoanalysts such as Klein, Winnicott and Bowlby, which perpetuated a research focus on the relationship of particular child-rearing practices to the healthy development of children (Kruger, 2006). In these early traditions of mothering psychology, motherhood was viewed as purely instrumental in the production of well-adjusted offspring (Kruger, 2006). This instrumentalist view formed the basis for possibly the most pervasive and influential mothering ideology in psychology; one in which "women are expected to find fulfilment and satisfaction in the role of the ever-bountiful, ever-giving, self-sacrificing mother" (Kruger, 2006, p. 187). This set of beliefs has been widely referred to as the 'intensive mothering' ideology, and it implies that only women who have the time, energy and resources to stay at home and be devoted to the care of their children should become mothers (Medina and Magnuson, 2009). This stance is supported to an extent by literature on 'attachment parenting' techniques proposed by Bowlby (1969) and others, in which mothers are encouraged to be emotionally available and completely attuned to their infants' needs. Proponents of Attachment Theory have widely propositioned the deleterious effects of maternal absence of full-time working mothers on infant attachment as well as linking it to problems such as childhood obesity and attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Kruger (2006) explains that the 'intensive mothering' ideology creates an ideal or stereotype whereby women believe that they ought to be capable of giving everything to their children so that they will grow and be happy; and an essential constituent for the child's happiness is the mother's own happiness which she is supposed to experience in response to the child's response to her.

Such constructions of 'good' or 'normal' mothering then become the benchmarks against which mothers and society measure the adequacy of their mothering (Phoenix & Woollett, 1991). In Lupton's (2000) study of the ideals and experiences of first time mothers, the white middle-class participants were able to clearly articulate their expectations of what it means to be a 'good mother' when interviewed prior to the birth of their babies. Lupton's (2000) findings reveal that "good mothers were conceptualised as selfless, able to give unstinting love and time to their

children, and as having the ability to regulate their emotions so as to best interact with their children (p. 55). What these findings also uncovered, however, is that many of these women found it very difficult to live up to this ideal in practice after their children were born (Lupton, 2000). It is apparent that exposure to idealised constructions of motherhood only serves to burden women with additional pressure to live up to this ideal and may cause them to become distressed precisely because they think that they 'ought to' be happy (Kruger, 2006). This experience of 'feeling down and feeling bad about feeling down' has been reported to be especially typical of middle-class white women in western societies because they are "a population that is particularly exposed to the dictates of western developmental psychology" (Kruger, 2006, p. 188).

It becomes clear that within this ideology for 'good mothering' a mother ceases to be a subject with her own needs and interests and instead, she becomes a conduit through whom others' needs are met. However, there is little research evidence to support the claim that a child's primary caregiver must be a mother who has sacrificed her own needs for those of her child and American feminist economist, Heidi Hartmann (2004), has criticised such mothering ideologies as being a major step backward in gender equity. Hartmann (2004) condemns the adoption of these mothering concepts as restrictive of a woman's options and results in her constraint to the private sphere of the home while undercutting the progress society has made in increasing men's investment in their children. The absolutist beliefs about the 'needs' of children presented above have been contested by more recent claims about the psychological requirements for human development (Burman, 2008), and many assumptions about the responsibility of mothers for their children's development have been strongly disputed (Kruger, 2006). Beyond this pertinent criticism, this dominant ideology tends to assume that a woman will have had 'options' to begin with. It endorses the idealised image of a white, middle-class, heterosexual couple with its children in a self-contained nuclear unit, presuming that mothers who work have *chosen* to do so as a matter of personal gain, and thereby marginalising the experiences of the vast majority of women in the world who have no choice but to work (Walker, 1995; Arendell, 2000). For example, Cock's (1987) early study on domestic work in South Africa claimed that full-time (stay-at-home) motherhood is "impossible for many urban African women compelled to support themselves and their dependents or to supplement their husband's low earnings" (p. 134).

Burman (2008) insists that "the model of the nuclear family, consisting of heterosexual couples with their 'naturally' conceived children, with the man bringing home the wage and the woman keeping the home, is increasingly recognised to be a fiction" (p. 109); but that the terminology

used within developmental psychology texts still reflects dominant familiar assumptions, with 'normal' family meaning 'nuclear' family, and any variations are correspondingly defined in relation to that ideal (Bozalek, 2006). Burman (2008) remarks that the power of this model of the family has tended to make itself felt more on those who fail to conform to it (gay and lesbian parents, poor parents, migrant parents) than those who do. Walker (1995) offers that the work of mothering embraces a number of different activities, (the act of childbirth, physical care, emotional care and involvement, socialisation), not all of which are (or need to be) necessarily present in any one configuration. She states that it is possible, depending on the society, for a mother to be responsible for all or only some of these tasks, and notes that even childbirth is not mandatory in order to become accepted as a mother (Walker, 1995). The relevance of this is that, in South Africa, physical care of children is often not the sole or primary responsibility of the mother, but is delegated, for instance, to a domestic worker or nanny (in the case of many middle-class women), or to other family members such as grandmothers or female older siblings (Walker, 1995). As such, while the dominant discourse for white middle-class women may define a mother as someone who takes responsibility for the care of her children, an arguably more appropriate discourse of motherhood in many black working-class communities may not emphasise women's involvement in the day-to-day care of their children as much as their responsibilities for financial support and discipline (Walker, 1995).

It appears that modern research on mothering is suggesting that there is no single definitive way that parents should be in order to ensure positive developmental outcomes (Kruger, 2006; Burman, 2008). However, the intensive mothering ideologies, with their emphases on the developmental needs of children and women's roles in fulfilling those needs, have continued to be the dominant western cultural and political standard by which mothering practices are evaluated, despite the fact that they are being challenged in theory (by academics and other experts) and in practice (by the lived experiences of ordinary people) (Arrendell, 2000; Bozalek, 2006; Kruger, 2006; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). The result of this is that women who fall short of this hegemonic ideal essentially do not fit the social construction of 'good mothers' and will be disposed to feeling guilt and anxiety over the aspects of their circumstance that diverge from this ideal. Moreover, feminist critics have consistently argued that postnatal depression is largely the result of the discrepancy between women's expectations of motherhood (resulting from ideological constructions) and their actual experiences of it (Kruger, 2006). Mothers will often feel pressure from this dominant mothering ideology to stay home with their children, whether they can afford to or not, and mothers who choose to (or have no choice but to) be employed may perceive that they are judged

as being deviant (Arendell, 2000). Middle-class mothers in particular, who choose to pursue careers as opposed to dedicating themselves full-time to child-rearing, may find themselves having to contend with others' judgments as well as their own guilt for leaving their children (Arendell, 2000; Hartmann, 2004).

2.4 Feminisms and motherhood

The focus of mothering research in psychology began to shift in many western societies with the advent of the women's liberation movement of the 1960s, although it was only in the 1980s that feminist theory made its way into the social sciences in South Africa (De la Rey, 2006). The result of this shift meant the rise of feminist psychology and increasing recognition of the importance of representing women's own perspectives through research with women (Burman, 1994; Wilkinson, 1997a). The result of the revolutionary work of feminist psychologists in the last few decades has led to new emphases in psychological research on mothering, and questions about what mothering means to women themselves and how women experience being mothers began to emerge (Walker, 1995; Kruger, 2006). Motherhood research has taken centre stage in much of women's studies literature and mothering is now discussed as a role or powerful identity that impacts on the lives of women in many ways (Arendell, 2000). However, feminism is a fractious and divided field and there is no single feminist approach to viewing motherhood – just as there is no single feminist approach to anything as its proponents lack consensus on many issues – but rather there are many diverse perspectives (Wilkinson, 1997b; Gill, 1998). As such, feminist views on motherhood are splintered and, ironically, within feminist psychology itself there are two discernable dominant ideals of motherhood, which in different ways also create prescriptions that obscure women's experiences of motherhood (Kruger, 2006). These two different perspectives on mothering run parallel to two of the main feminist traditions; that of 'equality' feminism, and that of 'difference' feminism.

In the mid-nineteenth century the term 'feminism' was used to refer to the 'qualities of females', and it was not until the First International Women's Conference in Paris in 1892 that the term came to be used regularly for a belief in and advocacy of equal rights for women based on the idea of the equality of the sexes (Haslanger & Tuana, 2009). Although the term 'feminism' is rooted in the mobilisation for Women's Suffrage in Europe and America during the late nineteenth century, efforts to attain justice for women did not begin or end with this period of activism. As there are many different theories of feminism, some have found it useful to view the movement as occurring

in waves. In the wave model, 'first-wave' (equality) feminism constitutes the struggle to achieve basic political rights during the period from the mid-1800s until the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution in 1920, which granted women the right to vote and introduced reforms in education, in the workplace and professions, and in healthcare (Haslanger & Tuana, 2009). This wave was concerned with access and equal opportunities for women and 'equality feminists' demanded that differences between men and women should be minimised and that women and men should have equal opportunities in all spheres of life (Krølokke & Sørensen, 2006). This first-wave consisted largely of white, middle-class, well-educated women who strove to reveal how the link between sexism and racism functioned as the main means of white male dominance (Krølokke & Sørensen, 2006).

Such a feminist perspective led to a variety of ideologies on mothering, but the general stance was that children should have multiple caregivers and that both a mother and a father should be equally involved with and responsible for their children (Kruger, 2006). Additionally, both husband and wife should be equally invested in their careers and these careers should have comparable importance in family decisions (Kruger, 2006). A more extreme take on this 'women are equal' perspective was that women should not become mothers at all and that the only way for women to truly devote themselves to their own creative development, and thus become equal to men, would be for them to become free from the ties to home and children (Kruger, 2006). This radical approach contributed to the basis of what would eventually become the 'second wave', widely known as 'difference feminism'.

Feminism in Europe and America had waned between the two World Wars but was revived in the late 1960s and early 1970s as 'second-wave' (difference) feminism (Haslanger & Tuana, 2009). Breaking from the first-wave agenda, this wave saw feminists maximising and celebrating the sex differences between men and women and emphasising how women's life experiences differ from men's (Wilkinson, 1997b). Second-wave feminism is closely linked to the radical voices of women's empowerment of the women's liberation movement, in which feminists pushed beyond the early quest for political rights to fight for greater equality (Krølokke & Sørensen, 2006). Unlike the first-wave, the focus in this period was on the de facto (or unofficial) inequalities in society, and this wave encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicised and reflective of a sexist structure of power (Haslanger & Tuana, 2009). Central to this 'women are different' perspective was the assertion that the identity of women is constituted through relationship-differentiation, rather than through the more masculine processes of separation and

individuation (Kruger, 2006). The 'romantic mothering discourse' of this wave was based on the works of feminist psychodynamic theorist, Nancy Chodorow, and feminist philosopher, Sara Ruddick, and this ideology centred on the belief that broad gender differences in identity, personality structure and psychic needs were products of wider social structures, and led to women's deep-seated motivation to have children and their natural orientation toward 'maternal thinking' (Ruddick in Kruger, 2006). These 'difference feminists' proposed that 'maternal thinking' is a "natural capacity that makes women special and even superior to men: it is exactly women's natural capacity for mothering that makes them more powerful in the world" (Kruger, 2006, p. 192).

More recent transformations of feminism have produced a 'third-wave', starting in the early 1990s and continuing through to the present, which arose primarily out of various critiques of both the first- and second-wave movements. Critiques of first-wave feminism include its failure to acknowledge the possibilities that motherhood may be a far more meaningful and significant endeavour for a women than staying in a job, and that the control mothers may wield over the child-rearing process can be an empowering experience for many women (Kruger, 2006). Critiques of second-wave feminism include problematising the notion of 'maternal thinking' – the idea that women are inevitably and naturally bound to be caring, motherly and concerned about nurturant relationships with others – as by connecting the essential identity of women to motherhood, this ideology furthers the restriction that women can only be powerful by being mothers (Kruger, 2006). Furthermore, third-wave feminists have challenged the assumption of a unitary female experience, critiquing second-wave feminism's lack of attention to the differences among women due to race, ethnicity, class, nationality and religion, and emphasise 'identity' as a site of gender struggle (Walker, 1995; Haslanger & Tuana, 2009). For example, black lesbian feminists have argued that such a model "excludes their experiences and therefore reproduces structures of cultural imperialism and heterosexism within feminist theory" (Burman, 1994, p. 122). As such, third-wave feminism seeks to overcome the theoretical question of 'equity or difference' and the political question of 'evolution or revolution' while it challenges the notion of 'universal womanhood' and embraces ambiguity and diversity (Krøløkke & Sørensen, 2006). It is evident that equality and difference traditions of feminism have articulated very different ideals of motherhood and what it should mean to women; and just as the conservative ideology of mothering discussed above has led to traumatic experiences of motherhood, feminist expectations and standards can also lead to equally negative experiences for mothers (Kruger, 2006).

In line with the views of Walker discussed above, Collins (1994) also highlights the fact that feminist theory has been grounded in and centred on the experiences of white middle-class women in developed countries. She states that “despite the significance of race and class, feminist theorising routinely minimises their importance” and has been subject to the overall ‘decontextualisation’ of western social thought in general (Collins, 1994, p. 45). Kruger (2006) further states that despite more recent attempts within feminism “to highlight the context within which women mother and the diverse experiences of mothers in different contexts, very little psychological research has been conducted about the South African motherhood experience” (Kruger, 2006, p. 195). The literature that *does* exist, however, has tended to focus primarily on mothers and children ‘at risk’. The pervasive tendency when studying marginal populations (black women or poor women) has been to identify groups of ‘problem mothers’ (single mothers, teenage mothers, jailed mothers) to become the target of psychological research and intervention, and not to focus on the subjective experiences of the mothers themselves (Kruger, 2006). Moreover, Phoenix and Woollett (1991) argue that if child development experts are likely to be middle-class and white, and base their theories on studies conducted with white middle-class mothers and children, it follows that they would be likely to perceive mothers who are poor, working-class, single, young and black as problematic and pathological.

The effect that dominant western mothering ideologies have had on South African mothering research is apparent, and this has particularly problematic implications. Kruger (2006) generalises the critique of unquestioned assumptions to all aspects of South African mothering research because much of the work that has been conducted falls within the framework of more instrumental discourses, where there are powerful assumptions about what constitutes ‘good mothering’. These ideologies and their assumptions about mothering fall short of being able to adequately address the extent to which the experience of mothering is strongly raced and classed in the South African context. Collins (1994) asserts that cultural and economic contexts variously shape mothers’ activities and understandings, and that mothering takes place within “specific historical contexts framed by interlocking structures of race, class, and gender” (p. 56). Arendell (2000) adds that women’s ‘social locations’ (or the intersections of local political economy with class, ethnicity, culture and sexual preference), condition the meanings that they construct as mothers. From an American perspective, Collins (1994) has proposed that having limited access to class and racial privilege constricts the range of options and resources available to minority mothers and that, for women of colour, the themes of “survival, power, and identity” form the “bedrock of motherwork” (p. 49).

Kruger (2006) sums up the inadequacies of the existing local research on mothering by offering that: firstly, there is very little research in the area at all; secondly, research on the subjective experiences of mothers themselves is virtually non-existent; and thirdly, the impact of race, class, culture and sexuality on motherhood experiences and practices is almost entirely missing from the South African literature.

2.5 Combining working and mothering roles

The widespread effect of prescriptive western mothering ideologies has resulted in large proportions of women in many societies being evaluated (by themselves and others) as ‘deviant’ in some way because aspects of their circumstance fundamentally diverge from the social construction of ‘good mothers’. As previously noted, women whose experience breaks with these ideals – which includes mothers involved in waged employment – may be disposed to feelings of guilt and anxiety about their deviation from the assigned role expectations in addition to the immediate difficulties presented by the challenge of combining working with mothering (Brink & De la Rey, 2001). Maume and Mullin (1993) state that when women take on dual roles (such as mother and employee) that are poorly integrated, they may suffer role-strain and reduced mental health. The tendency discussed above, for contemporary mothers to fulfil many social roles, either by choice or out of necessity, while still striving to meet the expectations of nurturing, scheduling, taxiing and feeding their families, has given rise to the Theory of Role-Conflict in feminist research (Medina & Magnuson, 2009).

The notion of role-conflict⁴ is rooted in the broad field of Role Theory which has appeared in central arenas in both Sociology and Social Psychology literature. It is argued that the earliest proponents of Role Theory include theorists such as Georg Simmel, George Herbert Mead and Ralph Linton, as they began introducing ideas about social roles as early as the 1930s, but it was not until the classic published works of Parsons in the 1950s that Role Theory became formalised (King & King, 1990). Role Theory concerns one of the most important features of social life – characteristic behaviour patterns – and the concept of ‘roles’ has become one of the most popular ideas in the social sciences (Biddle, 1986); but extensive confusion has persisted in the field as

⁴ Role-conflict is defined as the simultaneous occurrence of two or more incompatible demands made on an individual occupying multiple roles that impose conflicting expectations for their behaviour such that compliance with one implies non-compliance with the other (Kahn *et al.*, 1964). Role-strain is a consequence of role-conflict, defined as the difficulty in performing multiple roles, which may be experienced physically, emotionally or psychologically (Sieber, 1974). Despite this subtle distinction in meaning, these terms have been used interchangeably throughout this report for the purposes of simplification.

various authors continue to differ over the definitions and assumptions they make about roles (Biddle, 1986). A well-recognised early study founded on Role Theory was that of Gross, Mason and McEachern (1958), who were the first to define and operationalise several common role concepts (including role-conflict); however, the formal recognition for introducing the concept of role-conflict into organisational research is generally given to Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964). This publication marked the birth of Organisational Role-Conflict Theory (RCT) and was followed, over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, by a vast proliferation of research in the field of Role Theory in organisations, which continued to build on theoretical constructs through research that took an almost exclusively quantitative approach (King & King, 1990). As such, much of the empirical research in the field of social roles has been done from an organisational perspective and in organisational settings and it is through this research that the notion of role-conflict has been developed and continues to be used (Biddle, 1986).

Around the same time that RCT was gaining momentum in organisational research in general, western feminist theorists began to adopt it in discussions marking the acceleration of women's entry into the workplace. Role-conflict may be defined as the concurrent occurrence of two or more incompatible expectations for the behaviour of a person, which result from demands made on an individual occupying multiple roles simultaneously, such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other difficult (Kahn *et al.*, 1964; Biddle, 1986). The feminist take on RCT may be thought of as having its roots in second-wave feminist politics, as the fundamental assumptions of RCT are consistent with the ideals of 'difference', namely that women's experiences of balancing the role of parenting with dedicating themselves to a career are markedly different to those of men, and that they tend to become unjustly and disproportionately burdened by the traditionally feminine tasks of household and childcare (Biddle, 1986). It was during this second-wave period that the first feminist writings around role-conflict began to surface in America and Britain, preceded by Rapoport and Rapoport (1969) first coining the term 'dual career family' in reference to the emerging new trend of mothers joining their male counterparts in waged employment. This juncture was followed by a profusion of published feminist studies around working mothers, dual-career family structures, work-family role-conflict, and strategies for coping with role-conflict. Writers began to argue that women in western societies are subjected to conflicts between the expectations associated with traditional roles, such as home-making, and those for occupational or professional careers (Biddle, 1986). These arguments were supported by an array of feminist studies demonstrating the prevalence of role-conflicts and associations between role-conflicts and stress for women (e.g. Hall, 1972; Holmstrom, 1973; Gordon & Hall,

1974; Stryker & Macke, 1978; Skinner, 1980). This section draws insight from the wealth of available literature from both these earlier feminist works and the more contemporary applications of RCT in the study of working mothers.

2.5.1 Women and domestic labour

In what has been called a landmark work by the New York Times, feminist author, Arlie Hochschild (1989) explored the tensions between the demands of work and those of childcare and housework within American dual-career families. In this early book she asserts that despite men's greater involvement in parenting activities, the frontier of housework remains stalled in gender-typed patterns, with women's roles having shifted substantially to include family and work while men's roles in relation to the two spheres have changed very little (Hochschild, 1989). She goes on to state that women frequently bear the brunt of this "stalled revolution", and introduces the notion of the "second shift" into the field to describe the ongoing cycle in the lives of working mothers who return home after putting in a shift of work in paid employment to then take on the unpaid shift of home and childcare work (Hochschild, 1989, p. 13). This apt notion has been validated in contemporary work in the South African context by Sader *et al.* (2005), who refer to it as the "double shift" in their study of women academics who mother. This double shift refers to the task of a working mother to execute her work efficiently (as efficiently as men), while simultaneously fulfilling her motherly responsibilities, and can lead to a sense of role-strain (see Hall, 1972; Biddle, 1986). This was regarded by the respondents in the study as one of the universal challenges facing women in the workplace today (Sader *et al.*, 2005).

However, the most critical issue for Hochschild (1989) regarding this phenomenon is the tendency for women to see their "double day" as a personal hurdle rather than the shared social problem that it is (p. 273). A possible reason for this, as noted by Elman and Gilbert (1984), is that at the time of this work in the 1980s, the integration of maternal and professional roles within a middle-class dual-career nuclear family structure was neither a fully accepted nor greatly supported lifestyle choice at the societal level. Professionally educated married women were neither pressured nor expected by society to pursue their professional interests and, unlike in the case of poorer minority mothers, these women were assumed to have chosen a dual-career lifestyle (Elman & Gilbert, 1984). Such choices would have run counter to the cultural understanding that women should be principally responsible for childcare and domestic labour (Tingey, Kiger, & Riley, 1996). Another well-known early feminist role-conflict study conducted by Skinner (1980) on middle-class

working mothers also found that for the conflict for these voluntarily employed mothers also arose as a result of the socially held assumption that family care-giving was primarily their responsibility.

It is apparent that these gendered ideologies of parenting have affected the stress levels of mothers because, in addition to the time conflicts experienced by all working parents, professional women must cope with societal values and their own internalised beliefs about what is required of a 'good mother' – values which are often incompatible with those of a 'competent professional' (Elman & Gilbert, 1984). Given the fact that increasing numbers of women continue to enter the paid workforce, and that remnants of these traditional societal prescriptions for women's role in the domestic sphere have tended to persist, the attention of research has become ever more focused on the effects of employment on the well-being of working mothers (Tingey *et al.*, 1996; Brink & De la Rey, 2001).

2.5.2 Women as 'superwomen' who want to do it all

In contemporary literature, Carr (2002) has observed that, rather than envisioning work and family roles as 'either/or' activities, recent cohorts of young women and men expect to simultaneously fulfil the roles of 'ideal employee' and 'ideal parent'. She proposes that today's young women especially are a generation that places great emphasis on education and occupational attainment, that expects to achieve equity in the workplace, and that may be less willing than their own mothers to accept that career hindrances should result from work-family trade-offs (Carr, 2002). Blair-Loy (2003) suggests that combining motherhood with full-time employment is made difficult by the competing devotions a woman experiences towards her work and her family roles. 'Family devotion', according to Blair-Loy (2003), is the belief that motherhood is a calling, children are fragile, and that they need continuous motherly nurturing; while 'work devotion' stems from a belief that one's occupation warrants a high level of commitment and loyalty. These competing values can make it difficult for women to combine their work and family roles.

Thus, for women who are highly educated, the opportunity cost of staying out of the labour market is far greater than for women of lower classes who must engage in paid work for financial reasons, and professional women may thus more often exhibit joint allegiance to their mothering and working roles (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). Given the traditionally incompatible ideologies of motherhood and a career, they may experience greater tensions and have more complex identity management than women who prioritise one aspect over another (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005).

The American study by Blair-Loy (2003) found that few women were able to blend motherhood and a full-time career without experiencing 'cognitive dissonance'; that is the feeling of discomfort that arises when one holds two conflicting beliefs or when one's actions are not consistent with one's values. In this study, mothers who viewed their children as independent and resilient experienced the least dissonance when blending motherhood and employment. These mothers were challenging the dominant, stereotypical view presented above; that a woman's sole purpose is to care for her children and that 'family devotion' is her calling and her responsibility (Blair-Loy, 2003). Interestingly, while this study explicitly attributed these experiences to mothers' full-time employment, Tingey *et al.* (1996) have argued that whether a working mother is employed full- or part-time is not directly related to her levels of perceived stress. Their research indicates that, rather, stress is greatest for working mothers whose demands are high at both work and home, and they offer the possibility that the energy-creating characteristics of full-time work may offset the demands of multiple roles for working mothers (Tingey *et al.*, 1996).

Carr (2002) draws on early feminist writings in her description of family and the workplace as "greedy institutions" that demand the commitment of one's time and energy, "especially during the early stages of family formation and career pursuit" (p. 104). Depending on a woman's life stage and career stage, elements of her work and family domains such as schedules, work orientation, marriage, children and spouse employment patterns may all create pressures for increased participation in one of her roles at a given time, resulting in her experiencing added conflict over the perceived neglect of the other role (Brink & De la Rey, 2001). In addition, empirical findings have suggested that the number of social roles held by a woman is positively related to her level of reported role-conflict due to simultaneous demands on her time (Hall, 1972; Brink & De la Rey, 2001); the less satisfied a woman is with childcare arrangements, the higher her perceived level of stress (Tingey *et al.*, 1996); and a woman's decision to work and have a family in itself plays an important role in her motivation to cope with both her work and family responsibilities (Brink & De la Rey, 2001). An early study by Katz and Piotrkowski (1983) – one of the only works of its time to explore the experience of role-conflict among black low-income employed women – found that a lack of control over work and particularly its scheduling are key correlates of work-family role-strain for black mothers. The findings indicated that while professional women with a greater degree of autonomy in the workplace may be able to re-schedule work tasks or take needed time off, demanding jobs that provide little autonomy have especially burdensome costs for women who still hold primary responsibility for family work (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983). This study also found that married women with children reported the highest

levels of conflict, while unmarried respondents reported the least (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983), a finding that has since been corroborated by Medina and Magnuson (2009), who similarly identified that the mothers who are particularly affected by work-family role-conflict are married, employed in demanding professions, and the parents of young children.

2.5.3 Challenging Role-Conflict Theory

As a fundamental principle, RCT argues that the strain of combining the roles of wife, mother and employee are likely to have detrimental effects on the health and relationships of women (Martikainen, 1995). A major critique that has stood in opposition to RCT, and been validated by a collection of empirical research (see Holmstrom, 1973; Skinner, 1980; Elman & Gilbert, 1984), is that this view largely neglects the possible benefits of 'role accumulation', and the potential that these may outweigh the burden of role-conflict or mediate the stressful situation (see Sieber, 1974). Sieber (1974) has argued that people may prefer to take on multiple roles despite the likelihood that this will expose them to increased role-conflict which she motivates by referring to women's feminist demands for equality and the right to work. Tingey *et al.* (1996) offer an overview of much of RCT research with working mothers and conclude that "the results are inconsistent"; while one set of findings suggests that a mother's participation in paid employment enhances her self-esteem, improves her mental health and adds to her status and resources, another set of findings reveals that working mothers may be subject to stress as a consequence of the weight of household and childcare responsibilities combined with their work demands (p. 183). Similarly, the findings of Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) show that in contrast to feminist writings about how women experience exhaustion through shouldering the burden of home and family maintenance, their respondents appeared to "not only find these arrangements suitable, but also seemed proud of their abilities to work through complex work-family challenges" (p. 268-269).

In general, for women who choose to maintain a dual-role lifestyle of working and mothering, there is substantial evidence to suggest that they may find their multiple roles satisfying and fulfilling compared to mothers who are homemakers and research findings on maternal employment "demonstrate the potential for both positive and negative outcomes for working mothers" (Tingey *et al.*, 1996, p. 183). The critique discussed above, however, appears to only have relevance in research with middle-class women who have combined careers with their mothering roles out of personal choice. This raises questions about the applicability of RCT in research with poor or black South African working women. In an early American work, Stryker and Macke (1978)

addressed such a critique, stating that apparent race and class differences in role attitudes and behaviours will impact on the extent to which conflict is perceived by working mothers in different cultures or contexts. They report that the presence of extended families and substitute caregivers in black communities or cultures, coupled with the need for poorer women to work, will minimise their perceived conflict between employment and mothering, and it is likely that black women will work regardless of their childrearing responsibilities (Stryker & Macke, 1978). As such, it would appear that research on the experience of role-conflict for working mothers in South Africa may yield markedly different results depending on the socio-economic class of the population group or, even within a single class group, depending on their race and culture. This does not refute the value of RCT, but merely indicates its differing applicability among diverse target groups and contexts.

2.6 Support for working women

In the context of combining work and family roles, social support has been widely identified as an important resource capable of alleviating the adverse effects of the stressors encountered in the two domains (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1992; Bird, 1999; Mickelson, Claffey, & Williams, 2006). According to findings of contemporary American research, two sources of support appear salient: social support from work (e.g. from supervisors and co-workers), and social support from spouse and family (Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Parasuraman *et al.*, 1992). These two sources of relational support have been shown to affect indicators such as well-being, job satisfaction, family satisfaction, marital quality, life stress and work-family role-conflict (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1992; Mickelson *et al.*, 2006). Social support in the context of personal relationships is defined by Bird (1999) as the sense of being valued as a person, being cared for and having someone who will listen, understand and help when needed, usually involving the exchange of intimate communications and the presence of solidarity and trust. The section that follows focuses predominantly on literature emerging from research on academia as a workplace and introduces a key theoretical perspective associated with the phenomenon of social support within the domestic sphere. It aims in particular to highlight those characteristically South African social support arrangements that serve to assist working career women in this peculiar context.

2.6.1 Social support in the academic workplace

In their research in an American university, Parson *et al.*, (1992) found that academics turn to a broad range of individuals in both their personal and professional networks for help in achieving career goals and advancing professionally. The support that these stakeholders offer includes “encouragement, friendship, information and advice about the profession, visibility within the profession, improved resources for research and teaching, and intellectual guidance” (p. 161). What was interesting to note in their findings was that while academic men almost exclusively identified people directly connected to their professional careers as having been sources of career support, female faculty members were more likely to include individuals from their personal lives as well (Parson *et al.*, 1992). This may be due to the general lack of access that women academics have to informal networks of support in universities and the fact that their networks are generally not as effective as men’s in promoting professional visibility (Bagilhole, 1993; Shackleton, 2007).

The above finding is perhaps not surprising when one considers that Sorcinelli and Near (1989) established that academic women, more so than many other kinds of working professionals, experience considerable ‘spill-over’ between their lives at work and their lives away from work – between professional life and personal life. However, for both men and women alike, Parson *et al.* (1992) report that the support provided by a spouse or significant other was said to be the most significant source of career support. The women respondents in this American study further reported that colleagues within their departments were supportive and encouraging and provided a source of intellectual stimulation (Parson *et al.*, 1992). They noted the importance of having a supportive community of colleagues on campus to their continuing scholarly development, and it was revealed that more women than men in this study were concerned with developing professional networks for support, advice and academic collegiality (Parson *et al.*, 1992). Again this resonates with Bagilhole’s (1993) commentary about how women academics often lack role-models and guidance in Higher Education institutions which may be the reason why they see it as critical to their career development that they actively seek out and form these supporting relationships (Teevan, Pepper & Pellizzari, 1992). One type of collegial affiliation that was regarded as particularly significant to career development by junior academics specifically was that of a mentor-mentee relationship; a form of social support from which academic women and those from other marginalised groups have frequently felt excluded in universities (Parson *et al.*, 1992; Teevan *et al.*, 1992; Sader *et al.*, 2005). Women faculty members also proposed that support from their Heads of Departments had also been particularly important for their career advancement since it is

them who evaluate performance, provide information about promotion, maintain morale, handle conflicts, and allocate resources (Parson *et al.*, 1992).

The defining characteristics and particular perquisites and difficulties of the academic work context are addressed later in this chapter, but invariably the sources of social support from within this domain cited by women as being most critical are associated with those figures within the women's own departments or immediate networks who directly affect their day-to-day work experiences.

2.6.2 Support from a partner

In line with the assertion that significant sources of career support for academics may be found outside of the professional domain as well as within, the findings of an American study by Parasuraman *et al.* (1992) with dual-career couples in varied professions suggested that the social support received in one domain (e.g. from family) may well enhance well-being within the other domain (e.g. at work). Also endorsing this perspective, the findings of another American study by Wharton and Erickson (1995) with a non-academic sample reported that male partners' contributions at home played a role in reducing women's job-related burn-out. They found that men's participation in housework and childcare provided psychological benefits to their employed wives, and suggested that women who receive emotional support from their partners are less likely to have their own emotional resources depleted (see also Bird & Bird, 1987 for similar findings with dual-career academic couples). Correspondingly, research findings have widely asserted that the primary source of social support for working women is support from a spouse or partner. The works referred to above indicate that this applies to couples employed in a wide range of professional occupations including academia.

Partner support has been shown to be a key variable in how effectively work-family role-conflict is managed (Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Parson *et al.*, 1992) and, consistent with the role-strain perspective, research has shown that women whose partners spend more time involved in childcare report a lower incidence of depression (Maume & Mullin, 1993). Similarly, a lack of spousal support has been shown to be a major contributor to role-conflict, instances of depression and problems with marital functioning (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1992; Bird, 1999; Mickelson *et al.*, 2006). Assistance from a spouse in meeting the role demands associated with children and the household not only keeps a working mother from being unduly burdened by home responsibilities, but also

may allow for the development of a family pattern in which major life roles are more equitably shared (Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Coltrane, 2000). Despite men's increased support and participation in household work since the emergence of equality feminism in the 1960s, leading toward greater equity in the home, gender inequalities still persist in the division of domestic labour (Bianchi, Milkie, Sayer & Robinson, 2000).

2.6.2.1 The Distributive Justice Framework

The Distributive Justice Framework (DJF), developed by Thompson (1991), is the most influential current social psychological approach to the division of domestic labour in households (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). The DJF is a theory about domestic role-sharing and support, with strong feminist underpinnings, that serves to further our understanding of who does what, when, how and why in the home. More formally, the DJF provides a way to explain the persistence of gender inequalities in domestic labour through a consideration of the factors that determine women's 'sense of fairness' in close relationships (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). As such, through investigating *what* women perceive as a fair division of labour, and *why*, one can better understand the persistence of gender differences (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). It is apparent that research on the division of domestic labour has recently focused on two central paradoxes, namely the stickiness of stereotypical gender-roles and a sense of fairness (or unfairness) of shared labour, and these are explicated below in light of contemporary literature and research.

Increased numbers of dual-career couples in middle-class western society have led to shifts in gender-role attitudes – in other words, what a husband and wife expect from themselves and each other in their marital relationship roles (Coltrane, 2000; Mickelson *et al.*, 2006). Not only have the beliefs about the appropriate roles for men and women changed in the last few decades, but concurrently the division of household labour has also begun to shift; albeit much more slowly (Coltrane, 2000). Research on the division of household labour suggests that men and women are demonstrating more egalitarian behaviours than in the past (Bartley, Blanton & Gilliard, 2005). Since the 1960s, women have cut the average amount of time they spend on housework by nearly half, whereas men have nearly doubled their time commitment in the home (Bianchi *et al.*, 2000; Bartley *et al.*, 2005). In line with feminist ideals, men have become much more active parents than in the past, participating increasingly in childcare and housework, and they are slowly beginning to adjust their own work lives in response to family obligations (Bird & Bird, 1984; Carr, 2002). Similarly, contemporary women are investing more heavily in their careers than did past

generations of women, as evidenced by “their loftier career aspirations, higher levels of educational attainment and higher rates of labour force participation during their childbearing years” (Carr, 2002, p. 106).

These findings seem to suggest that men’s and women’s strategies for accommodating the demands of work and family are starting to converge and the traditionally defined categories of male- and female-typed behaviours have begun to deteriorate (Carr, 2002). This move toward equality in the domestic division of labour is consistent with the shift toward egalitarian attitudes and feminist ideals, but although the vast majority of both men and women now agree that family labour should be shared, few men assume *equal* responsibility for household tasks (Mickelson *et al.*, 2006). As such, despite the increase in home and childcare assistance provided by male partners, women in heterosexual relationships still assume the primary responsibility for home-centred tasks (Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Coltrane (2000) notes that, on average, women still perform two or three times as much housework as men, and they continue to bear the primary responsibility for the mundane *daily* domestic tasks such as cleaning, cooking, shopping, laundry and nappy-changing – jobs that fix them into a rigid routine (Hochschild, 1989). Evidently, although women are doing less housework now and men are doing more, the redistribution of household labour has been superficial and gender inequalities remain unmistakably persistent (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Hence, the first paradox stems from a growing sense of what Hochschild (1989) has termed a ‘revolution stalled’.

A further paradox in contemporary research on the division of domestic labour concerns perceptions of fairness and unfairness. As stated above, despite the rise in egalitarian values with most couples endorsing the ideal of equality, women still perform approximately two thirds of the total household labour (Coltrane, 2000). However, a large majority of those same couples were found to regard such objectively unequal arrangements as fair (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). This discovery prompted a dramatic expansion in research in the 1990s to investigate the meaning of ‘fairness’ evaluations, resulting in large numbers of scholars from a wide range of academic disciplines focusing their attention on the causes and consequences of divisions of household labour (Coltrane, 2000). The findings of Lennon and Rosenfeld (cited in Coltrane, 2000) during this time revealed that couples do not use 50 percent as an ‘equity point’ – men found the division of labour to be fair when they contribute 36 percent of the time devoted to household tasks, whereas women find the division of labour to be fair when they contribute 66 percent of the total. Such findings reveal that unequal divisions of labour are accepted as normal.

Thompson's (1991) DJF builds on insights drawn from the psychology of entitlement (Major, 1993), and Deutsch's (1985) social psychology of distributive justice, and it holds that women's 'paradoxical contentment' with extant domestic labour arrangements reflects the gendered nature of perceptions of fairness and entitlement in close relationships (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). In trying to explain these paradoxes, researchers have moved beyond 'structural' explanations of household labour and looked toward the role of 'subjective' determinants, resulting in a greater interest in the cognitions, attitudes and feelings that women may have about the allocation of family work (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Thompson's (1991) refinement of the DJF proposes that women's perceptions of the fairness of the domestic division of labour vary in line with outcome values, comparison referents and justifications in predictable ways (Coltrane, 2000). For instance, women who value equity compare their contributions with their spouses, are not persuaded by available justifications, and are more likely to perceive the usual housework arrangements as unfair. On the other hand, women who value alternative outcomes (such as caring or emotional closeness) compare themselves with other women, are persuaded by available justifications, and are more likely to perceive disparities as fair (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004). Doucet (1995) offers that, despite being problematic from some feminist perspectives, the DJF served to reinvigorate the idea that the domestic realm is an arena where problems of social injustice and disadvantage apply, and it has supported a form of 'difference feminism' in that it celebrates women's choices while remaining focused on the material disadvantages they might sustain.

Of relevance to this study on academic women, according to Coltrane (2000), there are a number of other factors that also influence couples' fairness evaluations of the division of domestic labour, which include their employment, education and ideological stance on gender-roles. With regard to ideology and gender attitudes, it is reported that women, and sometimes men with more egalitarian gender attitudes, see division of labour arrangements as being unfair to the wife in the household, and some studies have found that women's fairness evaluations are disproportionately influenced by men's traditional gender attitudes (Coltrane, 2000). He goes on to report that while significant interaction is found between one's gender ideology and feelings toward housework, the actual division of labour had less effect on fairness evaluations when the wife held more traditional views on gender (Coltrane, 2000). Spousal gender attitudes were also seen as a significant influence in women's abilities to manage the time demands of working and mothering roles. Bartley *et al.* (2005) and Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) found that for working women whose partners held relatively traditional sex-role attitudes, the time demands of the professional working role

were more strongly associated with role-conflict than for women whose husbands held relatively non-traditional attitudes.

Even pre-dating the 1990s eruption of feminist research focusing on gendered home-based support attitudes and behaviours, a study by Statham, Vaughn and Houseknecht (1987) illustrated the importance of a husband's cooperation in the wife's attempts to remain professionally involved and economically active. The findings of this study served to confirm and elaborate earlier feminist research efforts to document the significance of emotional spousal support for women's sustained work involvement (e.g. Rapoport & Rapoport, 1969; Holmstrom, 1973). Such emotional support may give working women the freedom to make a major commitment to their own careers and to feel positive about their integration of work with family life; and a lack of this support can contribute to feelings of inadequacy in meeting role expectations, particularly in relation to parenting responsibilities (Elman & Gilbert, 1984).

2.6.2.2 'New' fathers and fathering responsibilities

Much of the recent research on parenting attitudes and ideology seems to suggest that progressive change is underway (Doucet, 1995; Lupton, 2000, Coltrane, 2004). Signalling a feminist victory, changes in discourses concerning parenting have taken place, giving way to a more egalitarian model of parenting in which fathers are encouraged to orient themselves emotionally towards their children in ways that might previously have been thought of as 'maternal' (Lupton, 2000). Contemporary expectations still see men fulfilling the traditional role of the 'breadwinner', but they are now also expected to be involved fathers who play a larger role in child-rearing and housekeeping tasks than did their own fathers (Hochschild, 1989). In addition to this appeal coming from women, many men for their own part are articulating a desire to take on a more involved role as fathers, to contribute to childcare, and to develop a strong emotional bond with their children (Lupton, 2000). Until recently, most childcare and developmental research has been predominantly mother-oriented (presumably for ideological reasons), and any early developmental literature that did address the role of fathers was more concerned with paternal absence than analysing the implications of fathers' active contributions to child-rearing (Burman, 2008). Burman (1994; 2008) explains the recent preoccupation with fathering research as due to three socio-historical and intellectual trends in feminist activism: the increase in the number of women in paid employment and the increase in men's unemployment; the feminist attack on psychology for its

feminisation of childcare; and the impact of the women's movement in calling for the redistribution of gender roles.

From as early as the 1970s it was emphasised that fathers should be actively involved in the day-to-day care and nurturance of their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003), and 'active' parenting was portrayed as the yardstick by which 'good fathers' might be assessed (Lamb, 2000; Richter, 2006). The 'new father' ideal gained prominence in the 1980s, and compared to the distant 'good provider' fathers, new fathers were nurturant, caring and emotionally attuned parents, intimately involved in family life (Lamb, 2000; Coltrane, 2004). The psychosocial importance of father involvement in families has been well-documented (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Rane & McBride, 2000; Henley & Pasley, 2005), but its meaning has changed considerably over time. Fatherhood has always been a multi-faceted concept, and the defining characteristics of the role have shifted from initially providing moral guidance, to breadwinning, to sex-role modelling, to marital support, and finally to providing nurturance (Lamb, 2000). As these concepts have changed, father involvement has been viewed in different ways at different times. Historically, father involvement has also tended to vary considerably across regions and ethnic or cultural groups, with economic, political, legal, and cultural practices shaping fathers' ideals and actual behaviours (Coltrane, 2004).

Despite the call for greater father involvement globally, not all parents want to participate in the lives of their children; in fact, Morrell and Richter (2006) state that most South African men do not appear to be especially interested in their children and have frequently failed to be present in their lives. Richter (2006) explains that men's family roles have generally resisted change and, despite the shifts that have occurred over much of the western world, fatherhood in South Africa in some cases has remained narrowly defined as providing for, protecting and disciplining children. Richter (2006) proposes that there are many different ways in which fathers may provide for and be involved with their children and express their fatherhood. To fully appreciate the specific context in which fatherhood has been experienced in South Africa, one would need to develop an understanding of the socio-historical determinants of fatherhood that goes well beyond the scope of this report (see Morrell & Richter, 2006). For much of the twentieth century, men's different experiences of work in South Africa fundamentally shaped what was possible for them as fathers (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Poverty is regarded as being the most important factor undermining the role of fatherhood and the involvement of fathers in South Africa. The prevalence of black African men engaged in migrant labour (Morrell & Richter, 2006), paternal desertion as a result of their

lack of resources to provide for families (Morrell, 2006), as well as other societal conditions affecting poor and working-class South Africa, such as HIV/Aids related mortality and rife crime, have resulted in the absence of large numbers of men from households in which children are growing up, leading to low levels of support for childcare (Morrell & Richter, 2006). Nonetheless, men in general are reported to be considerably more active parents than previously assumed. Observations in South Africa indicate that men are increasingly providing care at home due to their female partners being employed, and young men are also voicing opinions that they would like to be more involved in their children's lives (Richter, 2006).

A review of recent research findings reveals a number of factors that may potentially influence the extent to which fathers will be involved in the lives of their children. Firstly, women's ideology about the role of fathers and the importance of that role to children is likely to impact on paternal involvement with children, and women with more liberal attitudes about fathers' role in parenting have tended to have partners who participate more in childcare (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Henley & Pasley, 2005). Fathers' self-perceptions are equally important because those who feel less positive about their father identity, and who thus have lower levels of investment in this identity, tend to be less involved with their children (Lamb, 2000; Henley & Pasley, 2005). Conversely, fathers who have a greater sense of parenting competence are more motivated to spend time involved with their children (Fagan & Barnett, 2003). The marital relationship has been found to mediate the association between paternal competence and father involvement because if a woman perceives her partner to be competent in the father role she will be more likely to support his identity of involved father (Fagan & Barnett, 2003; Henley & Pasley, 2005). This support and cooperation in the relationship is linked to her partner's positive self-perception and marital satisfaction, which in turn will predict his involvement with his children (Lamb, 2000; Fagan & Barnett, 2003).

In line with the role-strain perspective, studies on fathering have found that paternal involvement in family work tends to benefit mothers as well as children because when fathers share housework with their wives, employed mothers are able to escape total responsibility for home maintenance, evaluate the division of labour as more fair, and enjoy higher levels of marital satisfaction (Coltrane, 2000; Marsiglio *et al.*, 2000; Henley & Pasley, 2005). Interestingly, what Lupton (2000) found in her study with first-time parenting couples is that many of the women spoke about the need to actively 'involve' their partners in caring for their children and to provide them with consistent encouragement in this regard. For example, they described regular efforts to arrange for their partners to have 'quality time' with the child, and there was a sense that not only did this

initiative come voluntarily from these fathers, but that their wives took a fair amount of responsibility for ensuring that paternal involvement was taking place (Lupton, 2000).

2.6.2.3 Partners as irresponsible domestic helpers

It is apparent that despite much recent scholarly and popular attention to the figure of the 'new' or 'involved' father, the reality remains that motherhood in the modern home is still charged with more responsibility than fatherhood (Lupton, 2000). Lamb (in Richter, 2006) observes that in many studies the largest discrepancy between maternal and paternal involvement is found on the 'responsibility' dimension of childcare, with findings suggesting that fathers assume very little responsibility for their children's care. A number of studies have found that even when husbands willingly share in, and express commitment to, equal household work, their wives feel more *responsible* for the home and children, will do more of the work of planning and remembering what has to be done – for example, keeping track of doctor appointments and arranging for playmates to come over – and are more likely than their male partners to take time off work when their children are ill (Hochschild, 1989; Burman, 1994; Lupton, 2000). Coltrane (2000) has suggested that the persisting 'primary breadwinner' status of many working fathers allows them to use family time for relaxation, diversion and self-expression, whereas working mothers are less likely to enjoy family time given the burden of responsibility they carry in this domain.

Both Tingey *et al.*, (1996) and Lupton (2000) have proposed that when husbands *do* 'help out' with domestic labour, their assistance is just that – 'helping out'; mothers will tend to take responsibility for domestic management whereas fathers just assist with task accomplishment, when asked to do so. Related to these ideas, Hochschild (1989) explains that women devote *proportionately* more of their time at home to housework and proportionately less of it to childcare. What this implies is that working wives spend relatively more time 'mothering the house' whereas the time that their husbands spend at home is time spent 'mothering the children'. Since most parents would prefer to tend to their children than clean the house, it follows that men do more of what they would rather do. "More men than women take their children on fun outings to the park, the zoo, the movies... Women spend more time on maintenance, feeding and bathing children; enjoyable activities to be sure, but often less leisurely or 'special' than going to the zoo" (Hochschild, 1989, p. 261). This idea has roots in developmental psychological literature which suggests that men may often take on the role of the 'entertainer' in childcare, while mothers take more responsibility for the daily nurturing tasks of feeding children, cleaning their clothes and

performing emotional attachment work (Burman, 1994). Consistent with this premise, the findings of Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) reveal that when the women participants spoke of their children's fathers, they portrayed them as "childlike and irresponsible; in constant need of reminders" (p. 277).

Hartmann (in Katz and Piotrkowski, 1983) has argued that husbands may in fact be a net drain on a woman's resources. She explains that unmarried women are shown to spend less time doing housework than married women with the same size families, and suggests that husbands may reduce a woman's work-family role-strain by contributing income, but simultaneously increase her strain by creating additional housework (Hartmann in Katz and Piotrkowski, 1983). This theory may be substantiated if one considers that fact that multiple studies have found that married women with children report the highest levels of stress and role-conflict, while unmarried women report the least (Katz & Piotrkowski, 1983; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). Given this, and in light of the above discussion around social support, it cannot be said unequivocally, based on prior research findings, that having a partner will necessarily reduce one's strain. In their study on men's participation in childcare, Maume and Mullin (1993) proposed that when husbands are expected to care for children while their wives work, the majority of men will resist this arrangement, at least at some point in time, and this resistance is manifested in increased marital strain. They argue that fathers' care of children may produce overt and subtle forms of stress which make it more difficult for women to balance work and family, and that in the face of such resistance, these women are more likely to quit work than women who use other modes of childcare (Maume & Mullin, 1993).

It follows then that childcare by another (woman) family member or (female) non-relative would be more likely to put a working mother's mind at ease than relying on the father for supervision. The outcome of such a situation may be that employed women risk conflict with their husbands when relying on them to supervise children and they may then choose to resolve this conflict by reducing paid work if no other childcare option is available (Maume & Mullin, 1993). Hochschild's (1989) early feminist study suggested that men engage in "passive resistance" when they are tasked with a larger share of the domestic burden (p. 202). She found that because domestic labour and childcare were traditionally viewed as 'female' responsibilities, men believed that they had less expertise in these areas than their partners/wives, and they thus avoided domestic labour by denying its importance (e.g., they did not care if the bathroom was clean), praising their wives (e.g., "I can't entertain the kids as well as you can"), playing dumb (e.g., asking where things were), and "forgetting" to perform important tasks (e.g., making lunch for the family) (Hochschild, 1989).

Elman and Gilbert (1984) have considered that even the most egalitarian of men may have difficulty giving their wives the support and encouragement that they themselves receive, because men were not socialised to assume supporting roles.

What Hochschild's (1989) feminist study found was that indeed, many women felt lucky if their spouses did any housework at all and they sought to avoid conflict by performing most of the chores themselves, and sometimes by temporarily curtailing outside paid employment. It is likely that the trends presented here are specific to the social context of the time and the state of the gender equity and division of labour standards that prevailed then. As such, with continued progress toward equality one might expect that women today would experience more supportive attitudes from their spouses than those presented.

2.6.3 Support from employed domestic help

Another source of relational support for working mothers that has not been dealt with extensively in the international literature, possibly due to its particular applicability to the South African context, is the employment of domestic workers in the home as both housekeepers and child minders or nannies. According to Hein and Cassirer (2010), employing a nanny has been a popular childcare solution in both developed and developing countries for those families who can afford the cost. In South Africa, where income disparities are great and there are large pools of poorly educated, unemployed or under-employed women, the employment of domestic workers is common (Hein & Cassirer, 2010). As indicated previously, the domestic work sector provides significant opportunities for employment for women in South Africa and is primarily the occupation of the poorer, largely unskilled, working-class black female population.

2.6.3.1 Domestic workers and nannies in South Africa

Domestic service is the overall largest employment sector in South Africa, employing more than one million people, and as much as 20 percent of all employed black women in South Africa, (Du Preez, Beswick, Whittaker & Dickinson, 2010; Hein & Cassirer, 2010). Although Statistics South Africa's 2000 *October Household Survey* reported two other slightly larger occupational categories for working women in general, Department of Labour officials have repeatedly suggested that domestic labour is widely under-reported (Dinat & Peberdy, 2007; Fish, 2006). Disaggregation of the data from this survey by racial categories illustrates that domestic work was the largest sector

of labour for black South African women in 2000 (Fish, 2006), and subsequent research has consistently shown this to be the case (Dinat & Peberdy, 2007; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). Estimating the numbers of people employed as domestic workers has been made problematic globally by the lack of available and accurate data, the prevalence of unregulated work relationships, and because unregistered workers and child domestic workers do not appear in the official statistics (Ramirez-Machado, 2003). It is widely estimated, however, that considerable numbers of workers continue to join the domestic labour force on a worldwide scale, many of them providing childcare among other services.

Hein and Cassirer (2010) hold that finding appropriate childcare for their children is a problem faced by working parents almost universally. They state that as family structures change and more women enter the labour market, either by choice or necessity, there are repercussions of childcare difficulties that affect the workplace, the economy, gender equality, the education of children, and society in general (Hein & Cassirer, 2010). Paying a reliable nanny or child minder or putting a child into quality day-care can be expensive and often out of the reach of low-income and even middle-income parents (Hein & Cassirer, 2010). The childcare solutions that are available to parents can either facilitate their employment or act as a barrier to employment. As such, reliable childcare can help parents, particularly mothers, to ensure continuity in their careers. Hein and Cassirer (2010) state that if mothers are “compelled to resign for lack of affordable, quality childcare and do not work at all for a long period, they tend to have difficulty re-entering the workplace, particularly at the same level as they were when they left” (p. 8).

Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) maintain that the women in their American study made sense of and re-framed the ‘good mother’ image into a ‘good *working* mother’ role that entailed caring for and nurturing their families in part by locating and arranging good quality childcare. They ironically experienced pride in their mothering role through acts of locating others to ‘mother’ their children in their absence. The women in this study described in detail the different and sometimes multi-phase processes of arranging childcare for which they perceived themselves responsible (Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). All the women in this study reported that they either brought their children to day-care centres or employed nannies. Those who had a nanny who would come to their house stated that this was the most helpful arrangement as it lessened the daily tasks of transporting children and over-seeing their household (Buzzanell, *et al.*, 2005). It is interesting to note that many similar findings were revealed in a South African university workplace in the pilot study conducted by Poulos (2009). For example, all of the senior academic mothers who were interviewed indicated

that the option of private domestic childcare was preferable to the use of a day-care centre or crèche, including those women who, at the time, did not employ domestic childcare assistance due to financial constraints.

For parents, the critical aspects of a childcare solution which influence whether they use it or not have been noted as: “affordability in relation to their earnings; convenience in terms of opening hours and location; and the quality of the care the child will receive” (Hein & Cassirer, 2010, p. 24). Research results have suggested that working parents appreciate the convenience of employing a child-minder to work in their home, whose hours are often more flexible than those of a day-care centre (Hein & Cassirer, 2010).

Studies conducted in South Africa with working women in academia have found that many of those who are mothers rely on paid domestic help for assistance with childcare during their paid working hours. De la Rey (1999) reports that “most women with children described how they coped with the help of other women, either family members or paid child minders” (p. 16). Similarly, the findings of both Brink and De la Rey (2001) and Poulos (2009) – the pilot study conducted for this present research – reveal that many of the women in these studies were coping with work and family responsibilities, and reported relying on paid domestic help for childcare assistance during the working week. Despite the use of domestic childcare being a common practice in South Africa, there is proportionately very little contemporary local empirical research available to give specific evidence of the nature of the relationships between working women and their childminders, or the kind of social support that is provided for working mothers by these caregivers through their domestic assistance. The few notable exceptions include the widely recognised seminal work, *Maids and Madams*, by Jacklyn Cock (1980), as well as more recent work by Altschuler (2006) and Du Preez *et al.*, (2010).

2.6.3.2 Employment relationships, exploitation and power

There are a number of good reasons why the analysis of employment relationships and working conditions in the domestic sector have focused largely on this occupation as an artefact of apartheid (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). Legislation promulgated under the apartheid regime served to reinforce the oppression wrought by colonialism in South Africa. Various laws, which discriminated against people on the basis of race, restricted access to quality education and excluded them from many occupational categories, resulting in black South Africans, and particularly black women,

facing very limited employment choices (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). Effectively this led to a large pool of cheap, unskilled and marginalised black female labour who were dependent on domestic work for making a living and supporting their families (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). As such, a vast majority of the domestic workforce in South Africa has historically been constituted by black and coloured women, and this remains to be the case. In this way, domestic labour became a powerfully racialised and feminised institution, and almost all domestic employers belonged to the white middle-class.

The domestic service sector was a largely unregulated occupation that was notoriously exploitative and these workers were poorly paid, vulnerable, and completely unprotected by the law. In a major contribution to the analysis of domestic service in South Africa in the heyday of the apartheid regime, Cock (1980) described domestic workers as being among the most exploited groups in a society that was already characterised by extreme inequality and discrimination.

This inequality translated directly into vastly unequal relationships between domestic workers and their 'Madams', whose differences were informed by race, class and culture (Du Preez, *et al.*, 2010). It has been said that, in apartheid South Africa, black women were oppressed in three ways – as women (gender), as black people (race), and as unskilled workers (class) – that mutually re-enforced one another, and domestic service has been regarded as an important nexus of this 'triple oppression theory' at work in society (Gaitskell, Kimble, Maconachie & Unterhalter, 1983).

Cock (1987) argues that the inequality present in the domestic work employment relationship became a problem for feminist theory in the 1980s in two main ways. Firstly this was because the complex intersection of gender, race and class oppression in the situation of black women raised questions about the possible limits of the feminist struggle, as feminists were forced to grapple with the notion that white women stood in a power relation as oppressors of black women. Secondly, feminists were compelled to accept that the situation of a white middle-class woman 'buying in' the work of another (marginalised) woman revealed extreme asymmetries between the women's social positions and was evidence of a category of difference between them, implying that no universal statement about 'the woman' can be made and therefore 'womanhood' as a monolithic category ought to be abandoned (see also Lutz, 2002; Fish, 2006). It is evident, as Cock (1980) suggested, that the institution of domestic labour presents one of the most serious challenges to the notion of a shared gender experience among women. The class aspect of oppression was typically established by the relationship between a domestic worker and her white

'Madam', where the disparities in lifestyle and access to resources could be clearly contrasted. The particular character of the work – usually labour-intensive and unskilled – and the very low remuneration awarded to domestic workers signified their distinct social statuses (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983).

One of the most significant research findings that supports the significance of class-based differences is Fish's (2006) observation that the power asymmetries present in relationships between white employers and black employees were also evident between black employers and black employees, evoking an awareness of the salience of class differences *within* racial groups. The race aspect of domestic work is evidenced by the fact that, worldwide, it is always performed by groups of people regarded as 'socially inferior' (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983). In South Africa, household domestic work has above all been constructed as a raced-black institution, and apartheid ideologies were centred on the view of black people as second-class citizens (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983; Fish, 2006). In support of this, Altschuler (2006) remarks that South Africa was "socially and economically stratified by what might be described as caste-like divisions between racial groups" of which white people were dominant in every respect (p. 35).

Lastly, domestic service has a gender aspect whereby it positions women in subservient roles where the work they perform is largely taken for granted and unrecognised. Firstly, in the patriarchal conceptualisation of 'female labour', a woman is considered to be the natural provider of services in the home. As such, the tasks associated with domestic work – cooking, cleaning, childcare – are universally assumed to be 'naturally' part of the woman's sphere and resonate with the kind of work that they 'ought' to be doing as women within the patriarchal ideology (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983; Lutz, 2002). As women oppressed in a deeply andocentric society, domestic workers were often silenced and expected to be invisible. While this section presents an apartheid perspective on domestic workers, there have been major shifts in how domestic workers are seen and appreciated post-apartheid (as discussed in section 2.6.3.4).

2.6.3.3 Emotional entanglements in the home

As has been implied, the idiosyncratic relationships developed within the setting of paid domestic work are emotional and contradictory, and have certain unique complexities that make it different from other forms of paid work (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). Firstly, the work takes place in the employer's home and the relationship thus develops in an intimate space, which blurs the

conceptual divide between work and family, and affection and duty. One of the difficulties with this context is that the home is traditionally viewed as the site of family and leisure activities, and not of work. Secondly, combined with this, the kind of work that paid domestic workers engage in is often associated with what women do to express love for their families, and so housework and care-work may not be considered 'work' in the real sense, but as 'lovework', which is performed as part of the natural female role (Lutz, 2002; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). If domestic work is not seen as real work, then neither are domestic workers seen as real employees or domestic employers as real employers. In this context, the employer and employee may easily be drawn into a fantasy of friendship and a sharing of intimacy, despite the highly asymmetrical balance of power and privilege in the relationship (Altschuler, 2006).

This trend has led to the widespread use of 'the family metaphor' by employers in describing their relationships with their domestic employees (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010), which has implications for the domestic worker especially as it may serve to absolve the employer of their responsibilities. This metaphor hides the fact that there is a power relationship between the employer and employee, and allows employers to switch between regarding the relationship as contractual or familial, depending on what suits them at the time (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010, p. 397). This may place a disproportionate amount of control in the hands of the employer because this rhetoric of friendship and quasi-family membership quickly collapses when the domestic worker is seen to have crossed a boundary, and she may then be dismissed (Altschuler, 2006).

A large number of domestic workers in South Africa have been, and are, migrant workers who have left their own families in order to care for someone else's. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, the loneliness of this isolated existence may lead domestic workers to invest the love they feel for their families in those they are being paid to care for (Altschuler, 2006). In this way, the domestic worker, as a working mother herself, may experience her own work-family role-conflict arising from contradictions in the overlapping roles and identities of mother and paid domestic carer. Her somewhat 'misplaced maternalism' has implications for the vulnerable members of the family being cared for, especially small children, who may in turn experience the confusion of love, loyalty and disloyalty toward their domestic carer (Altschuler, 2006). These relationships between (white) children and their (black) nannies play a significant role in the children's social development; for the majority of white children in South Africa during apartheid, these relationships embodied their most intimate contact with someone categorised as black, and as such, served as a prime site for their racialisation – their learning about what it meant to be white was integral to their early

development (Altschuler, 2006). According to the findings of a study by Altschler (2006), it was only in rare cases that young adults, having grown up in South Africa, had “little to say about their relationships with their nannies or see this attachment as irrelevant to their understanding of family life” (p. 37).

2.6.3.4 Shifting post-apartheid legislation

In spite of the transition out of apartheid and into democracy, and the amendments made to the South African labour legislation to recognise domestic service, domestic workers were afforded very limited rights and legal protection. The *Basic Conditions of Employment Amendment Act, No. 137 of 1993* merely introduced to the Act the term ‘domestic worker’ and stipulated reasonable limitations for working hours. It was not until the Act was revised again (*Basic Conditions of Employment Act, No. 75 of 1997*) that substantive basic conditions of employment for domestic workers, including remuneration concerns were laid down. Neither these freedoms nor the new-found commitment to gender rights ideologies in South Africa did much to improve the daily working conditions of women employed as domestic workers or alter their position in society (Fish, 2006, Du Preez *et al.*, 2010).

More recently, however, the South African government has taken progressive steps toward reform by way of further amendments to the Act (No. 11 of 2002) and promulgating the *Sectoral Determination 7: Domestic Worker Sector*, effective since September 2002 (Department of Labour, 2010). For the first time in South Africa, this legislation makes provision for a minimum wage for domestic workers and sets out certain prohibitions with regard to wages, and it establishes detailed regulations regarding working hours, overtime, contracts of employment, leave and termination (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). Furthermore, it requires employers to register their domestic workers with the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). It is apparent that domestic labour has been one of the last social institutions to benefit from democracy and societal reform in South Africa, suggesting that Cock (1980) was accurate in her assessment of domestic labour as “the last bastion of apartheid”.

Transformation has been slow; domestic work is still a strongly raced and gendered occupation and many workers are still victims of exploitation and low wages, but there is at least some evidence that workers are realising the intended benefits of the new legislation. The results of investigations into the effectiveness of the legislature implementation reveal that the outcomes

have been experienced differently case by case; while some workers claim to have been empowered by the legislation and link it directly to an increase in their wages, other results indicate that the *Domestic Worker Sectoral Determination* has had little impact (Fish, 2006; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). The main concerns reported are, firstly, that there is evidence of widespread non-compliance with the formal labour policies that are in place; secondly, power structures between employers and employees remain so unequal that employers claims of ignorance about the new work standards have appeared to be completely acceptable; and thirdly, many workers, despite becoming informed of their rights in the new legislature, have not wanted to risk retribution from their employers and possible dismissal as a result of pursuing discussions about their rights under the new legislation (Fish, 2006; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). In general, it is evident that power relationships in South African domestic workplaces remain markedly asymmetrical and the latitude for exploitation that persists is a cause for concern.

2.7 International women in academia

As has been previously suggested, the academic profession may be said to typically present a highly unique working environment, career trajectory and organisational culture with respect to other professional careers in the corporate sector for instance. Unlike the broad discussion of women's employment offered above, this section moves the focus toward the peculiarities of academia as a profession and as a specialised institutional context for career women/mothers. It also delineates the varied experiences of academic women from a number of different geographical contexts, providing for a more detailed comparative exploration of the South African university context in the section that follows.

Women experience very different academic careers in the Higher Education sector (or in universities) compared to men. White, Riordan, Özkanli and Neale (2010) argue that factors like the following may impact on women's opportunities to become senior academics and senior university managers who are able to influence gender-sensitive policies: career mobility; children, families and other experiences outside academia; the slower process of their tenure and promotion to senior academic positions; the paucity of mentors for academic women; and gender-stereotyping. White *et al.*'s, (2010) qualitative study presents initial findings of a multi-country, cross-cultural study within the international *Women in Higher Education Management (WHEM) Network* project, which interviewed and compared the experiences of senior women and men managers in universities in four of the eight countries sampled – Australia, New Zealand South Africa and

Turkey. The size, shape and functioning of the Higher Education sector was shown to be different in each of these contexts but the main points from their preliminary findings, which were consistent across contexts, included that career paths into senior management in universities are still based on the traditional male model, whereby men tend to receive more support in moving into senior roles than women – who experienced gate-keeping on the way up, which was found to continue even once they were in senior management roles (White *et al.*, 2010). The study concluded that more attention needs to be paid to policies and practices in universities that directly or indirectly continue to discriminate against women and discourage them from applying for senior management positions (White *et al.*, 2010). While it was reported that the representation of women in senior management in universities in the four countries under study has improved in recent years, White *et al.* (2010) stated that barriers to their full participation in university management still exist and that organisational cultures have not shifted significantly with respect to gender inclusiveness (White *et al.*, 2010).

2.7.1 Universities as hierarchical ‘masculine’ institutions

Several studies have described how Higher Education institutions are “hierarchically organised in ways that privilege hegemonic masculinities ... and universities are sites for both the construction and reproduction of certain masculinities that, in turn, shape and are shaped by the institutional culture” (De la Rey, 2005, p. 8). This dominant hegemonic masculinity is said to be associated with “rampant individualism, competitiveness, authority and technical competence” (Blackmore as cited in De la Rey, 2005, p. 8). Careers in academia are precisely characterised by their hierarchical nature and sense of rationality and individualism (Bagilhole, 1993; Pillay, 2007). Such careers can thus be said to be at odds with the stereotypical feminine style of operation and more suited to a masculine style.

The findings of White *et al.*'s (2010) cross-cultural study support the notion that women ‘do leadership’ differently, contributing to a large body of foregoing research proposing indisputable evidence that women display inherently different leadership styles to men (e.g. Helgeson, 1990; Buttner, 2001; De la Rey, 2005). Several authors have defined, in more or less the same terms, those qualities that are widely agreed to be characteristic of a feminine leadership style, which include: empathy, cooperation, communication, nurturance, interdependence and interpersonal sensitivity; responsiveness to others’ needs and motivations; being more participatory, democratic, perceptive, and egalitarian; an awareness of emotional tone; affiliation and attachment; and an

orientation toward the collective interest (e.g. Fondas, 1997; Billing & Alvesson, 2000; De la Rey, 2005). Other descriptions of women leaders have shown them to be transformational, as opposed to transactional, with highly developed interpersonal skills (Buttner, 2001). Above all, women are regarded as being more *relational* in their general approach and less individualistic; enabling them to build better relationships, in which they are mutually empowering, and to enhance team effectiveness at work (Fondas, 1997; Buttner, 2001).

Works that have identified feminine relational practices in organisations, including Buttner (2001), report that women employees draw on those relational skills typically associated with the domestic sphere – including collaboration, sharing of information, empathy, and nurturing – and that these skills contributed to their work effectiveness. Helgesen (1990) proposed that certain of these characteristics associated with women’s leadership (including interpersonal communication, conflict-resolution skills, and a greater capacity for prioritising than their male counterparts) may stem from gender-specific experiences such as managing a household and raising children, while at the same time juggling a career. This explanation for differences in leadership style is thus not rooted in the biological sphere, but is instead attributed to gender-specific socialisation practices and life experiences (Helgesen, 1990). Chusmir, Koberg and Mills (2001) stated that the “pre-work socialisation for women traditionally encourages social relationships, whereas socialisation for men concentrates on competition and achievement” (p. 67). This generalisation tends to suggest that once in the workplace, women engage in a more egalitarian, co-operative and communicative work style in contrast to the command-and-control leadership style associated with men.

Academia is a sector of the economy that epitomises the proverbial ‘man’s world’, where scientific knowledge, reason and rhetoric, competition and achievement operate in a hierarchically structured system that rewards individuals. The significance of this is that it would appear that academia is not the sort of institution in which a woman would be expected to thrive. However, White *et al.*’s (2010) transnational study found that “the skills required to be an effective university manager are not necessarily gendered”, and that both male and female senior managers valued the different leadership style that women brought to university management (p. 657). Women’s characteristic skills were generally regarded across the sample as strengthening senior management and producing improved outcomes, thus providing a strong argument in favour of gender balance in university leadership (White *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, careers in academia are especially challenging for mothers due to the exceptional demands on one’s mental capacities, time and energy, and the unpredictability of a career narrative for academic professionals, which does not

support the desired stability and security of motherhood (Bird & Bird, 1987). Bagilhole (1993) acknowledges academia as a “hostile environment” for women, highlighting the issue that the pervasive nature of academic work renders it inseparable from a woman’s home and family life, which raises difficulties for combining an academic career with marriage and family (p. 263).

2.7.2 Combining academic careers and motherhood

From an outside perspective, an academic position in Higher Education may appear to be an ideal work environment for women who are mothers: a flexible schedule, autonomy, interaction with other adults, rewards for self-development and research topics of interest (Swanson & Johnston, 2003). However, academic women often perceive traditional academic careers and research agendas to be incompatible with having and raising children. Achievement of tenure in a university requires excellence in teaching, attainment of higher degrees, ongoing research productivity, conference attendance, scholarly publications and managing daily administrative duties; all of which allow little concession for the many duties of motherhood and time for a family life (Waggoner, 2008). Because of this, mothers with academic careers have long been socialised into ‘backgrounding’ their family responsibilities in order to meet the demanding expectations of their positions (Sotirin, 2008).

An American study found that parenting faculty members, especially Professor-mothers, reported more stressful and less positive experiences with their academic career progression than non-parenting faculty members (O’Laughlin & Bischoff, 2005). As a result of these difficulties, women in academia who wish to become mothers hold “a deep anxiety about being perceived as less than serious academics” (Sotirin, 2008, p. 266). There are countless documented instances of women academics who have never had children because they wanted to be taken seriously as scholars or because they did not have the time (Bagilhole, 1993; Mills, 2008). Another American study by Townsley and Broadfoot (2008) reported that having babies has been shown to significantly hamper women’s ability to earn tenure and, as a result, their statistics confirmed that “female academics held the highest rate of childlessness amongst professionals at 43 percent” (p. 136). These findings resonate with those of an earlier study conducted by Bagilhole (1993) in the United Kingdom. She commented that academic women choosing not to have children in favour of their careers appears to be a rational choice when one considers that they work in “an institutionalised context governed according to the male life cycle” (Bagilhole, 1993, p. 263).

2.7.3 Gender demographics and equity policies at universities

The above reasons may account for the under-representation of women in senior-level positions within Higher Education institutions globally, although this varies in national perspective and by faculties (White *et al.*, 2010). Hills and Rowan (2002) hold that, internationally, the university has been homogenised as a male institution; women are under-represented and tend to be concentrated at the lower levels and in disciplines which carry less prestige. They are more likely to be engaged in teaching and administration than research, providing them with limited access to professional development and other benefits (Hills & Rowan, 2002). The gender demographics for academic staff at Harvard University in the United States of America (USA) reflects these inequities; in 2005, women held only 19 percent of tenured positions within the Humanities, and just eight percent in the Sciences (Orr, 2007). Research done at the University of Washington (USA) also seems to indicate that women academics tend to carry a disproportionate share of first year teaching, administration and committee work, and pastoral care and counselling of students – none of which carry significant weight in impressing selection or promotion committees (Orr, 2007).

As mentioned in an earlier section, there are also the pervasive 'second shift' domestic responsibilities which are typically a part of a woman academic's workload in whichever part of the world they live and work (Orr, 2007). Swanson and Johnston (2003) observe that academic work has no boundaries and is never done; there are always papers to mark, lessons to prepare, journals to read, books to write and lectures to present. Moreover, they remark how balancing of all of these multiple requirements and responsibilities with the demands of raising children may be costly in terms of making progress in an academic career, because whereas academic scholarship favours continual and steadily increasing productivity, parents' scholarship is characterised by spurts of productivity as creativity waxes and wanes with the demands of childcare (Swanson & Johnston, 2003). They offer that such an outcome is to be expected when "the traditional academic linear career progression is imposed on a non-linear and chaotic process called life" (Swanson & Johnston, 2003, p. 8).

According to Townsley and Broadfoot (2008), universities in western societies seem to be responding to the demands being made on them by working mothers in Higher Education with policies and procedures such as paid and unpaid parental leave, part-time or job-sharing arrangements, and childcare provisions or subsidies. Many universities in developed contexts like

Australia and New Zealand have had gender-sensitive and affirmative action policies in place for the appointment, promotion, tenure, maternity leave benefits and retention of academic women for more than 20 years (White *et al.*, 2010). Academic women are frequently pursuing their rights through the advocacy and lobbying of gender action initiatives established within their employer institutions, which provide a greater sense of solidarity for women in what can otherwise be an isolating work environment, as well as providing them with information and support networks, increasing the likelihood that they will proactively pursue these rights. The problems for these academic women, however, appear to be persistent since the “dual demands of work and family are constantly vying for their attention” (Townesley & Broadfoot, 2008, p. 135). In other words, while policies/conditions at work are more supportive than in the past, academic mothers are still struggling to balance their dual responsibilities. The expectation placed on women in the academic workplace is ‘total dedication’ and, in order to be taken seriously, those who maintain such careers must demonstrate that their work is their primary and uninterrupted focus. The quandary here is that the same can be, and is, said about maternal caregiving (Townesley & Broadfoot, 2008). It can be noted that, more recently, the conditions and dimensions of the academic workforce and workplace are changing globally as more newly appointed women academics with PhDs are seeking tenure track positions, and are unwilling to forgo having children for professional success (Townesley & Broadfoot, 2008). By combining family and work commitments, and managing the so-called double shift, these academics are performing their jobs in unprecedented ways and thereby pressuring their institutions to respond with improved structures and practices to accommodate them (Townesley & Broadfoot, 2008).

2.7.4 Retention of women in academic work

In light of the above discussion, it is evident that the work involved in being an academic mother can be immensely challenging. It is a fair presumption to make, though, that the majority of women in academic careers are very committed to their professional scholarship and work for the intrinsic personal reward they derive from it (because the low salaries in academia, relative to the corporate and other professional sectors, make it unlikely that financial gains are a primary motivator) (Butler, 2003). However, it is also fair to assume that mothers are highly invested in their families and that this role may be more influential in their career decisions, regardless of the extent to which they may enjoy their work (Teevan *et al.*, 1992). For the most part, working women have been able to more or less balance these roles in a way that allows them to satisfy both their needs to have a career and be a mother, and reported global trends show that mothers

are increasingly joining the global labour force (Hartmann, 2004). However, given the changing needs of a woman's family over time, there are likely to be critical times when this balance will be more difficult to achieve than others (Lupton, 2000; Bussell, 2008), and the retention of women academics with children is reported to be a topic of ongoing concern at many universities on a global scale (Teevan, *et al.*, 1992; Driver, Ralebipi-Simela & De la Rey, 2008).

A British study by Bussell (2008) focused on various major life transitions and the related implications for high-achieving professional women with children. The findings proposed seven key transitional stages of life which reflected altering attitudes toward work, with the transition to motherhood being considered the biggest and most fundamental change (Bussell, 2008). In the context of work-family balance, times of heightened difficulty are often associated with some situational change in the family domain that shifts a mother's priorities toward investing more of her efforts at home, so disrupting the sense of balance between her roles (Bussell, 2008). This may have critical implications for her career prospects and status – especially in such a hierarchical institution as academia.

It has long been argued that family constraints play a significant role in preventing women from full professional involvement (Statham *et al.*, 1987), and that heavier family responsibilities may account for the exodus of women from academia specifically (Teevan *et al.*, 1992). Due to the major gender differences in family responsibilities stemming from culturally prescribed gender-roles, it has been proposed that the birth of a child affects men and women differently – while fatherhood motivates men to work harder at their jobs in order to be better providers, motherhood pressures women to work less so as to devote more of their time to parenting (Teevan *et al.*, 1992; Joesch, 1994). As has been noted previously, career women who take periods of time off work will tend to have difficulty re-entering the workplace at the same level they were when they left (Bussell, 2008). Despite this, however, it is a relatively common practice for middle-class working mothers across a range of demanding professions (Hartmann, 2004).

At these critical transition stages, the trend has generally been for working mothers to move into self-employment or negotiate part-time or flexible contracts at work where possible (Bussell, 2008; Tomlinson, 2006). However, for academic women this trend is markedly different given the nature of their work and the way in which the self-promotion framework operates. Academic parents are afforded the flexibility of dedicating less time to their careers in a different, less official way by choosing to 'opt out' of many aspects of academic life for a period of time (Butler, 2003; Sotirin,

2008). This would take the form of an academic effectively 'exiting' the running for promotion and limiting their involvement to only those required duties – essentially becoming teachers. In this way, they may avoid involvement in any extra commitments, put off pursuing further qualifications and take time away from producing research; making themselves un-promotable but affording them more time for life outside of work. Women in academic careers who have permanent posts are able to do this for years provided they satisfy the basic requirements of lecturing and administration in their departments around students' coursework (Swanson & Johnston, 2003).

Generally speaking, the phenomenon of mothers scaling back their work hours or leaving work completely has frequently been linked to women's failure to be represented in leadership in industry (Carr, 2002; Whitehead & Kotze, 2003). It is argued that as a result of women interrupting their careers during childbearing years, they accumulate less work experience and lose human capital and seniority, leading to their generally lower rates of advancement and lower pay (Joesch, 1994). However, Driver *et al.* (2008) assert that, in the case of academic women, their continued absence from positions of leadership is likely to have resulted from an intersection of various personal as well as institutional variables that impact on their career advancement. In line with this claim, White *et al.*'s (2010) findings revealed that, while senior men in universities tended to cite women's interrupted careers, family responsibilities and lack of internationally recognised research as reasons for their under-representation in positions of leadership, senior academic women cited the various forms of gender discrimination they had experienced in academia as the problem.

Either way, it is widely regarded as a myth that women do not rise to the top of organisational ladders in industry and academia; rather, organisations struggle to retain senior women and prevent their flight from demanding, senior positions once they have children (Raj, 1986; Carr, 2002; Hartmann, 2004). Hartmann (2004) argues that the failure of highly educated women to stay in the labour market represents a wasted societal investment. Given that women in university careers are among the most highly educated, and contribute toward the education of younger generations, this becomes a concern of even greater interest. In the past, many academic administrators reported having reservations about hiring women academics due to the belief that they would be less productive scholars as a result of having children (Hamovitch & Morgenstern, 1977). Today it is a social redress or equity imperative in many universities to actively recruit and retain women academics (Driver *et al.*, 2008), despite the belief that their parenting responsibilities in the home are likely to lead to lower scholarly output (Teevan *et al.*, 1992). However, the findings

of White *et al.* (2010) provide an example, in the case of Turkey, of a country where universities currently do not have any equity policies for women and the gender demographics for the Higher Education sector are hugely discriminatory.

2.8 South African women in academia

White *et al.*'s (2010) cross-cultural investigation into the state of gender in university management across multiple contexts allows for comparisons to be made between South Africa and the other countries sampled. White *et al.* (2010) state that the reason for comparing these countries was that each has "different academic traditions and approaches to improving the participation of female academics" – some of which appear to have been more effective than others – which in turn has impacted on the representation of women in senior ranks (p. 647). Preliminary results of this research found Australia and South Africa to be relatively on par in terms of the numbers of senior women academics and the gendered obstacles faced by senior university managers (White *et al.*, 2010). New Zealand was shown to fare much better on these indicators than South Africa, with Turkey having the harshest gender imbalances and barriers to women's advancement (White *et al.*, 2010). These findings would imply that, from a global perspective, the state of gender in South African Higher Education, although concerning, may not be as dire as a number of other local research studies (discussed below) have suggested.

2.8.1 Gender, race and class demographics at South African universities

An historical analysis of the university system in South Africa shows indisputable evidence of race and gender discrimination (De la Rey, 1999). The first signs of concern about gendered demographics of staff profiles in Higher Education emerged in the late 1980s, and by 1992, when the end of apartheid was in sight, white male academics were still the dominant group by far with women comprising only 29.8 percent of the academic and research staff of universities in the country (De la Rey, 1999). While there had been an increase in the number of women participating in Higher Education as students, there continued to be an under-representation of women in particular faculties and in senior academic posts (Sader, *et al.*, 2005; Shackleton, Riordan & Simonis, 2006). As of 2004, student enrolment in South Africa reflected that 53 percent were women, but women comprised only 37 percent of all academics and nine percent of senior management in universities (Gunawardena as cited in Sader *et al.*, 2005). As was found by White *et*

al. (2010) it has been widely noted that race issues have taken precedence over gender in affirmative action and social redress initiatives in South African universities.

However, by 2005, at the University of the Witwatersrand, one of South Africa's premier tertiary institutions, the employment equity profile revealed that women constituted 44 percent of Senior Lecturers, 25 percent of Associate Professors, and 22 percent of Professors (Orr, 2007). While these figures show an upward trend when compared with previous years, it was notable that there were still no female Deans and only one woman member of the executive senior management team for a period of at least five years (Orr, 2007). Deans, Heads of Schools and other senior academic staff were asked to comment on this trend and "the lack of a sufficiently robust research and publication record was the most commonly cited reason for the failure of women to advance through the academic ranks" (Orr, 2007, p. 164). De la Rey (1999) reports that, despite the recent increases in the participation of 'black' (African, Indian and Coloured) people and women, there is still a vast majority of white men at the upper levels of academia and in certain fields of study which carry more prestige and status; and that this previously advantaged constituency continue to publish approximately 90 percent of universities' research articles and books each year.

2.8.2 Women's career narratives and experiences of gendered obstacles

Much of the international research originating in America and Europe around women's academic career development has taken a quantitative approach, following the positivist tradition (Bujold, 2004). Given that a large body of the research in this field has been generated in these contexts, this has led to the dominance of statistical representation currently evident in the field. In the case of South African studies, however, the use of a qualitative career narrative methodology has largely prevailed as a means of generating knowledge on this topic (e.g. Walker, 1998; De la Rey, 1999; Orr, 2007; Pillay, 2007). Although it makes use of career narratives, the key difference between the current study and what has gone before is in the method employed. While De la Rey (1999), for example, sampled women from a number of different South African universities in an attempt to generalise the obstacles for academic women, this grounded theory study holds the 'activity system' constant in order to obtain rich, complex accounts of academic women's experiences.

Based on writings by Polkinghorne, Bujold (2004) describes the role of 'narrative' as both a process and a product – as a process it consists of one's meaning-making of their experiences and is a form of self-construction, and as a product it is a story. Cochran (1990) is one of many authors

who has advanced the narrative approach as a paradigm for conducting research on careers, and offers that a 'career narrative' is a story of the features of one's life that are relevant to how one's career got to where it is. Narratives are largely organised according to events and 'crisis points', and the career narrative method makes use of certain rules of what is typically included in such a process (common milestones) (Cochran, 1990). As such, it may be said that the use of narrative analysis risks forcing such an individualised and intricate process as one's career to fit some predetermined linear model, which is especially problematic given the unpredictability of careers (Bujold, 2004), especially for academic women. Conversely, the use of a constructivist grounded theory method allows for career narratives to emerge freely.

The work of Bujold (2004) draws on the large body of knowledge already accumulated regarding the applications of a constructivist/narrative approach to career, and portrays how this approach has contributed to career theory and research. Bujold (2004) holds that constructivism underpins a narrative approach since it is concerned with an individual's construction of meaning, knowledge and experience, and because narrative may be seen as a form of self-construction. By approaching career narrative research from a constructivist tradition, this study attempts to uncover how women experience and construct meaning in male-dominated universities.

The research of Walker (1998) pays particular attention to academic women and the interpretations and explanations they give of their lives and identities in South African universities. Walker (1998) reports that women are represented in larger numbers in the lower ranked positions (e.g. Junior Lecturer and Lecturer), with few to be found among the professoriate or the governing bodies. They are characterised as the 'other' academics, facing not so much overt discrimination, but the everyday practices of exclusion which are more subtle and difficult to contest (Walker, 1998). Hills and Rowan (2002) elaborate on this notion of 'exclusion' by explaining that women are marginalised within universities by being left out of the informal social networks of the 'old boys clubs', intimidation by the 'club-like' atmosphere of the Senate Room, the inconsistent and seemingly arbitrary standards and criteria applied to promotions, and their lack of representation in decision-making bodies. Despite the fact that after 1994, and the end of apartheid, women have been designated as a target group for social redress and affirmative action, Walker (1998) asserts that all women in academia in South Africa remain a minority and that universities are sites of some of the most "covert forms of resistance to women's advancement" (p. 353). Sader *et al.* (2005) explains this by stating that, even though the appointment of women in universities is now a social and political imperative in South Africa, the insidious masculine corporate culture of

universities finds ways of keeping women concentrated in the lower ranks. One such practice is the “inflexible institutional arrangements that are unsupportive of the domestic responsibilities that generally fall on women” (Sader *et al.*, 2005, p. 65).

A study conducted by De la Rey in 1997 focused on 25 women Professors in universities across South Africa (De la Rey, 1999). These women had years of experience in the Higher Education system and had been successful in moving up the academic hierarchy. By exploring the career narratives of her participants, she discovered that universities on the whole were not seen as women-friendly institutions (De la Rey, 1999). Many of the women in her study reported incidents with male colleagues concerning exclusion from informal networks and formal decision-making, stereotyping, sexual harassment, and men in senior supervisory positions effectively blocking their progress (De la Rey, 1999). Throughout the study, the women consistently represented having children as a potential hurdle in their careers and many of them spoke about a conscious, planned decision not to have children (De la Rey, 1999).

The career trajectory of a young academic woman typically involves the slow and fairly haphazard move from being a student to taking up a part-time position while furthering her studies; moving up in the institution is dependent on teaching opportunities that may become available, supervision, producing Masters and PhD dissertations, publications and conference attendance – all of which require independent research and funds (Mkhize, 2005). Choosing to have a baby amidst this process is problematic as she would, more than likely, lack sufficient time and financial resources to invest adequately in both of these demanding roles. Furthermore, without having yet achieved a permanent (tenured) position, one would not have access to the support of maternity benefits.

De la Rey (1999) proposes that this consistent representation of children as a hurdle reflects the incompatibility of women’s career paths in academia with mothering, and the absence of good childcare facilities available to these women in South Africa at this time. Reports cited by De la Rey (1999) indicate that, as of 1997, only a few of the Higher Education institutions in South Africa had childcare facilities for staff and students and, of those available facilities, only one would admit infants of less than one-year-old. Moreover, it is probable that none of these childcare facilities offered child-minding during the ‘third shift’ (which begins at home, *after* daytime office hours, and *after* family responsibilities have been attended to) in spite of the reality that this is when much scholarly academic work is done.

Orr's (2007) study at the University of the Witwatersrand in 2001 held focus groups with senior women academics in an attempt to determine what critical factors had helped them "make it to the upper rungs of the academic career ladder" (p. 165). These women were asked to explore the hurdles, hindrances and challenges that characterised the trajectories of their academic careers. Many of them reported that their careers had progressed by fits and starts as they had taken time out to focus on children, or had taken a number of years to realise that they could attain academic promotion. In many cases, it was mentorship or direction from a research supervisor that had assisted them in achieving this goal, and "patronage from and a collegial relationship with someone in a senior position was seen to be particularly advantageous" (Orr, 2007, pp. 165-166). There was general agreement among the women that ambition, commitment and discipline were essential; young women academics were urged to plan their careers, commit themselves to research, and become more like men in their pursuit of promotion (Orr, 2007, p. 166). Competitiveness was seen as a prominent feature of university culture, creating a harsh environment that harboured "intolerance and contempt for the demands faced by women bearing the brunt of parenting" (Orr, 2007, p. 169). Family responsibilities, particularly childcare, were mentioned as a significant challenge by many of the participants and unsupportive spouses were charged with making it very difficult for women to perform to full capacity in their profession. It was felt that "the institution unrealistically expects academic women to come to them without a background or baggage, and to become one-dimensional, forgetting that they are mothers, daughters, friends, and wives" (Orr, 2007, p. 170).

The women in Orr's (2007) study outlined some 'unwise choices' in terms of career advancement which included: taking time off to raise their children, limiting their availability for extended meetings, evening functions or overtime work (because of mothering responsibilities), and an unwillingness to travel away from home to conferences (p. 166). It was suggested by these women's responses that significant personal sacrifices and a re-prioritisation of family interests are inevitable costs of being a successful academic – that an academic mother is unable to focus her efforts 100 percent on either one of the competing spheres (work and family) and both will suffer as a result.

The South African research around this topic does not present one homogenous picture, however. As an Indian woman and a single mother who has, herself, succeeded in an academic career, Pillay (2007) provides a completely alternative perspective on the hardships of academic work for mothers. In her work with senior academic women at a South African institution, she writes about

her personal experiences of mothering in an academic career. In a review of Pillay's work, Mesthrie (2007) notes that while she acknowledges the "perceived oppositional identities" of 'academic' and 'mother', and the daily stresses of combining these multiple roles, Pillay argues that women's ongoing attempts to find a balance are futile because she believes that the calm of a "successful balancing act" simply cannot be achieved (p. 128). Pillay (2007) maintains that she has succeeded in her career *because* she is a mother and not in spite of it, implying her opposition to the abovementioned notion that motherhood and children are obstacles to academic career success. However, Mesthrie (2007) argues that the nature of academic work, and the way in which it differs from other kinds of work, was not given due consideration by Pillay.

2.8.3 Interventions around gender transformation

The political and social change emanating from the new democracy in South Africa has led to significant transformation of the Higher Education sector within a policy environment that is supportive of gender and racial equity (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006). A key feature of this transformation has been the demand for greater numbers of black people and women participating in academia, both as students and staff (Mama, 2003; Shackleton *et al.*, 2010). A study conducted by Shackleton *et al.* (2006) of different aspects of gender equity in a historically white, advantaged South African university revealed some of the remaining challenges to institutional reform. First the study looked at women students entering the Engineering Faculty (the faculty with the lowest proportion of female students), and noted the key success factors that have contributed to growing this proportion over the years (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006). The second component of the study investigated initiatives aimed at improving gender equity among academic staff in that Faculty (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006).

In line with those of Mama (2003), Shackleton *et al.*'s (2006) findings related to gender transformation in the case institution emphasised the importance for universities to avoid focusing on numbers and thereby "neglecting 'deep transformation' involving change in culture" (p. 578). The study revealed that whilst gender transformation of the student body had been relatively successful, little had been achieved in transforming the gender (and racial) composition of the staff, despite the progressive policy environment (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006). Women were found to be free to participate fully in all levels of the institution but were given little encouragement, and programmes aimed at raising gender equity awareness were not prioritised (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006). The authors recognised an "implementation gap between policy and practice" with regard

to staff in senior academic positions; because, despite a supportive policy environment, without “effective reward and sanction mechanisms in place”, conditions were slow to change (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006, p. 579). They offered that the only way to effect meaningful transformation would be to shift from policies and procedures toward actively addressing cultures and attitudes in universities through the support of awareness-raising and developmental initiatives such as the HERS-SA network (Shackleton *et al.*, 2006).

HERS-SA is a non-profit organisation dedicated to the career development and advancement of women in Higher Education in South Africa through carefully crafted interventions (HERS-SA, 2010). The aim of the HERS-SA developmental programmes is to empower women to take on senior leadership roles in universities, thereby providing much needed role-models for academic women (Shackleton, 2007; HERS-SA, 2010). The rationale behind this initiative recognises the need for “visible gendered change within the patriarchal core of the institutions” (Shackleton, 2007, p. 26). The organisation also aims to challenge institutional culture and facilitate workplace change in universities, thereby addressing gender inequity and enabling women’s full participation in academia (HERS-SA, 2010). The successes of HERS-SA interventions over the past eight years, however, have largely been at the individual level of analysis. While women report that the interventions have been personally beneficial to their careers, insufficient critical mass has been achieved to have made an impact at an institutional level. Shackleton *et al.* (2006) reported that two interventions in their case institution had produced positive gender outcomes; one being the HERS-SA professional development opportunities initiative offered to female academic staff, and the other being a management course offered to female engineering students within the university. This project with engineering students presents a novel way to ‘grow one’s own wood’ within a faculty exhibiting a severe gender imbalance, an approach also advocated by Driver *et al.* (2008). What this approach aimed to achieve was to attract women into the Engineering Faculty as students and then to mentor them to become academics, thereby growing the numbers of women in under-represented fields and providing impetus to transformation.

2.9 Academic women at Rhodes University

For eight years prior to and including 2007, Rhodes University maintained a research output per staff member that consistently put it among the top three universities in South Africa (Annual Research Report, 2007). For the 2008 year, this track record was improved upon in terms of both the quality and quantity of outputs, with a year-on-year growth in accredited outputs from 2007

to 2008 of 20.3 percent, which was significantly above the national 7.8 percent growth for the sector as a whole over the same period (Annual Research Report, 2008). This is a valuable status to have achieved in the Higher Education sector since the level of research output is the primary criterion by which universities and their academics are evaluated. In a study by Sader *et al.* (2005), several South African academics acknowledged that the development of a research profile through reading for PhDs, publishing and developing research networks, both nationally and internationally, are the ways in which academics can facilitate their career progression and receive recognition and reward from the university. However, Sader *et al.* (2005) state that being disciplined enough to put other activities on hold in order to achieve these qualifications and the accompanying recognition is a less feasible route for women with family responsibilities.

2.9.1 Gender equity and promotion at Rhodes University

In line with the measure of importance Rhodes University places on their aggregate research output, they are invested in promoting and encouraging their academic staff members to pursue further degrees and professional qualifications. The University gives various financial awards to academics who achieve a Masters or PhD degree or equivalent qualification while in the service of the University (Director of Human Resources, 2008). As such, Rhodes University is presented by the Director of Human Resources as having an ethos (policies and practices) that actively promotes the further academic development of all its staff. However, according to the statistics of personal promotion at Rhodes University in the last decade, the number of women who have applied for and achieved promotion to professorial level has averaged at one female promotion per year (Personal Promotion Statistics, 2008). This poses the question of whether the promotion process itself at Rhodes University is what deters women from applying in larger numbers, or whether it is simply the nature of academia in general that makes it difficult for women, especially mothers, to establish the prerequisite academic track record necessary to qualify for promotion. This issue has been addressed to some extent through research focusing on senior women academics within the Rhodes University context (Poulos, 2009).

Sader *et al.* (2005) claim that women academics are generally less likely to apply for promotion than their male equivalents; they propose that the “main block to promotion for women academics is the demand for long term experience required to build up an academic profile, whilst the need for facilities such as childcare, or for time out for child-bearing and rearing are largely ignored” (p. 71). The Director of Human Resources (HR) at Rhodes University has witnessed a similar trend

around the promotion process at this case institution (S. Fischer, personal communication, November 16, 2010).⁵ Fischer indicated that the personal promotion system relies on academics putting themselves forward and she believes that the risk involved in this kind of self-promotion is a great deal easier for men than women, who do not seem to respond as well to rejection when unsuccessful, often resulting in a 'flight response' (they leave the University). In line with trends evident in other universities, Fischer explained that the number of women academics at Rhodes University is not an equity problem but, rather, that there are not enough women at the senior management levels of the University. In her opinion, the difficulty for women has been around issues of finding the time to produce research. Fischer stated: "What you typically see with women who have children is that the research suffers, and then it impacts on their promotional prospects and career trajectory" (personal communication, November 16, 2010).

Also important to note is that one of the requirements that academics at Rhodes University need to fulfil in order to be considered for promotion is to produce a 'teaching portfolio', which comprises evaluations made by one's students and fellow staff members of one's competence as a lecturer. Recent research seems to indicate that student evaluations of lecturers tend to be significantly more critical of women than of men (Orr, 2007). According to Dr J. Vorster (personal communication, October 19, 2009), in her experience working at the Centre for Higher Education, Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) at Rhodes University, she has found that young black women lecturers "have to try harder to prove that they belong in that position". She says that this is likely the result of a combination of their own feelings of inadequacy and the negative attitude they receive from their students, feeding off each other and playing out in their inability to command the attention of students in the classroom. As a result they tend to struggle and this may then reflect poorly on them in formal evaluations. In addition, Vorster stated that "some women do not feel secure about their own academic voice" and that it takes a number of years for them to overcome this. Many of them do not stay the course which has been another factor impeding their chances of progress in the institution.

In line with South African legislation, Rhodes University applies affirmative action in their selection and promotion procedures and, provided a candidate is suitably qualified, the policy is clear that

⁵ An informal interview was conducted with Ms Sarah Fischer, HR Director at Rhodes University, towards the end of the research process as a means of validation and feedback. This interview material was *not* considered part of the 'data' analysed for this study, and selected extracts from this personal communication are reflected here to provide further contextual background to the gender policy/practice frameworks of Rhodes University. In line with grounded theory methodology, permission to conduct the research with staff at Rhodes University from Ms Fischer, and the validation interview, are incorporated into Chapter 3 as steps in the engagement with a key institutional stakeholder/gatekeeper in the research site.

an equity candidate will be favoured over a white male candidate (S. Fischer, personal communication, November 16, 2010). However, the problem with women in leadership roles comes with the appointment of HODs and Deans of Faculties, which are *election* processes and not selections (implying that employment equity will not apply). Fischer expressed concern over the current state of these senior managerial appointments at Rhodes University and indicated that this is a key area that needs to be considered for transformation purposes.

2.9.2 Retention of women academics at Rhodes University

The HR Director of Rhodes University went on to discuss the difficulties in retaining valuable women academics in the employ of the University. She explained that this issue has, in part, to do with attraction of female staff as well as retention; one reason for this being the location of the University in Grahamstown, where there are limited work opportunities for the professional partners of academic women, which may deter them from applying for positions (S. Fischer, personal communication, November 16, 2010). As an employer, Rhodes University has attempted to combat this problem by incorporating a 'spouse clause' as part of their retention policy. This recent development guarantees new staff relocating to Grahamstown that efforts will be made by the University to arrange employment for an academic's spouse (provided that he or she is suitably qualified) within the functions of the University. The Rhodes University staff thus has a high prevalence of 'academic partnerships' because many non-academic partners may be unable to find suitable local employment in a small city. Fischer acknowledged that another deterrent is the relatively low remuneration level of Rhodes University academic staff compared to other universities, government and corporate sector salaries. The funds set aside for remuneration of academic staff in Rhodes University's 2008 annual budget reportedly permitted clustering of academic salaries around the 50th percentile (Hodges, 2009). This was an improvement in the University's competitiveness relative to other South African institutions, but its salaries still ranked lower than the market median for comparable professions (Hodges, 2009).

Although Rhodes University offers the option of job sharing or part-time work to academic staff, Fischer reported that these have not been in high demand and cited the deterring remunerative implications of this as the most probable cause. She explained that Rhodes University does not at present have a formalised gender policy, and so much of the flexibility and concessions made for parenting staff members have been arranged on an individual basis and at the request of the staff members themselves. As Fischer described, Rhodes University has made funds available to provide

support for academic mothers on a case-by-case basis, by providing them with research assistants for example, where this is considered necessary given their additional family responsibilities. This system is not run as a generic programme but, from a retention perspective especially, has been made available to those productive women academics, who are on promising leadership trajectories, in order to help them remain productive given their added familial pressures. Fischer explained that, as in any budgetary environment, such differentiation is necessary in order for limited resources to be efficiently allocated.

In addition to this, Rhodes University has put facilitating mechanisms in place, which are directed toward equity candidates (of which women are a group), in order to provide them with longer sabbatical leave. Fischer explained: “We are giving people extra academic leave, which is what they may need to get a PhD finished or to get papers out in order to get promoted”. There is also a new policy in place regarding the personal promotion process, whereby Rhodes University is committed to taking diversity issues into account when considering an academic’s case for promotion, recognising a woman’s family responsibilities where she may have a slow output rate, for example. Such practices are fundamental to transformation because, as Fischer stated, the academic culture is so concerned with standards and meritocracy that there is often insufficient appreciation of an individual’s context, “which is what diversity is all about”. As previously stated, Sader *et al.* (2005) have, on the basis of their research, claimed that women’s needs for childcare have been inadequately accommodated in South African academic institutions in general. However, as the driving force behind transformation at Rhodes University, Fischer’s account of this University’s recognition of gender issues offers a far more hopeful picture.

2.10 Concluding the main ideas

An important issue to surface from the literature relating to the work-family balance of academic mothers is that, while the subject has been widely researched internationally, it appears that the number of studies conducted in a local South African university context is both limited and outdated. In addition to this, the South African research has, to a large extent conformed to the established, dominant methodological traditions of the field, thereby failing to generate other fresh perspectives on this topic. Furthermore, it is apparent that past studies on maternal employment (in general) have largely focused on the impacts of this on children, thereby neglecting women’s voices and the intricate balancing activities they perform (Lewis, 1991).

The grounded theory approach aims to abstract an understanding of a process where individuals negotiate action in response to a phenomenon in a particular situation or context (Creswell, 2007). Thus, what a grounded theory study may innovatively offer to this field is the development of an empirically based, contextually relevant theory about the enabling processes that contribute to academic women's ability to manage their scholarly work and family roles. This study aims to consider how the various sources of relational support available to these women intersect with multiple factors relating to their personal/familial and occupational circumstances (e.g. their race, culture, marital status, age of their children and professional status). Although the existing literature refers to some of these variables, they are yet to be brought together in a 'theory' which can explain how women are able to perform the 'activities' of mothering and working in an academic environment. With a strong focus on relational support – which is largely a home-based element – this study provides an exploration of the home-life and relationship issues that embed a professional career and articulate the 'messy' domesticities that are often entirely hidden in career narratives. Another value-adding attribute of this research is that it may provide the administrators of Rhodes University, and other South African institutions, with a more comprehensive theory through which to understand the diverse experiences of their women academics in terms of work-family role-conflict. This may facilitate future policy formulation, upgrading of existing procedures, and allocation of resources to better support academic women's career narratives.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

As indicated in Chapter 1, this study is conducted in the interpretive/constructivist tradition, which falls under the broad paradigm of qualitative research. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is concerned primarily with 'process', rather than outcomes; or in other words, with *how* things occur. He further states that qualitative researchers are interested in how people make sense of their lives and experiences and their structures of the world, and attempt to understand not one but multiple realities (Creswell, 2009). This is consistent with the core principle of constructivist research which assumes multiple realities based on the belief that reality is constructed from personal experiences that differ from one person to the next (Crotty, 1998; Charmaz, 2003). In beginning to understand the realities being constructed by research participants, one needs to see the world through their eyes and to analyse their constructed meanings based on their lived experiences (Ogina, 2007).

This is the aim of the current study; to employ the appropriate qualitative research techniques to elicit a rich understanding of the lived experiences of academic mothers who are balancing their demanding careers with their mothering roles and responsibilities from *their* perspective. As previously indicated, I have approached this study from a feminist perspective, which allows for the problematising of women's conditions and the institutions that frame those conditions, and which values the transformation of inequality (Creswell, 2007). This approach is well-suited to this research given the notoriously challenging experiences of women in the academic institution. This study thus intends to explore this world through the meanings of the participants themselves, to develop a greater understanding of women's unique and complex experiences within the patriarchy of the university system, and to develop a theory, grounded in these experiences, of the way in which these academic mothers are supported and enabled to balance their multiples roles and responsibilities within the academic context of Rhodes University. As suggested in Chapter 1, the intention of this study is to go about generating such a theory in a way that is novel for this field – through the use of Charmaz's (2006) constructivist approach to a grounded theory research method.

3.2 Grounded theory method

It is apparent from a number of different methodology texts (e.g. Strauss & Corbin, 1990; Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997; Charmaz, 2003) that grounded theory is widely seen as not merely a methodology, but an integrated research strategy that provides a set of principles and practices for the entire research process. However, the nature of these principles will be largely determined by which of the many strands of grounded theory one follows. The current state of the grounded theory field of research is fractious and complex and arose out of somewhat conflicted histories. The method was first conceived by Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss in 1967 and over the years since its inception, the term has become packed with multiple meanings, fraught by numerous misunderstandings, and complicated by competing versions (Charmaz, 2006). In order to motivate for the use of Charmaz's version of constructivist grounded theory in this study, it is necessary to briefly discuss the split that exists in the field and what the tensions are, and to consider some critique of her methods.

3.2.1 The objectivist/constructivist split in grounded theory

In the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss spoke about it being a method of discovery, and of theory as emerging from data separate from the scientific observer (Charmaz, 2006). However, since their classic statements in 1967, Glaser and Strauss have taken grounded theory in somewhat divergent directions (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). For years Glaser remained consistent with his earlier exegesis of the method, while Strauss joined forces with Juliet Corbin in promoting a version of grounded theory that favoured new technical procedures rather than emphasising the comparative methods that distinguished earlier grounded theory strategies (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser's background is in ethnomethodology research and he proposes a less systematic and more intuitive process, while Strauss and Corbin have advanced a more rigorous and step-based method with emphasis on systematisation and structured design (Willig, 2008). Glaser (1992) contends that Strauss and Corbin's procedures 'force' research data into preconceived categories and thus contradict fundamental principles of grounded theory. As such, these founding fathers of the original method took on opposing theoretical positions, although they still share some common assumptions. Glaser's version of grounded theory remains positivist and Strauss and Corbin's work retains elements of positivism such as researcher neutrality and reliance on method (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008).

A growing number of scholars have moved grounded theory away from the inherent positivism in both Glaser's and Strauss and Corbin's versions of the method (e.g. Bryant 2002; Charmaz, 2006; Henwood & Pidgeon, 2006), and many of the disputes among grounded theorists result from where authors stand between interpretive and positivist traditions. Charmaz (2003; 2006) argues that the forms that grounded theory has taken on since its creation are objectivist grounded theory, which derives from positivism (see more on this below), and constructivist grounded theory, which is part of the interpretive tradition. A constructivist approach sees both data and analysis in grounded theory as created from shared experiences and relationships with participants (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). As is fitting of approaches in the interpretive paradigm, it is the research participants' multiple individual realities and experiences that are held as important. Constructivists study how participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations and they do so from as close to the inside of the experience as they can get (Charmaz, 2006). Constructivist grounded theorists take a reflexive stance toward the research process and products and consider *how* their theories evolve – they acknowledge that the resulting theory is an interpretation and that it *depends* on the researcher's view; it does not and cannot stand outside of it (Charmaz, 2006).

Objectivist grounded theory attends to data as real in and of themselves and does not attend to the process of their production. This stance “erases the social context from which the data emerge, the influence of the researcher, and often the interactions between grounded theorists and their research participants” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 131). So objectivism assumes that data already exist in the world and await discovery by a neutral and objective researcher. Given their assumptions, objectivist proponents would argue for a stricter adherence to grounded theory steps than constructivists (Charmaz, 2006). Unlike Glaser's and Strauss's positions, Charmaz assumes that neither data nor theories are discovered. Rather, she claims that: “We are part of the world we study and the data we collect; we *construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). In heated inter-textual debate, Glaser (2002) has vehemently criticised these aspects of Charmaz's method, stating that to add his or her own interpretations would be “an unwarranted intrusion of the researcher” (paragraph 8). Glaser (2002) has slated constructivism as being an effort to avoid the work of confronting researcher bias. He stresses that bias is just another variable that is part of the research and must be woven into the constant comparative analysis. His position is that through careful application of the fundamental grounded theory procedures, and in particular by looking at many cases of the same phenomenon, human bias can be minimised to the point of irrelevancy and data can thus be rendered objective (Glaser, 2002).

In the face of the above criticisms, followers of constructivist grounded theory would argue that the reflexive nature of Charmaz's approach disavows this claim of failing to confront researcher bias. After all, as Charmaz (2006) astutely notes: "we are not passive receptacles into which data are poured; we are not scientific observers who can dismiss scrutiny of our values by claiming scientific neutrality and authority. Neither observer nor observed come to a scene untouched by the world" (p. 15). Her approach explicitly assumes that any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it (Charmaz, 2006). A point to be made in support of Charmaz's view is that even Glaser and Strauss (1967) themselves initially conceded that no researcher can approach a research problem as a 'tabula rasa' (blank slate). The following points summarise Charmaz's (2006) constructivist stance followed in this study (p. 178):

- The grounded theory research process is fluid, interactive and open-ended.
- The research problem informs initial methodological choices for data collection.
- Researchers are part of what they study, not separate from it.
- Grounded theory analysis shapes the conceptual content and direction of the study.
- Successive levels of abstraction through comparative analysis constitute the core of grounded theory analysis.
- Analytic directions arise from how researchers interact with and interpret their comparisons and emerging analyses, rather than from external prescriptions.

These characteristics and the above discussion of constructivist grounded theory according to Kathy Charmaz guided the research process in this study and influenced the research questions and aims. It is my intention to add to the validity of this study – and the resulting theory – through following an established route and aligning the research design with a recognised theoretical framework like that of Charmaz.

3.3 Research design

This research study intends to build on the methods and findings of Poulos (2009). Unlike the abbreviated version of a grounded theory research design used in the pilot study by Poulos (2009), the current study followed a *full* grounded theory design, whereby the researcher repeatedly returned to the field of study throughout the analysis process to gather more material to broaden and refine the analysis (Willig, 2008). According to Creswell (2009), grounded theory is a strategy of inquiry in which one derives a general, abstract theory of a process or action using multiple stages of data collection and the continual refinement and interrelationship of categories.

As stated above, this study followed the guidelines of Charmaz (2006) for constructivist grounded theory research. These guidelines acknowledge that grounded theorists often begin their studies with certain guiding empirical interests to study. A researcher's background assumptions and disciplinary perspectives may alert her to look for certain possibilities and processes in the data (Charmaz, 2006). These assumptions provide researchers with initial ideas to pursue and sensitises them to ask particular kinds of questions about a topic. Moreover, many researchers already have a sound footing in their disciplines before they begin a research project and often have an intimate familiarity with the topic and the literature about it (Charmaz, 2006). All of these provide vantage points that can intensify looking at certain aspects of the empirical world while perhaps ignoring others. Charmaz (2006) suggests that we may begin our studies from these vantage points but need to remain as open as possible to whatever we see and sense in the early stages of the research. As such, Charmaz's (2006) guidelines prescribe that "guiding interests, sensitising concepts, and disciplinary perspectives" may provide us with *points of departure* for developing, rather than limiting, our ideas (p. 17). Her methods tolerate the use of external theories in the construction of a grounded theory and stipulate that the researcher may use such points of departure to form interview questions, to look at data, to listen to interviewees, and to think analytically about the data. Charmaz (2006) summarises that "in short, sensitising concepts and disciplinary perspectives provide a place to *start*, not to *end*" (p. 17).

Charmaz's framework is appropriate for a study such as this where a researcher has engaged in prior research in an area and has a solid background in the related literature. Within the guidelines laid out above, this study used feminist theories, such as Role-Conflict Theory, as well as the findings from the pilot study as such points of departure to delineate a framework for the research, while remaining open to other emerging views. This research design breaks from traditional grounded theory design in that it is not wholly inductive; the aim is to use the findings of Poulos (2009) to set up initial 'hypotheses' and then to test the validity of these findings within a broader sample while still allowing spontaneous themes to emerge.⁶

⁶ The use of 'hypothesis testing' is borrowed from the more objectivist/empirical strand of grounded theory (e.g. Strauss and Corbin, 1990) – in which hypotheses are derived inductively from previous data – and *not* from Charmaz (2006), who has more of a sense of pre-existing theoretical sensitivities (which does not capture the nature and function of the 'hypotheses' in this study). However, the words 'hypothesis testing' are *not* being used in any positivist way, but in an iterative design to convey an idea of *propositional statements* and *tentative hypotheses* emerging from previous rounds of data collection and analysis (in the pilot study) (Poulos, 2009). The design of the current study is based on the data collection and analysis that went before, and uses the resulting tentative hypotheses to build a more focused theory by organising qualitative material around a limited set of propositions. It is important to note that the use of these words is not intended to imply that there will be 'evidence' that is constantly and systematically compared against new rounds of data collection and analysis (as is done by Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

3.4 Research question and aims

In previous chapters it has been argued that the number of studies conducted in a local, South African context focusing on the relational supports that enable a work-family balance for academic women with children is gravely limited. The aim of this study is to develop an empirical theory, through the collection of contextual data, about the experiences of academic women, who are mothers, employed at Rhodes University. It focuses on the particular demands these women face in satisfying their work and family roles and responsibilities and seeks to examine the relational processes that enable a more effective work-family balance. The study aims to consider how the various sources of social support available to these women intersect with multiple factors relating to the women's personal/familial circumstances (e.g. her race, marital status, age of her children, and professional academic rank). Although the existing literature refers to some of these variables, they are yet to be brought together in a theory which can explain how women are able to perform these 'activities' of mothering and working in an academic environment. The study is aimed at providing a means for generating a better understanding among the administrators of Higher Education institutions of the stresses, strains and successes that their academic women with children are facing. The study is guided by the following broad research question:

How do relational enabling processes support women in academic positions at Rhodes University, who are also mothers, in balancing their mothering roles and their full-time career responsibilities?

3.5 Participants of the study

The basis of this study was to identify participants who would yield information most appropriate to answering the research question (Creswell, 2009). The inclusion criteria were thus that the participants should be women and mothers of varying ages and races; they should have at least one child who is below the age of 12 years; they should be currently living with their children; and they should hold full-time academic positions at Rhodes University in various departments and at various levels in the institutional hierarchy. The exclusion criteria comprised the case where a child does not live with the mother (i.e. in the case of divorce) and where the children are older than 12 years. The reason for the latter exclusion criterion is that the study sought to examine the pressures that exist when full-time parental care is required. The study was thus interested in women who are active in childcare and professional academic scholarship, and therefore women

with older, more independent children and those who work on a part-time basis were not considered. Rhodes University was selected as the organisational setting from which the sample was obtained in order to provide a measure of homogeneity in the sample (Kelly, 2006). Thus, although each of the respondents' individual experiences may differ, the unique institutional context in which they are employed would be consistent across participants, allowing for comparison between them. Addison (1989) and Creswell (2007) have asserted that in grounded theory research, the theory that is developed is closely related to the specific context and the social structure surrounding and affecting the phenomenon being studied. The Registrar and the Director of Human Resources (HR) at Rhodes University were consulted for the necessary permission for this study to be conducted and they thus acted as gatekeepers for the research. The conditions for this permission were that any information regarding gender-related policies or practices (or perceptions thereof) espoused by Rhodes University needed to be discussed with the Director of HR before being reported, and that HR should receive a copy of the final results of this study.

As is typical of a grounded theory study, the sampling technique used changed throughout the process depending on the developmental stage of the research (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Initially, convenience sampling was employed to locate women who were willing to participate in the study, which was aided by the rapport I had already established with those women who participated in the pilot study (cf. Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). I was able to attract participants through the use of a recruitment advertisement that was sent via e-mail to the Rhodes University academic staff inviting mothers to take part in the study. This recruitment strategy proved effective and, of the many individuals who responded (some who had taken part in the pilot study and others not), I was able to select a sample of women who best fit the inclusion criteria. Fourteen suitable participants were identified on the basis of the above criteria using purposive sampling, meaning that their inclusion in the sample depended on them engaging in the 'activities' of interest for the research (Kelly, 2006). This number of participants yielded a sample that was large enough to incorporate a range of different experiences/factors into the developing theory, but small enough so that each case could be analysed in depth (Willig, 2008).

An effort was made to include as much diversity as possible in the sample given that the institutional context was held constant (e.g. racial/cultural diversity, different living arrangements, positions in the University, etc.). In this way, I intended to utilise any negative evidence that emerged as a way to test the developing theory. However, it must be noted that twelve of the fourteen participants were in stable, monogamous, heterosexual relationships with the fathers of

their children at the time of the study. As such, their households cannot be held as representative of South African households in general; for example, single mothers with a range of sexual partners, lesbian mothers, three-generation families and so on, were not actively sampled. According to Charmaz (2006), however, sampling in a grounded theory research study is aimed towards theory construction and not for population representativeness. Hence I purposively sampled and selected participants based on their suitability to help best form the theory (cf. Creswell, 2007). This approach led me to target participants who had provided particular responses so as to conduct repeat interviews with them during the course of the study; the aim being to use the additional material to fill any gaps in the analysis (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Ultimately, the involvement of all the participants was determined according to their personal willingness and availability to meet with me. All participants were asked to sign an Informed Consent form (see Appendix A) which detailed the basic aims of the research project and the nature of their involvement. The form states that participants may withdraw from the study should they become uncomfortable with its proceedings and that they would not be forced to yield any information which they are not willing to give. It was important that the participants were aware of their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, and as such one of the clauses is that the real names of the participants and any other identifiable information would not be mentioned (would be altered) in the writing up of this final research report. The signed forms will be stored in a sealed envelope in a locked filing cabinet in my research supervisor's office in order to honour the privacy of the women involved, and shredded after five years.

The table below provides a holistic overview of the participants who took part in this study and provides some of their biographical/situational information as far as is possible without compromising their anonymity.

NAME (pseudonym)	RACE	HIGHEST QUALIFICATION ACHIEVED	CURRENT ACADEMIC RANK	PARTNER? (occupation)	(number) and AGE OF CHILDREN
Anne	White	PhD	Senior	Academic	(2) School-going
Bev	Black	Masters	Junior	Academic	(3) Baby & Small
Cassie	White	PhD	Junior	Other	(2) School-going
Cynthia	Black	PhD	Senior	Other	(3) Small & School
Denise	Black	PhD	Senior	Other	(1) School-going
Diane	White	Masters	Junior	Other	(2) School-going
Jessica	White	PhD	Senior	Academic	(1) Baby
Lizzy	White	Masters	Junior	Single	(1) Small
Nikki	White	Masters	Junior	Academic	(1) Baby
Penny	White	PhD	Junior	Academic	(2) Baby
Rosie	White	Masters	Junior	Single	(2) School-going
Ruby	White	Masters	Junior	Unemployed	(2) Small
Stephanie	White	PhD	Senior	Academic	(2) Small
Tasha	Black	Masters	Junior	Academic	(1) Baby

Figure 1: Participant demographics table

The above table indicates the pseudonyms that were used in an effort to ensure non-disclosure of the participants' identities. Their real names do not appear anywhere in this report and the assignment of pseudonyms has remained strictly confidential. Further precautionary measures were also taken with regards to the other biographical information provided here. Regarding the women's race, the categorisation of the women as 'black' is intended to include woman identifying as black/African, Indian or coloured. This broad definition of race has been used solely for the purpose of preserving the women's identities as far as possible.

In the same way, it was necessary for me to attach arbitrary categorisations to the academic positions held by participants to avoid risk of identity disclosure. The principle that has been used to refer to academic status throughout this report is as follows: 'Senior academics' include those women who are Professors, Associate Professors, and only those Senior Lecturers who have attained a PhD and who are active in publishing their research. 'Junior academics' include Junior Lecturers, Lecturers, and those Senior Lecturers who either do not have a PhD or who do not actively publish their research. It was necessary to keep these categorisations dichotomous for ease

of comparison and to ensure the greatest possible anonymity; however, it is noted that these classifications are porous and are a gross simplification of academic status and work.

Finally, it was also necessary for me to develop as simplistic a system as possible for referring to the ages of women's children. The principle that was developed can be interpreted as follows: Children between the ages of 0 and 3 years have been referred to as 'baby' children; those between the ages of 4 and 7 years have been referred to as 'small' or 'young' children; and those 8 years and older have been classified as children of 'school-going' age. Where women have a number of children of greatly varying ages these boundaries were unavoidably more blurred and so an average age range was used; however, in most cases, this system was found to be effective.

The necessity for the above precautions came about as a result of the uniquely small size of the case University and the resulting familiarity among the campus community. This raised my awareness of the potential for reputational risk of the women involved should their identities be compromised and I have thus taken every precaution to protect these interests in the name of ethical research practice. In addition to these standard precautions, each participant was offered the opportunity to negotiate with me the level of disclosure of the above information.

3.6 Data collection

The qualitative data collection technique that was used consisted of intensive individual interviews with each of the 14 women in the sample. The strength of the qualitative approach meant that I was able to collect rich, descriptive data and details from the women such as their emotions and thought processes, which cannot easily be achieved using quantitative methods (Merriam, 1998; Marshall & Rossman, 1999). According to Charmaz (2006), intensive interviewing permits an in-depth exploration of a particular experience and fosters eliciting each participant's interpretation of her experience, thus making it a useful method for interpretive inquiry. Charmaz further states that intensive interviewing fits grounded theory methods well as both processes are "open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet flexible approaches" (p. 28).

One-on-one interviews were conducted because they offer the opportunity to explore the participants' individual experiences and to ask probing questions that provide for a deeper understanding of the issues that working academic mothers face. Through grounded theory methods, the aim is for the researcher to see participants' worlds as far as is possible in the way

that they do – from the inside (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews were conducted face-to-face because this afforded me the advantages of reading subtle communications (such as facial expressions), which enabled me not only to adjust my approach accordingly in order to elicit the most detailed and descriptive personal information, but it also allowed me to better assess the meaning that participants attached to their lived experiences (cf. Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The interviews followed a semi-structured format, which implied that an ‘interview schedule’ of key themes was used to open discussion of the women’s activities and experiences (Kelly, 2006) (see Appendix B). A semi-structured interview format is not the typical unstructured and iterative design traditionally followed by a grounded theory study (Creswell, 2007), but this technique allowed me to steer the interview to obtain the kind of data that would best serve in theory development. Furthermore, having an interview guide with well-planned questions and ready probes permits one to better concentrate on what a participant is saying and to avoid missing critical points to explore (Charmaz, 2006; Willig, 2008). In Charmaz’s (2006) view, a grounded theory researcher can devise a few open-ended questions to assist in focusing the interview and then invite a detailed discussion of the topic – by doing so, one encourages unanticipated statements and stories to emerge. The combination of the way in which one constructs the questions and conducts the interview will shape how well the between making the interview open-ended and focusing on significant themes is achieved (Charmaz, 2006; Willig, 2008). The interviews in this study took the form of a ‘guided expression’, which ensured that particular themes were focused on, while still allowing for variation and spontaneity to emerge (Willig, 2008). Hence, when unforeseen but relevant issues arose during the interview process they were explored further to yield the richest possible data. According to Charmaz (2006), “rich data are detailed, focused, and full. They reveal participants’ views, feelings, intentions, and actions, as well as the contexts and structures of their lives” (p. 14).

The interview questions sought to investigate the women’s ‘activities’ within and between their working and mothering lives in an attempt to generate a theory about (or make sense of) this ‘process’. As mentioned previously, the questions were formulated using prominent themes identified in the literature surrounding feminist Role-Conflict Theory, as well as in the findings of the pilot study. In designing the interview schedule, I followed Charmaz’s (2006) guide for “how to frame questions to study process” in developing questions that were “sufficiently general to cover a wide range of experiences and narrow enough to elicit and elaborate a participant’s specific experience” (p. 29). The questions were structured thematically in that the initial part of the

interview served to allow me to get to know each woman's situation better by asking direct questions about her familial/domestic arrangements and overall career trajectory, whereas the latter part served to elicit lengthy narrative accounts of the women's personal relationships.

Unresolved tensions exist between the different camps of grounded theorists on the matter of using an interview schedule. As implied above, Glaser (1998) has cautioned that researchers must guard against 'forcing' data into preconceived categories through the use of interview guides. Conversely, Charmaz (2006) maintains that using an interview guide to explore a topic is harmless and merely constitutes a way for a novice researcher to think through how to word open-ended questions and thus avoid blurting out loaded questions that *will* force responses into narrow categories. More so than other forms of qualitative data collection, interviewing challenges researchers to create a balance between asking important questions and forcing responses (Charmaz, 2006). It is apparent that what might stand as a viable means of gathering data to one grounded theorist, could be defined as 'forcing the data' by another.

I ensured that the time and venue of the interviews were arranged at the convenient of the individual participants. The emphasis in interpretive research on collecting *contextual* data motivated me to strive to meet with participants in either their department of employment at the University or in their home setting, as these are essentially the two realms with which the research is concerned (cf. Kelly, 2006). In all cases the participants elected to be interviewed in their private offices during work hours where the atmosphere was comfortable and quiet. I took care to establish rapport with the participants, both in correspondence before scheduled interview dates as well as during the sessions, so that they could feel comfortable speaking to me about their personal experiences. This strategy proved to be effective in gaining useful and valuable material. Charmaz (2006) speaks of establishing rapport as a way of respecting one's research participants.

The interviews were audio-taped to ensure maximum thoroughness in the collection of data and allowed me to better engage with the participants and generate a valuable conversation without interrupting the flow of communication to take notes. Charmaz (2006) offers that the use of a tape recorder allows a researcher to give full attention to the interviewee with steady eye contact and leads to the attainment of rich, detailed data. Obtaining rich data means seeking 'thick' description, which I enhanced through compiling my own detailed reflective notes during the interviews. In qualitative research, the possibility of researcher bias is great, owing to the relative lack of rigour in the research process. In an attempt to add rigour to this research process, I kept a

journal to record and reflect on the details of any choices I made throughout sampling, and the way in which I collected and analysed my data. I made preliminary analytic process notes (memos) between the interviews and throughout the transcription process, to mark instances of particular interest and relationships between data (Charmaz, 2006). These proved to be useful later when performing data analysis.

Following Creswell's (2007) guidelines, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim because I sought detailed description, This is favourable for an in-depth analysis of material, as opposed to transcribing pre-selected parts which may have resulted in an omission of important details (Siedman, 1991; Ogina, 2007). Having personally conducted all of the interviews allowed me to gain an overall understanding of the main issues involved in the activities of interest, and the act of transcribing the interviews enabled me to become familiar with the research material. In support of this approach, Charmaz (2006) asserts that studying your own data prompts you to learn nuances of your participants' meaning and language that assistants might easily miss.

3.7 Data processing and analysis

Within the guidelines outlined by Charmaz (2006), the interview transcripts were subjected to the systematic process of grounded theory analysis. According to these guidelines, grounded theory analysis consists of at least two phases of coding: Initial coding and focused coding. Coding is the act of naming segments of data with a label that simultaneously categorises, summarises and accounts for each piece of data (Charmaz, 2006). During initial coding, I studied fragments of data – words, lines, segments and incidents – by closely examining the interview material, and attached codes to discrete instances of phenomena as I observed them in the data (Charmaz, 2006; Willig, 2008). In the early stages of analysis, coding is largely descriptive and I generated a total of 240 low-level initial codes across all of the interviews (see Appendix C for a comprehensive list of the initial codes that emerged). For the most part, I used my own initiative in the naming of these codes and, in so doing, tried to encompass the essence of what each theme meant for the individual participants. Wherever appropriate, though, I used the words of the participants as *in vivo* codes so as to stay close to the data. This aided in preserving the participants' meanings in the coding itself and made it easier to begin the analysis from *their* perspective (Charmaz, 2006). This is important because if a researcher leaps beyond participants' meanings, the resulting theory is likely to reflect an outsider's, rather than an insider's view (Charmaz, 2006). The use of specifically a constructivist form of grounded theory design, and semi-structured interviews, meant

that the initial coding phase was lessened in this study as many of the initial categories were predetermined by the interview schedule (and pre-existing literature) and thus did not emerge inductively (Willig, 2008). However, as previously stated, spontaneous codes were allowed to emerge from the material also.

Data collection and analysis proceed simultaneously in a grounded theory study and each process informs and streamlines the other (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). The diagram below illustrates *my* experience of moving between data collection and analysis in this study and reveals the typically grounded theory way in which this process operated. My analysis began at the time of my initial interaction with participants, because I wrote reflective memos after each interview, I listened to interview recordings, made further notes, and was already becoming aware of themes in the material. Charmaz and Henwood (2008) posit grounded theory analysis as an ongoing process from the outset; I began with initial coding after transcribing the fourth interview and from that point onward I was engaged in the two processes simultaneously.

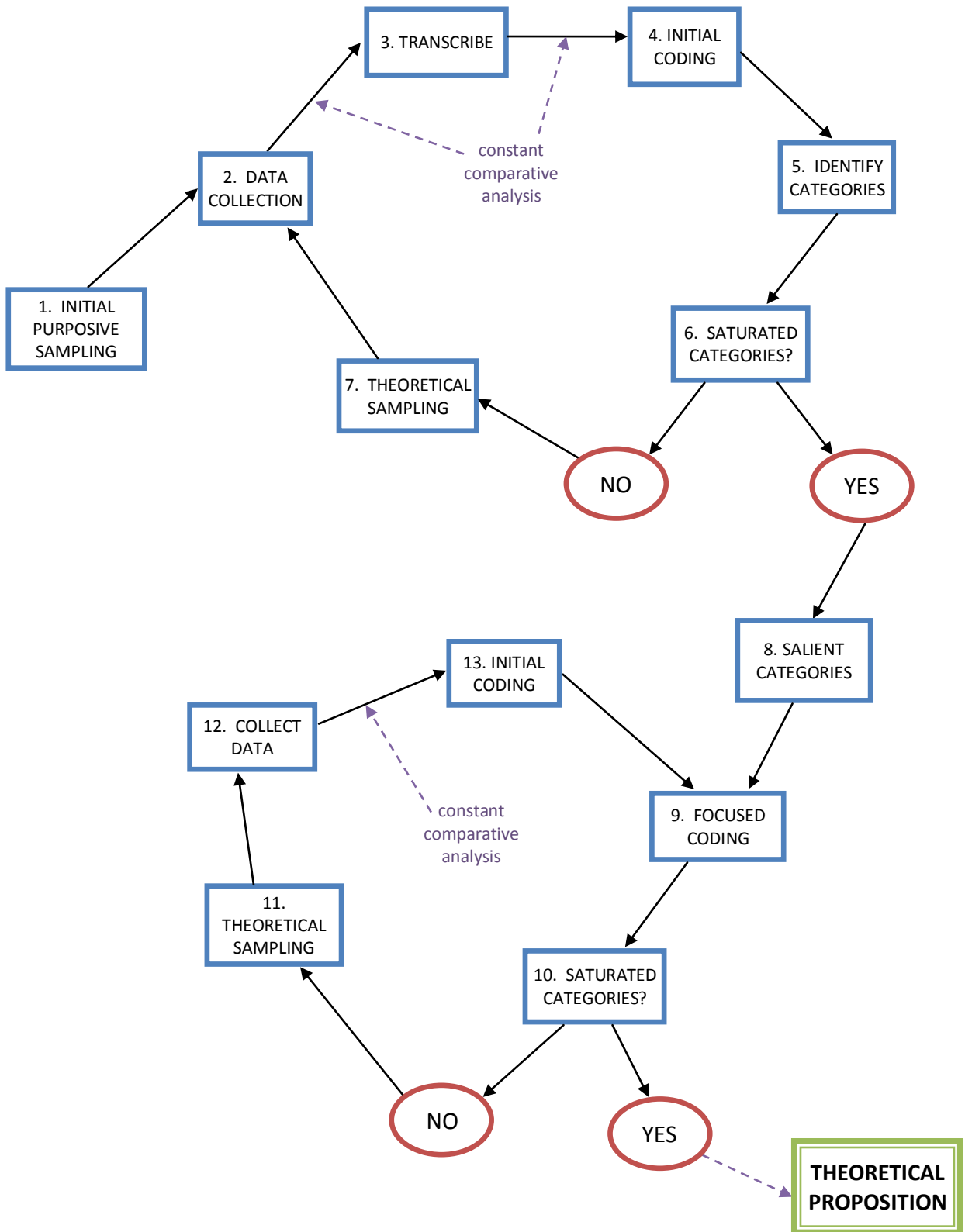


Figure 2: The spiralling interplay between data collection and data analysis processes

(Adapted from Ogina, 2007, p. 52)

Charmaz (2006) states that initial codes are provisional and grounded in the data. They are provisional in the sense that they may be reworded throughout the analysis to improve their 'fit', or "the degree to which they capture and condense meaning and action" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 48). They are also provisional because one aims to remain open to as many theoretical directions as conceivable at this point, and to progressively follow up on the more salient codes in an attempt to explore and fill out the properties of categories (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). Practically, what this entailed was comparing the events and views that one participant spoke about, and the codes, with those of each successive person I interviewed. As Charmaz (2006) promised, by making and coding numerous comparisons my analytic grasp of the data began to take form (Charmaz, 2006). Throughout initial coding, I used the focus that I had begun to build up to intuitively refine and hone in on the general trends I was noticing as I moved through the materials. As I analysed more transcripts, I began to code more selectively based on these emerging themes, and to seek them out specifically in subsequent transcripts.

At the same time as identifying new codes in the material, as coding progressed I began to establish some tentative categories by grouping codes together across the different women's responses based on similarities between them. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) define a category as a higher-level code which has grown in complexity and subsumed other codes. Throughout this process, I continued to engage in memo-writing which served to elaborate categories, specify their properties and define the relationships between them (Charmaz, 2006). I was also prompted to see areas in which my analysis lacked data and I continued to conduct interviews to obtain additional material to answer questions and to fill these gaps in the emerging categories (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). This iterative grounded theory process of moving back and forth between data collection and the emerging categories is called the 'constant comparative' method of analysis (Creswell, 2007). It required me to continuously compare data with codes, codes with other codes, and categories with pre-existing literature/theory, to ensure that the full diversity and complexity of the material was explored (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

This technique served to make the collection of material progressively more focused and directed towards the categories being defined (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). As such, this refinement of the coding process provided me with a clearer idea of what to pursue in further interviewing and influenced the kinds of questions that I asked. For example, in the latter interviews I changed the structure and order of the interview questions so that, instead of beginning the open-ended questions with asking the women about the times they had experienced severe role-conflict (see

Appendix B), I found that it enhanced the flow of the interview to rather begin with asking them about their significant relationships (a more salient theme), and allow the other information to emerge from the discussion more organically. By the time I conducted the last interviews, I was sure of what I wanted to know and so these became abbreviated and much more focused interviews, where the questions I asked served primarily to check tentative hypotheses against new interview material (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008). In keeping with the grounded theory practice of revisiting participants to check and verify the developing theory (Creswell, 2007), I made repeat visits to 'the field' as the analysis progressed. I included three participants in the sample whom I had previously worked with during the pilot study (Poulos, 2009), and discussions with these participants thus took the form of 'follow-up' interviews which were more focused and thematic than in the initial interviews.

The focused coding phase involved more selective coding to pinpoint and develop the most salient and most frequent codes and categories into broader, more meaningful categories at a higher level of abstraction. As Willig (2008) explains, this process is aimed at identifying those core categories that are central to answering the research question. These categories were then used to sort, synthesise, integrate, and organise large amounts of data (Charmaz, 2006). Bryant and Charmaz (2007) suggest that as one engages in successive levels of analysis, the categories coalesce and become more theoretical. Willig (2008) adds that, at this stage of the analysis, the categories are analytic rather than descriptive, and they interpret the phenomena rather than simply labelling them.

3.8 Data interpretation

In practice, I found that focused coding was not so much a 'stage' of analysis, but was more of an iterative process of grouping categories, dismantling them, and regrouping them in an attempt to develop a model that best fit the data. My first attempt at focused coding was largely guided by my knowledge of extant theory/literature and my experiences with the pilot study, which influenced what I expected to find and allowed me to see certain patterns in the data from early on. This process did involve a great deal of interpretation on my part as I constructed and related groups of categories based on my developing understanding of 'what was going on' in the data. The process entailed sorting and grouping related codes into categories and related categories into higher-order thematic categories until I had formed five abstract concepts, each incorporating sub-categories that integrated extensive numbers of initial codes (see Appendix D for visual

representations of the initial categorisations). However, the problem with this model was that I found the large amount of overlap between categories to be concerning. This became especially problematic when I attempted to categorise actual excerpts of coded text from the interviews according to this 5-concept model, and I found that the categories were not as discrete as I had originally thought.

As a result of the way they were arranged, a number of the categories appeared to cover some of the same points which meant that many of the coded excerpts could potentially fit under more than one label. This made me feel uneasy about the potential for 'forcing the data' if I had to decide that it should be included in one category rather than another, based on my personal judgement. For example, many codes that were included as 'hindering factors' could also be categorised as 'causes of role-conflict', and similarly, many of those included as 'downsides to being an academic mother' could also be considered 'work-related hindering factors'. So what I discovered was that there were a number of categories that could still subsume others, and a very confusing hierarchy had emerged where it was unclear which categories in the model operated at a higher level than others. Moreover, this first categorising attempt had failed to incorporate approximately 40 of the 240 initial codes, which were unable to be fit anywhere in the model. It became evident that I would need to reconsider my initial categorisations in order to address these problems.

I found it necessary to move the categories around and to try out different formations and combinations before I was satisfied that all the relevant data had been adequately represented with minimal overlap and ambiguity. The remodelling process involved multiple rounds of grouping categories and drawing up models unsuccessfully until I was able to find a good fit for the data. This was made difficult by the fact that each category of material is like a complex, multi-dimensional set of spiralling processes rather than a discrete cluster of meanings, and all of these categories are interconnected in a large matrix of activity and cannot easily be delineated. Nevertheless, through further abstracting the categories, merging 'thin' and similar categories together, and breaking others down to incorporate more variety, I was able to develop a more suitable model; one that reduced the amount of overlap and was able to incorporate almost every one of the initial codes into the matrix (see Section 5.2).

Progress from the initial attempt to the formation of the final model involved interpretation and refinement of the data. By this point in the analysis I had a clear sense of what the most salient

categories were and what material was most relevant to the focus of the research question and so it was possible to identify those codes that could not be connected to the emerging theory in any way. As such, the few codes that still did not cohere in the model were regarded as 'outliers'. In quantitative research, it is seen as acceptable to 'clean' the data of statistically-determined outliers, and while this was a far more subjective qualitative procedure, it was nonetheless rigorously handled and codes were only dropped from the analysis after every attempt was made to assess their relevance to the theory (by trying to merge them into the model in some way).

These outliers were not to be confused with 'negative evidence', and a clear distinction was made between the two. Throughout the analysis, the data from participants who did not respond in the anticipated way, or whose responses were contrary to my initial hypotheses (the negative cases), were not discarded but were integrated into the emerging theory (Willig, 2008). The negative evidence *did* fit within the model where it stood in opposition to the emerging trends in the data (the positive evidence). In the development of a grounded theory, my aim was to identify consensual ideas and patterns of similarity and difference among the interviewees, and to test the strengths of these ideas and patterns as hypotheses. These patterns included cases where participants spoke about the same themes, even if they held opposing views or had different experiences. The use of negative case analysis allowed me to qualify and elaborate the emerging theory, and served as a device for challenging my initial categorisations (Willig, 2008). Outliers, on the other hand, were cases where only one instance of a theme appeared in the data set and was not corroborated by any other data collected. They were thus codes that either represented one person's unusual experience, and were 'thin' or unsubstantiated and only relevant to one case, or which were irrelevant to the research. Examples of outliers from the list of initial codes include 'seeing children as resilient' and 'recovering from career disappointments'.

The most profound discovery to come out of this process of categorising and re-categorising the data was that it gradually became apparent that I was working with two distinctly different types of categories in the analysis. Some of the categories were what I have termed 'contextualising categories', and these contain the data that emerged which is peripheral to the research question, but which performs the important function of setting up the context in which to understand the phenomenon studied. The other kind are termed 'core categories' which are central to addressing the research question. As can be seen in the final model that summarises the coding process (see figure 3 in Section 5.2), the categories can be clearly split into those that set up the context for experience and those that focus on the enabling factors for academic mothers. In response to this

unanticipated development, I employed a more selective coding strategy during the latter stages of the analysis so that I was able to deal with these two types of categories differently. In this way, I was able to incorporate all the data that was generated through the study. However, I analysed the contextualising categories more superficially while the core categories were dealt with in a thorough and theory-building way. This was because much of the contextualising data generated in this study is similar to that which emerged from the pilot study (Poulos, 2009), and so what I have coded and represented in this report is much more selective than in the previous study. With a far greater volume of data, it is not possible to do justice to every code mentioned by every participant and so the process of selective coding, *and* the idea of peripheral, contextualising categories, is helpful because it allows for this data to be dealt with in broad strokes; just enough to set the scene for the more focal and theoretically salient material. These categories are explored in detail as the results of the grounded theory analysis process in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 of this report.

With the conceptual model providing a way for the categories of data to coalesce and the core-category to become central to the analysis, the emerging theory was able to come into sharp focus. I continued to gather interview material to add to the categories and to the emerging theory until such time that additional data no longer contributed any sufficiently varied material to the analysis – and the point of ‘saturation of the categories’ was reached (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997; Creswell, 2007). The aim of this analysis was ultimately to generate a theory from the material which integrates the categories that emerged across the various women’s responses, and proposes conditional hypotheses about how these women are supported in coping with their dual roles of working and mothering. Creswell (2007) notes that the centrepiece of grounded theory research is that the theory being generated should be ‘grounded’ in the original data at all stages of the analysis. This was achieved via the constant comparison method which served to ensure that, at all stages of the analysis process, the original ‘raw’ data were used to validate the emerging theory (Routledge, 1996). Having achieved the point of theoretical saturation greatly increases the validity of the theory that is produced by this study.

3.9 Quality of the study

Traditional criteria for judging psychological research are generally limited to questions of reliability, validity and generalisability. However, Pidgeon and Henwood (1997) offer that to apply these to evaluate grounded theory research risks undermining the very benefits of the approach.

They offer a number of criteria for judging constructivist research which recognise that personal and social forms of subjectivity are always present in research (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

3.9.1 Validation and ethics

Creswell (2007) notes that a particular advantage of using a grounded theory approach is that validation is built into the method and occurs throughout the steps in the process. In general, validity and reliability do not carry the same connotations in qualitative research as they do in quantitative studies, and such measures such as the 'credibility' and 'dependability' of the research are more often considered. Credibility is found in research that "produces findings that are convincing and believable", while dependability refers to "the degree to which the reader can be convinced that the findings did indeed occur as the researcher says they did" (Van der Riet & Durrheim, 2006, p.93). Creswell (2009) offers that the key way in which to meet both of these criteria is through documenting the research process. Firstly, by providing graphical evidence of my coding process I am able to assure the reader that I did not try to skew the data in any way, and this should also satisfy stakeholders in the project that I coded everything and was as inclusive as possible in both my initial induction as well as my analysis (because I reworked the model until I was able to include as much data as possible).

Secondly, in the pursuit of validating the material, participants were offered the opportunity to examine their interview transcripts to verify that the data had been captured accurately. Further validation checks that were built into the research process included: memo-writing to ensure consistency in the meanings of code/category labels; cross-checking coding with an independent other; performing negative-case analysis; and using thick description to convey my findings (Creswell, 2009). Consultation with the Director of HR, as a key institutional gatekeeper, also provided an opportunity for feedback and validation of important contextual material relating to Rhodes University. Finally, in the discussion of findings at the end of this report, published literature is used for 'supplemental validation', whereby I have referenced the literature to give a measure of the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2007). In the interest of ethical research practice, participants were also offered a chance to remove any personal details from the material that they felt might compromise their identities. Together with the individual participants, I negotiated the level of biographical detail that was presented in this report and the ways in which participant details were to be changed.

3.9.2 Transferability

Traditionally, research findings are assessed on a measure on generalisability to other contexts apart from the original context of study. However, Creswell (2009) suggests that this is a limited term in qualitative research because the intent of qualitative studies is *not* to generalise the findings outside of the site of study. Rather, the value of such research lies in the particular description and themes developed *in context* of a specific site. This caveat is particularly relevant to the current study given the significance of the unique institutional setting of Rhodes University (and South African Higher Education) to the work-life experiences of its academic women. However, one suggested alternative is the measure of transferability, which refers to applying the findings of a study in contexts *similar* to the context in which they were first derived (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997). To achieve transferability, I have ensured detailed reporting on the contextual features of this study.

3.9.3 Subjectivity and Reflexivity

The qualitative researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, and data are mediated through this human instrument (Merriam, 1998; Terre Blanche, Kelly & Durrheim, 2006). As an interpretive/constructivist researcher specifically, I played an active role in co-creating meaning during the data collection and analysis processes and in the interpretation of the material (Ogina, 2007). A researcher's interpretations cannot be separated from her own background, history, context; or prior understandings; and as such, her subjective role in the analytical process must be reflexively identified and explicitly stated (Creswell, 2009). Grounded theory assumes that the researcher is actively involved in the interpretive process of the study and that her decisions will shape the research process throughout, and so reflexivity becomes important in this method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007).

Following Wassenaar's (2006) guidelines for sound ethical practice, I have acknowledged my own biases, values and judgements, and my use of extant theory and guiding interests, and recognised the effect that these may have on the way I work with the data. Charmaz (2006) insists that constructivists make every attempt to become aware of their presuppositions and to grapple with how they affect their research. She warns that grounded theorists may ironically import preconceived ideas into their work if they remain unaware of their starting assumptions (Charmaz, 2006). I have explicitly framed this study as feminist research based on my own subscription to

those values. In addition, I have acknowledged my use of both feminist theories and the findings of the pilot study, and how these have influenced the initial hypotheses which I raised, the interview questions that I asked, and the lens with which I approached the interpretation of data. As I come from a position of personal experience that is deeply embedded within the particular research context of this study (having been a student at Rhodes University and a resident of Grahamstown for five years, and having had prior contact with many of the academic women whose views are being represented), I cannot be a neutral inquirer in this process and therefore acknowledge my role in shaping this study. As a way to acknowledge my involvement and my influence over this research process, I have chosen to refer to myself in the first person throughout this report. While Creswell (2009) promotes this as a way of writing in qualitative research that is “sensitive to your paradigm” (p. 194), I have chosen to do so for more symbolic reasons – to recognise that my ‘fingerprints’ are left on the processes of data collection, in the questions I chose to ask and the way in which I asked them, and on data analysis, in my interpretations of the material. These processes are infiltrated by my own assumptions, philosophical stance, priorities and disciplinary perspectives (Charmaz, 2003; 2006).

CHAPTER 4:

ANALYSIS OF CONTEXTUALISING CATEGORIES

4.1 Grounded theory analysis

The following three chapters, the analysis and discussion, deal with the process of developing a theory from the interview material following the principles of a constructivist grounded theory approach. As indicated in the previous chapter, the spiralling process of analysis constituted two main phases – initial coding and focused (or selective) coding – towards a discussion of the core theory-building categories that articulates an explanatory theory for institutional experience. As has been stated previously, through much of the initial coding phase I was led by the semi-structured interview schedule. As a result, many of the initial codes were predetermined by the interview questions that I asked and thus emerged as anticipated. However, unexpected codes also emerged spontaneously out of the material and were identified at that stage (see Appendix C for a list of all the initial codes that were identified). The initial codes are discussed in this and the following chapter as part of the categories that were identified by way of grouping related codes together.

The focused coding phase of the analysis involved an examination of the discrete codes resulting from initial coding and the grouping of these codes together based on the similarities and relationships identified between them through my interpretative engagement with the material. As suggested in the previous chapter, this task of categorisation followed an iterative process of grouping and regrouping codes in an attempt to construct a model that best fit the data. The outcome of this process saw the initial codes grouped into various sub-categories which then formed part of larger categories. Ultimately, these ‘groupings’ developed the three exhaustive categories of the study to be analysed. As has also been discussed previously, some of the categories identified were peripheral to the focus of the research and have served the purpose of contextualising the phenomenon under study, while other categories were more central to answering the research question.

4.2 CATEGORY 1: What it means to be a working mother

The remainder of this chapter addresses Category 1 and Category 2 and serves to provide an analytical account of the material that emerged from the participants' narratives that was peripheral to the specific focus of the research study. The information presented in the following categories is, however, very important for setting up a context in which to understand the participants' lived experiences of working and mothering in an academic environment.

4.2.1 Upsides to having a career as a mother

All the women who participated in the study acknowledged that there are many benefits to having and maintaining a career during motherhood. The benefits referred to here are those not necessarily related to the specific university-academic work that these women are engaged in, but the more general benefits of being a career woman and a mother. Interestingly, almost all of these benefits mentioned were primarily related to the women's own psychological and emotional well-being. There was a general sense among the various women's narratives that they enjoyed their working lives; one woman noted that she enjoyed having more than one role to fulfil, while another stated that she felt it was the "perfect situation" and she "wouldn't have it any other way". Many of the women suggested that having a career provides more mental stimulation than would the alternative of being a stay-at-home mother and that this was very important for a woman's personal fulfilment. Stephanie, a senior academic⁷ at Rhodes University with two small children, said:

The interesting thing is that my mother was a stay-at-home mother and I often think of that and feel quite guilty about that, but at the same time I look at her now and I think her life is quite empty, and so I'm really pleased that my life hopefully won't be empty; I'll have a career, and I think she regrets not having a career.

This seems to suggest that many of the reservations Stephanie may have about being a working mother are outweighed by the sense of personal fulfilment her career offers her. Tasha, a junior academic and first-time mother with a small baby, went further to say that not only is her career beneficial to her own well-being, but she believes that this positive energy adds to the well-being of her child. She said:

Your job enables you to be a different kind of person for your child, I think. I find it's good for me to do something different – to apply my mind to something else – and it's good for her; it's good for my child ... For me to be able to apply my mind at work means that I'm not as on-edge and easily frustrated at home as I might be. So I think it's a win-win situation.

⁷ To reiterate, the principle that has been employed for referring to the academic status of participants is as follows: Senior academic status is given to Professors, Associate Professors, and Senior Lecturers who have a PhD *and* are active in publishing their research. Junior academic status is given to Junior Lecturers, Lecturers, and Senior Lecturers who either do not have a PhD or who do not actively publish their research.

Some of the women who had daughters noted especially that having a career may bring with it added benefits in terms of their daughters' exposure to a particular kind of female role-model.

Anne is a very senior academic staff member in her Department with two school-going children.

She said:

I just think it's important to have a woman example; a role-model of a woman who has interests outside of her family and that's okay. I think it's important for my daughter to realise that it's okay to have interests and to have a life and that it doesn't make you a bad mother.

Tasha concurred by saying:

There are so many benefits that come from being a working mom. I never really appreciated it before but, having a girl, to me it's also important that she sees her mom doing a job and having goals and achieving things and to know that she can also do that.

There is much that may be interpreted from the sentiments offered by these women here. Firstly, it is apparent that they highly value a movement away from the traditional gender-stereotyped roles for women. Secondly, it is evident that they believe that the way they live their lives will shape their children's expectations for their own adult roles in society. Thirdly, they believe it to be an important part of their mothering role that they should make their daughters aware of the options available to them in life, and that they are able to model these opportunities through their own fulfilment is an added benefit to them of having a career.

Another benefit of being a working mother that was widely suggested related more to the benefits that having children may offer to a career-woman. It was proposed that through balancing motherhood with a career, a working mother learns valuable skills for using her work time more effectively. Penny, who is a junior academic with two small babies, said:

All working mothers will tell you this and they're not lying; you learn to be more efficient. A lot of single people or men waste a lot of time ... If I know the childminder is leaving at three and by tomorrow I have to have this done and its now two fifteen, I have to do it properly *now*, I can't waste any time. So you do become more efficient like that, and I hope that will continue and will be a skill that I've learned so when the pressure is off – when the kids are a bit older – then I could be incredibly productive.

Stephanie, whose children *are* now a little bit older, found that she too had this same experience of learning to be more productive with her time when her children were babies. She is grateful that this skill has continued to be something that is useful to her in her working role.

...I think it set me up quite well for even now, you know – when I get short bursts of time, really being productive with the time that I have, and not becoming overly stressed about not having a whole day ahead of me to do something. I gave up on that a long time ago.

There were more benefits of working and mothering cited by the women in the study that related specifically to the type of work that they do as academics and these will be discussed in more depth in the next chapter as part of a core category. However, despite the multitude of benefits

enjoyed by these working mothers, each of them also acknowledged the less pleasant and more difficult corollaries of balancing mothering with a full-time career.

4.2.2 Downsides to having a career as a mother

The negative aspects of being a working mother seemed to centre primarily on a constant conflict that persists between the roles of career-woman and mother, as well as a general lack of time for women to dedicate to their families. A large number of the respondents in the study referred to their experience of conflict over the incompatibility of their multiple roles as being “constant”, “day to day”, and “all the time”. Rosie, a junior academic and a single mother of two, illustrated this ongoing compromise:

I find that I'll be very focused in a meeting and be thinking 'this meeting's going very well and I've got my day really organised', and then suddenly I realise 'shit! I was supposed to take [my child] to [karate] and I'm late' ... So you never get to the point where you feel like you're on top of everything. Or I'll have a really good day with the kids and I've got their homework done before five and then I'll suddenly get to work and I will have forgotten I have a meeting and I'm like 15 minutes late. So one thing will be going well but then the other thing is surely not – one is always compromising.

These kinds of incidents suggest that Rosie finds it most difficult to adequately devote her *mental* energies towards always being on top of her multiple commitments in both her roles. This may be more difficult for her given that, as a single mother, she is solely responsible for juggling all of her family's needs as well as her own work commitments. Other mothers found they experienced difficulties of a more *physical* nature. Both Stephanie and Jessica noted that, for them, initially returning to work after their babies were born was the most difficult time to manage working and mothering. This was as a result of suddenly having to fit so much into their days and working late into the night, while still being woken up during the night by their children, which left them feeling constantly exhausted.

Many of the women in the study recalled that being a working mother requires one to make many difficult choices at frequent times when their family responsibilities and work commitments are at odds. For some women, these choices mean making certain sacrifices. Stephanie describes how, in her relationship with her partner, she is the one more likely to make sacrifices in her work-role to be present for their children:

When there is conflict, or when a child is sick, then one of us tends to have to give up things and that does often tend to be me; but that's not necessarily because [my partner] doesn't want to, often it's because I feel that it should be me. Because I was the one that initially took the maternity leave and initially took time off, it's hard then to rebalance yourself and to stop feeling like it's your responsibility ... if the kids are sick or there's something on at school during the work day, then I generally am the one who kind of juggles to be able to go.

From this it would appear that Stephanie's experience of making sacrifices as a working mother stems from both her desire to be the one who is there for her children as well as her fundamental belief that making those sacrifices of work for family is primarily her responsibility as a mother. Cynthia, who holds a high-profile senior academic position at Rhodes University, also spoke about making sacrifices as a necessary part of being a working mother. One of the sacrifices she referred to related to her lack of time to dedicate towards maintaining a social life outside of work or her family.

Cynthia: I used to have lots of friends but I don't have friends anymore [laughs]. I've decided that I actually don't have the time for that because if I did I would be driving myself crazy running after them and trying to keep up – organising little teas or drinking sessions or whatever it is that they do ... I just can't keep up with that so I decided to keep myself out of it, but it can be very isolating.

As a working mother, Cynthia has found that her lack of time for anything other than managing her career and being a mother to her three young children is what isolates her from her non-working friends. It is evident that the time-consuming tasks of working and mothering may come at the cost of certain aspects of a social life outside of work for academic women.

Another difficulty that was revealed by some of the women in the study was the idea that being a working mother involves an ongoing attempt to minimise any trauma you may inflict on the lives of your children as a result of maintaining your career. An example of this idea was described by Bev when she spoke of her discomfort at not always being present to provide for the needs of her three small children due to her working commitments, and her concerns that the disruption this causes may have lasting repercussions.

Bev: It's just that you know your children – you know how to handle them, you know what they need, you know what they don't want – and you almost feel that if people don't do things the way you would normally do them it's going to cause complete chaos in *their* lives. And you think that they'll *never* recover from that, and what if they are traumatised for life? It's always that; always juggling how *not* to traumatise the kids for life [laughs].

Bev's sentiment here reflects a common theme suggested through the narratives of all of the women in the study, that being a deeply held desire to be more present in the daily lives of their children despite the many joys and satisfactions they derive from maintaining their careers.

4.3 CATEGORY 2: Factors that hinder balance for academic mothers

4.3.1 Work-related factors

In addition to the difficulties of being a working mother discussed above, all of the women in the study spoke of the particular drawbacks specifically related to working in an academic job that

hinder their ability to effectively balance their working and mothering roles. All of these ideas related to the various ways in which academia is considered “a difficult world” for women, and especially for mothers. Like many of the women in the study, Nikki has been working and studying in academia for approximately ten years, although she does not have a PhD and holds a junior academic post. She spoke from her experience about how the institutional environment of a university can be unsupportive of academic mothers.

Nikki: The standard and expectations of previous generations for what a family-friendly [workplace] is has shifted in what my generation would expect. As much as it's been friendly and people have asked questions, I've still had to push for allowances for things like breastfeeding and stuff which weren't part of it. So maybe the culture has been [supportive] but not really the structures – they weren't really in place to make it a family-friendly environment.

Cynthia, on the other hand, is a senior academic but she also noted some of the ways in which she has felt the expectations of an academic career to be incompatible with the demands of raising children. She said:

...being an academic is really nice but it's tough, especially because you might be expected to adhere to a more masculine model of being an academic, which means going overseas with exchanges and stuff.

What she implies here is that, in academia as an institution, inadequate consideration is given to how the expectations for men working in this field may not be compatible with the needs and life trajectories of women who become mothers, and yet they may be expected to simply fit this same ‘masculine’ mould. This potentially leaves a senior academic mother feeling inadequate about her inability to travel more for her work and gain experience in the same way that men are able to; the way that is expected of ‘good’ academics. What the above two cases show is that women at very different levels in the academic hierarchy have experienced a university job as challenging; however, it appears that their reasons for this may be different depending on their status, which can have unpredictable implications. While senior academics may benefit from a more supported experience in terms of their needs being provided for by the institution, there are also far more expectations made of their academic performance than junior academics. Relatively junior women may feel that the institutional structures are not in place to make them feel supported, but they may be given more freedom to opt out of certain responsibilities of the job.

Some of the women also spoke about the harsh reality of the very low salaries that one can earn in the academic profession compared with work in the private sector. For many of these women holding a PhD, it was difficult to accept that being highly qualified and working incredibly hard at your job still does not provide you with the necessary finances to satisfy certain basic desires.

Jessica: Earning loads of money has never been a real big goal for me or my partner, but when you're starting to actually gasp every time you go to [the grocery store] and driving a crappy old car, you suddenly realise ... ten or twenty years ago, the father would get a lecturing job and the mother would be a housewife and you could comfortably buy a house and send your kids to a good school. Well, those days are just over wherever you are.

Jessica is a senior academic at Rhodes University with a PhD and has been a highly productive researcher in her Department, amongst her many other work commitments, who would potentially earn a much higher salary if she were employed in the corporate sector. In her view, Jessica indicates that the financial impediments associated with an academic job are “a sign of the times” that reveals the extent to which academic work is undervalued in today's society. This was frequently cited as a hindrance that that makes it difficult for working academic mothers to do what they enjoy so much.

A further distinguishing feature of academic work that was said to add to the difficulty these women experience, is the immense pressure placed on academics to perform in the various areas of their work. Jessica remarked that:

...it's quite a high pressure job and you're under all this pressure to publish and be an excellent teacher and all these things. So even without having kids it is actually really pressured; and it's the peer pressure that's very strong ... there's this huge pressure to publish lots of papers in really high-impact factor journals ... and most of my colleagues are very good at research so you're kind of trying to keep up with it the whole time.

Diane has worked in academia for approximately ten years but is a relatively junior academic. Although her child is now in high school, she recalled a time in her life when she was just starting out in her academic career and her child was very young. She described how the multiple pressures of this kind of work were extremely challenging for her to manage:

When I was doing my Masters I was doing a postgrad teaching qualification as well and I nearly killed myself trying to do those two. That was when I first started teaching; so those first five or six years of teaching were just absolute bedlam, they really were. In between furthering my own qualifications and teaching myself how to teach ... it was very pressured.

Most of the women in the study suggested that having children had impeded their work productivity in some way, with particular regard to their research output. The most commonly cited causes for this decline in work performance were the lack of time and increased levels of exhaustion that resulted from taking on the demanding role of motherhood. When referring to the effect on her academic productivity, Jessica described having children as having “made a hole in [her] career”. Tasha, who like Jessica has a young baby, shared a similar experience explaining that:

[Having a baby] put a spanner in a lot of things – in research particularly – and that's the biggest thorn in my side at the moment, is getting my research off the ground.

This experience was particularly evident among women with small babies and those who have very little support in childcare. However, even the women who said that they were able to remain

productive in research throughout raising their children conceded that it had been enormously “difficult to keep this up”. Closely linked to this phenomenon is the perception many women held that it is a great deal more difficult for a woman academic to achieve promotion once they have had children. This was suggested with reference to the commonly held understanding that an academic’s research output is especially important for determining the likelihood of being promoted. This may be strongly related to the particular difficulty that women experience with advancement in the academic profession because it is apparent that many of the women displayed relatively more commitment to their teaching; an aspect of the academic job that carries comparatively less weight in promotion decisions. Ruby, who is a junior academic with two small children, explained that:

It would be great if I had all the time in the world to do loads of research, and there’s lots of things I’d like to do research on, but my capacity to do loads of research is limited because, to me, my teaching must come first.

Both Diane and Penny held similar views; Diane asserted that she was not prepared to stand back from her commitment to teaching in order to become more involved in research, and Penny explained how she sees the nurturing element of teaching as very similar to mothering and is strongly committed to “teaching properly”. What is noteworthy here is that all three of these women are junior academics at Rhodes University, despite having each worked in academia for between five and ten years, and two of them have not obtained a PhD.

Many of the difficulties that were described by the women in this study related to balancing motherhood with *academic* work specifically spoke to the notion of what one of them identified as “the academic condition”. Nikki offered a great deal of insight into what she feels are the issues around the particular identity of an academic woman and how this relates to motherhood:

Nikki: It’s a case of existing in a man’s world, but also a world with a lot of older women who have coped despite having children ... As much as we think we’re in a liberal space, we’re *seriously* not when it comes to daily practice. I sometimes joke about how I wish I had a ‘wife’; somebody to pick up everything so I can just sit and think and be an academic. I think there’s a whole lot about academic women where they have not thought about the identity of an academic woman and how this should be different, or richer. I certainly think my generation has to deal with issues of what male academics are projecting onto them and a *huge* amount of what older women academics are. I often think it’s more difficult, when being contained in a role, the way other women treat you than men because it’s a lot more insidious; their effect on you. And I think a lot of them think we are ridiculous; those of us that want things to be shifted.

She goes on to explain how the traditional identity of an academic woman may cause a degree of internal conflict for a woman who would like to become a mother:

...It’s often very difficult; it’s like you have to excuse the fact that you want to have children as an academic. I think we privilege the cerebral over the bodily and all sorts of things like that; I certainly know I did and I still do, it’s just the way we operate ... [there are] things that just make me realise the feeling of embarrassment that a lot of academic women have at even the prospect of thinking of having a child ... it’s very difficult, I think, for a lot of academic women to get over that embarrassment initially.

Both Nikki and Lizzy spoke about the difficulty that highly educated women may experience in adjusting to the role of motherhood. They were referring specifically to the idea that academic women become accustomed to being trained and knowledgeable in their fields and to always being prepared for any role expectation given their aptitude for mastering a skill area through extensive learning and research. The difficulty this creates for academic women is that they may feel especially unprepared and out of their depth upon having a child given that motherhood is the one role for which no amount of research or study can prepare them. Lizzy, who is a junior academic and mother to a small child, pondered this identity crisis with reference to her own struggles to trust her instincts in unfamiliar situations:

I think of my personal stresses when I first had a kid; I thought 'I'm going to break this thing. I have *no* idea what I'm doing!' and I used to get myself so stressed out. But mostly speaking, there's nothing the matter with the kid and you can trust your instincts, which is very strange, I think, for women who have been educated because you always think that there's something you've got to learn, when you actually have the capacity to just deal with it and you've got to trust that.

Another characteristic of academic work that was said to further complicate the lives of academic mothers is the inconsistent levels of work demands in such a career. This inconsistency was noted at both the level of unpredictable day to day demands as well as long term changes in work demands that can be seen over an academic's entire career path. While many of the participants agreed that there were "no typical days" in an academic job and this alone makes it very difficult to combine with an intricate mothering schedule, Denise, a senior academic with a school-going child, painfully recalled how the first few years after starting out in her academic career was a period fraught with multiple high pressure demands:

I realised that ... to be an effective educator and to take on supervision, I would definitely need to do the two year course of a Postgraduate Diploma in Higher Education. That is an Honours level course that I was trying to incorporate with my normal teaching, research, undergraduate research coordination, and trying to write papers, plus completing my PhD. It was major chaos in my professional life at that stage ... So the first three years here [were] complete chaos and in that chaos you don't expect even 24 hours to be sufficient.

Denise was describing an experience shared by many of the women who took part in the study; that the multiple pedagogical milestones required to set the foundations for an academic career mean that often the early years of one's career in academia constitute a significant period of high work demands and that these tend to abate to an extent once one has more experience in teaching, research and administration. This experience of proving herself was particularly difficult for Denise as a black foreign national who came to South Africa for the first time to begin an academic career at Rhodes University, after previously having worked in a non-academic career. Alternatively, Ruby noted that in her experience, the busy periods tend to come and go quite

regularly throughout the course of the academic year. She recalled what a particularly pressurised period for her was like:

Ruby: In April I had a bad run because I just had so many deadlines that coincided with the end of April. I had my test to set for the beginning of May and it needed to be set by a certain date because it needed to be moderated; my exam needed to be set by a few days before the test because it needed to go to the exams office by the 28th of April; I was moderating the [first year exam]; I was moderating the [second year exam]; I was moderating two papers for NMMU, one paper for Wits and one paper for another university; I was doing [committee work]; and all my deadlines were kind of end of April or beginning of May ... and I was doing this in between delivering a lecture every day on quite tough stuff, and consulting students and trying to help them during the day because they had tests and exams coming up. So ja, I was finished; and then in between all of that, my children are still waking up at night.

What was agreed upon by all the women who took part in the study was that an academic job always involves gruelling periods of multiple high work demands in which it becomes ever more difficult to balance one's limited time and energy between work and family roles.

Above all the drawbacks associated with academic work, what was considered to be the greatest difficulty for these women in combining their academic careers with mothering was the typically long working hours that, for many of these women, persist regardless of whether it is a high pressure period or not. Working long hours is not only a function of academic work, but more of professional work as this appears to be an increasing trend in the private sector too. As organisations operate across global time zones, the notion of traditional working hours has diminished. However, as Stephanie noted, the major downside of an academic job is that one can "never really complete the work" and it is not the kind of job that one can leave in the afternoon feeling that their work is done until they return the following morning. The majority of the women in this study stated that they are required to take their work home with them, or complete work in the evenings and on weekends. For some of them this after-hours work is in addition to putting in a full day's work during regular work hours, while for others, this necessity comes about as a result of needing to make up for hours not worked during the day that may be spent on their family responsibilities. Cynthia explains how both of these situations may apply to her, depending on the specific period:

What often happens is if I've been unable to do the writing stuff and there's a deadline then I'll work at night ... Once [my children] are asleep, which is usually by about half past eight or nine, then I'll work from about nine until maybe half past eleven. There are certain, what I call, 'seasons', like from January to about April, which are normally the times when [my husband will need to travel for work], and these months I will have to work in the evenings to make up the time [lost during the day due to childcare] because otherwise I can't catch up.

For the women in this study, what the unrestricted working hours of their jobs have generally come to mean is significant time conflict between their roles as a career-woman and a mother, especially in cases when meetings run late into the afternoon and children may need to be fetched

from school or day-care, and perennial exhaustion as a result of losing valuable hours of sleep in an attempt to keep up with their work demands.

4.3.2 Relational factors

The sub-categories discussed above have dealt both with the down-sides to being a working mother in general, as well as the difficulties associated specifically with a career in academia. This sub-category will explore the factors of a more relational nature that the women in this study found to hinder their ability to achieve balance between their work and family roles. These relational factors form part of both their working and domestic lives.

a) In the work sphere

While the above work-related drawbacks to a career in academia for a mother relate to the nature of the institutional environment and the nature of the academic work itself, the focus here is on the *relational* difficulties that the participants have experienced in the workplace that have made it more difficult for them to reconcile work and family demands. Such difficulties may have included negative interpersonal incidences relating to 'departmental politics' – rumours, manoeuvrings, rivalry – and other encounters with underhand power-dynamics in the workplace. However, none of the participants reported any such difficulties and the incidents that were discussed referred specifically to a lack of understanding about the needs and concerns of the academic women (and mothers) on the part of their departmental leadership. One example of such an experience was described by Tasha as she recalled the reaction of her Head of Department (HOD) to the news that she was going to become a mother:

There are little things all the time, but I think [one of the] biggest things that stick in my mind [was] even before I had [my child] – when I was pregnant – and I went to the Head of Department to tell him that I was pregnant. I remember his face dropping and his reaction was just one of... He just looked angry. He just said to me 'Did you plan this?', and I thought that was a terrible, *terrible* question! I mean, he was the first person in this building that I told. And then we did have conflict after that because I was going to miss the second half of that year and he then wanted me to fit all my courses into the first semester and it was just impossible to do all of those courses at the same time. I remember having a meeting with him and the Deputy Dean and the Deputy Dean having to step in and say 'It's just not possible for her to do that; you can't expect her to do that'. He was just a bit unreasonable about the whole thing.

Through this story, Tasha communicated how the lack of consideration or kindness from her HOD and his unwarranted negative response in this situation was discouraging for her and caused her to experience some anxiety. In addition to this, the incident led to a degree of professional conflict between them as a result of the lack of understanding and support on the part of her department leader. It cannot be ascertained from this narrative whether Tasha's status as both a black woman

and a junior staff member in her department had a role to play in the lack of support that she was shown by her HOD, but it may not be uncommon for this to be the case among the predominantly white male leadership at many historically advantaged universities, including the case institution.

b) In the home sphere

Penny stated that, for her, it has been far more the “expectations from outside of the university” rather than those from within the university that have made her situation as a working academic mother more difficult. Cynthia also indicated that this has been her experience:

It's not so much pressure from academia really, the pressure comes from other mothers who actually basically have no idea what it is like to be a senior academic ... or to have the kind of schedule that I have; and so ja, I do feel that kind of pressure.

Here Cynthia was describing how the people in her life who make her feel the most under pressure and who cause her the most anxiety about the way in which she manages her working and mothering roles are the teachers and non-working mothers of children at her child's school. She feels judged by these women for being a working mother with a very demanding schedule that leaves her with less time to spend with her children. She elaborates on this further:

Cynthia: There have been instances where things have been difficult, especially picking up my [youngest child] on time ... At his school I always feel that, if I arrive even just five minutes before the time, that the teacher is always judging. When you arrive there late they make you feel as if you are actually not a very good mother; you're a bad mother. Like for example, in the morning if I drop him off and I just kiss him goodbye and I say 'okay, I have to go now' because I have to go and get ready [for work], then there are other mothers that are there – stay-at-home mothers – who are sitting on the carpet and helping the child with puzzles or whatever it is and I'm just not able to do that because I have to run to go somewhere else; just to get here before nine o'clock. So I always feel like, when I'm in the company of those particular teachers, that they are not very sympathetic and that they don't understand.

These feelings of being judged appear to hinder Cynthia's ability to feel satisfied with the way she combines her working and mothering roles as a senior academic.

Some of the other relational factors that were noted as being points of difficulty for the women in the study were related to the women's children themselves. Cassie, whose children are of school-going ages, spoke about the resentment that her children have towards her career. She was reading for a PhD when her first child was very little and admits that during that time she did not balance her life as well as she does now. She said:

What's quite sad now is that I *do* balance my life better, but my son still has... I think it has probably been engrained in him from when he was very young – I'm 'always working' according to him; 'always working'. And yet, I spend an hour and a half every night; I just sit with him whatever he is doing – without my other child; without anybody else. As well as doing all the fetching and carrying and watching his rugby games on the weekends and helping him with his homework and all these things which I *do* do. But I mean, kids do that; it's always or never for them whatever you do.

It is evident that Cassie is saddened by her child's resentment towards her work and this is something that may make it difficult for her to enjoy fulfilling her multiple roles. While she may

feel somewhat responsible, given that the amount of time she dedicated to her studies while her son was little has affected the attitude he now has towards her career, she is also aware of the efforts she makes to be present in her child's life and this seems to be an important affirmation for her of her ability to now successfully balance working with mothering. Bev's children are still very young (only the eldest is of school-going age), and she often finds their resentment of her work-related absence to be an emotionally difficult burden to bear.

Bev: Sometimes they just don't understand and they hate you; they just hate you for whatever decision you make and you just feel completely guilty and lousy.

It appears that, although Bev knows that her children's resentment is only because they do not yet understand fully the reasons why she chooses to spend time apart from them, this does not help her to avoid feeling conflicted when her work-related absence causes her children to become upset. This resentment from her children may, as in Cassie's case, frustrate Bev's ability to feel positive about combining her roles of career-woman and mother.

Another factor related to the women's children themselves was mentioned by four of the participants as being the cause of some added difficulty. These women all have very young children and, for all four of them, there was some aspect of their children's nature which made them somewhat 'difficult children' and contributed some frustration to their situations. For some of the women, this point was related to their children not being very "good sleepers", as is the case for Tasha:

[My child] is not a good sleeper; so on a good night we're probably up and down four or five times and on a bad night we hardly get any sleep; and that's regular. So when seven o'clock comes we're not rested; that's the picture in the morning [laughs].

The difficulty here is clearly that being kept awake by a restless child night after night adds to the already exhausted state of a mother who is balancing multiple roles during daylight hours. For the other women, this point was related to their children being overly particular about who they are happy to be left with or who they will happily "go to". Stephanie commented that her children become especially difficult when she has to leave them behind at school or at home for example:

I must say that my children aren't good with goodbyes – there's loads of screaming and crying and it leaves you feeling very guilty and that is difficult. Our elder one has gotten a lot better but when the one is better about it then the other one falls apart.

In this way, it is possible that the difficult traits of the women's children may add to the strain they already experience at having to leave their children to attend to their work commitments.

The final relational factor that was found to hinder the achievement of a balance between working and mothering roles for the women in this study was the instance where many of them do not

have any relatives living close by. This spatial aspect to relational support structures is particularly important given that Grahamstown is a very isolated location and it is far (and expensive) to travel to from many of the major city centres in South Africa if one does not live nearby. This was a concern for nine of the women who participated in the study who stated that they do not have any family members besides their partners living close enough to Grahamstown that they may provide regular practical support in childcare. Stephanie suggested that having nearby relatives would be greatly beneficial to her:

I wish we had family to call on in town. We don't have anyone close by and that would be a huge help; like if [my children] are sick to just take them to Granny's or something.

This and many similar sentiments from the other women indicated that the advantages of having relatives who live nearby may contribute significantly to a working mother's ability to juggle her work responsibilities with childcare, especially at times when regular childcare arrangements fall through.

As a foreign national living in South Africa, Denise has found her lack of access to a family support system to be hugely difficult; not only from the perspective that family may provide assistance in meeting one's role expectations, but also from a cultural perspective, where this isolation has been a completely unfamiliar experience for her. She stated:

Not having the family support [is] terrible for me because I come from a background where you look at extended families and uncles and aunts as all being close. So there was that huge family and friend support that I'd enjoyed because for 32 years, until I came here, I had lived in the same city and my network was huge there – personally and professionally ... So that's how we lived; with families like that. It's not just husband, wife and children – that's not the way I know families to be. Not having that moral support was terrible for me.

Denise's cultural adjustment difficulties are likely to have been aggravated by how hard it is generally for newcomers to fit in and make friends in the small, tightly-knit academic community of Rhodes University, and further still because she was a black woman, with non-western social values, coming to a historically white university. In Lizzy's case, not only does she not have the help of nearby relatives to support her in childcare but, having come to Grahamstown as a single mother to take up a position at Rhodes University, she is also without the help of a present and involved partner. She described how being on her own has at times made her frantic attempts to manage a career, a household and the needs of her small child all the more difficult and chaotic.

Lizzy: It would be nice to have lots of money and a good supportive partner who is there and to be like a happy little nuclear family, but the fact is that I don't. And obviously I have my moments where I get upset about it – especially at about half past eight in the morning, when we're already late for school, and I'm dropping my kid off, climbing out of the car saying 'Ah! Where are your shoes?' And you get out and you see some moms in SUVs who have obviously gotten up in time to blow-dry their hair straight. Then you have a little green-eyed monster moment where you just want to say 'What do *you* do *all* day?' ... I must say that I've had one or two Fridays where I just thought 'Lord above, how am I ever going to come up with an excuse? What can I do? Who can I call on?' And I've just felt a bit stretched.

Evidently, whether it was a lack of access to a family support structure or difficulties in the very closest of relationships that was cited by the women in this study as hindering their ability to reconcile the demands of their work and family roles, a large majority of the participants acknowledged that relational factors may pose considerable difficulties.

4.3.3 Experience of work-family role-conflict

Many of the hindering factors referred to above have alluded to this idea of role-conflict, whereby the working mothers have experienced some form of incompatibility in the expectations, timing, and commitments of their dual roles of working and mothering. Each one of the participants was able to recall times when they have experienced conflict between their career and their motherhood responsibilities and how these experiences and the associated feelings and processes have manifest themselves. This sub-category provides an account of the primary causes of work-family role-conflict as cited by the participants, as well as a description of the feelings they have experienced as a result.

a) Causes of role-conflict

In discussions with each of the participants about their experiences of balancing academic work and motherhood, in which each of them reflected on significant episodes in their lives when they experienced role-conflict, it became evident that each working mother has her own unique story to tell about what may cause the most severe conflict and how such circumstances may come about. Invariably these stories follow a set of common themes whereby the working mother may be required to make an impossible choice between two mutually exclusive commitments, or where the expectations she must fulfil in order to satisfy the demands of one role come at the costly expense of something in another role. The story told by Ruby illustrates another familiar situation in which conflict arises as a result of the pervasive time and energy demands of one role leaving the working mother unable to dedicate herself to another role in the way that she would like to.

Ruby: One of the issues I am facing is that [my eldest son] goes for speech therapy ... he's been going since March last year and he has to do speech therapy homework, and I've really struggled to do homework with him. This year he's in after-care and he comes home from school really tired and he's got other school homework on top of that. I really struggle to fit it in because he's tired, I'm tired, I'm sitting with another load of work to do, and we've got from five o'clock until say eight o'clock in which we have to bath, do supper, and he wants to play, etcetera. So I'm supposed to now fit in extra homework during that time and then as soon as I'm finished that I must then pull out my books and start doing work again. I'm really struggling with that because I'm exhausted and those are like the hours when I relax – before they go to sleep – and then I do more work ... So for him, he's tired and he doesn't want to do it; for me, I'm tired and I don't want to do it; and so regularly we are not doing the speech therapy homework. If I was a mom that could go home at two or three o'clock and not take work home with me at all, I think it would be easier to sit down and convince him to do it, but I'm so tired that I don't have

the energy to fight with him about it. So that's one conflict that I have been feeling bad about because I know I should be doing it with him; even if it's not every day, every second day I should be sitting with him, but I just can't – if we do it once a week we're lucky.

The narrative Ruby offered of this instance of conflict in her life exhibits clearly how a working mother's role-conflict often arises out of tension between what she wants to do – for her children, as a mother – and what she is able to do with and for them, as a *working* mother with other draining commitments. This notion of “going against your natural desires” as a working mother is felt quite strongly by the women in this study as a significant cause for role-conflict. Nikki describes her experience of this:

The struggle often comes around going against my desires because it's something that I have to do ... Now I have a kid and for the first time in like ten or 15 years of not feeling so strongly like I want something, I have to say 'no'. I don't want to spend time away from him – that is not something that I ever want to do – but I've sort of had to grow up and say 'okay, I'm going to have to' ... It's hard for me to explain it because I've never really had it so strongly until him. There have been things I've wanted in my career and couldn't get, but it isn't as strongly felt. The desire that I have to be around my child is not just emotional; it's bodily, it's instinctual, and it's very, very strong. So when you try to make a decision to sever that, it's difficult because it feels so totally unnatural.

In a way very similarly to Ruby's story, Nikki indicated here that her conflict came about as a result of the demands from one of her roles obstructing the fulfilment of her desires in another role – the tension between what she *must* do and what she *wants* to do. Very closely related to this idea was the conflict that many women experienced over leaving their children. A working mother is forced into making a frequent practice of leaving her children in order to fulfil her working role, but it seems that this painful separation never becomes any easier, as was expressed by Bev when she said:

You see, that question: 'When are you coming back home, Mama?' makes you feel like 'ah! Where am I going? I should just stay here!' When my son looks at me with the look that he gives me when I go, it makes me think that I should just go back home. So when you go home and you see your children and sometimes you can see that they are bored, and if you were around maybe you would be playing something with them or... I don't know. And then you feel like 'is it worth it?' You just want to stay home and do developmental things with them, cook for them, play with them.

What Bev indicated here was both the strong desire that she feels to be with her children as well as the guilt she feels about not being more present in their lives to be able to offer them everything she would like to offer them. The conflict she experiences at times like this is likely due to her questioning whether the reasons for maintaining her career are worth missing out on all those things she would like to be doing for and with her children. Anne, who is a senior academic and displays a high level of involvement in her career, also discussed the difficulties she has experienced around leaving her children, referring particularly to the conflict she feels over needing to travel abroad for work. Anne's two children are of school-going age and appear to have responded sensitively to her work-related absence, which is likely to have made these decisions all the more difficult for her to make.

Anne: The dilemmas come in around travel when you want to go away. There have been lots of hard situations and it's about those times when there are tough calls ... I don't like to leave my children, especially when they were younger. I think they suffer and you have to say to yourself 'well, is the suffering worth it and what is that cost-benefit analysis?' I made the decision that I needed to go to one international conference a year because I think as an academic you look bad if you don't do that – that's the minimum. And so I said that I would do that minimum ... but then there are other opportunities where I just say 'well, I'm not going to do that'. You also just feel sad a lot of the time; crying on the plane and crying on the phone, and yet you're there and you've made that choice that you need to go for those four days.

Anne's conflict here seemed to come about as a result of her attempts to resolve the tension between what is required of a 'good academic' and how this may not fit with her desire to do what a 'good mother' would do and stay with her children. This again echoes the impossibility of doing what one would like to do and what one must do as a working mother, and it also highlights the extent to which many mothers tend to internalise a sense of primary responsibility for the care of their children, despite the presence of a capable and willing father. Anne is supported by the assistance of her partner who is also an involved parent, and his ability to step in with their children in her absence is likely to have gone some way toward alleviating her conflict over not being there for them on a practical level. However, Anne has implied that much of her not wanting to leave her children is an emotional reaction to missing them while she is away.

Jessica, who is a first-time mother, recalled a recent experience of severe conflict at a time when she seemed unable to provide for her baby in the way that she was supposed to and desperately wanted to. She told the story of her experience of initially returning to work:

I just remember at the end of the week being wiped-out. I was breastfeeding and after the first month or two I would just run out of milk; I would run completely dry which is a sign of stress. I felt so terrible because my baby was still so little and he was living on the stuff; he wasn't on solids yet. So you've got this crying, desperate child on your hands and you just feel terrible!

This experience speaks to the general incompatibility of a highly stressful work situation and new motherhood and the potential for conflict that this presents. Moreover, Jessica's story illustrates the conflict caused by her not being able to successfully fulfil her nurturing role as a mother and, essentially, her guilt over feeling that she had let her child down.

Both Lizzy and Cynthia had an interesting take on what they believe are the primary causes for role-conflict with regard to working and mothering. Their rebuke targeted the expectations of "traditional societies" and the "popular discourses of motherhood".

Lizzy: In more traditional societies, a long time ago, the idea was that children and families and whatever need to be left at home. I think that's the conflict; this idea that you need to wear two different hats instead of just saying 'well, the hat is exactly the same'.

In this way, Lizzy explained how she believes that the traditional expectations imposed on women by society have the potential for causing conflict for them if they internalise these expectations in their attempts to balance their roles. Cynthia explained this idea further:

It's not impossible to do it all. There is this sort of popular discourse out there that it's impossible to do it all – that you have to choose between either being a very good mother or being a very good academic – and some of it has to do with, I would say, the popular discourses of motherhood ... Some mothers out there create that particular kind of discourse of *ideal* motherhood – how you *should* be in order to be a *good* mother – and that is something that trips up a lot of young mothers because it makes them feel guilty, it makes them feel like they're not doing enough. And then they do more of that supposedly ideal mothering to the detriment of their academic work.

Cynthia reiterated how there is great potential for working mothers to be instrumental in causing their own work-family role-conflict if they allow themselves to 'buy-in' to popularly reproduced expectations of what makes a 'good mother' and how they 'should' be mothering. In this way, some working mothers may be constantly trying to live up to a model of mothering that their circumstances actually do not allow for.

One particular catalyst for potential role-conflict that was agreed upon by the majority of the women in this study was the breakdown in a support system. Whether this took the form of a late or unavailable childminder, a sick child, or the abrupt closure of an after-care facility, many of the participants were able to relate to the chaos in their lives that such 'breakdowns' in their individual systems cause. Penny has small babies who need constant care and supervision during the day while she is working. With minimal support from her partner in meeting this responsibility, she employs a full-time childminder to assist her in daily childcare and she is very reliant on this system which allows her to attend to her work. Penny reflected on occasions when such a 'breakdown' in her support system had occurred in her life and the conflict that this caused for her:

The hardest times for me have actually been days when my childminder is sick, or her kids are sick, and I get a message at half past six saying she's not coming to work; I've got lots of stuff on and my husband's got lots of stuff on and we've got to somehow juggle that. It's immediately a source of conflict and it's difficult to negotiate around how to manage it.

Tasha's baby also requires the same degree of vigilant care and she has very much the same childcare arrangement as Penny to assist her and enable her work time. Despite Tasha's reports that her husband, on the contrary, is very helpful and involved in childcare, she still spoke about having had similar kinds of experiences with breakdowns in her support system and the immense potential for conflict that results.

Tasha: It makes you realise how reliant you are on that system ... I find that I am very reliant on [my] nanny and so the conflict comes in when things don't go according to plan and you have to sacrifice something to make everything else work.

b) Effects of role-conflict

It was evident that all of the women in the study were familiar with the idea of work-family role-conflict and were aware of its presence in their lives. Each of them was also able to articulate the thoughts and emotions that they experience as a result of this conflict. Through these conversations, it became clear that “feeling guilty” was a common emotion shared by working mothers who are subject to role-conflict. Key to the narratives in this category was that while some of the women said that they had tended to feel conflicted about both of their role expectations, other women stated that they only ever felt guilt or strain on one side of the conflict. Rosie is an example of someone who said that she had often been aware of two different kinds of strain.

Rosie: If there is a week where I'm particularly running around all the time I do have feelings of guilt about not putting as much as I should be, or as much as everybody else is, into my work ... but I feel it the other way around if I am spending a lot of time [working]; the same feelings. So it's on both sides; and I think when the children get older that might become more of an issue.

Tasha offered a similar sentiment about her sense of being conflicted:

It's just this constant conflict about when you're at work feeling guilty because you should be doing something for your child, and when you're at home feeling guilty because you should be doing your work.

While these women appeared to suffer from a certain amount of strain regardless of how they were dividing up their time between working and being with their children, the yearning desire to spend more time with their children was the most commonly felt type of strain among the group of women. Cynthia, a senior academic in a leadership position with young children, described how this is the only part of the role-conflict that has been problematic for her:

I do have work-family conflict, but I think it's really about wanting to spend more time with my kids ... It's always about spending more time with the kids because here at work I have a lot of time; from the time that I arrive until the time that I leave and with all the extra time that I put in at night, I have a lot of time for work. And I suppose that's what has helped me to have a relatively successful academic career thus far.

What is evident from this narrative is that Cynthia is able to resolve the conflict on one side through ensuring that she is dedicating enough of her time and energy in that sphere (at work), and while this provides her with the satisfaction that she is successfully meeting her role expectations in that sphere, it comes at the cost of conflict on the other side. She went on to say that she often feels that she “should be doing more” with her children but cannot because her “time is very limited”. This suggests that in the case of incompatible role demands, something will always suffer. This was something that Rosie suggested when she spoke of her inability to dedicate herself fully to all the aspects in her life that she regards as important. She said:

I always feel like something is suffering. It's hard to say what the major things in my life are, but my children are certainly one of them, and my work – those are two quite major things – and then the PhD

is this dream that just doesn't seem to happen, and then my personal time and my friends and my boyfriend. So those are the kinds of things I have to put a lot of energy into and I always feel like... ja, the multi-tasking is a difficult thing.

In addition to there being evidence that coping successfully in one role may lead to reduced presence in and a struggle to cope with the demands of the other, it also became apparent that the negative effects of *not* coping in one role may also have a negative 'spill-over' effect into the other role. There were four participants who made reference to this idea and all of them had experienced it in the form of a negative work spill-over. Stephanie was one of them and she explained that:

I do notice that if I've got a lot on at work I'm more irritable with the children. So even while I may not be thinking about work, emotionally I am clearly more stressed and don't handle things quite so well.

Many of the participants experienced both role-conflict and this idea of negative spill-over in the form of a kind of 'performance anxiety' upon becoming a mother for the first time, where they felt that they were just not coping very well with either their job or their responsibilities as a mother. These anxieties seemed to feed off one another and this interplay between roles was found to negatively affect the working mothers' multiple role performances.

Jessica: There is a sort of angst that comes with the idea that 'I'm not doing my job as well as I used to', because all of those pressures of your job are still there ... That semester when I came back from maternity leave was quite busy with teaching and stuff, so it was just this constant feeling of not doing justice to your job and then, at the same time, not doing justice to being a mother either – you feel you could really do better as a mother, and that you should be there more for your child, and at the same time you're just not really doing your job as well as you should be.

Nikki shared a similar experience to Jessica in that the stress she came under upon returning to work from maternity leave affected her milk supply and made her unable to provide sufficiently for her new baby. The way in which she spoke about this experience relates to this sense of performance anxiety.

Nikki: ...When I realised that this was happening I really did feel like I was at cracking point – the guilt was huge – that my choice to return to work was literally affecting the nutrition of my child. The feeling of neglect was huge! And feeding him is one of the joys in my life ... It was horrible; he landed up self-weaning which was really hectic for me, because I couldn't get my milk supply up and I started giving him formula and then he rejected the breast. It was very, very difficult. I knew it wasn't rejection but it was all happening at the same time – so I'm not really coping at work with the workload, I'm not really coping with the stress, and I'm not really coping with looking after my child.

Nikki's story very clearly illustrates the emotional strain she experienced as a result of trying to meet the expectations of her two demanding roles and how her inability to combine these roles led to a deep sense of conflict and guilt over her perceived maternal inadequacy.

It is apparent that feelings of guilt are one effect of work-family role-conflict that was agreed upon by all the women in the study. In many ways feeling guilty about dividing one's time and energies between competing spheres is characteristic of the experience of *working* mothers

specifically – and they seem to be most predisposed to it – but it was also suggested that feelings of guilt and anxiety are something that will always be present for any mother; working or not. As a mother of three very young children, Bev explained how sometimes her feelings of guilt around mothering are completely unrelated to her career:

It's not even just guilt; guilt is always there as a mother. I think even outside of a career, even when you have to discipline your children you feel guilty afterwards; even if you don't work and you just go out and do something one evening and you have to leave them at home, you'll still feel guilty. I went to a concert with a friend of mine and I couldn't stay there beyond half past nine because... just that anxiety – it's guilt, it's anxiety. All of sudden you just get panic-stricken – What if he is crying uncontrollably? What if they can't go to bed without me there? What if something happens to any of them and they can't find me? – Even though you've got a phone on you... And you'll phone them and say "Did anybody phone me? Does anybody need me?", and they're like 'No' [laughs]. But still you'll phone again like 15 minutes later.

Here Bev displays amusement in reflecting on her own irrational worries about not being present for her children's every need. She implies that even though she has a reliable partner who is capable of looking after their children, and despite having dependable full-time childcare arrangements for the times when she is not at home with them, she still has an absurd sense of anxiety about being away from her children. While she seems to know that her panic is unwarranted, her deeper maternal instinct is that her children need *her* to care for them and this leads to her being severely conflicted at times when she has left them in someone else's care. What appears to matter most is that regardless of who was there, *she* was not there.

The results of the grounded theory analysis are continued in the following chapter, where the analysis of core categories is addressed in great depth.

CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF CORE CATEGORIES

This next part of the analysis serves to provide an analytical account of the material that emerged from the participants' narratives that was central to the focus of the research on the factors that facilitate the balancing of work and family roles for mothers with academic careers. The information presented in the following category (and its sub-parts) builds on what has gone before by proceeding through an analysis of how the hardships associated with working and mothering in an academic environment may be managed and the processes at work in women's lives that enable them to do this more effectively.

5.1 CATEGORY 3: Factors that facilitate balance for academic mothers

5.1.1 Non-relational factors

This sub-category is concerned with any of the factors that were referred to by the women in this study that were *not* associated with the supporting relationships in their lives, but which assist them in balancing work and family more easily. These facilitating factors included the instrumental personal coping strategies that the various women employ as well as the specific characteristics of an academic job within Rhodes University that assist them in attaining a work-family balance.

5.1.1.1 Good coping strategies

Following the analysis presented in the previous chapter of the participants' experiences of work-family role-conflict, this section identifies some of the most effective coping strategies that the women in this study have developed to help them minimise their experiences of that conflict. Many of the coping strategies proposed by the participants were those that they have found helpful in their own attempts to balance working and mothering. Others, however, were mechanisms that they only learned to value through their experiences of *not* making use of them and these were thus offered as retrospective advice for a way to manage work-family balance better than their own.

a) Get help

Many of the women in the study spoke of how useful it had been for them to be able to get help from others in meeting their role demands, and they offered that this was a very important strategy for any working mother to employ in either her domestic or work sphere or both. This suggestion of getting help referred not only to seeking hired help, but also to the ability of academic mothers to ask for and accept help when it is offered. These strategies were employed by both single mothers and those with accessible partners, implying the significance of these strategies to a mother's coping effectiveness. It was apparent that even mothers with partners found that they needed other help. Anne said:

I think that academic women are often women of a particular personality type that are ambitious and survivors and want to do everything themselves. But for god's sake, get help – cut the food bill and order in extra help. There's cheap labour in South Africa and lots of unemployed people who want to help you wash your dishes on a Sunday. If that's useful to you – to wake up on a Sunday morning and have your house cleaned – then do it. And ask friends; I never asked for help and it's really, really stupid.

The idea that it may be difficult for an academic mother to ask for help was commonly felt among many of the respondents, one of whom was Bev. She said:

Have support; do it with somebody else – kids on your own is just too much! I actually experienced it the first year I was here, before my husband came, and it was tough ... And for those women who can't be with their husbands, I would still say don't do it alone; get other support. We've become such a closed-off society where you want life to be about you and your children and we're so focused on the nuclear family that people have stopped being able to ask for help.

Rosie explored this idea further when she reflected on her own experience as a single working mother of two, and she admitted that her reluctance not only to ask for help, but to accept help when it was offered had been to her own detriment and had made her situation unnecessarily difficult at times.

Rosie: When I say that my friends have been helping a lot, it's because this year I have been much better organised than before and I have asked people ... whereas the year before I was just really yo-yo'ing from one place to the other and not wanting to ask people for help, when actually I realised that people are very willing to help. A lot of other mothers work only part-time and so I've always felt that I can't ask them if I can't reciprocate, you know? So I have now accepted a few [offers].

Rosie and Diane both stressed reasons for the importance of getting help from others when they urged that a working mother should not “try to do it all”. Rosie suggested that a working mother should “be realistic” about what she can do on her own and not try to “be a super-hero”. She qualified that if a woman sets the bar that high then she will “constantly feel guilty and disappointed”. Diane also warned that:

There are only 24 hours in a day and there's only so much you can do. You've got to be careful about burning yourself out.

b) Be organised

A large majority of the participants agreed that it is essential for an academic mother, especially, to be organised in the way she plans her days and manages her time as this can help to greatly reduce the levels of stress and conflict she will face in balancing her multiple roles. Cassie, holds a relatively junior post, but has been working in academia for over 15 years. During this time, she has had two children who are now of school-going age and her multiple related responsibilities have taught her to be more organised.

Cassie: I'm not naturally a systematic person, and I'm not a routine person, but I've really appreciated those kinds of mechanisms. When I have mechanisms in place where I'm more organised, everything just works so much better. So being organised really does help me.

Bev suggested that with three small children, this strategy was the most critical to her coping effectiveness and she offered that: "it's all about being organised – when you're organised it makes your life easier". She felt that it is necessary to have a routine, keep up with work, and to plan your days in advance.

Bev: Just plan your days, organise your kids, and organise yourself; then it's easier to deal with. I mean, sometimes you're not as organised and then everything just comes at you just to prove how you can't control everything, but you must try your best.

For Rosie, who is a single mother and whose children are at an age where they are involved in multiple school-related and extra-mural activities, practising good time management has been critical. She has found it helpful to make use of complex timetables so that she can always get to where she needs to be:

Some days are quite complicated – there's no typical day; every day is different. It's so complex that I've got a whole timetable up on the fridge of who's picking up which child when and what sport they've got and whatever. If I don't have that timetable I completely fall apart; everything relies on that timetable.

It is evident from the above narratives that regardless of whether these women have very small or much older children, and whether they are supported by a partner or not, they have all come to realise that they can simplify their daily lives substantially by merely establishing an ordered routine for themselves and their families. What Nikki has found most helpful is to have contingency plans in place so that she is prepared in the event that her childminder becomes unexpectedly unavailable. In this way, her levels of organisation and foresight have been able to help her avert the conflict that would arise from the chaos of a support system-breakdown. Unlike Cassie, perhaps, extensive organisation and advance preparation appear to be a natural preference for Nikki who has gone to great lengths to anticipate every possible source of potential conflict. As an exceptionally busy senior academic, Cynthia has also found that she is able to reduce her stress and save herself time through practising a good routine, planning ahead and preparing things in advance:

Before we go to bed I make [the children's] school lunches because that helps me to think of what's going to go in those boxes; because I don't want to put bad stuff in them. So when I'm making supper the night before I actually make the school lunches so that it's all ready to go in the morning ... My preparation for the week ahead happens during the weekend ... for example, my youngest one needs to have his lunches made, so like I'll make all the lunches on the weekends and freeze them so that if for whatever reason I'm late over the lunch period, then the nanny can always defrost food and warm it up for him.

c) Adjust your perspectives

From their experiences, the women in this study were able to propose a number of ways in which a small change in one's mindset about a difficult situation can go a long way towards resolving the conflict it may be causing. Diane urged that the most valuable thing she has learned is to keep the importance of the role that her job plays in her life in perspective. She said:

The university is not your whole life – there's a whole life outside of here as well – and that's something that has taken me a long time to really come to terms with. I think the tendency is – and you see it all over campus – people just live for their jobs, you know? There's a whole world out there waiting to be enjoyed and that's something that mothers do have a better insight into than anybody, because we do have these dual lives. It's very important to maintain that; working yourself to death just isn't the way to go.

What is relevant to note in light of the above narrative, is that although Diane has achieved Senior Lecturer status in her Department, she appears not to have actively pursued promotion to a higher status for many years, which is evident in that she has chosen to focus more on the teaching aspect of her job than on producing research and reading for further degrees. One might attribute Diane's reason for settling into her Senior Lecturer position and opting out of the 'promotion race' to the mindset she outlines above – that she does not view her career as being central to her identity and does not wish for it to define her. While this mindset may assist Diane in resolving her role-conflict, the detached stance it involves may be more difficult (and perhaps less desirable) for a more senior academic to achieve.

Tasha suggested that the most helpful mental strategy that she has learned from her experiences of balancing mothering with her career is to be creative in the way you handle situations of potential conflict. She offered that instead of having to always say 'no' to one thing or another and making compromises in her roles, she has been able to find novel and more constructive solutions by simply approaching problems more creatively.

Tasha: You have to be creative about how you're going to get around problems. I don't like to say no outright – that to me isn't the answer ... you'll find that people are very accommodating once they realise what you're going through and they'll try to help if they see that you're doing what you can also; you're not just throwing your hands up and saying 'I have a child, I can't do it', because that's not empowering to anybody. You're saying 'I want to do it; I just need to find a way that I can'.

Lizzy highlighted a working mother's need to adapt the plans she has for her life to her situation so that she may be fulfilled by what she is doing. She put it like this:

It's hard to assess how much of the challenges one has are the challenges of the world or one's own expectations that somehow your life was going to be different. Because I think we all have little dreams as kids that when we grow up we're going to live in that nice double-story house, and have a big lawn and a dog, and be married with two kids. We draw pictures of these as kids and then somewhere along the line, you either let go of that fairytale because it's not how things turned out, or you get into trouble in your life if you hold onto a dream that is not applicable in reality.

This suggests that a way for a working mother who may be struggling to possibly cope with the way things are in her life and to be more fulfilled and happy with where she is in life, is to adapt her plans for that life to better fit with the reality of it. Bev related a similar sentiment from her experience of falling pregnant at an unplanned stage in her life. She advised:

Even though I didn't plan it this way, you have to change the plan; you have to see 'What suits me best in *this* situation that I'm in now, and how can I best adapt to it and make the most out of it?' I think that's what I did in my situation.

What these participants were suggesting is not that women should simply let go of their dreams if their lives take them down an unplanned path, but rather, that they should be willing to adapt the dreams that they envisage to whatever situation they find themselves in by on the one hand, being more realistic, and on the other, always looking for the positive outcomes of any given situation.

d) Timing of motherhood

Half of the women who participated in the study made reference to the difference that the timing of childbearing can make to one's career trajectory and overall experience of being an academic mother. The most noteworthy points were that many of these women themselves had not intentionally planned the timing of their motherhood, and many of them also held decidedly different views on how they would have gone about this in the event that they had. The stance taken by each of these women on this matter is likely to have been influenced by their own experiences as well as what they have learned from the experiences of other women (role-models) who may have done it in a different way to themselves and had a more positive experience. While all the women agreed that it would greatly benefit an academic woman to attain her Doctorate before having children, some of them, like Stephanie and Penny, advocated having children earlier on in life, while others, like Denise and Cassie, opted to wait until later in life.

Jessica explains how the unique career path of an academic woman makes the timing of motherhood for her that much more important than for career women in other professions:

In your academic career there are certain milestones and ... these sorts of big things like a PhD or your first promotion; if you can get them out of the way before having your first child it will make life a lot easier. The early stages of an academic career and climbing that first rung and getting that PhD is so work intensive, you're going to just burn yourself out if you try and do that at the same time as having a kid.

Having stated this, Jessica completed her PhD before becoming a mother and so does not have firsthand understanding of such difficulties. Cassie, however, who is an older mother relative to the other women in the sample, was able to speak from her own experience about the challenges of combining reading for a PhD with mothering a new baby. She said that she has regrets and wishes that she “had balanced it better”.

Penny and Stephanie are relatively young for women who have secured a PhD, a permanent academic job, and have had children. They both remarked on the benefits of being in such a position and how this has been enabling for them. Both women implied that their situation puts them “ahead” of most people in their careers in a sense, and allows them to feel that they “have the time” to focus on raising children now and be somewhat “unproductive” without it meaning “the end of the career”. Penny also adds to this the advantages that one has being a “relatively junior” academic at the time of having her children. She said:

With my first maternity leave I was new here and essentially more junior – I wasn’t involved in lots of stuff. So I went on maternity leave and no one bothered me. But the second time around, I had Masters students and I had lots of commitments and it was like I couldn’t just drop them all. So in the space of [a few] years I had become more important in a sense, and so it was harder to let go of those things; and I can just imagine someone who is on six thousand committees and in charge of so many things would find it very hard because you feel guilty – that’s also a caring relationship, with your Masters students, and you can’t say to them ‘well, find yourself someone else, see you in six months, hope it goes well’. So I had to keep on; but obviously the more senior you are the more of those kinds of commitments you’re going to have.

On the contrary, what Cassie found helped her was the fact that she got married and had children much later on in her life. She said that she felt “fortunate” to have led a very “full life” before becoming a mother. What she was referring to was the breadth of her experience in having had a different previous career, having travelled, and having had her independence and being self-sufficient before settling down into marriage and motherhood in her mid-thirties. All of these women were able to see the advantages of their chosen route and it is evident that there is more than one ideal way to find fulfilment and a good balance between motherhood and an academic career. However, Denise warned against the risk that one may put off having children for too long, as she did, in an attempt to find the “right time”.

Denise: We decided not to have [another] child until my career had taken a better stand, or until I felt more comfortable with it. And then three years ago I decided ‘Yes. Okay, now I am more settled’, but biologically now it’s not working. So that’s possibly one of my most frequent regrets in life. At the time when you are reproductively active, that’s the time you should have your children – you can’t phase it out and say ‘Some other day’, because what if it doesn’t happen? What if you never get to the point where you do feel settled enough? Sometimes you pay a huge price and you don’t realise the price you are paying when you are going through it – when your academics or your career are your goals – when you are achieving those goals you don’t realise what you are losing.

e) Take care of your needs

Many of the women spoke about strategies they had employed, psychologically as well as in terms of the ways they created spaces in their work and family lives, that have served to ease their own sense of discomfort about the difficult balancing game that they play. One such strategy that was widely referred to by the women in the study is the idea that working mothers should push for what they need in both the home-space and the workspace that will help them to cope more effectively. Anne, who is a senior academic at Rhodes University, spoke about how important it is for a woman to negotiate with her partner so that her needs are met in the relationship with respect to his involvement in childcare.

Anne: You need to fight the fights with your husband early. If the marriage breaks down because of those fights, it wasn't going to survive anyway; really not. So you've got to take the risk early because otherwise you're going to lose respect for your husband. Because if that husband is not involved with something that is going to be a consuming passion for 95 percent of women, then you're just going to start seeing that person as irrelevant; and I've seen it happen so many times – where couples drift apart because he's increasingly not in the game and she's increasingly consumed by it. The resentment builds up, the guilt builds up on his side, the lack of mutual respect... and the marriage ends. And so I think you have to fight that fight.

Denise, Nikki and Lizzy all spoke of the ways in which they had fought for the allowances they needed in their workspaces to enable their work-family balance wherever possible. This involved pushing for allowances related to childcare from the University or bringing a child along whenever they were required to attend work commitments over weekends or in the evenings. Surprisingly, the level of seniority of these women varies because while Nikki and Lizzy are both junior academics, Denise is an Associate Professor in her Department. One might consider, though, that in Denise's particular case – being a black woman and a foreign national who was not only new to Grahamstown and Rhodes University upon her arrival in South Africa, but new to academia as well – her academic-positional seniority may not have translated into the kind of influence that an Associate Professor may usually command in her Department. If this is to be upheld, then it appears that it is the more junior ranked and lesser-influential academics who spoke about having actively pushed for the allowances they need from their departments. However, it is equally possible that this could be a personality-related tendency and that some women are just more inclined to make room for what they need in their environment than others. Another possible explanation for why some of these women may bring their children into the workspace, which will be dealt with in more detail later in this chapter, may consider these to be acts of desperation in cases where academic mothers face limited options for childcare.

Penny is also a junior academic in her Department who is managing the balance between her career and caring for her small babies. Her opinion is that it is important for working mothers to

make the fact that they are balancing work with a mothering role visible in the workplace in order to push for a better understanding of their situation in this domain.

Penny: What I'm trying very hard to do is to not have these two roles that are totally distinct; so I bring my kids to a lot of work stuff and my Department has been okay with that ... So I'm trying to not have that divide where I'm *either* this or I'm *either* that; I'm trying to keep myself and other people aware that I'm playing two roles here, so that there can be shifts in the workplace's understanding of who you are. It's a conscious thing that I've done ... I talk about my kids when I'm at work and I talk about my work when I'm at home; integrating the two into who I am so that I'm *one* person and not two different people with completely conflicting roles.

What Penny implies here is that she perceives the only way for her to achieve a sense of balance between her conflicting roles would be for both those roles to define who she is and how she operates in *both* her home and work domains, rather than having two distinct identities continually competing for dominance or needing to be balanced. Another junior academic with a very small child, Lizzy described a similar strategy that she has also practised and how she has found this to be a helpful way of standing in opposition to what a more traditional society would perhaps expect from her as a woman and a mother. She said:

Society has a tendency to say 'Okay, *this* is work and *that* is your private life', and I just actually tend to say 'well, it's got to come along because I'm just a human being and I can't divide myself so rigidly'. I think people often struggle with this because they require a certain amount of respect in their professional space and they don't want to be seen to be compromised. But I think that you're a human being and people respect you ultimately for being a human being and, I think, for being comfortable with who you are – I'm a mom; that's part of who I am. My students know that and I don't think they have lost any respect for me.

As an established senior academic, Cynthia reflected on what she regards as the importance of challenging the “dominant perceptions” in traditional society that may impose unnecessary added pressure on working mothers. She offered that it has been through her own debunking of these societal pressures, from early on in her academic career, that she feels she has been able to combine her working and mothering roles as successfully as she has.

Cynthia: As a young academic, you need to challenge some of those popular or dominant perceptions of what a mother is supposed to be like so that you will be able to get your academic stuff done. You need to forge your own path that you're going to be happy with and that suits your choices ... So I work in the evenings – I do some of my best work in the evenings – and the work gets done. In the end it's the product that counts; how many papers you have published, not running up to the senior common room and having tea with Professor So-and-so. And I've got the career progression to prove it; I've gotten the degrees, I've gotten the promotions, I've published the papers, and how I did that actually doesn't matter.

It is clear from this narrative that Cynthia is speaking from the position of someone who has been successful in establishing herself in the University and in the wider academic community. It is likely that a more junior academic who is still struggling through the process of degrees, promotions and publications would see her career trajectory in quite a different light. Cynthia suggests here that, for an academic mother, being successful is a matter of doing your job properly, but at the same time doing it differently from perhaps the way academic men or childless women may get it done.

She went on to suggest that the same goes for the way she is able to mother compared with other non-working mothers. She states that while she may not fit the dominant model of a “good mother”, who “spends two hours every day working through their child’s alphabet”...

...every night we have our dinner at the table and we always chat about what happened in our days. We do prioritise that, it’s just not the things that people actually see; it doesn’t fit that model ...it’s not the same kind of mothering; maybe it’s a less public kind of mothering, but it’s good mothering nevertheless.

By challenging these various expectations, these working mothers seem to have been able to avert much of the inner conflict that would otherwise be caused by actually taking on these expectations and allowing them to deride one’s sense of self.

Lastly, affording themselves freedom from unnecessary guilt was considered by many of the women in the study to be a critical way of enabling themselves to cope more effectively with balancing work and family demands. Both Nikki and Jessica are first-time mothers with small babies, and both were able to describe having employed such re-framing strategies in their own lives. Nikki stated that she believes “one of the biggest problems that mothers have is guilt” and she has found that it has “enabled” her to practise simply not allowing herself to feel guilty about certain things. Jessica has employed a similar coping strategy to enable her own sense of balance. She explained:

It’s one of my sort of life philosophies or whatever that feeling guilty is really bad; it’s bad for you, it’s bad for your family, and it doesn’t achieve anything with respect to the thing that you’re feeling guilty about. If [your situation] is really so bad then you must change something about it, but if you can justify what you’re doing then don’t feel guilty. So I work quite hard at not letting guilt build up ... and it’s a very deliberate coping strategy. If I don’t work on a weekend then it’s a deliberate decision and I’m not going to beat myself up the whole time that I’m not working; if it’s really that important to do it then I’ll do it.

f) Prioritising family

The most frequently mentioned strategy used by the women in this study to achieve a greater sense of work-family balance was the conscious effort they made to prioritise their families over their working lives. Penny indicated that there is a portion of time every evening that she and her partner have put aside for “dedicated child and family time”. Cassie acknowledged how this is something that academic women may need to work at persistently to ensure the quality of the time they are spending with their families, given the propensity for academic work to invade one’s headspace.

Cassie: Identify what you need to do in your life, and what you want to do, and make spaces for that. Because particularly as a professional, and as an academic, it’s so easy for your work to take over or to be taking over even if you are physically with your family – it’s in your head and hanging over you. You need to make a definite space. So if you can’t devote your whole weekend to your family, at least make sure that you take one day completely off where nothing related to work happens – nothing whatsoever – and it’s all about your family. It’s a physical space, a temporal space, and a mental space as well.

Closely relating to this, both Diane and Nikki spoke of the effectiveness of setting strict boundaries in their lives which enable them to achieve quality, uninterrupted family time. Nikki stated:

I think that I've just been really hardcore in terms of priorities; it's like a disciplined mental decision that I've made that I will not do certain blurring of the boundaries between my job and my private life ... so one of my ways of coping with conflict is to decide exactly where the boundaries are and, in terms of priorities, to put [my child] above work. Because essentially I am dispensable at work; I'm not dispensable in his [my child's] life – it's just that simple.

Nikki's comment here about her dispensability in her work-role is specifically related to her position in the academic hierarchy; Nikki is a junior academic in her Department and may very well feel that she is replaceable in this role. However, an academic mother who is a Head of Department for example, may not find the boundaries to be as clear-cut in terms of her priorities and commitments.

Both Tasha and Penny, who are also junior academics offered, as a useful way of defining boundaries, the valuable lesson for a working mother of learning how to say 'no' to additional work commitments. Tasha acknowledged that at first this is a very difficult thing to do, especially as an academic woman, because it is likely that you are "not used to saying 'no' in your career..."

...but once you have a child, you have to be able to say 'no'; and you can't really be saying 'no' to your child, so you've got to say 'no' to work. And that's something you can't allow yourself to feel guilty about; it is a way of resolving the conflict more than anything.

Even as a senior academic, Stephanie has also practised this strategy of saying 'no' to work commitments and she reflected on how it has been immensely helpful to her in her experience:

Stephanie: Occasionally when I have said 'no' to work things, I have thought "Well, thank goodness I did that because if I hadn't, I would not have managed at all".

She did go on to say, though, that for a person like herself who is a "perfectionist" in her career, it is very hard to say 'no' because she strives to be the kind of person "who other people can always count on". Moreover, the academic workplace presents other systemic reasons for why it is not always easy (or possible) to refuse certain work-related tasks. Firstly, many of an academic's responsibilities such as lecturing and meetings are planned and agreed upon well in advance, and so avoiding such tasks usually necessitates finding someone to replace you. Secondly, senior academics are expected to take on a number of additional duties in their departments and it is very difficult to get away with always saying 'no', as there are a limited number of senior staff in a department who are able to take responsibility for these things. However, somehow women in academia frequently find themselves taking on a disproportionate amount of these 'extras', while academic men seem able to avoid such unproductive tasks.

Another common and related strategy among the respondents was the decision by many of these academic mothers to put their careers “on hold” while their children are very young. Penny is a young junior academic and she is one of the women who stated that she has consciously made such a decision. She explains:

I have decided to put the career on hold for a while; I made an explicit decision when I had my [first child] ... it doesn't matter that much to me now to advance because I've made this explicit decision that for about six or so years I'm not going to push very much on the career front.

Penny noted that the primary reason behind making such a decision is that it allows her to be more available to her children while they are at an age where it is important for her to watch them grow. Jessica, who is a more senior academic, rationalised her reasons for also having taken a similar decision:

You can actually get away with a patch of not being the best ever; I don't feel that I'd be justified in just slacking off because I have a commitment to my Department, but the fact is that if for a year I'm not the best that I can be – as long as I do the things that are really important – there's no point in beating myself up over it. I have a family, I have a child, and that's actually... in the greater scheme of things, when you look back on your life when you're 60, are you really going to regret that you didn't write two more papers that year? No; but you will regret if you didn't watch your child grow up, you know.

It was also evident through many of the other women's narratives that this anxiety over missing out on the formative years of their children's lives was a commonly held concern. Stephanie remarked that children are “little for such a short time” and this is a critical time for a mother to be present and involved in her child's life. As a senior academic, Denise similarly stated that she may have the potential to work her way into a highly influential position in the next ten years, and this would be great for her career...

... but what happens to [my daughter]? She will grow up and go away – she will not miss anything – but I am the one who will have lost that time.

The above excerpts reveal that it is a taken-for-granted option available to these women that allows them the choice to hold back from their careers as they see fit and to put the needs of their children (and themselves) first. The flexible nature of an academic career and the system of self-promotion is indeed instrumental in affording academics this kind of control over their career trajectories; however, this does not necessarily provide all academic mothers with the same kind of flexibility. All of the women discussed above who have opted to put their careers on hold may be classed as having middle-class backgrounds, they all have husbands who are employed, and all appear to have access to the kinds of resources that would enable them not to be concerned about being less productive for a certain period and being overlooked for promotion. Furthermore, they all appear to subscribe to the same western belief that what is most crucial to children's development is that their mothers are available and present in their lives. It is probable that there are more disadvantaged and under-resourced academic women in universities in South Africa, who

also have young children whom they would like to spend more time with, but who may have limiting commitments, such as exorbitant student loans to recover or conditional funding agreements for their research for example, which result in their progress being more strictly monitored and which prevent them from realising the flexibility that the women in this study have benefited from.

5.1.1.2 Work-related factors

The following section discusses the remaining non-relational factors that were found by the women in this study to significantly assist them in achieving work-family balance. These factors were related to the particular work environment of the positions they hold in the academic profession more generally, and at Rhodes University specifically.

a) Living in a small city

A total of 12 out of the 14 participants spoke about the situational advantage of living in a small city like Grahamstown that working at Rhodes University provides. All of these women stated that they enjoy living in Grahamstown and appreciate the lifestyle that it has offered them as working mothers with young children. Many of them noted that the benefits of this lifestyle had been instrumental in their decisions to continue on in their jobs at Rhodes University, including two of them whose partners or themselves had been offered better remunerated work elsewhere but who had decided that they did not want to leave Grahamstown. The common theme discussed was that, quite aside from any benefits Rhodes University offers (or does not), Grahamstown offers a “good environment for raising children”. Tasha explains that when she was recently breastfeeding her baby and needed to be constantly rushing between home and work during the day, living in Grahamstown was hugely helpful to her because she was always able to be “just five minutes away from home”. Diane shared a similar appreciation for the accessibility one has in Grahamstown, and finds it helpful, even now, though her children are relatively older. She explained that if one of them had to phone her from school during the day because “they need their tennis racquet or whatever”, she is able to “go home, pick it up, and drop it at school” in a matter of minutes. Cassie’s husband is often not around as he frequently travels for work, so she often assumes the role of the sole parent to their young children in his absence. She saw the accessibility of Grahamstown as particularly comforting in the event of some emergency. She said:

If there was an emergency I could be back home in five minutes and that's really, really helpful as a mum who works. It's not like Jo'burg where it would take you an hour to get home.

Four of the women contemplated the enabling environment of Grahamstown by comparing it to less favourable places they had lived and worked before. Stephanie stated that:

Grahamstown offers a lot for bringing up small children in terms of making life easy with working as well. Where we were [before], there was no way I could just quickly pop out to take my daughter for a swimming lesson because I'd be stuck in traffic for 45 minutes.

Cassie made a similar remark about where she had lived and worked previously...

I couldn't work full-time because I was fetching and carrying kids the whole time ... I was in the car for three hours a day driving my kids to and from school and to their activities. So when you compare it to that, this is so much easier to be a mother. The fact that I don't have a full-time husband supporting me is not so much of an issue here; it was more of an issue [before].

Here Cassie suggests that the way in which small-city living enables you to accomplish more in short spaces of time may offset the difficulties caused by other support factors that may be lacking in a working mother's life. Penny, who has two little children, summed up the benefits that she has experienced as a result of living in Grahamstown by noting that:

It really makes it a lot easier because basically if you think of cutting two hours out of your day for commuting, then that's two *extra* hours that you can dedicate to either your kids or to work. That's something that has made it a lot easier and that might not apply to female academics working at [other universities] – it's very specific to here ... Even stuff like with the childminder I employ; even if she *walks* home it takes her 40 minutes, and if I go drop her off it's like ten minutes. So I don't even have to bear the guilt of her travelling two hours a day and being away from her kids, you know? So I can also think of it like... she has more time with *her* kids.

b) Enjoying what you do

Five of the women in the study commented that if a working mother enjoys the work that she does, this will make it far easier for her to find a sense of balance in having multiple roles. They generally agreed that if a mother loves what she does, is not working simply to pay the bills, and is passionate about her work, this will help her to resolve a certain amount of the conflict that she experiences in balancing her work and family roles. Cassie again made reference to the notion of spill-over when she spoke of the importance of feeling positive about your job as a working mother:

I think if you're not passionate about what you're doing that will overflow and affect everything else; you'll be frustrated and it will end up spilling over and affecting your family ... So you can't divorce these things – these spaces.

It was apparent that for these women, deriving enjoyment and satisfaction from the work that they do is an important part of being able to justify the corresponding costs of combining working and mothering such as less free time to spend with their families. Lizzy is a junior academic at Rhodes University who moved between a number of different jobs in other cities before settling in Grahamstown. She proposed that one should always be mindful of the extent to which they are “happy” with what they are doing in life.

Lizzy: It's a question of 'Do you enjoy what you're doing?' and if not, then what can you do about it? ... I think if I could do anything, I'd probably be doing exactly what I'm doing. Because if that's not the answer you give, then you need to change something.

It is possible that part of the reason for Lizzy's happiness with what she is doing may be the fact that her low-status position means that there are less demands made on her than on senior academics. A Professor, for instance, may at times find it more difficult to derive such joy from her work because of the unavoidable additional administrative and institutional clutter that takes up so much more of her time than would a more junior position. As such, a senior academic may find that there are parts of her job that she enjoys and parts that she does not, but that it is all part of the package (perhaps a far more realistic view of a person's job satisfaction than the idea that a person should love everything about their job all the time).

c) Flexibility of academia

A commonly held opinion among the women in the sample about the advantages of being engaged in academic work was regarding the flexibility that one has in this type of career relative to jobs in other professions. Every participant who took part in the study made reference to this flexibility as having been immensely enabling for them as a working mother, with many having referred to it as one of the most critical enablers for them. According to Anne, who had always intended on working in academia and has worked her way up the academic hierarchy of qualifications and promotions to a senior level:

An academic job gives you flexibility; so I can't really say that things have ever reached crisis point. The only thing that I might have to do in a day – and it's not even every day or every term – is turn up for a lecture; everything else can be done at home. Or if I had to bring my children into this space nobody would say anything. There are just so many things about this job...

Anne summarises here the two major benefits of an academic position that the women in the study found to be most helpful – the flexibility of *where* you work during the work day, and the flexibility of *whether* you work during the work day (given that academics are able to make up for lost working hours by working at night or over weekends). Denise is senior academic who appears to work very long hours every day in her office at the University. She commented on how significant it has been for her to be able to bring her child to work with her.

The flexibility I have here is that I have an office all to myself and the secretary next door to me would always find [my child] here with me; all the time – weekends, weekdays. Immediately after school she was picked up by her dad and brought here to be with me.

This is an aspect of the flexibility of the academic environment that has been particularly helpful in satisfying Denise's needs as a working mother because she does not employ anybody to assist her in childcare while she works and the only assistance she does get is from her husband, who also works full-time. Penny also described the benefits she, as a junior academic staff member, has

derived from the flexibility of the academic workplace and proposed that these may far outweigh the difficulties associated with mothering as a professional academic.

Penny: There are a lot of things about how difficult it is to balance an academic career with motherhood but I think there's a positive side to it; it's not the *worst* job to balance. I don't have to be here right now if I don't want to; there's no one checking up on me. I have a lot of flexibility and that *really* helps with kids. So you can work at night; you don't have to do all your work in work hours when the kids are awake.

Penny's narrative here reiterates what was stated above; that one of the main implications of the flexibility of an academic job is the ability to largely choose when you will do much of your work.

Tasha said that she believes this is what makes an academic job perfect for her as a mother:

I know I have certain work to do ... but, to me, whether I'm doing that here in my office or at home, whether I'm doing it at midday or midnight, the work still has to get done. But at least I have the flexibility that I don't have to be sitting in my office from eight until five every day, and that's really huge. In that way it's the perfect job to combine with being a mother because you have to get your work done but you don't have to punch in your times.

For Jessica and Denise who, unlike many of the other participants, had not always envisioned academic careers for themselves, the fairly unique advantages of academic work came as a pleasant realisation to them through a comparison with other possible career paths. Jessica recalled:

It gradually became clear to me that academia is actually the sort of job that is really appealing because you have so much freedom to do the sorts of stuff that you're interested in doing. It comes with these different dimensions of teaching, and research, and admin, and travelling... In most other jobs you don't get such a wide variety of activities.

Cynthia was also of this opinion; that an academic job, despite its failings, has much more to offer a working mother than may initially be evident. She told the story of how she came to realise this at a time when she momentarily considered the possibility of a career change.

Cynthia: Being an academic is a very exciting thing; lots of people don't think it's a very exciting job, but the main thing is that you get to choose what you do, which is fantastic ... I was actually offered a different job in administration. I thought about it really carefully and, okay, it would have been a different title and a little bit more money, but then I thought 'Oh no, that means I have to get to work at eight o'clock in the morning and somebody else will be in control of my time'. And so, against all odds, I said 'Thank you, but no thank you; I'd rather just remain an academic'. The flexibility is extremely important ... it was something I feared that I would not be able to do in [a different] post.

Lizzy, who had worked in industry before taking up a permanent academic post, also used the comparison between academic work and other types of jobs to support her argument that, in a way, the role of an *academic* mother is very different from the typical working mother role. She explained:

Something I'm interested in is how different specifically a role in academia is as opposed to a role as a working mum; because, actually, academia allows you a lot more breathing space that, say, a strict office job wouldn't ... There is certainly a lot more flexibility than I've had in other jobs, and I know that life could be a hell of a lot worse. You could work in an office job as a secretary and have absolutely no joy in what it was that you were doing; you'd be expected to be there from seven thirty to open the office and maybe knock-off at four thirty, and you're not allowed to run home for your lunch breaks, and you've got to squeeze in a [breastfeed] in the ladies toilet cubicle because you don't have your own office. I think those kinds of professional circumstances are infinitely more challenging than academia is.

In summing up the views expressed above, it is evident that a diverse group of women present a fairly unified opinion regarding these enabling features of academic work. Anne, Denise, Jessica, and Cynthia are all senior academic women at Rhodes University, while Penny, Tasha and Lizzy hold more junior academic positions, but all of these women acknowledged that they have benefited in some way from the flexibility of the nature of academia in general, and from Rhodes University specifically. Moreover, if one considers the further diversity in this group of comprising black and white women, single women and those with partners, mothers of tiny babies and mothers of school-aged children, it is evident that no group of women is excluded from having access to the freedoms and flexibility of their academic jobs in some form or another.

d) Being available to your children

Closely related to the above discussion is the way in which, through these various areas of flexibility, an academic career is conducive to working mothers being more available to their children. Diane, who is a relatively junior academic at Rhodes University, made a career change into academia approximately ten years ago at the time when her children were very young. When comparing her academic career to her previous experiences “working downtown”, she reflected on how on many occasions it had been possible for her as an academic to prioritise her family and her children in ways that would never have been possible in her previous job where she was “locked into office hours and it was very difficult to go missing”. She remarked that as an academic...

If you have commitments at school – sports day or speech day, those kinds of things – and you know about it in advance, you can plot your time and maybe move a lecture around or whatever. It’s very nice from that perspective that you can be available for your kids.

Cynthia also commented on how she has had a certain amount of autonomy in being able to structure her academic work in ways that have allowed her to prioritise and spend time with her children. She said:

As my daughter especially is getting bigger she does want more of my time ... and so I'm trying to think of ways of actually doing that. In the past, when she was very young, I used to take her with me on [research] trips. So we used to go and that was a bit crazy but it worked because she was there with me and she felt included and that sort of thing. And this is where the flexibility of the academic job comes in, because I am able to choose my topics and choose the locales in which I do my fieldwork.

It may have helped that Cynthia is a well-established and influential senior academic in her Department, affording her such a level of control over the content and structure of her work. However, her seniority is unlikely to have made a significant difference to her autonomy in this regard, given that most academics, be they junior or senior, are able to determine their own research areas, interests and specialties. What is more likely is that there are disciplinary differences in academics’ work that affect both the flexibility and the ‘child-friendliness’ of the work structure and environment. For example, one participant commented on the potential dangers of having her

children spend the afternoon in a science laboratory; she described how “[a lab] could catch fire, so many things could go wrong; there are chemicals in there and the kids may not know how to get out of the place”. Despite this clearly not being a suitable environment for a young child, the rigid structure of the kind of work and research that is involved in certain academic disciplines, such as the sciences, may confine an academic mother to a laboratory for a significant portion of her work day. For example, if a mother did not have any arrangement for afternoon childcare and she was required to conduct a laboratory practical, she may have little choice but to bring her child into this environment. This experience sharply contrasts with that of Cynthia (above), where she describes actively and voluntarily arranging to have her child spend time with her while she works. It may be said that perhaps women within certain disciplines, such as the humanities and the social sciences for example, would find it somewhat easier to involve their children in their daily activities, and would thus experience the freedom and flexibility that academia has to offer working mothers in a very different way to women working within other, less flexible disciplines.

As stated previously, Denise was not involved in academia until she came to South Africa and, prior to her relocation, she had established a career in the NGO sector. After a number of painfully difficult years adjusting to a new country, a new culture, a new job, new expectations, and a new lifestyle – and all the while feeling unfulfilled and regretting her decision – she has at last begun to enjoy what she came to Rhodes University to do, and to feel positive about the changes she made in her life and the lives of her husband and child who followed her to Grahamstown. Denise explained what she now sees as the most significant outcome of her career change to academia – the ability it affords her to be more present in her daughter’s life:

The great sense of achievement and happiness and flexibility in my lifestyle now has allowed me the ability to give quality time to my daughter and enjoy her growing phases ... So for the next [few] years – until she is in university – it will be academics ... Academics will never be the best-paid job, I know that; and it will never be as fulfilling for me as it was in [my previous career], I know that too. I know all these things, but that's how you make informed decisions; you know what you are missing out on but you also know why you are doing it. Putting the next few years of my daughter’s life ahead of the most fulfilling job is my decision... Because nobody else matters after that.

In this poignant yet realist narrative, Denise offers a contrast to many of the other participants’ opinions that have tended to revere ‘The Academic Career’. Denise suggested that an academic job is by no means the ideal job to her. However, she acknowledged the very real advantages that such a career can offer working mothers, (with regard to their increased availability to their children), and stated her intention that *her* academic career will serve this purpose in her life while her child is young.

5.1.2 Relational enabling processes

This second and final sub-category of the core category is central to the focus of this research. It is concerned with the significant relationships in the lives of the women who took part, and how the support processes at work in these relationships have enabled them to more effectively balance their work and family roles. The relational enabling processes that were explored by the participants included: their relationships with people in their workspaces, families and immediate networks of friends, as well as relationships with the people who assist them in childcare and household maintenance.

5.1.2.1 Workplace relations

This section deals specifically with the *relationships* that participants have in their workplaces, more so than the academic work environment itself, although it is acknowledged that these elements are inextricably linked. The most significant relationships in the workplace that have the ability to influence the ease with which an academic mother balances her multiple roles were said to be the relationship she has with those in leadership in her Department (her HOD) and her relationships with her colleagues. It was interesting to find that one of the participants, very early on – upon initially becoming involved in the study – noted the extent to which she felt that relational processes surrounding and affecting the working activities of a woman in an academic position were the most influential factors in determining her overall experience of this workspace. Her comment was this:

The idea of 'relational processes' applies both within the institution and without it. At the end of that day, whatever the institution's policies or general practices are, it's who your Head of Department is and how they operate [that matters]. It's not just about the structures – the mechanisms – that have been put in place, it's about the actual processes; the *relational* processes. For me, you can look at what the institution does in terms of its structures and its policies coldly, but at the end of the day it really *is* about the people and the relationships... The same department might be completely different if the leadership were a different person.

a) Supportive leadership

The above sentiment highlights the importance of the people in leadership in a woman's academic department to their work-life experience. An overview of the responses from the women in the sample revealed that four of the women are employed in departments that have a woman HOD, two of whom work in the same department, and one of these four participants is, herself, the Head of her Department. The remaining ten women in the sample are employed in male-headed departments. It may be said that to a large extent, the perceptions, acceptance and support of the

issues facing working academic mothers shown by an HOD will significantly impact an academic mother's experience of her workplace. Many of the women who took part in the study felt that they have received sufficient support from their departmental leaders in this area.

Jessica: Our Dean of [Faculty] is quite a progressive, understanding, and pro-diversity sort of person and he's based in my Department ... So I do feel that, here at the University, I get the necessary support and understanding and that makes a huge difference.

While the person that Jessica refers to here is not her HOD specifically, she highlights the fact that any senior member of a department, who carries significant status and influence (such as a Dean or Deputy Dean of Faculty), has the power to set the tone and atmosphere within that department and influence the workplace culture. Rosie also felt that her supportive work environment had been established through the presence of supportive leaders. She said:

...they certainly don't keep time and whatever; as long as you get the work done they are very happy. My direct line manager – if that's what you would call her – has always said to me 'you must do what you need to do; you don't need to account for your time or anything', and I've always appreciated that support.

Penny spoke of a similar experience in her Department, commenting that:

...there's not much more I'd want from [my Department] regarding my role as a mother, apart from being okay to cut me a bit of slack and so on. But I have felt a lot of the time that this has been happening – If I say I can't come to a meeting because my child is sick, they're okay with it.

Bev observed that having a "supportive boss" is helpful when "things break down" because you know they will "understand that life happens and you can't control everything". Bev described her "boss" as a man who has a good understanding of the demands of raising a family. Despite Tasha having had conflict with her Head of Department early on, during her pregnancy, she nevertheless felt that he had, since then, made an effort to be more understanding of her situation.

Tasha: When I have had an issue he really has been great ... I asked him whether it would be possible for the first three months for me to work at home in the afternoons, and he spoke to [the Director of HR] and we made this arrangement ... I never actually used that in the end because [my child] took to our nanny so well, but there was always that safety net where I didn't feel guilty if I did need to. And he was very good about it; very understanding.

What is most noteworthy about these accounts of support from departmental leadership is that each of these five women is employed in a different academic department within four different faculties, and yet all report having received remarkable support. In all five, the HODs of these women's departments are men, alluding to the highly gendered nature of leadership in general at Rhodes University, which may be said on the basis of the very small number of academic department heads who are women at this institution (five in total). This sets up the normative experience for a large majority of female academic staff members at Rhodes University as one where men in leadership roles are making allowances for women subordinates. It is evident, though, that very few of the women mentioned here perceive having a male HOD as having been

problematic for them, in general, in terms of workplace support. It is also notable that apart from Jessica, whose promotion to a senior level was only effected within the last year, all of these women being discussed are junior academics in their departments. Relative to Professoriate status, all five of these women may be ranked as junior academics but it appears that their status or rank in their departments has not in any way restricted their access to the required support within their departments. However, it is possible that senior academic women (Professors), with far more complex responsibilities that cannot simply be dropped, would face considerably different negotiations around getting the support that they need from their departments. Given the particular issues they face and the multitude of responsibilities that they juggle relative to more junior women, it may in fact be more difficult for them to get leeway and arrange allowances for family-related concerns. Based on the experiences of the women in this sample, it is unclear what potentially mediating effect a woman's race could have on the level of departmental support she receives. Although two of the five women discussed above are black and the other three are white, this diversity did not seem to influence their individual experiences of supporting relationships with their respective HODs.

An unanticipated idea that emerged in conversations with the women about departmental support was that many of them believe it to be especially relevant whether or not their HOD has children of his or her own. The women who proposed this idea explained how an HOD may be more supportive of them as academic mothers if he has a more personal understanding of their experience. Ruby said:

I love my Department and I am lucky in that my HOD has small children so he can relate to what I am going through as a parent; even if he's not a mother, he's at least a parent of young children. Having an understanding boss makes it easier ... I haven't always been lucky enough to be employed by a boss who is understanding about being a working mom with young children, as I am now.

Jessica, who is a new mother, has also found that being in a departmental environment where many of her colleagues share the recent experience of becoming parents has helped her to feel supported and to ease any anxieties she may have about meeting her work-role expectations. She explained that:

[Many of] my colleagues now have had kids in the last few years and my HOD has a [toddler] who is not easy. So there's quite a lot of understanding for... you know, if I don't arrive at eight that there might be reasons for it.

Bev added that while having support from her HOD is very important for an academic mother, this support is something that may be earned through proving yourself to be a hard worker in your Department. She described the supportive relationship she has with her HOD:

My boss has children; and I'm not saying that because he has children that he understands – I'm sure other bosses who don't have children also understand – but he's been very supportive since I came back and when things are not going well he will say, 'No, go, it's fine. You can go check that everything is okay'. So it helps that he is supportive and he also encourages me to be a better mum. He says 'they're small and you'll never have this time again so you must make the most of it'. So it works. I suppose also if you... I'd like to think that I work really hard so I've maybe gained some kind of credibility with him; that he knows that I'm not lying saying that my child is not well; that I'm actually working and I wouldn't just be sitting at home or taking a nap and not doing my job.

Once again, the above perceptions are closely related to the gendered nature of leadership at Rhodes University; while many HODs, like those mentioned above, are also parents and this affords them a better understanding of the difficulties that parenting staff members face, they are nonetheless mostly still men. This is important because, even as a parent, it is unusual that a father would have had to take time off work or bring his children into his work environment because his wife would most likely take care of this.

b) Supportive colleagues

The relationship an academic woman has with her colleagues was mentioned by some of the participants as being an especially helpful source of support. In most cases, it was not that a woman's colleagues gave her practical assistance, but their support was more on the emotional and psychological levels of just being willing to listen, understand and show sensitivity towards her in a given situation. Bev describes this kind of colleague support from her experience:

The people you work with can really help the kind of environment that you're in... People in your workplace don't necessarily do things to support you, but it's when you've had to be away and you walk in and they don't give you a scolding; because that would just add so much guilt and pressure onto the guilt and pressure that you're probably already feeling.

As a junior academic, Bev positions herself as being accountable to her colleagues at times when her family responsibilities have kept her from meeting the expectations of her job, in a way that perhaps a more senior academic would not. As such, it has clearly been enabling for Bev to have the understanding of her colleagues who have not been outwardly resentful toward her. However, it may be that criticism within departments of parenting staff members' absences and unavailability happens in a more indirect and informal way. What is more important is an academic mother's *perception* that she has this support. Tasha, who is a new mother, views the support she gets from her colleagues in terms of their willingness to be flexible and accommodating of her circumstances when she has needed this. She remarked that:

The support of colleagues has been very, very important because you need to be able to say to your colleagues, 'this is my situation... Can we rather make this arrangement?' And it's not often that I've had to do that ... but when I have had to ask for a bit of leeway from my colleagues they've been great. So that's an enabling factor.

Cassie's perspective on this matter was slightly different from the others in that, as well as expressing their understanding of her situation, she also referred to her colleagues' willingness to actually do practical things to help her to manage as being very supportive:

When my father became ill recently it was quite a hectic emergency situation and we all thought he was on his way out; and [my colleagues] covered for me. I was about to drive back to do my Wednesday afternoon [lecture] and leave my folks in the hospital, and they said 'No, absolutely not'. So it's that kind of thing ... we're incredibly understanding of our lives beyond our work and how that needs to be factored in and accommodated.

Cassie implies here that she has reciprocated this understanding and support of her colleagues; however, none of the women mentioned whether or not they have volunteered to help other academic mothers in their departments to manage *their* work commitments. It would appear that the support that these mothers have received may often be uni-directional and viewed as non-obligatory collegial kindness.

5.1.2.2 Support from a partner

This section deals with what was the most frequently highlighted and critically emphasised enabling factor in this study. Two of the participants are single mothers and thus did not offer very much to this theme of discussion from their own experience, but almost every other participant with a husband or partner (all men) acknowledged that the support provided to her as a working mother by her partner constituted the most critical determinant of her ability to effectively cope with the demands of balancing her work and family roles. Due to the fact that the experiences of these men themselves and their own accounts of their involvement in the stories that follow were not directly investigated for this study, it is the women's perceptions of the support they have receive from their partners that is reflected in this analysis. However, this is appropriate because in terms of the way that this relational support enables an academic mother's career, it is the extent to which these women *perceive* they are being supported and how this affects their professional lives that is most important. In a study that looks at university women this dimension of partner support is perhaps quite unique, as many academic women may tend to have quite idiosyncratic and non-standard relationships with their intimate partners, often characterised by living apart, balancing dual careers, commuting, and travelling alone for research and conferences. This theme of 'support from a partner' has been divided into a number of sub-themes, each exploring a different facet of these relational support processes. In addition to considering the various ways that the women in this study are supported by their partners, this section of the analysis focuses on the dynamics of these academic women's intimate relationships. It also addresses the effect of gender-role attitudes on the level of support the women receive from their partners, looks at the

ways in which this support is given (or solicited) in the relationship with respect to childcare and home maintenance, and considers the effect that a partner's own occupation and job status has on his involvement in home-based activities. Of the 12 women in this sample who have partners, eight of these men are employed in the academic profession, three have careers outside of academia, and one does not have a paid occupation as he is currently furthering his studies full-time.

a) Practical support

One would expect that educated, liberated career women such as those who participated in this study are particularly inclined to have relationships with men committed to principles of egalitarianism. The women's perceptions of their partners' attitudes towards traditional gender-roles are addressed later in this analysis, but it was evident that almost all of the women in this study hold non-traditional role expectations for their partners' involvement in the more stereotypically 'feminised' activities of domestic and family life. Of the 14 women in the sample, 13 stated that the fathers of their children do provide them with practical support to at least some acceptable degree, and seven of these women indicated that this support is substantial. This type of support was related primarily to assistance in various household and childcare tasks that enables an academic mother to dedicate more time towards sustaining her career. In the analysis of this theme that follows, I present some examples of the varying levels of practical support that the women have received from their partners and some interpretation of the trends that emerged from this analysis.

Bev, Diane, Tasha and Anne were among the women whose experiences in this area particularly stood out in that they appear to receive substantial practical support from their partners. Bev is a junior academic at Rhodes University with three small children and her husband is also employed within the University, although not in a full-time academic capacity. She praised her husband for the support he gives her and believes it has been critical to her ability to cope with the working-mothering lifestyle:

He is so good you know; I'm so fortunate, I must say. If it weren't for him, I'm telling you I wouldn't be where I am because of the support he gives me; he's really exceptional and I don't think other men compare to be quite honest. And I'm not just flattering him; it's because I can see it, you know – I've seen it with some of my friends...

She went on to describe all the ways in which her husband contributes towards managing various household and childcare tasks:

He picks up my son for lunch and he also picks up my daughter. And he wakes up early in the morning and makes our breakfast and the lunches for the kids. So every single day, religiously, he does all of that. And if needs be, like when my son's bike is broken, he'll fix it or he'll take him to school, pick him up... whatever needs to be done, he's always there.

Diane spoke very similarly of her husband as being immensely helpful and supportive of her in all aspects of household maintenance and childcare. She described her relationship with her husband as a “fifty-fifty partnership” and, like Bev, she praised his merits compared to other men she knows:

My husband is a wonderful help, he really is. He’s one of those rare men who does actually pitch in and do something, and I’m very, very fortunate. I have colleagues who are married to men who just kind of come home and expect to put their feet up and have everything done for them, regardless of whether the woman works or not. But thankfully I’m not married to a man like that [laughs]. So he has been a great help over the years and he is also very good about looking after [my daughter] – taking her here, there and everywhere. Obviously as she has gotten older it’s been easier, but certainly when she was little he was fantastic. When there were weekends where I’d have to work, he’d put the kids in the car and take them off to the sea and have a day out or whatever; and he helps with the cooking and the shopping.

Diane’s husband is not an academic and his particular occupation affords him quite a lot of control over his time. It appears that both Bev’s and Diane’s partners have been able to devote considerable time to their children and to helping with household tasks. This has perhaps been facilitated by their particular occupations, as neither of their jobs appears to resemble a typical full-time work arrangement and (unlike their academic partners) their weekends are largely free of work. Tasha’s husband, on the other hand, is a full-time academic and holds a very senior position in his Department at Rhodes University. Despite the large amount of work and responsibility that one would expect to come with such a position, Tasha implied that her husband plays a significant role in caring for their baby. She described their daily routine in a way that shows how the things that each of them does contribute to the shared partnership they have in raising their child. She said:

Sometimes my husband goes home early at like four and starts [our child’s] dinner, and sometimes I do that, and other times the nanny will get it going. One of us will feed her dinner and we may sit down and eat with her if we’ve got our ducks in a row, otherwise the other one makes our dinner. Once she’s finished eating and running around, I usually then have a little bit of playtime with her and my husband will see to her evening milk bottle and run her bath. I bath her and then we both sit with her for her milk bottle and story time. My husband usually goes off and I start putting her to sleep, but if she’s too excited and she won’t go to sleep then her dad comes and puts her to sleep.

Similarly to the above women’s narratives, Anne asserted that she shares a completely equal parenting partnership with her husband in all respects as they both contribute equally to childcare, cooking and lifting of their two school-going children. However, their arrangement is possibly quite unique in that they each take total responsibility for these functions on specific days of the week. Anne’s husband is also an academic employed at Rhodes University, although he holds a position of lower rank than his wife, suggesting that he may have fewer administrative responsibilities and commitments in his department and the university community. As such, Anne’s husband possibly has more time to devote to household responsibilities and childcare than she does and may have a more flexible work schedule. What their arrangement means is that each of

them has days in the week where they are supported by the other in terms of home-based tasks so that they can dedicate those days fully to their work, which Anne says has been “fantastic” for her. Both Ruby and Stephanie noted that their husbands are very helpful in looking after their children, particularly in allowing them to attend to their academic work when they need to; however, the profiles of these two women’s husbands are very different. While Stephanie’s husband is a senior academic at the same professional rank as his wife, Ruby’s husband is unemployed and thus would be expected to have far more time to offer towards childcare than husbands who work. Ruby did state that often when she needs to work on the weekends her husband will take their children out for the day, but it seems to be that his time contribution to the home and children, in general, is not more or less than most of the *working* fathers in this sample (some who are senior academics). Nevertheless, Ruby indicated that she feels adequately supported and satisfied with the time that her husband devotes to childcare and maintaining their home.

Unlike the participants mentioned above, who are highly supported on a practical level, others appear to have received inconsistent support from their partners. Several of them stated that while their husbands do provide them with support in some respects, they are the ones who do decidedly more in other respects. Denise’s husband spent the majority of his working life employed in the corporate sector at a managerial level; however, at the time when Denise took up employment at Rhodes University as a senior academic and their family relocated to South Africa, he left his occupation to join her and to study full-time towards his PhD. Denise said that she has found it very helpful that her husband does all of their shopping and he assists greatly in caring for and lifting their daughter, but that he does not help her at all with the household chores, despite presumably having more time for these things than she does. Jessica also finds that her husband is practically helpful at times when he is able to be, like over the weekends, and that they share the burden of housework quite equally; but she finds that at other times he is unhelpful, and she carries the bulk of childcare responsibilities especially. She explained:

When he comes home he does things like feeding the dogs, washing the dishes; he helps with all of that. So in terms of household and shopping and that sort of stuff, we’re pretty equal. But childcare during the week, the practicalities of it are mostly my responsibility.

Jessica’s husband is an academic at Rhodes University who has gone from recently being a post-doctoral researcher to being currently employed as a staff member, but who has “struggled” to establish his career and does not yet have a permanent academic post. Jessica described her husband’s job insecurity and his sense that “he hasn’t quite cracked it” as being “very stressful for him”, and it was evident that his attempts to further his own career have made him largely unavailable to his family during the week. As Jessica described, there are times when she gets very

little practical help from her husband at all and the day-to-day tasks of caring for their small baby become solely her responsibility.

Jessica: In the morning I get up and I get myself and [my son] ready for kindergarten. My partner is like *not* one of those morning people so he's still in bed by the time I leave the house. So I pack the kindergarten bag and I have my breakfast and I get us both ready and I head into town and chat and sing to my child on the way there. And then I drop him at crèche and spend like five minutes there to see if there are any issues, and then I arrive at work.

Another woman who indicated that she takes primary responsibility for much of the home-based and childcare tasks in her household was Penny, who explained that even though her husband is “at home a lot” he rarely does any of the fetching and lifting of their children. In a situation similar to Jessica’s, Penny’s husband is also an academic who is “more behind in his career” than his wife, despite being older than her, and for this reason has tended to be very involved with his work. Penny explained that, for her husband, the past few years have felt like “make it or break it time” and so until very recently his career has been his main priority, which has come at the expense of time spent with his small children. Now that he has been promoted and achieved “stability and permanency”, she said that he is feeling more “affirmed”. However, Penny stated that, of the two of them, she is far more likely to be the one who would need to shift her work around if one of their children was sick as her husband “finds it very hard to drop a work thing for the kids”.

The above two sets of dual-career parenting dynamics (Jessica’s and Penny’s) present key examples of how the persistence of traditional gender-roles may, from a feminist perspective, lead to problematic domestic care arrangements (particularly for full-time working women). In a situation where one member of a parenting couple has a more successful or lucrative career, it may make sense for their career to be prioritised and for their partner to play a more supportive role, even if both are employed (e.g. Pixley & Moen, 2003). In this model, the ‘supporting’ partner takes on more responsibility domestically to maintain the smooth functioning of the home and to facilitate the focus and optimal time-use of the work-focused partner, regardless of gender. This arrangement makes considerable sense as the family is likely to benefit from the greater earnings of the more successful partner’s work efforts as well as from the efforts and time dedicated to household and childcare by the other partner. It is noteworthy that in the case of both Jessica’s and Penny’s relationships, quite the opposite has occurred; their husbands are less established in their careers and yet they appear to have dedicated more of their time to work and less of it to their families, leaving their more successful wives to balance the primary responsibility for childcare and household maintenance with their demanding careers.

Of the women who spoke of receiving very little practical support from their partners, two of them are single mothers and hence do not currently have partners, while the other two women are married to working professionals with demanding careers. Both Cassie and Cynthia stated that much of the lack of practical support from their husbands is due to the fact that they both spend a great deal of time travelling for work-related reasons and are thus unavoidably unavailable. Cassie's husband is a scientist who is required to spend very long periods of time abroad for his work. Cynthia's husband, on the other hand, is employed in the corporate sector and, although he also frequently travels for work, this is usually local travel and for more brief periods. Both of these women indicated that when their husbands *are* around they are very helpful but then, when their husbands are away, they are the ones who manage everything. Cassie explained:

[My husband] has always gone away with his work so at the end of the day it's always been me who holds everything going; I always end up making all the arrangements and when he's here he'll just fit in ... When he's around we have a much more equal relationship; he does as much as I do in terms of childcare and cooking and shopping and everything. But because he travels so much, it just means that the majority of the time I end up doing it all.

Rosie's case was one of the exceptions to this theme in that she is a single mother and so her children's father is not around to provide daily practical support. However, she described their situation in collaborative terms in that she feels that the financial contribution he makes to their lives, which enables her to employ a domestic helper, indirectly provides her with practical support in childcare. She explained that: "he wasn't all that helpful anyway when he was around, so in fact I often think that I'm better off". Lizzy is also a single mother and she stated that her child's father lives too far away to be of any practical assistance to her in childcare.

b) Involved fathering

Closely related to the idea of practical support, and yet fundamentally different from it in many ways, is the level of involvement shown by the participants' partners as fathers specifically. This theme was more about the interest that these men show in childcare and in being actively involved with their children than it was about the chores they assist the mother with. Given that the men's involvement was not investigated directly, it is the way in which the participants *perceive* their partners' involvement that is analysed here. Tasha explained how, in her opinion, the considerable involvement her partner has in their child's life has been largely influenced by the special relationship he has independently built with her. She explained:

... it's only because he has been so involved from day one. He bonded with her from when she was born because we had a very traumatic birth and I didn't see her the first night – she was in high care and I was passed out. He sat with her that night and he bonded with her, and he and she have been [so close] ever since. So if I need to do things on a weekend, he'll take her out and go do the grocery shopping

with her or he'll take her to [the Botanical Gardens] for a walk or to the field to play and he's quite happy with that. And he's very capable of packing her snack and her juice and knowing what she needs and not forgetting her hat and her coat – it is amazing!

Once again, despite Tasha's husband's senior academic status at Rhodes University and his presumably busy schedule, Tasha positions him as a reliable, responsive and engaged father who is exceptionally capable in childcare. Despite only making reference to her husband's involvement with his child on the weekend here, Tasha did indicate elsewhere in the interview that this kind of involvement from her husband is a daily contribution. As far as Nikki was concerned, the thing that is important with respect to a father's involvement with his children is that it must come from his own initiative. She said:

He's been very involved as a father, which I think is important. And it hasn't necessarily been to support *me*; it's been his own choice in how active he's going to be in our child's life. So I haven't really had to demarcate things or ask things.

Nikki's stance on paternal involvement seems to propose that intimate father-child relationships should be the outcome of a voluntary decision process on the part of the father to actively engage and participate. It is a plausible assumption that more educated fathers who are committed to egalitarian principles and challenge patriarchal ideas of uninvolved masculinity tend to display a greater desire to be actively involved with their children than perhaps earlier generations of men have done, and will *choose* to do so because they want to. Ruby, however, described the way in which her husband's efforts to support *her* in her mothering role mean that he plays a very active fathering role in the process, and that these two things are really one and the same in the dynamics of their relationship.

Ruby: He's a very good father, definitely; I'm very lucky. He's very involved ... and sometimes when the children are being particularly difficult – because they tend to be more difficult with me than they are with him – and whatever discipline method I'm using is not working, and they're fighting, and I just want to throw in the towel and give up, then he'll come and take them and talk to them and tell them how they're supposed to behave and then they have to come and say sorry to mommy [laughs]. So ja, he's very, very good with the children and I'm lucky.

Cynthia believes that the way a father shows his commitment to his children is by actually being present and available to them. She feels that, despite her husband spending a fair amount of time away with his work, he is present for his children. She stated that:

My husband is there; and he's very... I think the word would be 'transformed'. When he's here he does pick up the kids and he will take them to the library and to the park and stuff like that. So in that sense he's a committed father who is there; he's actually *there* for the kids.

It may be argued that there are different ways in which a father can be 'present' for his children other than as a physical presence, such as being emotionally available to them. This would have been another way that men who are frequently away from home and from their children can show their commitment as fathers. Stephanie indicated that one of the ways her partner showed his

commitment to fathering was when he “dropped a day’s work” so that he could stay home to take care of their child when she was a baby. This sacrifice evidently meant a reduction in his pay, and may not have been the best thing for his career, but he did this to support Stephanie in caring for their child and to enable her to give more time to her own work. Stephanie and her husband hold positions of equal academic seniority at Rhodes University and the egalitarianism of their partnership is evident in the way that this shift of the father into the home-space (even if just for one day per week) helped to balance the time that they were each able to spend on their academic work. Even now that their children are a bit older and he no longer does this, Stephanie said that her husband sees “spending time with the children as important for both of [them]”.

The few women who indicated that their partners are less involved in their children’s lives were, not surprisingly, also those who said that their partners are often not around to support them practically at home. Jessica seemed to rationalise her partner’s limited involvement with their child to an extent because she said that she understands how it may be difficult for him:

It’s always the first couple of years that are the most difficult because fathers find it a lot easier to do practical stuff with the kid when they’re a bit bigger. I think most men actually struggle when they’re tiny. But I know there are exceptions; I can see that... So I do get frustrated at times.

Jessica went on to say that her partner’s inability to be more involved with their child, in terms of being a greater general presence in the child’s life as well as participating more in routine childcare tasks during the week, makes her situation difficult and she often feels “a bit like a single mother”, even though she is not. Penny explained that not only is she more aware than her husband is of their children’s needs because she spends far more time with them, but her children have also become more used to her being the parent who provides for these needs, possibly due to her husband’s lack of presence and involvement. She expanded:

I would say, certainly, I’m much more aware of what the kids want and they tend to ask *me* a lot more; like ‘mommy can I have this...’ They both tend to be very ‘mommy, mommy’ kids ... But I wouldn’t say that [my husband] is totally unaware – if there’s a runny nose he will go get a tissue and wipe it – he’s not totally unable to see what kind of nurturing is needed ... but he’s not as aware as I am of what happens when and who needs to be fed when and who’s nappy needs to be changed and things like that.

It may be theorised that this kind of limited involvement from fathers very early on in a child’s development, and continued lack of proximity and familiarity, may result in a barrier to effective communication between fathers and their children, and hence the common perception that mothers are more easily able to talk to children more intimately later on in their childhood.

c) Emotional support

This type of support was related less to practical assistance in household and childcare tasks, and more to the way in which partners may provide their support for working mothers by giving them encouragement and understanding and being perceptive of their needs on an emotional and psychological level. It may be the case that a partner who is also an academic would best be able to provide this kind of support given their greater understanding of an academic mother's work pressures; however, it is likely that emotional support is more of a personality variable than an occupational one. Ruby felt very strongly about this element of support in her life and proposed that, to her, it was the single most important form of support that an academic mother can have. She stated that:

However supportive your colleagues are and however supportive your friends can be, the most important thing is that you have a supportive husband; because your husband is there every day, all the time, and if your husband isn't going to support you in being a working mom in a tough academic environment and coping with small children... If your husband's not going to support you, you're going to be an emotional wreck most of the time. So that's the most critical of all as far as I'm concerned ... having an understanding husband.

Ruby implied that, for a working mother, having a partner who supports your choices and allows you feel positive about what you do and how you are doing it is vital to your ability to cope on an emotional level. For a working mother like Cassie, whose partner is usually abroad for his work, the significance of practical support has become diminished as she has become more used to doing things on her own. Thus, for Cassie, this kind of emotional support that her partner provides has made all the difference to her ability to manage her working and mothering roles more effectively. She explained that:

... it was a very significant time of my life, where my husband was extremely supportive of me doing my PhD and having babies and all the rest of it. He's extremely supportive of women and their careers and loves that about me; he's incredibly supportive. He doesn't negate it in any way; in fact he raises it up out of all proportion I think – he thinks more of my work than I do, which is fantastic. It's that level of emotional support that is important.

Bev also discussed how having her partner's blessing and support towards her work has been a critical determinant of the progress she has made in her career. She said:

Without his encouragement, I wouldn't have done any of it; that's the kind of support that he is – he sees opportunities and he'll say to me 'Go for it! If you need to travel or whatever then I'll stay with the kids'. So I think to have had that kind of support has helped me also to just grow in my career; to know that I've got somebody that I can trust.

It is possible that Bev's partner has been able to see opportunities in this way because he is directly involved in the same field of academics as his wife. This 'insider's view' may have afforded him insight and a better understanding of the 'business' of the academic profession that a non-academic partner may not have; making his mentoring and career advice far more valuable.

Even for those women whose husbands tend to be less involved and practically supportive on a regular basis, this type of emotional support from their partners is something that they do receive and that they believe to be an essential enabling factor. Jessica stated that the “things that really matter” to her are trust and “caring for each other and being positive about each other”, and that having these processes at work in her relationship with her partner has made “a huge difference”, especially to the way she feels about her mothering:

... on an emotional level we've got a very harmonious relationship and so, for me, that is the biggest form of support; the fact that he makes me feel good about the way I am as a mother and so on.

Nikki reflected on how she believes that becoming parents has changed the way that she and her husband respond to one another in emotionally difficult situations and how this has been instrumental in helping them to avert major crises. She explained:

After the baby was born I think that maybe shifted [my husband's] and my emotional roles in a way, so that he is more perceptive of me now when I'm crumbling and need him to be there. And maybe that's why there haven't been a whole lot of catastrophes – there've been moments of strain, but there haven't been major catastrophes.

What Nikki implies here is that the critical aspect of the emotional support she has received from her husband is that he knows when she needs him and how to respond to her. This kind of engagement from a spouse or partner is likely to involve a significant level of intimate understanding between the couple and is indicative of the strength of their connection.

It was suggested by many of the women's responses that the level to which one's partner is actively involved in childcare can greatly influence the kind of emotional support they provide. Three of the women spoke about their husbands having developed greater respect for what they do as mothers through spending time taking care of their children on their own and realising the responsibilities and challenges that this involves. Cassie reflected on her husband's experience of this and, commenting on the resulting developments in their relationship, she said:

I just think that was a really important insight for him. He met one of my friends and he said to her, 'I have a whole new respect for Cassie and what she does'.

Similarly, Anne described what this had been like for her own husband and the significance of such a realisation on his part to their relationship:

... I would get home and my husband would be grey; he's a big, athletic guy and he would just be like 'Please, please take the baby. I beg you!' [laughs]. And that changed everything because he realised that this is a really, really tough job. Men think that they know what it's like if they've looked after the baby for an hour or two hours or even four hours, but it's when you've got the whole day – you wake up at six when the baby cries and that's you. And then it's all the way through; it's utterly relentless and very hard. And it's all through the day while you're actually trying to do other things as well! You feel alone, you feel isolated from the world, you feel bored, you feel out of your mind. So ja, he got it after that; very fundamentally.

As a senior academic with a high level of professional involvement, Anne insisted on a greater domestic presence from her husband when their children were very young, recognising that this is

the kind of support she needed to enable her career. Unlike some of the other partners discussed above, her husband's response as a more junior academic was to make significant spaces in his own career so as to devote more of his time to fathering and to support his wife's career. It is possible that the variation in these men's responses was a function of the differential seniority of their wives academic positions; as an Associate Professor, Anne may command more influence in the workplace than do Jessica and Penny (who are at Senior Lecturer and Lecturer level), even though all three report being more established in their careers than their respective partners.

d) The parenting relationship

This theme follows on from these last comments and briefly addresses the dynamics of the relationship between the academic women in the study and their partners, specifically in the context of mothering and fathering, and how becoming parents is likely to have changed the way their relationships operate. This is relevant because if becoming parents has in some way negatively affected a couple's relationship, this may have a direct bearing on the working mother's feelings towards her parenting role, and may in turn affect her satisfaction with the dual-role lifestyle. Eight of the 12 women in the study who have partners made reference to the time they get to spend together alone as a couple. For all of these women this quality time with their partners is limited as, not only is it restricted by the extensive hours they (and in many cases their partners too) dedicate to their academic work, but even more so by all the time-consuming responsibilities involved in caring for children. Stephanie noted that, for her and her husband, having children and juggling the various activities and duties that come with this commitment has meant "seeing less of each other". Each of the eight women stated that the time they have with their partners comprises only a few hours in the late evenings once their children are in bed. Even then, this period may be cut short depending on whether they have outstanding work to complete before they themselves go to bed, which was shown to be a typical function of an 'academic partnership' where both partners usually work at night. The way Tasha explained her situation illustrates how the time she and her husband have together is generally "whatever is left over", and depends largely on whether their child goes to sleep when she is supposed to and whether either of them (both academics) has work to catch up.

Tasha: On a good night [my child] is nicely asleep by half past seven, at which stage we have supper, a shower, and then most nights we sit down to work. Our time together is when we have supper; that's when we catch up on our day, and if we don't have to work then we have a bit more time together.

While Nikki remarked that the time she is able to spend with her husband is "very little time actually", Anne said that she and her husband "usually spend about an hour or two hours between

nine and half past ten together”, and implied that this was a portion of the day that they consciously dedicate to spending alone together. Tasha went on to describe a way in which having a small child can further restrict relations between a parenting couple, even after the child has been put to bed for the night:

Trying to keep [my baby] in her sleep zone, I sleep in the single bed in her room with her from about four or five in the morning, and then she'll manage to make it through until seven if we're lucky ... So [my husband and I] seldom wake up together anymore; we're usually in different rooms.

Cynthia mentioned a “new development” that she and her husband have put in place so that they may have more time to spend alone together. This change was necessary because, even on the weekends, they were not getting adequate time away from their children to devote to one another and their relationship.

Cynthia: This year only we have instituted this thing where we have a casual [babysitter] who comes in on a Saturday; so at least on a Saturday now we get a chance to do pretty much what we want to do. But before that, we would have the kids with us the whole weekend.

Besides the amount of time the parenting couples are able to spend together, some of the women discussed other ways in which their relationships with their partners had changed since becoming parents, both the changes for the better and the more difficult ones. Jessica noted the pressures that having a child can place on one's relationship, but also mentioned how she and her partner have managed this well:

Your personal relationship can take quite a lot of strain after having a baby. I mean, your sex life isn't what it used to be, your figure isn't what it used to be... And I don't get any bad vibes about any of that, even though we know things are not the hottest and the best they have ever been; but we talk about it. We have decided together to have children and... So in that sense I feel that we really are together in all of this.

In this way, Jessica and her partner have been able to avoid having certain problems in their relationship as a result of the adjustments to parenthood through keeping the lines of communication open and through allowing one another the time and space to adjust to these. Nikki, on the other hand, spoke of the positive changes she has seen in her relationship with her partner since their child became a part of that relationship. She feels that it has inspired a new way of dealing with issues in their relationship and a new common outlook between them as to what is most important.

Nikki: I think it's blurred the boundaries. Like before, if we had a fight there would be a point after the screaming and the crying where we would be like, 'That's your shit that you need to take responsibility for and deal with'. Now we don't really have the fights so much – there isn't as much time – and there'll be a lot more generosity. So if I'm really not coping and he can see it, he'll just take over a whole lot of the stuff that I do on a practical level and give me space; and I think I do that often with him too. It's like we're not as clear about standing up for our own space ... It's almost more important just to have things be okay. It's more important for him that I'm coping than getting his point across; and the same for me. So having a baby really makes your relationship grow and shift. It's not so much about yourself as a person anymore, as it is about the space ... there just isn't as much time to stew in your own juices; the day has to carry on.

The above narratives reveal how the women's professional academic careers are inescapably embedded in their home lives and intimate relationships. As such, the women's responses have provided evidence of how an understanding of the complex interplay between these home and work spheres may yield important insight into academic women's experience of role-conflict.

e) Determinants of parenting roles

This theme deals with the participants' perceptions of how both their partners' and their own individual styles of parenting are informed and effectuated in their daily lives, and the implications that this may have for the particular roles they take on as partners in their households and as parents in the lives of their children. The one way it was perceived that parenting roles are shaped is through a person's own experience of gendered parenting in their upbringing. This was considered by the women in the study to have greatly affected their partners' views on their own roles as husbands and fathers in their households. Some women, like Stephanie, Nikki and Cassie, indicated that their partners held quite "new-age, progressive views on gender-roles". Nikki said:

My husband is hugely enabling. I think he has a very good understanding of gender-roles and divisions and, as a [man], is possibly quite unique because he was over a lot of that stuff before I was ... We haven't had a clear division of labour in the home; like a stereotypical division of labour.

Cassie made a remark about her opposition to traditional gender-roles in marriage and said that she feels "fortunate" that her husband is not an "archetypal stereotype". She expanded:

I wouldn't have fallen in love with him if he had been anything else; I wouldn't have fallen in love with a stereotype. Because my parents' relationship... my mom is constantly frustrated but she does everything – she never asks [my father] to do anything but if she did, he would. I lived with that; where she does everything and huffs and puffs and blows and throws her wobblies, but he gets his dinner on a tray every day. And she's an accomplice to it all; but also, she is just doing what she was brought up to do.

Here Cassie made reference to the important way in which a man's upbringing may influence his understanding of the role expectations of being a husband and a father; and similarly, how women (as wives and mothers) are brought up to collude in upholding these expectations. Penny further developed this idea in discussing the example of her own husband and, also, voicing the concerns she has about gender role-modelling with her own children:

It can be quite hard for men I think; particularly men who were brought up in very sexist homes – and my husband is like that – where their mothers did all the nurturing and their fathers worked. It's very hard for them to imagine a different role for themselves ... You can see it with small kids; they learn by imitating us. It is worrying, like now that there's a baby, my eldest son copies me a lot and he carries teddies around and stuff and he always describes himself as a 'mommy' when he's doing that – he never describes himself as a ['daddy']. So he already has that connection and what can I do? He even says, 'When I grow up I'm going to be a mommy' and he *clearly* associates nurturing with 'mommy-ness', not with ['daddy-ness']. And that's not what I would've wanted – I don't want to bring him up like that – and so I try in story books and things to give him other models, but I can't avoid the fact that I'm the one who's doing most of the nurturing and that's the most powerful shaper of consciousness.

What can be deduced from Penny's narrative here is that the parenting roles she and her husband play are traditionally gender-stereotyped and that she believes that a child's exposure to certain

models will play an important part in their own gender-role expectations. Another woman who indicated that gender-roles in her marriage are traditionally stereotyped is Denise; however, given her particular background, Denise is an exceptional case in this sample of women. As previously indicated, Denise is a black foreign national who, as an adult, left her country of birth to move to South Africa and who thus spent her formative years in a markedly different social context and set of cultural arrangements from the one she now faces. This was also the case with her partner, whose life experience was similarly embedded in a particular culturally mediated upbringing. As such, Denise described the entrenched role expectations in her relationship as having been powerfully shaped by their context, as well as being the result of her and her partner's very traditional upbringing.

Denise: Coming from [my country], a male-dominated system where men are used to women staying at home generally – not from my generation onwards so much, but certainly up to my generation. So men are not expected to walk into the kitchen and start helping; that's not what they are brought up to do. My husband was brought up in that system where it was very hierarchical, a lady has to stay in the kitchen and a man should never step in there ... When it comes to cooking and the daily maintenance, it is assumed that I will do it. So that's a very tricky thing.

Another factor that was considered to influence the roles that the women and their partners play in the parenting of their children was their individual personalities and styles of parenting. Several women discussed how their partners' different personalities lead to them having different approaches to parenting their children. To illustrate this idea, Stephanie said:

...our personalities are quite different and I think that comes into the parenting; because he's much more laissez-faire and will say 'If the children don't want to get out of their pyjamas, they don't have to' [laughs]. So a lot of his not dressing them in the morning is because he doesn't see it as important – he really doesn't mind if they stay in their pyjamas all day, whereas I *do* mind. I tend to have a more structured... So sometimes I get cross with him because he isn't doing things but it's kind of a personality thing as opposed to him thinking that I should do it because I'm the woman.

Stephanie's experience appears to resist the idea that a mother makes all the rules in the home regarding childcare and that a father will simply do as she says, which is particularly significant given that Stephanie's husband is an academic. Academics may be regarded as generally quite opinionated individuals who are adept at arguing for their given point of view, and this may result in academic couples finding it difficult to compromise over issues of parenting and childcare. Cassie, on the other hand, viewed it as "constructive" that she and her husband "do things very differently", and she remarked that their approaches "complement each other in different ways". Similarly, Anne felt strongly that it is inevitable that partners will have different styles and methods of parenting, but that this can be a positive thing when it means that they bring different strengths to the partnership.

Anne: Obviously people are critical of one another in any kind of partnership ... I have my way and I obviously wish everybody was like that [laughs], but you have to kind of temper your criticisms. I don't look after the children the way that he does, but he brings a whole different thing – I don't charge onto the trampoline and do somersaults and so on, that's what he does.

Bev referred to the notion that, as a result of spending more time with their children, in general, mothers may become positioned as the parent who is always nagging her children to ensure that the essential daily nurturing tasks get done. The implication was that fathers, on the other hand, may play the role of the fun and entertaining parent who is less likely to enforce a strict routine in his involvement with his children.

Bev: [My husband] used to be like not involved in the stuff that makes you a 'horrible mom', like having to get bathed and dressed and brush teeth ... But I think we change characters day by day; on some days I'm 'mean mum' and on other days he's 'mean dad' and I'm 'fun mum'. So it used to be like that, where I was always the one saying, 'Please eat your food!' and then he would come in with sweets and biscuits when I'm trying to get the kids to eat supper, and you just end up wanting to pull your hair out. But I think it's also good; because he doesn't do it every day and it's good to break the routine for *me* sometimes too. Sometimes you just get so obsessed with doing the right things and doing the good things and you forget that life is for living. You can't always be good every day; sometimes you must just have chocolate cake!

Bev suggests here that her husband does often tend to fit the 'fun father' model, but that they have also become more fluid in the roles they each take on in parenting their children. She believes that it can be a positive influence for two parents with divergent approaches to modulate one another's tendencies in order to bring out the best in each approach.

f) Negotiating parenting roles

This final theme of the analysis of partner support deals with the actual ways in which this relational support process is negotiated between the parenting couples. The key focus of this theme was the way in which the women in the study went about getting the support they needed from their partners, given the women's perceptions of their partners' particular personalities, attitudes about appropriate gender-roles, and their own perceived role expectations as husbands and fathers. Several of the women interviewed described how they had gone about engaging in (or not engaging in) these negotiations with their partners. Something that was noteworthy at the outset is that, regardless of whether the women felt that their partners take on enough or less than their 'fair share' of home-based responsibilities, many of them shared the opinion that equitably shared parenting arrangements for working mothers are a rarity. Anne, for example, who perceives that her husband shares equally in household and childcare tasks, stated:

It's about looking at the university and saying, 'Women in high positions are unusual so let's find out what's going on for them'. And I suspect that what's going on for many of us who *do* manage this is that we *do* have very equal relationships; that we've somehow managed to sort of hammer that out with our husbands. So I think that really makes all the difference ... because working out *proper* sharing is actually quite a tough thing to do when society doesn't necessarily provide you with a precedent.

In the same way, Jessica, who perceives that her partner frequently does *not* pull his weight in terms of equal responsibilities for childcare, said:

Even though he is quite an enlightened guy, far from being patriarchal or anything, I have somehow fallen into much more of the 'mother' role ... I think the whole idea of sharing fifty-fifty is... there are a few people who get it right, but it's pretty rare.

The idea that may be established from these and other similar opinions is that these women view the notion of equitably shared parenting as an ideal that is immensely supportive of academic women coping with working and mothering, but it is a very difficult system to accomplish and sustain in a relationship. Many of the women discussed the ways they have gone about moving their relationships with their partners toward being more equitable. Anne recalled:

It didn't come naturally to him and we had to sort of fight for this space very hard. There were lots of early battles; and I think that a lot of women don't fight those battles because they think they'll lose their husbands actually – they think that men won't be able to cope with work and childcare and with society's pressures. We did have those fights for one reason or another and, very early on, I thought my husband just wasn't getting it so I said to him that he has to just take a cut in pay and stay home all day one day with the baby when [my child] was very small.

As such, it would appear that Anne's approach to her husband's lack of assistance was to simply demand more support from him and to lay down precisely how this was to be achieved. Her tone and her ability to make such demands indicate that she possesses a level of assertiveness and direct communication in the relationship relative to her partner. As an influential senior academic, Anne has most likely become accustomed to making decisions, designating responsibility and advocating particular ideas or paths for action, whereas her partner, whose professional status is relatively much more junior, is likely to be more used to abiding by decisions, taking on assigned responsibility and following predetermined paths for action. As such, it is possible that Anne's senior professional status and associated workplace persona has created a degree of spill-over into her personal life and affected the style with which she negotiates support in her marital relationship. A further possible explanation relates back to the assumption that Anne's husband may have been in a better position to take time away from his work as a junior academic without many of the additional administrative duties and high profile commitments that come with seniority in this profession and which Anne is likely to have had.

Stephanie's approach to such negotiations presents a stark contrast to this direct assertiveness and appears to have been more amicably discussed together. She feels that the parenting partnership she has with her husband is "becoming more egalitarian" but that it has needed occasional work. She explained:

I think we've had stages, like when I first started working and it was only part-time and he was working full-time, when we didn't have such egalitarian parenting; and at times I would get cross about it ... but

as I started working more I think it shifted. We've occasionally had conversations where we've had to relook at things and try to share things more; mostly I think we just discuss things and negotiate things quite a lot.

Despite being regarded as a senior academic staff member within the University, Stephanie has a lower academic rank compared with Anne and is unlikely to assert the same level of power and influence in her Department. This implies that she would not be subject to a work-role spill-over of dominance in the home in the same way as described above. In addition to this, Stephanie's situation differs from Anne's in that her husband holds a comparable status position in his Department to her own and so in terms of the influence of their respective work-role personas, neither Stephanie nor her partner are likely to give the other orders. In accordance with their similar work status, Stephanie implies a fairly equal distribution of power in the discussions that she and her partner have around their shared parenting arrangement, but also, that she is more often than not the one who is unhappy with the state of this arrangement. Having been the parent who initially worked part-time, Stephanie may feel that she now has to work harder to have her career taken as seriously in the partnership, even though she works full-time. It is, of course, also possible that the different styles of negotiation displayed by Anne and Stephanie may be moderated by a variation in their personalities as well; in general Stephanie's narrative creates the impression that she is more softly-spoken and less opinionated than the impression of Anne that is projected.

Compared with the above two cases, Denise's approach to negotiating support from her partner is quite unique in that it took the form of a kind of subtly manipulative approach. She described how by simply choosing not to drive a car, she was able to establish a system in her relationship that would relieve her from certain home-based duties without entering into negotiations with her husband around support.

Denise: I realised that if household responsibilities are completely mine, then there are certain things that I should just – without creating a big issue and a sense of division of labour, which is not there in my house – I should quietly and conveniently shift certain things. So I did not drive a car, and fetching [my daughter], dropping her, going to [the shop], or anything was not my responsibility. That was my way of demarcating it ... that prevented me from [having to do] so many things. So that was 'division of labour'.

Given the cultural context discussed previously that embeds Denise's relationship with her husband, it is possible that the traditionally-stereotyped subservience of women that permeates many non-Western cultures (ostensibly including the dominant culture in Denise's home country) may have influenced her style of establishing task allocation in her household without direct confrontation or communication. Through her approach to this situation, Denise was able to 'push' for the support she needed from her husband without ever actually asking for anything.

Another woman in the sample who said that she did not need to ask for anything in the way of practical support from her partner was Nikki, although the reasons for this were very different. Nikki's husband is also an academic employed at Rhodes University, whose position is largely on par with that of his wife. Nikki expressed that the arrangement she has with her husband regarding child- and home-care is very supportive of her being able to manage her workload; however, she described this arrangement as "something that just happened". What this has meant is that Nikki and her partner have fallen into certain supporting roles of one another and that attaining this enabling support from her husband has not required any solicitation on her part.

In Penny's experience, the process towards more equitable parenting between her and her husband has been ongoing. She describes how her partner has gradually made more of an effort to adjust his focus from being consumed by his work to prioritising his time with his children more, and that this has in turn improved her sense of equity in the parenting relationship.

Penny: Since [the baby] arrived, we have gone through a kind of marriage counselling process because I was doing everything and he was very stressed about work and work-focused – there was a particular set of circumstances around his work that also dictated that. So he's trying to move away from that ... there certainly have been times when he is just so stressed about work that he can't see anything outside of it, but now he's trying a lot harder to not be like that and I'm trying to be a lot more like, if he says 'can I help?' and I say "Yes, go and do this!" So I think that's better... he's now trying to set aside more dedicated time for the family. So one thing that he's started doing is always finishing [work] at five thirty, which wasn't the case before. So five thirty until seven thirty is a block of time, and Sunday is a family day.

As has been discussed previously in reference to Penny's relationship with her partner, his lack of involvement in the domestic sphere and his lack of support of her working and mothering roles has been closely linked to his increased involvement in his career. Rather than enter into negotiations of any kind to obtain more support from her husband, however, Penny excuses his prioritisation of work and focuses on whatever effort he *has* made. Her strategy seems to have been to adjust the way she responds to his offers of assistance, so that he may be more encouraged, rather than to seek out his assistance overtly through making demands on him.

The final issue that was raised by participants around negotiating support from a partner was the level of engagement with which the women's partners provide their assistance in household and childcare tasks. This discussion focused particularly on the dimension of whether or not a partner was sufficiently aware and engaged so that he did not need to be told what to do and how to assist. As a central topic of discussion in literature on mothering, it has been theorised that it not as important whether or not men are *willing* to be involved in household tasks as it is that they are seen to be able to assist voluntarily and respond autonomously to what needs to be done (e.g.

Burman, 1994). Six of the women in the sample commented on this issue and their responses were varied. The remaining analysis of this theme provides examples of women who perceive their partners to have displayed a high level of engagement and initiative; those whose husbands' level of responsiveness has tended to fluctuate; and those who perceive their husbands as being largely unaware of what assistance may be needed. On the one extreme, Tasha stated that her husband is highly "tapped-in" to the needs of both his wife and their child:

I'm so blessed with him! He does so much and he loves doing it. A lot of the time I don't have to even ask, and it's not like I have to tell him what to do, he just... we know our routines, we know our way around each other, and we just know how it works.

As indicated previously, Tasha's husband has dedicated an extensive amount of his time toward being involved in caring for their baby, despite holding a high-profile position at Rhodes University and having demanding work expectations and responsibilities. This is most likely the reason why he has such a good understanding of the childcare routines in his family and is able to assist without his wife's guidance. It does not appear that Tasha has been the driving force behind her partner's involvement and it is possible that his own progressive ideals for masculinity and fathering have led him to voluntarily seek out greater involvement.

Bev stated that, with her partner, it is not a case of him being either completely aware and engaged or being completely out of touch with the needs of his family. She indicated that there are times when her partner may not realise that she needs his help and other times when he does, but that he is always there willing and ready to support her. As she described:

... it's fifty-fifty; it's a bit of both. Sometimes I'll have to say, 'Please! Can you take the baby! Can't you see that I'm trying to do this?' and then he gets upset; not over the fact that he has to help but I think he sometimes gets annoyed with maybe the way I ask for help ... But there are other times when he can see and he will just come in and pick up the slack for me; and then I think he's so wonderful [laughs]. But most times I do have to ask.

For the most part, Bev's partner seems to be engaged and aware of his family's needs but, like anybody, also has times when he may be more distracted by other things and may not notice that his assistance is needed. Despite Bev's overall satisfaction with her husband's level of engagement, she appears to become impatient with him at times when he does not offer his help to her. It may be that she tends to have unrealistic expectations of her partner at times which result in her frustration when they are not met. It is perhaps unreasonable for Bev to expect that she will never need to ask her husband for his assistance or point out to him where and how he may be needed.

On the opposite extreme from Tasha's situation, Diane stated that despite her partner being very willing to assist her, he is not inclined to use his own initiative in the practical things that he does to help and, more often than not, he needs to be prompted by her. She said:

You do actually have to articulate it because sadly, as helpful as some men can be, they are still men and it has to actually be pointed out to them. Sometimes I'll say, 'I've got a pile of 300 scripts to mark and I just actually can't do anything today. Don't you want to just take the kids out and get a bit of food at the supermarket?' And then he's quite willing to, but you do have to set it out.

Despite Diane's frustration at having to ask her husband for assistance, she does seem to be satisfied with the support that he gives her and his general willingness to assist. However, Diane's narrative suggests that she possibly endorses the stereotype of men being domestically inadequate. It is possible that this could be indicative of Diane having somewhat particular standards for the way she likes things to be done in the home; a particularity which is arguably not uncommon for academics or for women. Should this be the case, it may very well explain why her husband, although very willing to help, has opted to wait until he is told what to do.

With regard to partners using their initiative in assisting their working wives around the house and with their children, both Anne and Penny referred to the importance of giving their partners more "autonomy" in the home and in childcare. They both saw this as being vitally important in giving their partners the sense that they have something to contribute in these domains. Penny explained that the way she has tried to do this with her husband is to refrain from telling him what to do as much as she did in the past:

When I used to go out in the evening, I used to prepare everything beforehand and then just tell him, 'You've just got to pour this much water in that bottle and you've got to heat that up in the microwave for 32 seconds...' Now I'm just saying, 'Bye!' [laughs], and if they don't get fed what I would have fed them than that's fine.

This point illustrates Penny's realisation that, perhaps ironically, what a mother may need to do in order to elicit more involvement from her partner is to let go of her tight control over the way things are done in the domestic space. Successful academic women are especially likely to display high levels of discipline and structure in the way that they work, and it is possible that this structure may overflow into their home life and restrict their flexibility. This structure is evident here in Penny's anecdote and, as suggested above in the case of Diane, it may be that men are too intimidated by such rigid expectations to feel that they are capable of helping 'properly'. Anne spoke about these strong tendencies that many mothers have to control everything in terms of a certain kind of power...

I think a lot of women can't let go of... [the] power attached to being the one that knows everything – knows how to put the nappy on, knows what juice the child prefers – and we almost pump ourselves up with that power like, 'Gosh, don't you know that the child doesn't eat wholewheat bread?' or whatever. But you can't have all that power and that sense of self-esteem that you get from it and at the same

time have a 'sharer'; so you've got to decide. I had a hard time giving up that power because I sort of like to look over his shoulder at what he's putting in the lunchboxes.

In accordance with Penny's perspective, Anne suggests here that providing one's partner with more autonomy is a critical step towards establishing more shared parenting practices in the relationship. However, it would appear that in order for any attempt at providing a partner with more autonomy to be successful, a mother needs to be committed to letting go of that power of being the primary caregiver who is in control, and not to be overly critical of the ways her partner may do things that is different from her own. From this perspective, women may be positioned as playing the pivotal role of conferring authority to their partners in the household and managing (directly or indirectly) the support that their partners are able to give them. The relevance of this is that if working academic mothers regard support and assistance from their partners as being critical to their ability to cope with role-conflict and to balance their multiple roles more effectively, they may need to take more responsibility for the extent to which they themselves enable this support.

5.1.2.3 Support from a domestic worker

The section deals with a widely discussed and critically significant source of relational support that is particularly important in the South African context. All but one woman in the study spoke about a relationship they have with somebody they employ to assist them with childcare and/or housework while they are attending to their daily work commitments. The level of involvement of their domestic helpers varied substantially but, for more than half of the women, this relational support played the most pivotal role in their ability to dedicate time to their careers without becoming unduly burdened by home-based tasks, and provided the peace of mind they need to ease their ambivalence about their choices to maintain the working-mother lifestyle. What this theme revealed is that, despite Rhodes University's family-friendly policy framework offering the option of flexi-time work arrangements to its parenting staff, most of the academic mothers in this sample have found it more beneficial to work full-time and secure the services of some form of employed childcare. What also became evident is that, regardless of their chosen mode of paid-for childcare, most of the academic mothers in this sample view private domestic care as the most preferred childcare option, despite the elaborate negotiations that this may involve. The ensuing analysis of this section addresses the reasons why many of the participants have chosen to employ domestic workers, the assistance that their domestic workers provide, the ways in which this has been supportive of them and enabling of their careers, and the significant relationships that may be formed during this process. These themes and the various contextual influences around academic mothers' childcare decisions are addressed in the remainder of this section.

In the sample of 14 women, 13 reported that they make use of employed domestic help; ten of these women are assisted in both childcare and household maintenance and three only with housework. The degree to which a domestic worker's responsibilities involve childcare also varied among these ten cases in that six of the women employ their helpers in the capacity of a 'nanny', whose primary responsibility is caring for the children; and the other four women referred to their helpers as 'domestic workers', who were mostly responsible for household maintenance activities, but then also care for the children whenever they are at home. Only one woman did not employ domestic assistance at all. Lizzy is a young, white single mother employed in a junior academic position at Rhodes University. She has one small child who attends school in the mornings and then stays in after-care at his school until his mother finishes work in the evenings. Lizzy implied that she does not receive significant support (financial or other) from the father of her child, and that she is the child's sole provider and caregiver. Despite recounting the difficulties she has faced around a lack of adequate childcare in the afternoons (and no childcare at all over weekends), Lizzy gave no indication that she would like to change her current arrangement or employ somebody to look after her child at these times. As a very junior staff member at the University and as a single mother who works full-time, with presumably no other significant source of income, it is likely that her reasons for not employing a more comprehensive childcare arrangement are finance-related.

a) Private childcare vs. day-care

There was a clear consensus among the majority of the women who took part in this study, both those who make use of domestic childminders and those who do not, that private domestic childcare is a far better and more supportive option for academic mothers than sending their children to the Rhodes University Day-Care Centre or the various private crèches that operate in Grahamstown. Four women proposed that their reason for this preference was that a domestic worker is likely to be able to work more "flexible hours" than a crèche facility, and another two women stated that they value most the "one-on-one care" that their children get from a nanny or domestic worker. The motivations for why participants tended to prefer domestic childcare were based, in some cases, on their personal experiences of the associated benefits, and in other cases on the problems many of them had experienced with alternative childcare options. These accounts are discussed below and provide insight into the nuances of the women's individual experiences.

Cassie and Penny, who are both junior academics, were among the women who highlighted the benefit of domestic workers offering more "flexible hours" than a crèche facility and suggested

that one is able to make more elastic arrangements with them on a day-by-day basis if necessary. This was seen as vitally important for a mother working in an academic job whose work hours may be irregular and long. Cassie said that she feels very “fortunate” to have a domestic worker who is available to her at any time of the day if she should need her. This benefit of privately arranged childcare is particularly relevant when one considers that academics may often be required to travel for their work, attend workshops over weekends, and go on field trips for research. Penny has two small babies (and does not receive a great deal of practical support from her partner), and she has employed a full-time nanny to assist her in caring for them during the day while she is at work. She described the flexible arrangement she has with her nanny:

Her hours shift so sometimes she will finish at five and other times at two and stuff like that. I've never asked her to work overtime but she's very flexible in her hours ... She doesn't have another job or anything like that and she's got someone who looks after her kids from quite early I think until five or so – a sister who's there – so she doesn't have to leave at a set time to go and pick them up and she can sometimes work until five thirty if I need her to.

Stephanie and Bev were the participants who proposed that private domestic childcare is a more favourable option to a day-care centre because it “offers the kind of one-on-one care for children, which is best when they are very little”. Stephanie, a senior academic who has two small children, explained that:

It certainly does give me more peace of mind when I think about how I used to drop [my daughter] at crèche and she'd cry every time; that used to be far more stressful than with [my son]. And I know that with the nanny he will have a nap; if I said that he needs to have a nap at about half past ten, he would. Because it's just him at home, whereas in a crèche there are 15 other children and if your child is not used to napping with 15 other children making a noise then they're not going to nap. So that messes things up because you pick them up at five o'clock and they fall asleep in the car... So all that sort of thing is so much easier with having a nanny; it's definitely an arrangement that I find helpful.

Bev employs a full-time nanny to take care of her little baby and she said that, for her, “it would be impossible to do anything [work-wise]” without the help of her nanny. She went on to provide further explanation for why she favours one-on-one care, based on her own experiences with day-care centres.

Bev: Most day-care centres here won't take children until they are about one year – it's different from Jo'burg where you can take them from six months. But then just after your maternity leave ends, you hand over your baby to them... I can't imagine that... they're so, so little! And then also, it's not good, even for the baby, because of the exposure to illness and all of that. And there isn't one-on-one contact, so it's better just to have someone who is dedicated to caring for your child.

What Bev did not mention, but which likely adds to the benefits of private childcare for her, is that she has two other older children who are at school for part of the day but return home in the afternoons. Having a nanny at home means that Bev has somebody present to look after all three of her children in the afternoons at presumably no extra cost to her.

Even those academic mothers, such as Jessica and Lizzy, who do use day-care facilities as opposed to private childminders, concurred that these methods for childcare were not as functional nor as supportive as employing a domestic helper. Lizzy's biggest gripe about the after-school day-care service she employs to look after her child is that their hours of operation are often completely inconsistent with the actual childcare requirements of the average full-time working parent. She explains:

Something I've found very strange is that on Fridays there's no after-care which means that on Friday afternoons I have to do a little bit of a shunt and a juggle to figure out where he can be. At his particular school, school finishes at half past 12 on a Friday and that always makes me laugh because, surely, the point of after-care is for people who are working, not for people who are just too bloody lazy to look after their kids in the afternoon. So *I* actually *need* [them] to be looking after my kid and Friday is a working day! I would think that if it was a blanket policy that everybody finished work at half past 12 on a Friday then fine, but very often I have Friday afternoon lectures.

This narrative provides one example of how the mothers who make use of various day-care options other than private domestic childcare were all able to identify the drawbacks of these arrangements. The above points (as well as the analysis that follows) indicate some of the reasons given for why the majority of the women in this sample choose to employ private domestic helpers to assist them at home, despite the great costs involved and the elaborate negotiations around finding someone suitable and trustworthy to employ in this role.

b) Childcare options without domestic help

Despite the general consensus among the women in this sample that private childcare is the preferred option, it is clearly not always a viable option for everyone, and a number of the participants currently make use of various other arrangements. This theme dealt with the reasons that these women give for not employing private domestic childcare assistance, and their descriptions and experiences of the other childcare options available to them. As indicated previously, Lizzy was the only woman who does not employ domestic assistance in any form, and then Jessica's and Denise's cases are included here because while they employ domestic workers to assist them with housework, they do not make use of domestic help for childcare. Denise gave a number of reasons for why she has chosen not to employ a childminder to assist her at home while she works, the first of which being that her Rhodes University salary has not allowed for this to be a financially viable option. However, as is evident in the following narrative, Denise has more complex reasons for not wanting to choose this childcare option that would not go away even if she did have the financial means to afford a domestic childminder.

Denise: What triggered a lot of conflict personally and emotionally for me was the fact that in [my home country], I lived a very comfortable lifestyle, and until I came here I had never lived a single day without domestic help. Then to come here and on a single salary not to have the money to have a full-time maid... And when they do come, they would either steal or not do things the way I wanted them to be

done. So I would, more often than not, not have any domestic help ... when people steal I feel very betrayed; I have had many instances of that so any time I have had help it would be just once a week, never on a daily basis ... But to take care of my daughter, not at all! The crime rate that is projected into your face the whole time when you're not from this country is something I've not been comfortable with. And culturally... it's just very different.

As a foreign national, Denise would have been largely unfamiliar with the cultural context that embeds domestic worker employment in South Africa. Her sense of alienation in South Africa, and especially in a small city like Grahamstown where it takes a long time to penetrate existing social networks and make friends, would have meant that she is likely not to have had many people whom she could talk to about her reservations regarding certain childcare options available to her. As such, it is not surprising that Denise displays a somewhat cautious view of the employment of domestic labour as a means of childcare. The reasons that Jessica gave for her choice not to employ a private childminder are different from those of Denise and are quite specific to her personal situation. She said:

We live quite a way out of town and it's like a 20 minute drive so that has made childcare during the day actually quite a tricky one, because we can't really leave him at home with a nanny. Firstly, because of the distance, it would make me uncomfortable to leave him so far if anything had to happen; but the other thing is that [the area] is really so rural that you can't find someone good there – I haven't even found anyone that can actually speak English.

Each of these women has made use of alternate methods for keeping their children supervised during their working day. As a senior academic with a small baby, Jessica has opted to send her child to one of the local crèches in Grahamstown to be cared for while she is at work. She did not enrol her baby at the Rhodes University Day-Care Centre initially because he was only four months old when she returned to work and, based on this, they would not accept him. As a result she sent him to one of the only facilities that *would* accept such a small baby, and she has continued to use this crèche even now that her child is old enough for the University facility. Jessica indicated that, despite sending her child to a crèche not being an arrangement that she would ideally have wanted, it has worked for her:

I heard about this place and I went to check it out and it was quite a shock, you know? You look after your baby in the comfort of your home and you're so particular about everything, and a crèche just seems like a very chaotic, rowdy place to be sending your tiny little baby to ... But it's actually great; it's worked out really well. I'm happy with it and my son is also very happy there.

Denise stated that the only option she has felt comfortable with is for her and her husband to take care of their child themselves. This has meant that whenever her child was not in school, she was with one of them at the University until they would take her home and be with her there. With regard to her colleagues' reactions to her having her child with her at work, Denise said:

If it was frowned upon, I didn't take the time to look at it, because there was no time. The face-to-face interaction had been a neutral one – it's not that there's been a great sense of support for it, nor has it been a case of 'No, you can't bring her'. But I know nobody else brought their children [to work], I know

that very well, but they also come from very established families, they have their nannies, and they have their siblings, and their friends, and grandmothers. I didn't have any of this and so it was very clear that I am doing what I am doing because that is the only option available.

As a black foreign national who, until beginning her career at Rhodes University (at a senior level), had never worked in South Africa and had never worked in academia, Denise struggled with the low salary she earned. This was especially constraining because she was the sole supporter of her family as her husband was studying full-time towards his PhD when they initially moved to South Africa. In addition to this, Denise's dislocation in a foreign country and the pressures of her position as a senior academic in her department have been such that she has had little time to establish a social network of friends, particularly other women (and men) who are parents of similar aged children to her daughter. Her model of ideal childcare has left her juggling childcare primarily between her husband and herself. Another woman who perceived bringing her child to work with her to be her only option at times when other support systems have not been available is Lizzy, who is a single mother. Denise's and Lizzy's situations are different in many respects but there are similarities that may be drawn. Both of these women are/were (Denise's husband has only recently been employed) supporting their families solely on a single Rhodes University salary, which they perceive to be largely insufficient for their needs; both of these women moved to Grahamstown from elsewhere to take up their positions at Rhodes University and both have struggled to establish support networks over time; and both women do not employ the services of a domestic helper to assist them with childcare. Lizzy referred to the range of alternative options for childcare that she *does* make use of depending on the needs of her situation. This seems to have been a rather *ad hoc* process without any formal childcare routine in place.

Lizzy: It was quite hard when he was small, but now that he's a little bigger sometimes he'll come to class with me and he's just got to sit in the corner and behave himself, and generally he does. Otherwise I would find a friend who's free to look after him. Obviously you don't want to do that every week because you start feeling like a bit of a heel ... so that can be quite tricky. But I must say that, generally, if I am completely without any other resource then he comes with [me].

c) Primary responsibilities of domestic worker

The women who do employ domestic help, as will be shown, have had markedly different experiences of childcare from those of Lizzy, Denise and Jessica – experiences characterised by peace of mind and having somebody whom they know and trust providing them with back-up at home. Two of the women who employ a nanny primarily as a childminder are Tasha and Bev, who have very small babies who need quite intensive care-giving. Both of these women are black and are junior academic staff members. Despite both of them having received considerable support from their workplaces and having both had opportunities to negotiate their times of work and the

option of working from home, both of them have nevertheless found it essential to have a full-time caregiver looking after their babies at home during the day. In addition to this, both of these women reported that their partners are especially present and involved in sharing the load of home-based activities. In light of these points, these women serve as key examples of what was a general trend in the conversations with the participants: that these women need 'something else' over and above the very best support that both their partners and their workplaces can offer them. Tasha described her arrangement with her nanny as follows:

Her primary responsibility is [my child] and I've always said to her 'That's your main task'. She is responsible for everything to do with [my child], so she puts her clothes in the washing machine and makes sure they get ironed, and she keeps her things neat and tidy and clean.

In the cases of both Tasha and Bev, where the nanny's primary responsibility is childcare, it is apparent that the nanny is also required to do a certain amount of housework. In Bev's circumstances specifically, the nanny's job profile appears to have changed over the time she has been working for Bev, largely re-negotiating depending on Bev's changing needs regarding household cleaning and childcare when her baby was born:

Bev: Initially she used to come like once a week before I had my little one, just to help me get a handle on things and clean up – just housekeeping stuff. But now because of the baby, she basically takes care of the baby; she stays with him from when I leave in the morning until when I come back. So she feeds him and stays with him, makes food for him, and I see them during lunch when she will take a break. Then I can breastfeed and play with him and when I'm done she takes over again ... when I didn't have the baby and she was dedicated to housework, I expected more from her and it was easier. But now I know she's always got to have one eye on the baby so I don't put pressure on her and I've taken some of the responsibilities on so that she doesn't have so much housework to do.

All of the women who employ nannies as childminders acknowledged that it is very difficult for somebody to look after a very small baby intensively, and at the same time be expected to take care of housework. For this reason, Tasha and Penny employ more than one domestic helper so that there is someone else to do much of the housework, allowing the nanny to focus on the children. There are three women who employ more than one domestic helper and each of them offered different reasons for why this kind of arrangement has been necessary for them. All three of these women are married to academics and two of the three have very small babies who need high levels of care and attention.

Penny: Now there are two; particularly because my husband has felt that the house is not very clean and tidy, and it's very hard for [the childminder] because some days... my eldest is at pre-school in the mornings, but there are days when she's going to have to look after him as well and [my children] are at that age when you really can't take your eyes off them at all. And my youngest sometimes wants to be carried around the whole day so everything you do you have to do with one hand. So there's a limit to how much she can mop and stuff like that – I don't want her strapping the child on her back the whole day or leaving him in a room to do cleaning. So now somebody will come in once a week and clean the house so that [the childminder] will just do laundry and dishes and the kids basically ... it means she will feel less pressured and the kids will be her clear focus.

Even though Anne's children are a bit older now, relative to Tasha's and Penny's (above), she has also found it useful over the years to employ more than one person to assist her at home for her own particular reasons:

We have two women who work for us and they alternate because we actually found that it just takes too much out of one person; mainly when the children were smaller we were finding that by Friday energy levels were really down and patience levels and all that; and I also wouldn't like to be home five days a week with the children [laughs]. So we just decided to alternate and the two bring different strengths – one is amazing at ironing and the other is better with the kids.

Given Rhodes University's low academic salaries, (relative to the mean standard for South African tertiary institutions), and that all three of these particular academic women are partnered with academic men also employed within the University, it is surprising that there was very little mention of the financial implications of employing additional domestic help. The only reference to financial matters that was offered was mentioned by Penny, but this was only to say that it had been her husband's initiative that they employ additional help and that she would not complain about having the extra help because they could afford it. In each of these academic partnerships one parent holds a senior position and thus presumably earns a marginally greater salary than the other. This greater earning potential will have been somewhat enabling for these couples to meet their needs for additional domestic help. However, these are nevertheless academic salaries which are considerably lower than the earnings of most other skilled professionals, and it is highly likely that these childcare and housework expenses represent a substantial proportion of these families' incomes.

In many cases, such as Diane, Nikki, and others, these women spoke about how they have enjoyed a full range of services in the assistance they get from their domestic workers. Nikki, who has a little baby, stated that the responsibilities of her domestic worker included "cleaning of the house, clothes, and everything to do with [her child]". She remarked how her domestic worker manages all her responsibilities herself and said that she could best be described, more accurately, in an all-encompassing way, as a "home administrator". It was also evident that even when some women, like Jessica and Ruby, employ domestic workers primarily for help with housework, it is likely that occasionally there will be childcare involved in the work that they do as well.

Jessica: We have a domestic who comes in on a Saturday and sometimes *ad hoc* if I have to... Say for example I really have to work on the weekend and [my partner] is busy as well, she is always keen for extra work so I will get her to come in for half the day on a Sunday and just dandle the child. But in general, I don't have a nanny as such.

The preceding analysis of the responsibilities of domestic workers employed to assist in the households of the women in this study reveals a number of key findings about the practices and

experiences of these academic mothers. It is evident that many of the women choose to employ expensive private domestic childcare despite their minimal salaries and even though Rhodes University makes a childcare facility available to its staff, most have chosen not make use of this. The above points about the range of services that these women get from their domestic workers may be one important reason for these choices as they position domestic workers as the most comprehensive 'home-care' option.

d) Practical support

This theme comprises the ways in which the women in the study have found the assistance of domestic helpers to be practically supportive, in terms of both childcare and housework. Tasha summed up her experience of domestic childcare by saying that it was generally valuable because her nanny "takes over" so that she and her partner "are able to go to work"; but many of the women participants mentioned the specific things that their domestic workers and nannies do that they find especially enabling in their daily working and mothering lives.

Rosie, who is a single mother of two school-going children, explained that she has drawn on her domestic helper's cooking skills and that it is incredibly helpful that when she gets home she is able to do homework with her children instead of needing to prepare a meal, as this is done for her. Nikki suggested that her nanny is very helpful in writing lists of things that need to be bought for the home, and "she takes the initiative" in an autonomous way. For Nikki, not needing to point things out to her domestic worker or tell her what to do is what gives her great peace of mind. Anne's peace of mind comes from knowing that her children are being capably supervised by her domestic workers; she said that what is important is that "if there is some sort of crisis you've got to have an adult around, you just can't do without that". Some of the women recalled particular times that they can remember when their domestic workers have done something for them that was especially helpful. Ruby said:

It has happened a few times... I don't ask her to dress [my child] but she'll see if I'm rushing around a bit and she'll help and she'll dress him for me. She is quite engaged when it comes to the kids and she'll take the initiative if she can see that something needs to be done ... She tries to help if she sees that I'm taking strain, and if she sees that I'm picking up five hundred things to carry to the car, she'll take something and walk down to the car with me without me even asking. She's very helpful from that perspective.

It was evident that these women felt most supported, and were most touched, by the things that their domestic workers did that were outside of the requirements of their jobs, which they did simply to be helpful and supportive, and which were unsolicited by their instructions or requests. Bev fondly described such a situation with her nanny:

She's so supportive, you know. She knows like when my husband is not there, she'll come in a little bit early because she knows that maybe I will have to give my son a lift to school. So she'll be there at around quarter past seven. Sometimes it breaks my heart because I didn't ask her to, you know. She'll just do it and I'll hear the buzzer in the morning and I think 'Oh no, don't tell me it's her' – it just breaks my heart that she's so thoughtful! It's the little things like that.

This reveals the gendered nature of the assistance provided by domestic workers to their employers. One might say that it is as a result of domestic workers invariably being women themselves (in this case they all were) and often having their own children and families that enable them to know the kinds of assistance needed by their working-mother employers. In this respect, it might not be surprising that working mothers position their domestic helpers as more helpful and more enabling than their own male partners, because they are willing and cooperative helpers, they do not (or cannot) resist or talk back in the same way that partners do, they are better able to understand the difficulties and strain associated with mothering work and much of the time they provide immensely effective assistance without being asked or even prompted to do so. This is obviously not always the case, but most of the women in this study implied that this was so.

Another noteworthy point was that almost every single woman who employs a domestic helper commented on the significance of having their housework taken care of for them in supporting their ability to cope with the demands of working and mothering. Some women even suggested that this support alone was one of the most critical enablers of their dual-role lifestyle. The various ways the women referred to this type of support included that “without it we would just go bananas; there's no way I could keep up with it all”, “without it we would just never sleep”, “I wouldn't be able to survive without it”, “it just makes everything I do so much more possible”, “it's critical; you can't actually operate unless you have that support at home”, and “it's an incredible luxury and I don't take it for granted at all”. Tasha stated that she finds assistance with housework to be especially enabling in terms of the time it allows her to dedicate to her work:

If we had to go home and still worry about whether we had ironed clothes and whether we needed to vacuum and clean the bathrooms and that sort of thing, I think I'd actually go mad because I don't know where we'd find the time ... I think the biggest thing it enables me to do is to fit as much as I can into work hours – that to me is the biggest thing – to fit two or three times as much as I used to have to fit into the same work hours; into a work day. And it allows me to do that because I'm not worrying about that sort of thing; so it's a huge weight off my shoulders.

Diane offered a similar sentiment about how having domestic help has enabled her to fit more into her day, saying that, “The most critical thing about being a working mother is that you've got to have back up at home ... because you just can't do everything”. She made her meaning explicit here by qualifying that *both* a “supportive partner and *also* domestic help” were essential supports for a working mother. Both Diane and Ruby, made a connection between how even having somebody doing housework for you can be indirectly supportive of you in childcare as a working

mother with very little time. Ruby's domestic worker is not usually involved in any childcare, and she explained the above idea by illustrating a particular example of how she has found this to be the case in her own experience. She said:

Whether a domestic worker is helping with the children or not, they're still helping. The tasks that they are taking off your back are so incredibly supportive and they are sometimes things that you don't think about when you think of your children and who helps you take care of them. You don't think, 'Well, imagine if I had to do all the housework as well'. Because every morning the lunch boxes are washed, and I'm making the lunch and putting it in the lunch boxes but I didn't have to wash them ... So I just go to the cupboard, get the lunch boxes, get clean bottles out and make the lunch and put juice in the bottles. If I had to go and wash the lunch boxes and the juice bottles it's another ten minutes in my day; and that's *just* the lunch boxes and juice bottles, never mind the supper dishes and the breakfast dishes and cleaning the house!

Every one of the women mentioned above commented on how fortunate they are to have the "luxury" of domestic assistance, but none of them made reference to the affordability of this lifestyle in relation to their low academic salaries.

e) Emotional support

Four women spoke about the emotional support that their relationship with their domestic worker provides them and how this has been enabling for them in terms of giving them peace of mind about the *quality* of care that their children are receiving while they are required to be away from home for work. This individualised, quality care and the associated peace of mind is what many of these women perceive to be the critical advantage that domestic childcare offers over the use of a day-care, which ostensibly does not (or cannot) provide such emotional support. Three of the women spoke about this emotional support as a bond of trust, one of whom was Penny:

She is someone I trust *completely* with my children and so I don't have any doubt in my mind when she's with them that they're okay, and that to me is really, *really* valuable and incredibly supportive.

One person who regarded this aspect of domestic support to have been particularly significant in her experience was Nikki, and she reflected on how the emotional support she receives from her nanny has made her feel more secure, especially when she initially had to leave her baby to return to work.

Nikki: The nanny is amazing! I mean, one hundred percent on a practical level, but on an emotional level it has been hugely helpful for me to have somebody who would not just look after my son, but would love him in my absence. I was a very possessive mother and, even though she was the domestic [worker] in our house, she didn't even hold him for the first four months – very, very possessive. And then she and I did this thing where she would play with him... So I took a while to let go [laughs]. But she is amazing; we recently had a writing retreat and it was the first time I had left the house at night ... I went away just for one night and two days; and it was close enough so I knew that if there was anything wrong I could come back quickly. By the second day I was there, I phoned [the nanny] to speak to her and I was like, 'Just make sure you're kissing him enough' – it was irrational things you know. And she just said, 'Don't worry about me loving him; I'll love him so much, it's fine'. So it was amazing.

This narrative illustrates the way that many of these working mothers have positioned the nannies they employ in very significant roles in the lives of their children, to the extent that they appear to ‘fill in’ as substitute mothers for the children in their own mothers’ “absence”. This raises questions about the demanding role expectations that this places on these women who often also have their own children to mother but whom they spend a substantial amount of time away from while they care for their employer’s children. This aspect was acknowledged by some of the participants and is addressed later in this analysis.

f) Relationships with domestic worker

Across the sample of academic mothers who employ domestic helpers, there was a great deal of ambivalence about how they do (or should) view their relationships with these women. This uncertainty is a common feature of this kind of relationship because while it is a contractual employment relationship, the associated work is carried out by the employee in the private home-space of the employer and this, along with the personal bonds that develop, tends to blur the boundary between a contractual arrangement and a friendship. In describing the relationships that they have with their domestic workers, the women in this study frequently referred to the length of time they had known their employees. Cynthia, Diane, Rosie, Anne and Cassie, commented on the number of years their domestic helpers had worked for them and suggested that many of these relationships were well-established, extending up to as long as 20 years in Diane’s case. Many of the women described the most treasured and devoted relationships and many appeared to feel very emotionally close to their domestic workers. Diane’s domestic worker had very recently passed away but she described the 20 year relationship they had shared:

She has always been such a pivotal part of my life; I am very fortunate to have had her all these years ... She worked for us for 20 years and she raised my children. I cannot even begin to tell you; it was like losing a member of our family, you know. She was such a wonderful woman and it has been a tragic loss for us ... We had a wonderful relationship, we really did; we got on extremely well ... I mean, it was a ‘madam and a maid’ relationship of course – they always are in this country and you can’t get away from it – but I’d like to think that we were also friends. I was always there for her and if she needed anything she knew where to come.

Despite the fact that Nikki’s relationship with her nanny has been far shorter than that of Diane, she described a very similar kind of relationship that they share:

I really trust her; I trust her more than I do my in-laws or my own mother or anyone. There’s a lot of mutual respect between us and she’s a second maternal instinct for me. She is our number one caregiver if we can’t be there – after [my husband and I] it’s her ... But she is obviously our domestic and, because of the power structures in this country and that, things are not equal.

The descriptions offered here by Diane and Nikki represent the way in which they, as employers, perceive these relationships with their domestic workers to be deeply meaningful and quite intimate. It is likely, though, that the same relationships may, in many cases, be viewed quite

differently from the perspective of the domestic workers, as employees. What is most relevant to this research in terms of the women's relationships with their domestic workers is the great sense of trust that permeates these narratives. It emerged that one of the most essential needs of these academic mothers was being able to trust the person or people to whom they transferred the responsibility of caring for their children. This trust is what has enabled these women to cope better with leaving their children and their homes in order for them to continue to work and achieve academic career milestones.

Despite the way in which many of the participants gave glowing and overwhelmingly positive accounts of their relationships with their domestic workers, they also all acknowledged, as is evident in the above narratives, that these are fundamentally contractual labour relationships. Furthermore, some of the women also referred to the particular difficulties of this kind of asymmetrical relationship in the context of South Africa around poverty and racial issues, which tend to complicate the deeply personal nature of the relationship. Stephanie describes how such difficulties have been very apparent to her in both her decision to employ a domestic worker and in her relations with the woman who now works for her:

I put off entering into this relationship because I knew that in South Africa it is always so complex with the racial dynamics and the poverty dynamics. And it's like entering into a professional relationship because you're an employer and an employee, but in such a private space of your home ... It's not always easy but at the same time I look at what her job has enabled her to do – and we help out with her children's school fees and that – so it does make you feel like it's at least a mutually beneficial relationship; but it's complex.

Stephanie's comment here reveals that being a middle-class white woman and employing a working-class black woman appears to make her, personally, very uncomfortable due to the complex issues it raises. Anne's way of dealing with these loaded complications appeared to involve trying not to allow the relationship to become too personal and having a clear idea of where the boundaries of that relationship are; but this too is not easy to do as she explains:

I don't like to get into this whole 'one of the family' type of thing, you know? They're not in our family; they're people who work for us. But at the same time with children it's really hard because they do – especially with the person who's been with us a very long time – hug her and share their joys and their triumphs and their things with her. So I find it quite a difficult relationship to negotiate because I like to try to insist that this is an employee-employer relationship.

Unlike Anne, Stephanie explains that she has had difficulty in viewing her relationship with her nanny as a professional relationship and in some ways she would like it to be more than that:

It's not easy because she doesn't... If I ask her a question she will answer, but she'll never offer information and I've had to come to accept that and remember that at the end of the day it is a professional relationship. The difficulty of course is that it *is* professional on one level, but on the other hand, I feel that it kind of falls outside of a normal collegial relationship because we care about her more on a personal level ... So I often used to hope that it could be more equal and that she could talk to me more, but I've kind of accepted things.

Due to Stephanie being a white woman, it is possible that her domestic worker may not be able to (or want to) relate to her in a more personal way other than as an employee. As the experiences of domestic workers were not investigated directly, this cannot be known with certainty, but it may be said that the expectations that white middle-class employers have of a friendship with their poor black domestic workers may be unrealistic in the social context of South Africa. Bev, on the other hand, is a black woman who indicated that her experience was the opposite of Stephanie's and spoke about having a strong personal connection with her nanny and open channels of communication.

Bev: I've let her into my life and she has also let me into hers, so we have a strong mutual bond where we have to trust each other ... When I can see that there's something wrong with her, we talk; like if I can see something amiss in her eyes or the way she is talking then I'll ask her 'Are you okay? What's going on?' And then she'll tell me and sometimes I actually find that it's something big ... So I know that she knows she doesn't have to pretend to me that she's fine.

While this, of course, may still not be regarded as anything more than Bev's perception of this relationship, it is plausible that a black domestic worker may find it easier to relate to a black employer even where a significant class difference is present in the relationship.

Another relationship that various women discussed was the relationship between their children and their domestic childminders. This relationship appeared to be a very important determinant of how the women felt about the quality of the childcare they were providing for their children. All of the women who commented on this theme described immensely positive and affectionate relationships between their children and their caregivers. Diane reflected on the relationship that her late domestic worker shared with her children saying, "She loved my children and she used to really look after them like they were her own". Tasha similarly stated that her nanny has treated her baby "like her own child" and Nikki said that her nanny was her baby's "second mother". Tasha fondly described the nanny's relationship with her child:

My child took to her straight away and from the outset they were best friends. I remember trying to put her to sleep the second day we had the nanny and I just thought, 'Well, the nanny's not going to be able to put her to sleep' because she's very difficult to put to sleep and she was crying. The nanny came into the room and she said 'Give her to me', and she took her and [the baby] went quiet and she went to sleep. It was just perfect ... And she just has a way with her; she has a wonderful way of distracting her when she's being difficult and just distracting her out of it, which I can't do [laughs]. So she can do things with her that I just can't do.

The only difficulty in this supporting relationship that was mentioned by the women in the study had to do with what were described as "cultural differences" in the way that the academic mothers and their domestic childminders view children and what is important in caring for children. These difficulties were mentioned only by white middle-class senior academic mothers, and in both cases

these concerns arose out of the mothers' anxieties about the level of stimulation their school-going children were receiving in the care of their childminders. Stephanie explained:

Sometimes I have this fear that she puts my son in front of the TV all morning when I'm not there. Then occasionally I would say to her things like, 'Do you do puzzles and stuff with him?' And then I would notice that I would get home and they would be sitting around the table with puzzles, but clearly puzzles that had just been started [laughs].

Anne had a similar issue with mental stimulation and she explained it in terms of "cultural differences":

For [the childminder], if her son comes to my house and watches TV all day then that's great; he had a great time, he's happy, he's relaxed. But for me it would be a nightmare; I'd be beside myself wondering, 'What happened? Why was this day a disaster? Why weren't the children doing stimulating art activities?' [laughs]. So there's a class and cultural difference in our expectation of what's good and what's bad in a day and we had some early disagreements about that.

As Anne pointed out here, there is a class difference between these white, highly educated, professional women with western values about childcare and child development, and the working-class, perhaps very poor and most likely only semi-educated, black women whom they employ. These disparities become problematic around childcare because academic mothers are likely to have theoretically based and expert-informed expectations for the quality of care that they arrange for their children. These ideas may be foreign to a woman from a disadvantaged background whose more immediate concerns about the poverty and security of her own family mean that she may lack understanding or appreciation for the middle-class mother's preoccupation with the "mental stimulation" of children. These concerns appear to have been the only perceived drawbacks to have emerged around the use of private domestic childcare as opposed to sending children to a day-care centre, where childcare would be likely to involve a balanced curriculum of more structured and stimulating activities. All of the women who mentioned that they had experienced difficulties of any kind with their domestic workers advocated that the best form of conflict resolution in this relationship was to talk issues over with their employees and set out their expectations clearly.

g) Finding "the right person"

Many of the women who employ domestic workers or nannies discussed the particular importance of finding "the right person" to work for them. It was evident that finding a good fit for your needs and your family in a domestic worker, and being able to identify her when you have found her, is known to be an extremely challenging process among these working mothers. There were four women who discussed this process either in terms of their own experience or from witnessing friends who have undertaken it. Diane, whose children are quite a bit older relative to the other participants in this study, remarked that she has seen with many of her colleagues who have little children "the difficulties that they have getting good domestics and nannies". However, despite the

difficulty of this process compared to sending their children to the Rhodes University Day-Care Centre for example, these women nevertheless regarded having a domestic worker as a more preferable option. Tasha described what this ordeal of trying to find a nanny for her little baby had been like, and also alluded to the invaluable benefits of waiting for exactly the “right” person:

It was only after a long process of trying to find a nanny; I worked my way through several nannies and there was nothing wrong with them, but it just wasn't what I was looking for. And [my child] has also been quite fussy about people from quite early – fussy in the way that I can see she responds to people. And so ja, I worked my way through trying a couple of nannies before I found ‘the one’. The first day she started, I just knew, and my husband just knew, and my mom was staying with us and she just said, ‘This is the person’ ... I was so glad that I didn't settle for just anybody and I waited for the perfect person. A lot of moms who had babies at the same time as me found a nanny who was okay and they didn't have a rapport at first, but they stuck with it and they said, ‘Well, I've got this person so I'm going to settle with this person’. And that just wasn't something I wanted to do; and I'm so glad because my nanny has just been amazing.

Both Bev and Cynthia, who each have three children and employ nannies to care for their babies, commented on the importance of actually going through the process and ensuring that you have the kind of person that you are looking for and that you would want to care for your children. Bev said:

It's tricky because you have to know the person and you have to trust them because you don't really know who you're leaving your child alone with during the day.

Cynthia elaborated on this idea from her own experience of recently taking on a new nanny:

At first it was a case of ‘Let's get somebody who's going to help us to look after the baby’, not knowing exactly what the person is really like. Because that's the terrible thing, you know; people just advertise for a nanny and then this stranger arrives at the door and you've got to like hand your baby over to somebody who you don't know at all; nobody knows them, they're not even a friend!

Closely related to the idea of finding “the right person”, the women in the study proposed some of the key attributes that they felt are most important to look for in a domestic helper. Not surprisingly, the two qualities that stood out most significantly were that a domestic helper should, above all, be “trustworthy” and “reliable”. Diane commented on the extent to which she saw these attributes in her own domestic worker and described the qualities that had made her “the right person” for her family:

She was just one of those incredible people that was never missing; she was always at work and if for some reason she couldn't be there, which only happened a handful of times in the years that she worked for us, she would always send somebody to come and tell us what was happening. She was very reliable and so trustworthy, you know? And she was as honest as the day is long.

According to Cynthia, the most important quality that she expects from a domestic helper, and something that she has never doubted with her own nanny, is that “she loves the children”. It is not clear how a mother might make such an assessment of her domestic worker's feelings, but what this reveals is that Cynthia regards her children having a good relationship with their nanny as being the aspect of this childcare arrangement that gives her the most reassurance in leaving

them to go to work. Similarly, Nikki said that the most important part of the relationship she has with her nanny is that she knows that “nothing will stop her putting [the] child’s welfare right at the top of her priorities”. Tasha summed up all the traits that she most appreciates about her nanny and that make her the “perfect” nanny:

...she is young; I never really wanted a young nanny, I had always thought of an older lady ... but she was so young and ‘vibey’ and upbeat and that was the kind of person I wanted around my child. She obviously needed a bit of training at first as to how I like to do things, but she’s a hard worker, she does things quickly, and her English is good. I sent her on some courses – a nannies first aid course and a developmental stimulation course – and she really took from those and she’s handled situations when she’s needed them really well. And so ja, I trust her implicitly with [my child]; I trust that she is never going to have a dirty nappy or be hungry or be upset or be hit or scolded. She has the same kind of values that I have; she treats my child very gently but she can discipline her, without seeming like she’s doing it.

This idea about one’s domestic worker sharing their same values about hitting and disciplining children was a quality that Anne also saw as very important. Finally, Cassie mentioned that it was important for her to see how her domestic worker deals with her own children and that this held a great deal of weight in establishing the kind of person and caregiver that her domestic worker is.

There were a number of women who acknowledged that their domestic workers are also mothers to their own children. This aspect was discussed with reference to the particular difficulties that the women had with the dynamics that this brings to the relationship, but also to the particular qualities that this gives them as a domestic helpers and childminders. Cassie explained how the fact that her domestic worker has a family of her own to care for has created some emotional conflict for her:

The situation I’m in at the moment is that she’s actually leaving her little boy mid-week to be with me; not because I’ve asked her to, but because she didn’t have the work ... So you see it’s very interesting; this relational process and how it impacts on the other people’s lives as well, as mothers and workers. I feel very torn about this because she’s away from her child during the week at the moment – and I know it’s just a transitional phase – but she’s spending that time with *my* child and that’s a bit of an issue for me.

Despite the level of conflict that this relationship dynamic has the potential to cause for the working mothers, many of them acknowledged the invaluable benefits of having a nanny who has had the experience of raising and caring for her own children. Bev stated that it is unfortunate that her nanny doesn’t have any children of her own and Nikki said about her nanny:

I respect her opinion as somebody who has had three children of her own and I find that that’s been very helpful; to have that knowledgeable advice. She was looking after a friend of mine’s baby and she actually picked up that the child had meningitis at three months before the mother did. And she’s a reserved person, but she landed up totally crapping on the mother when she didn’t take him to the doctor after she had told her; and I really respect that sort of thing.

The women in the study proposed unexpected ideas for what they consider to be an important part of 'knowing' their domestic workers and nannies. Bev described the process of how she came to know her nanny and find out what kind of person she is:

She would come once very week to do the housework and that's how I knew her. I built up a relationship with her and I would drop her off at home so I know her family, and you just get to know a person, you know ... We would chat a lot; it helps to chat with your childminder because then you get to know all sorts of things about who they are, where they come from, things that are happening around them, things that are happening in the township. It really, *really* helps, because then you know who you are dealing with and the kinds of things this person is exposed to – especially when they tell you about their life, you know. So she would tell me about her mother and her sister and about how they grew up. So I got a good idea of the person – I mean, you never completely know a person, but at least I would know if such and such happens where I would go to knock on her door.

In this narrative, Bev is describing all the things that she came to know about her nanny that she feels have been significant in providing insight as to the kind of person she is. Bev implied that she has a great sense of familiarity with her domestic worker and that they have a fairly open relationship. The racial and cultural similarities between Bev and her domestic worker both being black women may have played a role in them being better able to identify with one another (better than perhaps if the employer were white), and despite the significant class difference this may have encouraged Bev's domestic worker to converse more openly with her. Cynthia also shared the opinion that it is important to know your domestic worker's family and how they live and where they come from, and she implied this when she stated that:

I think that she is very good; I mean, we know where she stays and we know her family and stuff like that, so I'm quite confident in her in that regard.

Despite also being a black woman, Cynthia did not exhibit the same kind of familiarity with her domestic worker as Bev did and she communicated a more distanced stance toward getting to know her employee as a person. She explained that knowing somebody who knew her domestic worker personally and could act as a character reference for her was the most critical way in which she was able to get to know more about her nanny initially.

Cynthia: ...with the person who is our nanny now, there's [another Lecturer] here who knows this woman personally. So I had that kind of connection, which I think a lot of people don't have. I at least had somebody who could vouch for her and somebody who I could speak to about her and find out what's going on in her life, just to have a better sense of who she is.

5.1.2.4 Other significant supporting relationships

Apart from the support of these key relationships discussed above, the women in this study also spoke about other sources of relational support that had played a significant role in helping them to cope with the demands of working and mothering in an academic environment. These comprised relationships with close family members, having understanding or easy-to-manage children, and friendships with other women who were also working mothers in Grahamstown.

This section deals with various issues around how isolated a person can feel from their families in other parts of South Africa as a result of living in Grahamstown, which is very cut off from many major city centres. This distance problem may also be exacerbated by the lack of time that academics have to keep up with their distant families and friends in between balancing their demanding working and mothering roles.

a) Family member support

Four of the mothers made reference to members of their families who had been particularly helpful and supportive of them. Three of them mentioned that they have either a sister or in-laws living close by who have been able to take care of their children for them on occasion when needed and that this has been very helpful on a practical level. Family members who do not live close by were also credited as having been supportive and this support had been on an emotional level. The one relationship in this theme that was found to be immensely supportive on either a practical or an emotional level (or both), was the relationship some women had with their mothers. Rosie said that even though her mother does not live close by, she often comes to stay for quite long periods of time, and during these stays she is incredibly involved and supportive in terms of helping Rosie care for her children. She said:

...particularly my mother because, although she lives in Jo'burg, she comes for months at a time and she likes to be involved in all their various concerts and making costumes and cooking food for things. So ja, she is very supportive.

It is likely that Rosie has found this support from her mother very helpful because she is a single mother and so she usually has to manage these nurturing tasks on her own. Bev and Ruby described the especially deep supportive relationships that they have with their mothers on an emotional level and how this has been a key enabling factor for them since having children.

Bev: I speak to my mother almost every day and *that* for me just makes... it helps my sanity; like it's just that I know I can tell my mother about anything and she'll understand my situation. So say for instance I can't talk to my husband, and obviously I can't talk to my boss about my personal issues, then my mother is... I know she'll be able to comfort me even though she's far away. Even though she's not here to be able to practically support me by doing things for me, she is an incredible emotional support. My mother is a pillar of strength and that's a very significant supporting relationship for me.

In Bev's case her mother is her confidant and their relationship provides her with someone whom she can talk to and can trust. Bev is a very young mother and perhaps receiving the guidance and encouragement from her mother as a young person has been helpful for her in avoiding becoming overwhelmed by the demands and responsibilities of her working and mothering roles. Ruby is another young mother who also described her mother in a very significant emotionally supportive role, but the nature of this support and their relationship are somewhat different:

My mom worked when I was a child so I've got a mom that I can bounce things off and she understands what it's like to be a working mom ... My mom is a medical doctor so she's highly qualified and she was

working in a stressful situation; she wasn't in a job where she worked from nine until 12; she was in a job that was just as stressful as my job *and* raising children. So it helps to have a mom I can talk to about... 'Mom, it's just so hard!', and I know when she says 'I know' that she knows ... She's always been there for me from an emotional support perspective; I think that's important for *all* women to have if your mom is still alive.

In Ruby's case, her mother is a professional woman who Ruby appears to look up to as a very strong role-model of a woman who has managed the role-conflict of being a working professional and raising young children. As a young mother, Ruby seems to look to her mother for support but also for understanding and recognition about how difficult the working-mothering lifestyle is, and perhaps at times for validation when she is feeling particularly conflicted about dividing herself between her career and her family and feeling unsure of her decisions in this regard. What is common to both of these cases is that it is important to the women to have someone who they feel like they can really talk to and who would understand them.

b) Support from children

Five women in this study, with children of varying ages and developmental stages, made reference to ways in which their children had somehow, often unwittingly, been able to support them in the difficult work of managing motherhood and a career. For the three women whose children are still very young, this support seemed to have come about by virtue of their children being especially "easy to manage" and this appears at times to have made their lives notably less complicated than they would otherwise have been. One example of this kind of facilitation was in the case of Jessica and her little boy:

I'm lucky that I've got a happy and healthy child and he enjoys crèche – I don't know what mothers do in that situation if their child isn't happy at crèche, which some kids really aren't ... My son is a very sociable little guy and that makes it easy ... When I say easy, I mean... I think every child is hard work; when you're with them it's like non-stop action – but what makes it easy for me is that he's a happy child. When I arrive at crèche he's playing and when I leave him there he doesn't cry, he's happy to see the person who cares for him and the other kids. That makes a huge, huge difference when I think about 'Am I doing the right thing, am I doing the wrong thing?' I look at my child and he's a happy child, he's active, he's well-developed – like all kids he has got little 'lurgies', but he's fundamentally a healthy child. And I think, 'Well, I can't be doing something fundamentally wrong if my child is thriving like this'. Phew, that makes *all* the difference; if it wasn't like that then I don't know if I could keep this up.

The other two women who spoke about this theme had children who were quite a bit older. The support they received from their children came more in the forms of "cooperation" and "understanding" at times when they were perhaps struggling to cope with all their various demands and may have been unable to provide for their children in the way they would have liked to. Denise recalled a story of a time when her child showed enormous support for her and that has been a significant and treasured memory for her. This was a time of extreme hardship when Denise was trying to finish her PhD, which had become caught up in a quandary of political controversy, at the same time as keeping up with her teaching, research and supervision – much of which she

was doing for the first time in her life. She was also struggling with chronic sleep deprivation as a result of over-work, the alienation of having moved to a new country where she knew nobody, and her sense of extreme dislocation from the community of family ties.

...the extent to which I got cooperation, not just from my husband ... but also from my daughter who was hardly eight years old at that time. Sometimes the food that I had cooked would be crap because I was in no state of mind to focus on what I was doing. She would just eat a spoonful and then she would say, 'Please ma, can you feed me?' I would feed her and then after she was done, when I would sit down to eat, I would find it difficult to finish the meal because it was just not good. To believe that an eight year old child can understand what her mother is going through and to support that by not making a big issue of saying how bad the meal is; that is phenomenal for me. When I think of how some of my [relatives] treat their children – if a meal is not good, the child just refuses to eat so the mother will get up and go make something else for the child. Ja, my daughter has been such a blessing in my life.

c) Working mothers “shared experience”

More than half of the women in the study credited certain friends in their close networks within Grahamstown as having been immensely supportive of them in their efforts to cope with the challenges of being a working mother. What was evident from these women's accounts is that the friends who were said to provide the most meaningful and valuable supports were those women who also “share” in the experience of what it means to be a working mother in a demanding full-time career with young children. While both Denise and Rosie found their friends to be most supportive on a practical level, in that they would often agree to watch over their children or entertain them for a period to allow the women to devote some necessary hours to work or to resolve a time clash, the majority of the women remarked on the emotional support and understanding that their friends have been able to provide. Lizzy noted the particular difference that having friends who are parents has made for her as a single mother with no other significant support in childcare:

Something that was strange was, [where I worked before], I didn't have friends with children and since I've moved here, I've discovered that, actually, most of my friends have kids, and suddenly I have a lot more of a support structure because people understand you; they understand that you can still go out and do certain things but, you know... [Before], it got to the point where sometimes that felt a bit challenging; like I can't go to a party with my friends because they're going to go to the kind of party which [little] children can't be at.

Ruby also stated that she has a lot of “friends who've got small children” and, for her too, the level of understanding that other working mothers can provide has been significantly supportive. She stated that other working moms “know exactly what you're going through and can relate, and that definitely makes it easier”. It is evident here that, as young mothers and junior academics, both Lizzy and Ruby have realised the supporting benefits of having friends who can identify with and who “share” their experiences of balancing work with mothering very young children. As Lizzy suggested, these friends are able to understand, more so than her friends who do not have

children, that this is not always an easy task and she has seemingly felt that her mothering responsibilities have been more accepted in these social circles.

Tasha explained how having had a network of supportive and understanding friends has been particularly important for her because she does not have any family nearby “to help [her] and be there for [her]”. She describes how, in becoming her ‘substitute family’, her friends have been supportive of her on both a practical and an emotional level.

Tasha: Other moms who I know do their best to help when you need it; and just offering support and advice, that's huge when you don't have your family around. They really become your mom and your sister and your aunt [laughs]. Especially when you're doing all this for the first time, very often advice is the best thing someone can give you ... So I do have a support group of other working moms, who I have known since we did antenatal classes together and we've all been in moms groups since then. They are always willing and [my child] knows them, and she knows their nannies, and she knows their kids. There are a couple of those nannies who she's quite comfortable with and that support is invaluable.

It is evident here that Tasha has found the advice of friends who are also mothers to be the most valuable for her as a new mother with a little baby, possibly because the advice from these working-mother friends comes from a knowledgeable place of “shared experience”. Finally, Jessica was able to identify and to sum up well the practical, emotional and psychological aspects of why having friends who are also working mothers can be one of the most critical forms of support for a woman. She explained:

You need a good support network. I've got several good friends who have got young kids and we just really help each other out, and we talk with each other, and you just really need that. You know, if crèche closes for a long weekend, I can leave [my child] with my friend's nanny; if you need to talk about stuff, you have people who have shared the same experience. It's been really important to me to have a handful of really good friends who work in similar careers or who are all working mothers – just to normalise your experience by sharing it with people who you know and respect and who are similar to you is a huge factor in keeping you sane ... I don't know how people do it without that because you're actually just really depriving yourself of such a major coping mechanism; but also, a chance to actually... Because life becomes a slog; and between all that child-raising and working you are kept busy the whole time. If you can do some of the childminding while having a cup of tea or a glass of wine with a fellow mother for a couple hours here and there, it just makes such a huge difference. So that's what keeps me sane and keeps me happy, is having these friends that I spend time with.

Whether it is practical assistance with childcare, or an encouraging therapeutic conversation, Jessica has found that the support of other women in her life who can identify with her experience and intuitively offer her the kind of support she needs to be a comprehensive source of support that greatly enables her in coping with her dual-role lifestyle. In particular, she points to the potential of this kind of kinship to provide relief from balancing work and family demands relentlessly and to bring happiness into her days in a way that she feels is only possible for those who “share” her experience.

PERIPHERAL << >> CENTRAL

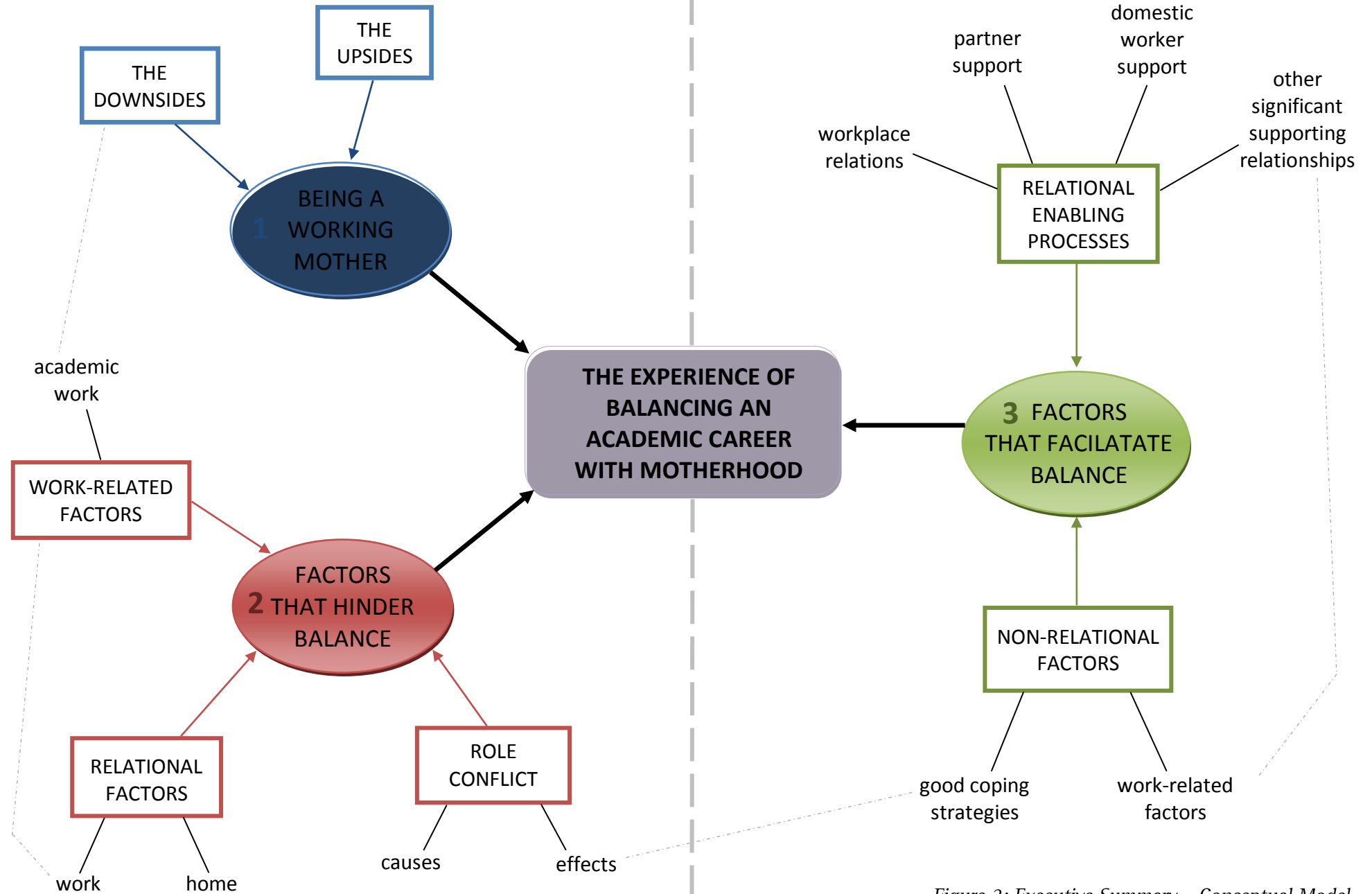


Figure 3: Executive Summary – Conceptual Model

5.2 Executive summary of the coding process

The above diagram (figure 3) depicts the conceptual model that provides a summarised account of the grounded theory analysis in this study. This model illustrates a highly abstracted delineation of the outcome of various levels of coding and categorisation; from the point at which focused coding began to integrate initial codes into provisional categories, to the eventual theorising about how academic women at Rhodes University, who are mothers, are able to balance their university and family responsibilities. The purpose of the executive summary is to provide a broad overview of the completed coding process and to effectively sum up the preceding two chapters by showing how each part of the foregoing analysis relates to other parts and to the whole.

After numerous successive attempts to develop a model that was able to attain a 'good fit' with the data, this arrangement of categories and sub-categories represents the final categorisation which successfully incorporated every part of the analysis and was able to synthesise, integrate and organise the substantial amount of collected and coded material in this study. From this graphical depiction of the analysis, which begins one analytical level above initial coding, it is possible to distinguish how the emergent themes among codes were related and grouped into categories (focused coding), and how these were then further integrated into the three discrete higher-order categories (selective coding), at increasing levels of abstraction (cf. Willig, 2008). These three conceptual categories can be clearly split into those that set up the context of the phenomenon (peripheral categories) and those that focus on the 'enabling factors' (central categories). What is also clearly observable in this diagram is the analytic progression toward the central core category of 'enabling processes'. Following the guidelines of Creswell (2007), this core category has been synthesised, through integration of its many complex and detailed sub-parts, to form the basis for an empirical theory that is 'grounded' in the original material.

Many grounded theorists and grounded theory research practitioners have written about the value of and insight obtained from making use of diagrammatic tools for organising and representing research data and processes (e.g. Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997; Charmaz, 2002; 2006; Lempert, 2007; Creswell, 2007; 2009). Both Lempert (2007) and Creswell (2009) are of the view that diagrams are central to grounded theory work; they argue that diagrams provide a helpful way of generating concepts from what might otherwise be chaos in the data, and they are the best way of establishing a holistic picture of a process when the problem under study is especially complex. Glaser (1998), however, warns against the use of diagrams as he believes them to be another way

in which researchers risk forcing the data they analyse into pre-conceived categories. I remained mindful of this caveat throughout the process of analysing and categorising this material, and I feel that every effort was made to minimise unwarranted levels of subjectivity in this process (as detailed in Chapter 3). In the main, the use of diagrams greatly served my analytic ends, affording me lucidity and precision in working with highly complex material fraught with ambiguity.

As previously suggested, the coding process in this study essentially began, in many cases, with low-level categories having already been informed by both the use of a semi-structured interview schedule (cf. Willig, 2008), as well as the guiding perspectives and understandings I held from my experience working with the pilot study and related literature (cf. Charmaz, 2006); all of which predetermined certain themes in the data. Some of these predestined low-level categories may be noted in the diagram including ‘partner support’ and ‘causes of role-conflict’ for example. In other areas, where unexpected themes emerged from the interviews, coding began at the traditional level of inductive initial codes. Examples of spontaneous, inductive codes include ‘commitment to teaching’ for example, which falls under the ‘academic work factors that hinder balance’. Given the level of abstraction of this model in providing such a broad overview, for the purposes of simplicity the initial codes are not shown here.

In this way, the diagrams discussed previously that illustrate my *first* attempt at focused coding and categorisation (see Appendix D) are able to depict far more of the complexity in the data than this final model does. These five ‘thematic clusters’ that I initially developed are an important part of the process, as they trace my earlier sense of logic in identifying groupings of codes and synthesising categories, and the progression towards increased sophistication in the way that I coded and categorised. It is important for this process to be included in the discussion because it clarifies the progression of moving from the raw list of 240 codes, to the clustering of these together in low-level categories, to the assembling and reworking of various models and shedding and refining data, and finally to the development of this model. What they also reveal is the way in which I raised the level of abstraction of my analysis as I moved through the process – a key tenet of the logic of the grounded theory method that “leads to pursuing theoretical connections” (Charmaz & Henwood, 2008, p. 254).

Having successfully advanced a model within which to make sense of the phenomenon under study, I nevertheless had concerns about possible over-simplification. At issue was the apparent ‘leap’ from the extremely inductive and detailed initial coding of 240 codes (during which I

remained very close to the data), to the final abstract model depicting the few major categories. However, the reasonable interpretation (and justification for the legitimacy) of this analytical stride that I offer shall hopefully mitigate any similar concerns or criticisms. I rationalise that any large thematic structure that is devised for complex research material is bound to be an abstraction, and *will* be a simplification because it is like a 'grid' that one forces onto chaotic, messy material. If one considers the image referred to in Chapter 3 of sets of spiralling processes (rather than discrete clusters), all interacting with one another in the material, and then presses a thematic grid on top of this, it will unavoidably be an act of brutality. It is not possible to capture the material in its absolute complexity and so the simplistic grid is necessarily used. However, the result is that it then becomes essential not to erroneously give the impression of simplicity of the data, and as such I have tried to complexify the material in the foregoing analysis and to highlight the various tensions between different positions. In addition, I have marked some of the more significant interactions between the different categories on the diagram itself so that they are not represented as being discrete. In these ways I have tried to indicate that complex understanding is needed.

It is without doubt though that the simplistic map of the coding process has its value. As the researcher engaged in coding and analysis, once I had the organising tool of the model in my mind I could then flesh it out with more complexity, without losing the sense and coherence of the bigger picture. Conversely, if I had attempted initially to go for the complexity only, I would have sacrificed the crisp clarity provided by the model. As such, use of the model is not simplification; it is a way of getting some coherence in a mass of complex data. However, from the perspective of a reader, (an audience for this process as opposed to being immersed in its creation), I have considered it best to provide the lucidity of this executive summary as a 'debriefing' rather than an upfront prescription for how to read the analysis. In this way, despite the model fitting the progression of the analysis chapters very closely, other avenues for interpretation are not entirely shut out but the model does bring the lengthy and involved analysis process to an eloquent, comprehensive conclusion.

The above graphical display presents a clear and comprehensive map of the connections and interrelations between the various categories that were identified through analysis of the interview material. These linkages show how phenomena were brought together, both during the interviews by the participants themselves, as well as through my interpretation during the analysis, to suggest possible causal relationships. Summarising these linkages aided in devising the discussion of core categories and the establishment of a theory in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION OF CATEGORIES

The previous two analysis chapters presented the various themes which emerged from the interviews with academic mothers at Rhodes University. The analysis of material in this study was conducted within a constructivist form of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), where I used the findings of the pilot study as points of departure to set up the initial hypotheses to be tested and themes to be investigated in order to build a theory that answers the research question. What this means is that, effectively, this 'discussion' of findings constitutes the concluding cycle of a broader grounded theory process, beginning with the exploratory pilot study having provided a context for the phenomenon of interest, and having established key areas for investigation, and ending with an analysis focused on the enabling processes that assist academic mothers in balancing their work and family roles. The purpose of this chapter is to draw on the findings presented in the foregoing analysis in order to satisfy the aims of this research. These aims are to first identify the most critical enabling factors that facilitate balancing work and family activities for academic mothers, and then to address the research question of how relational processes support women in striving for this balance.

The 'discussion' of findings coheres around several key interpretive tasks. Firstly, the three exhaustive categories that were generated through the focused coding and analysis of the interview material are discussed according to how they contribute to the development of a theory that answers the research question that guided this study. As explained previously, these categories were found to contribute to the theory in different ways and the use of a more selective coding strategy in the latter interpretation phase of grounded theory analysis allowed for a distinction to be made between the 'contextualising categories' and the 'core categories'. The research question to be answered focuses specifically on the relational processes that enable academic mothers to balance their dual roles and so the 'core category' of *factors that facilitate balance for academic mothers* forms the focus of this discussion. As such, I would like to reiterate here that I did not intend to pay attention to the 'contextualising categories' in a theory-building way and I have thus treated them more superficially in this chapter and discussed them in less detail than the 'core category', which is central to theory development and has been addressed more thoroughly.

Secondly, by addressing the research question using the findings in this 'core category', I postulate a rich description of how various enabling factors work to assist women in academic positions, who are also mothers, in balancing their mothering roles and their full-time career responsibilities. The developing theory relates to the activities and experiences of specifically middle-class, highly educated mothers employed as academics at Rhodes University in South Africa. Finally, in this discussion the grounded theory processes of validation and saturation are achieved by actively linking the findings of the current study to previous studies and relevant literature (Willig, 2008). This serves to establish whether the emerging theory confirms, extends or disconfirms what is already known about the factors enabling the balancing of working and mothering roles for academic women.

6.1 Contextualising categories

As previously indicated, the following two categories present findings that served to set up the context in which to understand the lived experiences of working academic mothers at Rhodes University. Although this information does not contribute directly towards building a theory of how relational processes have enabled their balancing of work and family roles, the purpose of discussing these categories is to set the scene for what comes after. For this reason, the contextualising categories are discussed first in order to provide a clearer understanding of the overall experience of being an academic mother and the difficulties faced from the perspective of a group of Rhodes University women. By briefly linking and comparing these findings to prior literature and theory, I have intended to show how the contextual material generated in this study (henceforth referred to as the 'present' study) emerged as expected to show that the Rhodes University context presents many common issues for its academic women.

6.1.1 What it means to be a working mother

The analysis of Category 1 in Chapter 4 provided a comprehensive exploration of the positive and negative aspects of being a full-time working mother. It was found that, despite the many difficulties associated with simultaneously fulfilling these two demanding roles, the consensus among the women in this study was that the benefits of this lifestyle outweigh the drawbacks and that, for the most part, they enjoy having more than one role to fill. This outcome was consistent with the findings of a host of prior studies conducted in various contexts (e.g. Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Arendell, 2000; Lupton, 2000; Swanson & Johnston, 2003; Buzzanell *et al.*, 2005). The

participants in the present study asserted that they receive various personal and family benefits as a result of performing multiple roles which have led to their decisions to maintain their demanding careers. These women's reasons for remaining active in the workplace mirror those suggested by the findings of Farel and Dobelstein (1982), Orbuch and Custer (1995), and Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) in that they included gains such as personal challenge and satisfaction, mental stimulation, social interaction and status. It is evident that the most significant benefits of being a working mother that emerged across the sample were all related to the effects of having a career on the women's psychological and emotional well-being, which was similarly reported by Tingey *et al.* (1996). This was found to be the case for all the women in the present sample – both junior and senior academics and both black and white mothers. Even in the cases of the three women who reported being primary breadwinners for their families, income was not cited as a significant motivator for maintaining a career. Although evidence provided by Hosking (2006) and Potgieter and Barnard (2010) suggests that the South African work context is unique in that women's choices to continue working may largely have to do with affirmative action and their resulting high earning capacities, it appears from the present study that this is not the case among these women.

The possible reasons for the above findings relate closely to the kind of work these women are engaged in as well as various assumptions that may be made, based on this, about the kinds of values they are likely to hold. Firstly, it is reasonable that the financial rewards of having a career were not mentioned as an important motivator by these women because academic posts in South African universities are, in general, not highly remunerated relative to the corporate sector (as evidenced in a report by Butler, 2003), and Rhodes University salaries are around the 50th percentile of these (Hodges, 2009). As intellectuals it is likely that academics' work would yield greater intrinsic value and that they would not have pursued academic careers primarily for financial gain (Daymond, 2007). Secondly, as a highly educated niche of career women who have pursued extended studies, academics are likely to fit a certain profile of the kind of women who expect more from their lives, in terms of their own personal fulfilment and social standing, than perhaps women who have not studied as far (or at all) (Pillay, 2007). Despite none of these women having referred to herself as a feminist, it is presumed that as academic women they are inclined to hold certain feminist ideals (Mama, 2003; Sotirin, 2008). As such, they are unlikely to be content with keeping a household and raising children as their sole purpose in life and will tend to exhibit more progressive views on the roles of women in society (Walker, 1998; Mills, 2008).

These values would explain the interpretation across the present sample of women that, contrary to popular notions of what constitutes a 'good mother' prescribed by developmental literature, their careers *enable* them to be 'good mothers', rather than preclude it. This finding resonates with those of an earlier study by Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) in which working mothers were found to re-frame the 'good mother' image into a 'good *working* mother' image and they perceived themselves to be better mothers because they worked. The participants in the present study offered that, in addition to allowing them to be happier and more fulfilled mothers, their careers allow them to be good role models for their children and to instil in them a more progressive view of women in society. Similar findings by Swanson and Johnston (2003) revealed that working academic mothers believe that their children benefit from having mothers who are strong role models. Promoting an empowered image of women for their children seemed to be important to the participants – especially those with daughters – and they viewed this as a key part of their parental role of shaping their children's values. The above characteristics may explain why the personal benefits of having a career cited by senior and junior academic women and by black and white mothers were found to be similar in this category – because their collective values as *academic* women appeared to be more salient than any other motivators emerging from their race, class or career status.

Although the benefits of being a working mother provide the participants with positive reinforcement for their career choices, they also acknowledged the difficult drawbacks of this lifestyle. The same ambivalence was observed in other studies including Lupton (2000) and Buzzanell *et al.* (2005). Similar to the findings of Waggoner (2008), the challenges that were cited appeared to centre on the general lack of time these women felt they have to dedicate to their families as a result of their work commitments. Given that they all expressed a strong desire to be more present in the daily lives of their children, it was evident how their decisions to work have presented a conflict of interest. The women referred to the conflict between their roles as mothers and as career women as being unrelenting, which was indicative of the fundamental incompatibility of a full-time career and mothering referred to by De la Rey (1999). This element of work-family role-conflict in the lives of these women is further explicated below in Category 2. The consensus among participants was that making difficult trade-offs between roles is one of the central difficulties of being a full-time working mother. These findings coincide with those of Orr (2007), which suggested that an inevitable cost of being an academic mother is that one is unable to focus one's efforts 100 percent on either of these competing roles (work and family) and both will suffer as a result. However, what became evident is that this perception is likely due to the fact that a large majority of these women still view themselves (mothers) as bearing the primary

responsibility for childcare, despite having careers. This point resonates with common research findings in many earlier studies of women holding such beliefs (see Hochschild, 1989; Arendell, 2000; Swanson & Johnston, 2003; Sader *et al.* 2005).

The time at which working mothers in the present study were found to have experienced the greatest conflict appeared to be upon their return to work after maternity leave. This implies, firstly, that tension is likely to result from the adjustment to managing additional role-demands, and secondly, that the conflict is greatest for working mothers who have very small babies to care for. Despite the above finding making seemingly logical sense, it contradicts reports by both Lupton (2000) and Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) that career women in their studies had enjoyed returning to work after maternity leave. Nonetheless, women in this study with older children did appear to manage the work-family balance more effectively and with greater ease. It was also evident in the present study that women in more senior positions experienced greater time pressures in meeting their role-demands as a result of having multiple onerous responsibilities, and that single mothers found it most difficult to keep up with their multiple role expectations. As such, it may be deduced that a woman in a senior academic position with very young children who is single (or poorly supported at home) will have the least positive experience of combining mothering with a full-time career, whereas a woman in a relatively junior academic position with school-going children and substantial support in childcare will manage her working and mothering roles most effectively. These findings are largely supported by the findings of Orr (2007) and propositions made by Sader *et al.* (2005); however, Arendell (2000), Pillay (2007), and Medina and Magnuson (2009) have all maintained that, in fact, married working mothers experience greater stress over work-family conflict while single mothers have frequently been found to cope better. Finally, there appears to be no qualitative difference in the references made to the benefits and drawbacks of being a working mother by black and white academic mothers in this sample, suggesting that a case can be made for the experience of working and mothering for largely middle-class, well-educated South African women being largely equivalent.

6.1.2 Factors that hinder balance for academic mothers

The analysis of Category 2 in Chapter 4 served to provide evidence that role-conflict is a phenomenon which significantly impacts on the lives of working academic mothers at Rhodes University. This result is consistent with previous research findings of Swanson and Johnston (2003), which suggested that the academic profession fits the characteristics of being a highly

demanding occupation, increasing the likelihood of a mother experiencing work-family role-conflict. The women in the present study offered different views about what they believe to be the primary antecedents of role-conflict but their stories tended to follow a set of common themes. Various reasons given for why academia may be considered a “difficult world” for women (and mothers in particular) emerged in the analysis of this category (see Bagilhole, 1993; Walker, 1998; Mama; 2003). Among these was the perception that the expectations of the kind of career trajectory that it takes to succeed in the academic profession are generally incompatible with the demands of mothering. This finding concurs with that of Swanson and Johnston (2003) whose American participants exhibited the same general impression of motherhood in academia. Both junior and senior academic women in the present sample recognised this incompatibility between their academic work and mothering, but the varying reasons they gave for this were based on diverse institutional experiences mediated by their academic rank.

A person is said to experience work-family role-conflict when the roles and obligations of being a spouse/parent and those of being an employee conflict and cause stress for the individual (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). A characteristic difficulty associated with academic work that emerged to be problematic for the women in the present study was the very long working hours that this occupation involves. It was evident from the responses of the participants that the nature of academic work has often required them to take their work home. This resulted in work spill-over which “occurs when emotions, attitudes, and behaviours generated in the workplace carry over into family life, or when work limits time spent with family” (Keene & Quadagno, 2004, p. 3). When this occurs, the work-life and family-life spheres overlap; the more overlap there is, the more guilt one feels about neglecting their family role and, thus, the greater the role-conflict. As such, this pervasiveness of academic work eroding the women’s time with their families caused them to experience role-conflict because what they *wanted* to do with/for their children as mothers was constrained by what they were able to do as *working* mothers in the face of their other pressing commitments. A corollary of this frequent overlap and spill-over of work pressures into family time is that full-time academics are unable to divide their lives into two distinct spheres. This would be consistent with the findings of Swanson and Johnston (2003) and Shackleton *et al.* (2006) who asserted that full-time academic women find it difficult to separate their worker role from their mother role.

The notion of striving for a work-family balance is an important concept in Role-Conflict Theory (RCT); the idea of this theory being that work-family balance is the division and allocation of a

person's time between two competing spheres of their life, whereby if one aspect of their life is neglected, stress and discomfort will result (Keene & Quadagno, 2004). According to RCT, balancing the pressures of a full-time career and mothering can place strain on a woman, leading to detrimental emotional and physical health effects (Martikainen, 1995; Blair-Loy, 2003). The findings of the present study upheld and confirmed many aspects of RCT in that the academic mothers' responses revealed that they had experienced times of role-conflict, and they reported feelings of anxiety, guilt and exhaustion as a result of their attempts to satisfy their multiple conflicting roles.

However, the material in this study goes further to suggest a more complex and fragmented kind of role-conflict at work in the lives of these women that RCT fails to theorise. A particularity of academic work that was reported to further complicate the work-family balance for the women in the study is that they face multiple pressures from the different aspects of an academic job, including teaching, research, writing and administrative work, among other things. As such, the simplistic theoretical notion implying that conflict occurs between 'work' (one role) and 'family' (one role) may be critiqued based on these findings. Rather, it was suggested that academic women may experience conflict between the multiple roles or commitments *within* one of their broad role-identities (working or mothering), which in themselves may often be largely incompatible. For example, many of the women academics were found to exhibit a high level of commitment to the teaching aspect of their jobs; a very necessary daily function of an academic department, but a very time-consuming activity that may imply less time being spent on research and writing. As such, an academic woman may become conflicted between her commitment to her roles as a teacher and as a researcher; two roles clearly competing for time; both within the woman's broader work role. The same may also be said for the women's family roles based on evidence in the present findings (covered later in this chapter). In this way the findings of this study serve to substantiate but also to extend the scope and comprehensiveness of RCT. In other words, the women's collective personal experiences appear to uphold the assumptions and prognoses for what RCT states the experience of role-conflict entails. However, the findings of this study also serve to challenge the limitations of RCT in that it does not account for the potential of 'intra-role' conflict for mothers with demanding careers, entailing multiple (conflicting) role-demands within one sphere.

In both international and South African studies, academic women have represented having children as being a factor that can significantly impede their ability to advance and succeed in their careers

(De la Rey, 1999; Townsley & Broadfoot, 2008). The findings in the present study seem to be consistent with these as many of the participants – particularly those with small babies – stated that the time-consuming and exhausting demands of motherhood have inhibited their academic productivity, especially with regard to research; which matched the findings of Swanson and Johnston (2003). However, based on some of the material mentioned above, the demands of mothering are possibly not the only reason that some women academics do very little research and struggle to get promoted. As has previously also been observed by Bagilhole (1993), many of the women in the present study greatly emphasised commitment towards their teaching roles, which is generally not considered the most productive way to spend one's time with regard to advancing one's career. The reasons for this align with the findings of Waggoner (2008) who asserted that a focus on ongoing research productivity, attainment of higher degrees and scholarly publications are essential elements for achieving academic excellence. In light of the fact that, at many universities (including Rhodes University), an impressive publication record carries substantial weight in promotion decisions, devoting too much time to teaching could severely impede one's progress. Teaching is a time-consuming function and it was evident that teaching-oriented participants rarely had time for any research at all. I propose that this is likely a major contributing factor to women's failure to climb the academic hierarchy, as evidenced by the fact that it was only junior academic women in this study who spoke of their commitment to teaching over research, whereas the more senior (and successful) women displayed a stronger research focus in their work role. As further evidence, many of the most senior women in the sample had a number of children, some of whom were very young, and yet this appeared not to have stalled their career progress.

With regard to the tension they experience between their working and mothering roles in general, some of the women reported that they feel conflicted about their performance in both of their roles, while other women only felt the conflict on one side. It was less common for the academic mothers in the sample to feel that they should be devoting more time to their work role, or feel guilty about the amount of time spent with their families. However, the reverse of this – women having a desire to give more of their time to their families – was common to all the women in the sample. This finding is consistent with those of both an early work by Hochschild (1989) and, later, Buzzanell *et al.* (2005) who reported that working mothers felt more anxiety over meeting their domestic and family demands and felt most torn about the time they spend away from their children while working. Similarly, Pillay (2007) found that academic mothers in her study reported feeling no guilt about the time devoted to their domestic roles. It appears that the senior academics in the present study felt more torn between the demands of what it takes to be a good

academic and the expectations of a good mother; whereas it seemed that the more junior academics – with fewer work responsibilities and less involvement in university functioning – found it easier to side with their maternal roles at times of severe conflict (at the expense of their career-role fulfilments). Every one of the academic mothers in the sample reported having experienced times of work-family role-conflict, and it may therefore be regarded as a phenomenon that is relevant to academic women at all levels, of all ages and races, regardless of when they had their children or how many they have. The only marked difference that emerged with respect to the participants' experiences of role-conflict was that the women who are better supported in the home sphere experienced less conflict. In her sample of South African academic women, De la Rey (1999) similarly found that each and every participant reported experiencing role-conflict – even those who had childcare arrangements in place. However, all the women in De la Rey's study were of senior academic status.

6.2 Core categories

This discussion of the core categories is the stage at which the actual 'grounded theory-building' takes place. With the backdrop of the various experiences and difficulties associated with balancing mothering and academic work having been set out in the above section, the factors that *enable* academic mothers to manage their work and family roles more effectively in the context of these difficulties are now discussed. As stated above, the broad category that is central to the focus of this research is: *Factors that facilitate balance for academic mothers*. Under this broad category I discuss the factors which were the most frequently occurring in the data, and which were cited by the largest number of participants as being critical in enabling them to manage a more effective work-family balance. These are the core categories that ultimately serve to build the theory for this study. A 'theory' in grounded theory research aims for confluence of central ideas, so the theory-building includes those themes spoken about most prevalently across all the interviews, and on which every (or most) participant's responses agreed (Creswell, 2007). The aim of this discussion is to advance a rich description that addresses the research question: How do relational enabling processes support women in academic positions at Rhodes University, who are also mothers, in balancing their mothering roles and their full-time career responsibilities? However, the foregoing analysis (chapters 4 and 5) revealed that although the initial, tentative hypothesis was upheld, and relational processes do constitute the most significant enabling factors in the lives of the participants, there were other non-relational factors which emerged to have comparably significant enabling effects and these must therefore be incorporated into the theory.

6.2.1 Non-relational enabling factors

A significantly large proportion of the women in this study (13 out of the total of 14 women) referred to the personal coping strategies that they employ, which have been instrumental in assisting them to cope more effectively with the strains of combining mothering with their full-time careers and overcome role-conflict. As such, the use of coping strategies would qualify as a critical enabling factor for this sample. This is not an uncommon topic for research in the field of role-conflict, and multiple prior studies suggest that coping strategies are widely used as a means of combating tension and strain (see Elman & Gilbert, 1984; Dyk, 1987; Brink & De la Rey, 2001). However, given that six main coping strategies were identified and analysed in the interview material, all of which were markedly different, the 13 women's use of these was varied and no single coping strategy emerged as being distinctly prominent. Only one coping strategy stood out as being marginally more popular than the others and this was the practice of the academic mothers prioritising their families over their work in times of conflict. This was attempted by the participants in a variety of ways including setting aside time especially to spend with their families, avoiding taking on additional responsibility at work wherever possible, and making decisions to put their careers on hold (by prioritising their teaching) while their children were young so as to dedicate as much time as possible to watching them grow. Similar trends were observed in both a South African study by Butler (2003), where academic women opted to prioritise time with their children over nurturing their careers while their children were very young; and in an American study by Medina and Magnuson (2009), who reported that a common strategy used by mothers in their sample for coping with role-conflict was to reduce their work hours or limit their careers. In as much as this coping strategy was found to be favoured among the women in the sample, and to have been helpful to many of them, it did not emerge as a sufficiently critical enabling factor and thus has not contributed to the developing theory. The non-relational factors that *have been* regarded as significantly enabling, however, include the work-related factors of *living in a small city* and *the flexibility of academia*.

6.2.1.1 Living in a small city

As the first theory-building category, the benefits afforded to working academic mothers that arise from living in a small city emerged as an unexpectedly strong enabling factor that appears to hold great significance for many Rhodes University women. A large majority of the participants (12 out of the total of 14 women) spoke about the multiple situational advantages of living in a small city

and the ways in which these have been beneficial to them as full-time working academic mothers. It was perceived by many of the participants that the combination of these benefits offers academic career women a lifestyle that is highly specific to living in Grahamstown and working at Rhodes University; a lifestyle that has been instrumental in many of the women's decisions to maintain employment after having children.

Rhodes University is one of the only instances in South Africa of a historically white university situated in a small city that is isolated from any large city centre and mostly surrounded by rural farmland, where industry has been developed largely around the functioning of the University. This makes Rhodes University fairly unique in South Africa because, compared to other rurally-located institutions (invariably historically black disadvantaged universities), Grahamstown offers excellent middle-class amenities like shops and good schools, making it more attractive to white, middle-class academics with children. Even when compared with small, university-centered towns in the United Kingdom, Grahamstown has certain striking features given that it has limited public transport infrastructure, which invariably rules out commuting for Rhodes University staff. Consequently, much of Grahamstown is a residential area and a substantial majority of the full-time University staff and students are presumed to live within a restricted radius of Grahamstown and the surrounding suburbs/farmland (at least on a semi-permanent basis). As a result of these fairly anomalous features, there is unsurprisingly an absence of literature available to which reference can be made and from which comparisons can be drawn. In this regard, the findings of the present study (in building upon those of Poulos, 2009) may offer something entirely novel to the field of research on working and mothering in an academic environment.

In conveying their perceptions of the benefits of living in a small city, many of the women in the present study acknowledged that their appreciation of the lifestyle they enjoy in Grahamstown has been an instrumental factor in their decisions to maintain their jobs at Rhodes University in preference to offers of employment elsewhere. This finding, which concurs with the prior study with a different group of Rhodes University women (Poulos, 2009), indicates that the situational benefits of Grahamstown may present a strategic advantage to Rhodes University in the retention of women academics (or families where both partners are academics) with children. The respondents noted that the small size of Grahamstown offers them proximity, which was found to be particularly enabling for women who need to be juggling their work and mothering responsibilities and moving between home and work during the day. This was relevant to this sample of women as very few of them reported being able to go to work in the morning and not

needing to attend to other child-related responsibilities during the day. It was also noted that the small size of Grahamstown allows one to get between places and accomplish tasks in short gaps of time. In this way, the women are able to save on commuting time, which allows them to dedicate more time in their day to either their work or their families, and makes it easier for them to be more committed to both their work and family roles (Poulos, 2009). This was found to be particularly relevant to academic mothers for whom time is a scarce and valuable commodity.

The drawbacks of living in Grahamstown that were mentioned relate to the remoteness of its location. As previously indicated, Grahamstown is isolated from any of the large city centres in South Africa (being approximately 150km from the nearest airports in the cities of Port Elizabeth and East London). It is likely that many of the academic staff employed within Rhodes University are not originally from Grahamstown and have relocated from elsewhere to take up employment there (S. Fischer, personal communication, November 16, 2010). This would explain why very few of the women in the sample reported having relatives or extended families who live nearby. As such, living in Grahamstown may present the disadvantage to working mothers of having limited access to family support networks, which were regarded as particularly helpful to full-time working women in the event of their regular childcare arrangements falling through. However, it cannot be assumed that this kind of isolation is a negative feature, as it was implied that this was a preference for some of the participants, and the general consensus among this sample of women was that the benefits of living in Grahamstown outweigh the costs.

Another consideration related to this issue is the potential for an academic woman's partner to be able to find suitable employment in Grahamstown, given that outside of academic posts at Rhodes University and teaching at local schools, there is very little industry in Grahamstown beyond retail, and very limited employment opportunities for well-educated people. According to S. Fischer, the HR Director at Rhodes University (personal communication, November 16, 2010), Rhodes University, as an employer, has attempted to combat this problem by incorporating a 'spouse clause' as part of their retention policy. Fischer stated that this recent development guarantees new staff relocating to Grahamstown that efforts will be made by Rhodes University to arrange employment for an academic's spouse (provided that he or she is suitably qualified) within the functions of the University. This is one way in which Rhodes University is attempting to improve its ability to attract promising academic women. Fischer noted that such policies are uncommon at other universities in South Africa but have become necessary at Rhodes University because of the employment situation in Grahamstown. Despite Fischer having considered the inflated cost of

property in Grahamstown to be a disincentive that makes it more difficult to attract and retain young academic staff to Rhodes University (also reported by Highway Africa, 2010), this issue was raised by very few of the women in the sample.

Grahamstown has rightfully earned a reputation of being an “academic city” as a result of having Rhodes University and over 100 schools (SA-Venues.com, 2010). Of these schools, the city offers some of the best private schools in South Africa, which may be one of the most attractive features that life in Grahamstown (and work at Rhodes University) can offer academic parents compared to positions at other rurally-located universities in South Africa. High quality schooling is likely to be an important consideration for middle-class academic parents, provided they can afford it (the expensive fees at these premier local schools are almost certainly only affordable to families with dual-earner income capacity). In recognition of the strategic opportunity this presents for the attractiveness of location, the Rhodes University administration has taken steps to arrange for preferential admission for the children of Rhodes University academic staff to these schools (S. Fischer, personal communication, November 16, 2010). This is another important initiative that aims to elevate Rhodes University’s ability to attract and retain parenting academic staff. Policy developments such as this reveal how a family-friendly ethos is being cultivated at Rhodes University to assist academics with families and to further affirm their commitment to the quality of life of the small campus community.

In summation, the Grahamstown lifestyle offers the fairly unique advantages of middle-classed, well-resourced, small-city-living for academic professionals in South Africa. As was also found in the pilot study, this lifestyle is particularly enabling for academic mothers in that it assists in providing them with more time to dedicate towards their work and their families, making balancing an academic job with mothering far less of a challenge when compared with working and mothering at other universities in larger cities in South Africa (Poulos, 2009). These enabling benefits have played an important role in many academic mothers’ decisions to sustain careers and to remain at Rhodes University in particular.

6.2.1.2 The flexibility of academia

A second non-relational enabling factor that emerged from the material as being a stronger motivator than initially hypothesised (despite considerable reference to its benefits in the related literature) was the workplace flexibility afforded to parents in academic careers compared with

other professions. There are numerous writings about the perquisites of the academic profession, including but not limited to Dyk (1987), Teevan *et al.* (1992), Butler (2003) and Swanson and Johnston (2003), which variously state that an academic job offers the benefits of a flexible work schedule to women who are mothers. Each and every participant in the present study regarded this aspect of their working lives as being one of the most critical (if not *the* most critical) factors that enables them to manage their working and mothering roles and responsibilities. This perception confirms what was found by Arendell (2000), who stated that mothers who have the advantage of a flexible workplace have more control over their work lives and are the ones who benefit the most from paid work. A number of the women in the study compared their work conditions in the University to a range of other professional circumstances, some based in their own personal experiences and others not, which they regarded as more challenging for a working mother. There was consensus across the sample that, despite the severe difficulties faced by women in the academic profession, careers in academia are relatively easier to balance with mothering than most other demanding full-time careers; and the certain flexibilities afforded to academics were named as one of the key advantages of academic work. Although these findings concurred with those of Butler (2003) and Sotirin (2008), they contrasted with the findings of another South African study, which suggested that inflexible institutional arrangements, such as late meetings and after-hours events, do not support academic mother's domestic responsibilities (Sader *et al.*, 2005).

The flexibilities that have been enjoyed by the participants at Rhodes University include the understanding many of them had received from their managers and colleagues when needing to work from home during a given period. Many participants also stated that they are able to choose when they work, because their office hours and work schedules are not strictly monitored, enabling them to make up for lost daytime work hours in the evenings if preferred (or necessary). These claims regarding work scheduling were corroborated by the Director of HR, S. Fischer (personal communication, November 16, 2010). In addition to this, participants in the present study valued the high level of autonomy academics have in choosing how they get their work done (so long as it is done); and the autonomy they have in arranging their working lives to fit with their family lives. Lastly, some of the women referred to the flexibility that has been extended to them on occasion when they have needed to bring their children into the academic workspace, an act which would be frowned upon or prohibited in many other occupations. Once again the benefits of this enabling factor were cited by some of the respondents as their reason for having turned down other (non-academic) employment offers, which in many cases offered other benefits including a

higher income. These women's choices reveal the importance of this kind of workplace flexibility to working mothers.

The women in the present study offered that the ultimate benefit of the flexibility of an academic job is that it allows a working mother to be more available to her children, by allowing her to prioritise them more and to be more present in their lives. This appeared to be especially important for women with very young children and they indicated that they were able, to a large extent, to choose their level of career-involvement at any given time – meaning that while their babies were small they could choose to avoid additional responsibilities and simply meet the minimum requirements of their positions for as long as they see fit. This ability to 'opt out' of certain aspects of the academic job is an important feature of its flexibility that allows mothers to have considerable control over the *planned* parts of their own career trajectory through, largely, choosing how much work they will take on and when. In the present study, this was considered to be a positive feature of an academic job, while another South African study that yielded similar findings of academics taking time off work to raise their children (Orr, 2007), represented this as an unwise choice for academic women rather than as an advantage, citing the related effects on their career progress and mobility. Nonetheless, for the women in the present sample, it was evident that the opportunity to be available to their children far outweighed any characteristic difficulties associated with academic work which they had faced (such as low salaries, long working hours, multiple high-pressure demands, and gender discrimination). It was evident, however, that only the women in dual-career partnerships, with middle-class backgrounds (and sufficient access to resources to allow them to be less productive for a period in their careers), regarded this notion of 'opting out' as a taken-for-granted option. It is probable that more disadvantaged and under-resourced academic mothers would not utilise this available workplace flexibility in the same way.

All the women who participated in the present study expressed unified opinions about the enabling features of academic work, and all of them reported having experienced this flexibility at Rhodes University. Given the diversity of the sample with regard to the inclusion of senior and junior academics, black and white women, single and partnered mothers, with very young as well as school-going children, it was evident that there was no group of women who is excluded from these advantages of an academic career. However, as suggested above, it was not clearly evident from the analysis of material whether there may be particular groups of women who are able to negotiate these kinds of flexibilities more easily than others in the institution.

In summation, one of the primary reasons that academic mothers may have chosen to maintain their careers after having children is that academia offers them the ideal situation of being employed (and the personal fulfilment and financial benefit that comes with that), while at the same time not being constrained by fixed office hours and being available to their children (Butler, 2003; Swanson & Johnston, 2003). In this way the flexibility of an academic position may allow working mothers to marry their simultaneous ambitions of motherhood and employment with the least compromise. In terms of ongoing childcare and balancing working and mothering roles, the flexibility afforded to academic mothers may greatly mitigate the potential for role-conflict because their ability to adapt their work time, to changes in childcare arrangements for example, may prevent difficult situations from reaching crisis point.

6.2.2 Relational enabling processes

As hypothesised, various supporting relationships in the lives of the academic mothers in the present study emerged to be critically important processes that enable these women in balancing their working and mothering roles. However, certain workplace relations that were hypothesised to be critical enabling processes did not emerge prominently in the analysis of the interview material for this particular sample of Rhodes University women. This finding ran contrary to those of many local and international studies in the related literature which generally positioned workplace relationships as an important facilitator for academic parents (e.g. Butler, 2003; Orr, 2007; Sotirin, 2008). In the present study, women's relationships within their departments, both with their managers and their colleagues, were investigated. Based on a review of literature, these relationships were initially flagged as being significant, as prior research indicated that the most influential supporting relationships in an academic woman's workplace are those with people in her immediate workspace (Parson *et al.*, 1992).

While several women regarded the leadership in their departments as having considerable influence on the ethos of the department and the general supportiveness of the work environment, this was not a widely communicated idea among the present sample at Rhodes University. Only six women (out of the total of 14) spoke about their relationship with their HOD. It is expected that an academic mother's HOD will have an effect on her overall working experience, and it was evident in a single case in the data that an *unsupportive* HOD has the ability to create some difficulty for a woman attempting to balance work and family roles. However, it appears that, all things considered, support offered by an HOD has little direct impact on an academic mother's ability to

cope with the demands of her working and mothering roles. This was the majority view of the women in this sample across a broad range of departments and faculties at Rhodes University. It must be noted that some of the women did state that they found their HODs to be understanding of their needs, but this was qualified by the caveat that a large majority of HODs at Rhodes University (and for this sample) are white men, and the level to which they *can actually* understand mothers (even if they themselves are parents) was questioned.

The theme of colleague support was not widely referred to by the women in the sample and was found to be even less significant. Where this kind of relationship was mentioned, this support once again did not appear to greatly impact on a working mother's ability to cope with her multiple role demands, and most women regarded it as more of an appreciated, although fairly inconsequential, friendly gesture. In light of the above, it is important to note that 'collegial support' may have been understood and considered by the participants in the practical sense of helping out with fulfilling role-demands, rather than in the sense of mentoring and as an intellectual resource. This practical focus came about as a result of the focus of my interviewing and the fact that I did not raise questions about mentoring.

6.2.2.1 Support from a partner

As was anticipated, support from a partner was the most frequently highlighted and emphasised source of support by the women in this study. Every woman who has a partner (12 out of the total of 14 women) acknowledged support from her partner, in some form or another, as being a critical determinant of her coping effectiveness as a working academic mother. This finding was consistent with that of the study by Orr (2007), which found that unsupportive spouses can make it very difficult for an academic mother to optimally perform her dual-roles. Orr's (2007) study found that if a woman's partner takes on childcare and household tasks, this can significantly reduce the burden on her to cope with all these duties by herself, providing her with more time to dedicate to her academic work. As indicated earlier in this chapter, academic women are inclined to value egalitarianism and it is reasonable to expect that they would have relationships with men who are committed to egalitarian values. Despite none of these women having described herself as a feminist, a large majority of them, very typically of highly educated and intellectually empowered women, frequently displayed feminist values.

In most cases these assumptions were upheld, as the majority of the women's partners were reported to assist practically in the home and to exhibit an egalitarian approach to their relationships as expected. Correspondingly, the majority of the women in the sample perceived these relationships to be equitable or "shared fifty-fifty" in terms of household and childcare practicalities. Some of them did appear to be equitable; however, there were also many women who perceived their arrangements to be fair even when, from a feminist perspective on egalitarian household and childcare load-sharing, they were quite clearly not. In these cases the women were taking the primary responsibility for home-based affairs and were usually motivated in this regard by a deep-seated belief that, as mothers, the household and childcare were primarily *their* responsibility (Dixon & Wetherell, 2004; Medina & Magnuson, 2009). This validates the core principles of the Distributive Justice Framework (DJF) which sets out that gender inequalities in the home remain persistent, women take considerably more responsibility for home-based tasks, and they tend to perceive these arrangements as fair (Coltrane, 2000; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004).

In the sample interviewed for this study, women academics talked about men-partners who did not assist (or contribute their 'fair share') in home and childcare tasks; and it was revealed that this was usually due to the women taking on extra domestic responsibilities to protect their husbands, who were relatively behind and not yet established in their careers. This tendency ran contrary to findings in much of the literature which indicated that in a dual-career couple, the partner with the less successful career will usually be the one who scales back their work time to be more available at home and to allow the other partner to be more career-focused (Parasuraman *et al.*, 1992; Hosking, 2006). In this Rhodes University sample, a number of husbands with less established (less successful) careers were perceived as *less* available to their wives and children and *more* career-focused.

Once again, analysis revealed that the women in this study view gender-role modelling as very important, not only with respect to the models they expose their children to, but also with respect to their partner's attitudes in the relationship and his role expectations of himself as a husband and father, indicating again the largely progressive stance among this group of women on issues of gender representation. With regard to the level of involvement in fathering that the women perceived their partners to exhibit, what appeared to be most important to many of these women was that their partner's involvement with his children should be voluntary and on his own terms. It is likely that prioritising this kind of value is characteristic of academic women because they may have considerable insight into the developmental importance of a father being involved with his

children, or they may simply expect their partners to emulate the transformative image of a 'new father' (cf. Burman, 1994). Given that a majority of these women's partners are also academics (eight men out of a total of 12), they may share the same understandings, priorities and progressive ideals. It was evident that the fathers who were perceived as being less involved with their children were also those who were less involved in housework, but this was not true in the reverse as some fathers who enjoyed a close and involved relationship with their children did not offer much practical assistance with housework. But even those men who did not provide practical assistance to their mothering partners appeared to be emotionally supportive.

This emotional support largely took the form of expressed understanding and implicit encouragement for the women both in their career and mothering roles and in the decisions they had made to combine the two. Support on an emotional level was widely regarded by the women in this sample as being the most important kind of support that they received from their partners. This concurs with findings by Mickelson *et al.* (2006) that emotional spousal support predicted better marital satisfaction and less conflict for egalitarian women and men. This finding serves to challenge the exclusionary focus of the DJF on the instrumental domestic labour contributions of partners (Thompson, 1991). What was found in this study is that some women are not as concerned with getting practical help from their husbands as the DJF would expect and that they will be more satisfied if they receive emotional support from their partners. The notion that these women may view emotional support as being more important and more supportive of them than the equitable division of household labour provides a significant challenge to stretch the scope of the DJF. The above ideas will be returned to below in terms of the practical support with household and childcare work provided by domestic workers.

It was evident from many of the women's relationships that parenting couples, where at least one of the partners is an academic, have very little time to spend alone together. This appeared to be one of the unpleasant trade-offs of being a full-time working academic mother; because when these women are dividing their limited time between their demanding work and mothering roles, there is very little time remaining to devote to her role as a wife/partner. This observed trend concurs with the findings of Carr (2002) who referred to this allocation of limited family time as a work-family 'trade-off'. This analytical point emanating from the present study adds to the critique of Role-Conflict Theory proposed earlier in this chapter; because in addition to experiencing inter-role conflict between largely incompatible work and family roles, the academic mothers experience

intra-role conflict in each of these spheres resulting from their multiple role demands within each role-identity being mutually exclusive at times too (see Martikainen, 1995).

A critical finding was the notion held by many of the women in the present sample that shared/egalitarian parenting may mean the difference between an academic mother coping or not coping, being successful or stagnating in her academic career, and being in a high or low status position. However, having suggested this, both the women with more traditional partnerships and those with more egalitarian partnerships felt that equitably shared parenting is very rare. In their pursuit of more egalitarian arrangements, many of the women engaged in various styles of negotiation with their partners. Their chosen style appeared to be dependent on their personalities, their academic status, their partner's career status, the couple's views on gender-roles, and the distribution of power in the relationship.

Four different negotiation styles emerged inductively from the material analysed in this study. These might be summarised as follows: *Assertive dominance* was usually used by the more senior of academic women who possessed some power in their partnership, which was usually indicative of it being an already fairly egalitarian arrangement. *Amicable discussion* tended to be employed by the less dominant but nevertheless assertive women whose academic status varied but whose relationships were characterised by a fairly equal distribution of power. *Subtle manipulation* was the tactic employed by women who were assertive enough to seek out satisfaction of their needs but who did not possess the power in their relationships to tackle the inequalities in their relationships directly. *Non-negotiation* occurred in some cases where women did not attempt to change the status quo in their relationships; rather they made excuses for accepting the arrangements despite holding egalitarian values.

An aspect of the supporting relationship between an academic mother and her partner that was regarded as most significant by the women who took part in the study was the level of responsiveness and engagement exhibited by their partners in their assistance and support. The women's individual experiences of this with their partners varied significantly: at one extreme there were few men who displayed high levels of awareness and engagement, where their partners rarely needed to solicit their assistance in the home. Other men were said to be very helpful, willing and usually aware about what to do, how and when, but their partners still reported that they needed to ask them for assistance. At the other extreme there were men who were willing to help but needed to be prompted and guided in what to do, how and when. Having to ask for help has been

widely found (and is supported in related literature) to be exhausting and frustrating for women. However, there was no mention of overt resistance to sharing responsibilities which indicates a largely egalitarian group of men. Despite their own exhibitions of egalitarian values, some women in the study implied collusion with the stereotype that men are domestically inadequate (cf. Burman, 1994). It may be hypothesised that in cases like these, partners are actually given little opportunity to participate autonomously in the home. In general terms, one might type-cast academic women as fairly controlling personalities who are likely to have high standards and expectations in various areas of their lives. This may present an intimidating and discouraging influence for men with regard to using their initiative in the (traditionally feminised) home-space, perhaps resulting in a male partner opting rather to wait until he is told what to do. The implication of this hypothesis is then that, in order to receive more responsive help from their partners, academic women may need to relinquish some power and control over the domestic space and give their partners space to respond on their own and in their own way. An important part of this empowerment would involve giving partners and fathers the sense that they have something to offer in this domain.

Denise's relationship, as largely a negative case in much of the foregoing analysis, presents a noteworthy reference point for the importance of social context in relational support processes. As she was the only participant who does not subscribe to western social values, her case reveals the critical influence of one's embraced cultural values. It is evident that the subscription to patriarchal cultural values of Denise and her husband influenced every element of their partnership in terms of parenting and relational support: her acceptance of patriarchal gender-role expectations, the distribution of power in her relationship (evidenced by her subservience and non-resistance) and her non-confrontational style of negotiating to have her needs met. However, a striking attribute of this family arrangement that set it apart from a historical, detached, organised patriarchal system was the way in which, although Denise's partner appeared to view housework as a culturally prescribed feminine task and would thus have no involvement in it, he was depicted (by Denise) as being completely and willingly immersed in childcare as a devoted and involved father, against all patriarchal prescriptions of the maternal responsibility for childcare.

6.2.2.2 Support from a domestic worker

The academic mothers in the present study emphasised the importance of relational support from a domestic worker as being most critical in their ability to cope with combining their working and

mothering roles. All the women who took part in the study except one employ some form of domestic assistance with either household or childcare or both of these responsibilities. The majority of these women (ten of the 13) indicated that they employ the help of domestic workers in childcare, with six of these employing nannies who are dedicated primarily to childcare. More than half of the women in the sample cited support from their domestic worker as most enabling of their careers and the most effective in resolving their ambivalence about leaving their children to attend to their paid work responsibilities. These findings concur with findings from both De la Rey (1999) and Brink and De la Rey (2001) who reported that during working hours, women rely on paid domestic and childcare help.

The analysis of this theme in the previous chapter revealed the following findings: firstly, despite the fact that Rhodes University's family-friendly policy framework offers the option of flexi-time work arrangements to its parenting faculty members, most of the academic mothers in this sample have found it more beneficial to work full-time and secure the services of some form of employed childcare. Secondly, despite the fact that Rhodes University offers the family-friendly practice of an on-campus Day-Care Centre, most of the academic mothers in this sample have elected not to make use of this facility. Finally, regardless of their chosen mode of remunerated childcare, most of the academic mothers in this sample viewed private domestic care as the most preferred childcare option, despite the elaborate negotiations that this may involve. The above trends have been observed in many studies conducted in the South African context including De la Rey (1999) and Hein and Cassirer (2010), as well as in an early American study by Green and Zenisek (1983), who reported that although day-care can help employees meet the demands of home and family, it was losing popularity as a childcare solution.

There was widespread consensus among the sample of women involved in this study that private domestic childcare is more supportive of working academic mothers than the practice of sending their children to a crèche. This was perceived to be the case especially for mothers with very young babies. The implication of these mothers choosing to leave their new babies with a domestic worker rather than in the more regulated environment of a crèche suggests several assumptions that may be made about certain values that these women hold around childcare solutions. Firstly, it would appear that these women regard it as very important that their children receive one-on-one care. Secondly, it implies that they value the flexibility offered by private domestic childcare arrangements, which may be particularly helpful to them given their unpredictable work pressures and shifting needs as academics specifically. Finally, it is evident that these women value

maintaining high levels of career commitment and are thus prepared to trust somebody enough whom, (in many cases) they may not know very well, to leave them alone and unsupervised with their babies so that they may attend to their paid work commitments.

Middle-class South African women seem to be balancing a unique kind of working and childcare arrangement. They are able to maintain a lifestyle of professional careers, perfectly clean homes, well-cared-for children and leisure time in a largely uncritical way. In the United Kingdom and the United States of America, by contrasting example, where domestic help is beyond the means of almost all families, most working- and middle-classed women work full-time, cook, clean, shop, and use public transport, and they send their children to day-care centres and after-care facilities after school (Hein & Cassirer, 2010). Some of the South African women in the present study appear to even have the means to employ more than one domestic helper and so have both their childcare and housework responsibilities taken care of while they work. Many of the women in the present study regarded their access to the assistance of domestic workers as a “luxury”, but most did not indicate how they are able to afford this luxury service on academic salaries (many of them junior academic salaries); especially since more than half of these women’s partners are also earning modest academic salaries. However, some participants did mention the availability of cheap labour for such work in Grahamstown.

On the basis of international literature on western working mothers (e.g. Farel & Dobelstein, 1982; Hein & Cassirer, 2010), the practices and experiences of the South African mothers in this sample are not what one might expect of middle-class academic working mothers. These women are choosing to employ relatively expensive private childcare and have chosen not to utilise the childcare facility offered to them by Rhodes University. A possible reason for these choices is that the employment of a domestic worker offers working mothers a range of services including housework, simultaneous supervision of other (older) children, home security, general domestic administration and companionship in some cases, making this practice the most comprehensive “home-care” option. The most likely explanation for how so many of these women (and their partners) are able to afford this kind of childcare is the existence of high unemployment and widespread poverty, and the unique state of the domestic work sector in post-apartheid South Africa in terms of how it is raced and classed (Fish, 2006; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). These factors have meant that many poor black South Africans work in domestic service for meagre salaries and do not contest the justice of their employment arrangements as they are grateful to have an income (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983; Du Preez *et al.*, 2010). As such, due to the availability of the cheap,

unskilled labour that poor black women provide, some form of domestic help is prioritised in most household budgets (Gaitskell *et al.*, 1983).

The findings of the analysis of this category on domestic support in Chapter 5 indicate that the mothers in this sample appear to need 'something else' over and above the best support that their partners and their workplaces may offer them. Above all, domestic workers were perceived by the participants to be immensely practically supportive by the participants. This was not so much a result of their domestic workers taking on a broad range of the home-based tasks, but was more related to the way in which the academic mothers received help from their domestic workers. It was widely reported across the sample that they did not need to point out what needed to be done and that their domestic workers took initiative and assisted them in an autonomous way. Parenting literature suggests that it is often *more* exhausting and frustrating for mothers to constantly prompt and direct their partners in order to solicit their assistance in household and childcare, than if they were to forego the assistance and do things for themselves (Burman, 1994).

In light of this, it could be said that working mothers may find the engaged, spontaneous and intuitive practical support of a domestic worker to be more helpful than that of her partner (Lupton, 2000). The analysis of the present study revealed that what the working mothers found to be most supportive were those things that their domestic workers were not required (or asked) to do but which they helped with anyway. Such assistance referred to by women in this study included the likes of a domestic worker helping a young child to get dressed for school or helping to carry items to the car in the morning. It may be hypothesised that because these domestic workers are also women (and many of them are mothers themselves), they are better able to recognise what kind of help and support would be needed by their employers and when; and they may also better understand the particular strains of mothering. It is possibly for these reasons that the women often positioned their domestic workers as being more helpful and supportive than their partners.

This finding marks a significant challenge to aspects of the DJF, which positions the assistance that women receive from their partners in household tasks as the most important contribution other than their own, and assumes that there are only two parties involved in the allocations of domestic labour (Thompson, 1991; Coltrane, 2000). This dichotomy implies that if a woman is doing less household work, her partner must be doing more, which is not necessarily so in the case where there is additional domestic help. Thompson (1991) does suggest, however, that women will

always assume a larger share of the total domestic labour hours, and this aspect is upheld given that domestic workers are largely women. The findings of the present study seem to suggest that many women are discouraged from seeking the assistance of their partners in the home sphere because they are often met with some resistance and many of them would rather not put strain on their relationships with their partners by continually prompting them and pushing them for help. This observation is supported by the early American findings of Hochschild (1989) in which she detailed what she called men's 'passive resistance' to assisting with domestic chores. Instead, South African women interviewed in this study are able to get the support of their domestic workers without any antagonism (perhaps partly because they operate within an unequal power relationship where they sell their labour); they rarely complain and were often said to assist intuitively and thoughtfully. For these reasons, many of the women found their domestic workers to be more engaged and supportive helpers than their partners, which may pose a key area of theorising under the DJF that is lacking in sufficient contextual specificity related to the post-apartheid middle-class household setting, in which fairly unique negotiations around domestic labour and care-work take place.

The participants extended the conversations of how their domestic workers assist them with household tasks to address the more emotional aspects of the relationships that develop between working mothers, their children, and their domestic caregivers. The only mention of emotional support by participants in this theme related to them having trust in their domestic workers and an appreciation of the peace of mind they provide. Emotional support from domestic workers for their employers was found not to be a prominent feature of their employment relationship, which was most likely due to the majority not actually having a close personal relationship with their employer. Despite perhaps sharing common roles of woman, worker and mother, these women are likely to have difficulty relating to one another and may be prevented from connecting on a more personal level largely because of the significant disparity in their life experiences resulting from social divisions in the South African context of poverty, race and class issues. As a result of these vastly asymmetrical power relationships, many academic women are ambivalent about how to view their relationships with their domestic workers. Some of the women, rather than viewing this relationship as a contractual labour relationship in which domestic workers 'work' in their homes, described having experienced emotional bonds and friendships between themselves and their domestic workers. However, it may be said that invariably these perceptions of the relationship are one-sided and, while working mothers appear to have made active attempts to get to know their

domestic workers better and to make them feel 'at home', domestic workers' views of the relationship were not solicited.

In the present study, one instance of the relationship between a black domestic worker and her black employer seems to suggest that relationships may tend to be much more reciprocal in terms of both emotions and communication when employers and domestic workers exhibit racial semblance. In this particular case, Bev perceived that she knew her domestic worker very well and that they shared thoughts and experiences with one another as friends. The notion that a black employee would be more comfortable opening up to and befriending a black employer is plausible because, despite there still being a class divide between the two women, the distance separating their lived experiences may be somewhat reduced by their shared racial identity/solidarity. This case example exhibits a marked change in domestic workers' experiences with black employers since Cock's (1980) early research on domestic workers in South Africa, which found that black domestic workers were treated especially harshly in the homes of black and Indian employers (also confirmed by the findings of Fish, 2006). However, it is also possible that this one case in the present study is an anomaly and that the connection evident between these two women is the result of some other factor such as personality.

6.2.2.3 Working mothers' shared experience

The final significant relational enabling process that emerged from the data was largely unanticipated despite its apparent critical importance to the emerging theory. This theme involves the various relationships that the academic mothers have in their lives with women (largely friends) who share their experience of being a working mother with a demanding full-time career and young children. More than half of the participants in this study (nine out of the total of 14 women) asserted the importance of the particular kind of specialised support that other working mothers are able to offer them. In general, the women in the study spoke about their friends and family members being caring and supportive of them, both practically and emotionally. However, the majority of these women agreed that the most meaningful and valuable support could *only* come from those women in their lives who are also (or have been) working mothers. Many of the participants insisted that their working-mother friends are perceived to be more supportive and less judgemental than their non-working mothering friends and that they are able to be supportive practically and emotionally in very particular ways (because they do not need to be asked or told how to do things). Some of the reasons for why these women have found other working mothers

to be supportive included: having people who can understand you means that there is less need to make excuses to those people or to explain to those friends what you can and cannot do. In addition, women who have gone through the same difficulties as you have are far better equipped to provide advice of more tried and tested ways of coping.

The women in this study offered that the particular importance of 'shared experience' is that it is able to reassure a working mother that another person understands what she is going through. It emphasises the notion that mothers tend to feel that they can never adequately explain the elusive experience of motherhood to anyone who has never experienced it. As such, it values the impact that a shared sense of cultural values that have come to be experienced as 'common sense' has on one's understanding of a phenomenon. A specific case from interviews in this study captured the sense of all the women who proposed the importance of this particular source of support. In this case, one participant describes the difference in the extent to which she feels supported by her mother, who was a professional woman working in a demanding career and mothering young children, in comparison with her mother-in-law, who was a stay-at-home mother when her children were young and who returned to work as they got older, but her job involved secretarial work and so it was not very demanding, nor was it a career. This participant made the point that she feels more supported by her mother as someone who has shared her experience, than by her mother-in-law (who can only infer this experience). She explained that she appreciates more the meaningful and practical advice that her mother is able to give her. She may value this advice more because she believes it to be more grounded in actual personal experience than in the case of her mother-in-law, and also because it validates her own experiences and makes it ring true.

A key point that may be taken from this comparative evaluation of the 'quality' of different kinds of support is the importance, once again, of gender-role modelling to the women in this sample. It may be suggested that, for this participant, the support and guidance she receives from her mother is about having a role model to follow, rather than just having support. I propose that this would be an important source of support in the family and friends sphere of life for Rhodes University women, because it has not been apparent that these women have access to many role models in the University. This is not surprising given that there are so few women in HOD posts and other positions of leadership at Rhodes University. The importance of this has been emphasised by Shackleton *et al.* (2006), whose study provides examples of how the powerful impact that women exert as role models to other women in academia cannot be over-emphasised. A number of local and international studies (e.g. Bagilhole, 1993; Butler, 2003) have noted how women in the

academic profession suffer from a lack of role-models and mentors; but, despite such findings having been widely communicated, the women in my study seem to be implying something slightly different. Analysis revealed that the support needed by academic women is from other women who have had similar experiences to them (working mothers in demanding careers), and not all academic women in leadership positions are mothers.

Finally, the women in this study suggested the particular importance of having working-mothering friends for a mother living in Grahamstown. Once again, the remote location of Grahamstown and the implications that this has for many academic women who have relocated not having family members close by, were cited as the reasons why having a supportive network of friends who understand what you are going through is all the more important. Fortunately, a great number of people living in Grahamstown appear to have families with young children, and so life for them revolves largely around their children's activities. Many of the women in the present study indicated that people in Grahamstown make friends through meeting other parents with children of similar age to their own (for example, through ante-natal classes, school etc).

6.3 Addressing the initial hypotheses

The inherent limitations in the pilot study (Poulos, 2009) resulted in gaps in the analysis that presented directions to be pursued and hypotheses to be tested with further research.⁸ The present study, therefore, undertook to address the four hypothetical questions (in Chapter 1) that were raised as a result of this prior study in and through its pursuit of a theory that answers the broader research question guiding this present study. As the process of addressing these initial questions (framed here as tentative hypotheses or propositional statements) serves to augment theory development in the forthcoming section, they are briefly addressed here.

The first hypothesis I set out to test was that work-family role-conflict is a typical experience for academic mothers at Rhodes University in general, and not just white, senior academic mothers. Closely related to this, the second hypothesis I set out to test was that senior academic mothers experience high levels of role-conflict partly as a result of the added pressures and commitments

⁸ This study did *not* involve more and more cycles of theoretical sampling and hypothesis testing via constant comparison to build a generalisable theory, as Strauss and Corbin (1990) advocate. The 'theory' that is developed here is a rich description and critical discussion of what went on in the interview material, as it stood, situated in a particular context (Rhodes University in Grahamstown). This rich description and critical discussion linked findings to the pilot study, previous research and theory, extending and building onto it.

that accompany their senior status positions and make greater demands on their time than would lower ranked positions. Having worked with a broader, more diverse sample in this study, the data generated was able to test these hypotheses among a wider base of academic mothers from Rhodes University to see if they were upheld and how they could be extended. The findings suggested that work-family role-conflict is indeed an experience that is common to every academic mother in the sample, regardless of her race, academic rank, number of children, or marital status. It was suggested that the nature of academic work itself, with regard to long working hours and the frequent necessity to take work home, is a major cause for time conflict between work and family as well as work spill-over into family time. It was confirmed that senior academic mothers do experience the highest levels of role-conflict when compared with relatively junior academic women (on average). The connection between job status and role-conflict may be related to the level of commitment shown by these women toward their work-role/identity. Senior women are likely to face work-family time conflicts more often than junior academic women and, if they are inclined to be more committed to their work-role, they would not find it as easy (or possible) to prioritise their mothering role over work as junior academic mothers would. A number of other mediators were found to affect this causal relationship, however, and overall it was theorised that senior academic women with very young children and little/no support in the home sphere found it the most difficult to reconcile work and family roles, whereas junior academic women with older children and substantial home-based support managed the work-family balance the easiest.

The third hypothesis raised by the pilot study stated that junior academic women's experiences of institutional support from Rhodes University in meeting their needs as working mothers would be more problematic than that of senior women. Given that the present study did not address the participants' perceptions and experiences of official Rhodes University policies, or the 'family-friendly' ethos of the institution and its administration, the basis for addressing this hypothesis lay solely in the women's reported levels of support received from the leadership in their individual departments. In the main, both junior and senior level academic women in the sample were found to be fairly satisfied with the support they have been shown within their own departments, so disconfirming the initial hypothesis. However, the consensus among both senior and junior academic women was that this source of support was not as important as other personal relationships in terms of enabling their ability to balance work and family roles.

This then raises the fourth and final question posed in Chapter 1 which asked what are the critical factors that make an academic working-mothering lifestyle possible? This question raised by the

pilot study was integral to the focus of this research and forms the basis for answering the broad research question guiding this study. The hypothesis that I aimed to test in addressing the above question was that the most critical factors enabling the balancing of work and family roles for academic mothers are relational processes. The findings of the present study revealed that there were five sources (or means) of support that emerged as being critical enabling factors for the majority of the women in the sample. Three of these support processes were relational in nature, including support from a partner, support from an employed domestic helper, and support from friends who are also working mothers. This finding confirmed my hypothesis that relational support is the most salient source of support for working academic mothers. The remaining two critical enabling factors were non-relational factors, including the benefits of working at Rhodes University in terms of its location in Grahamstown as a small city, and the flexibility offered by a career in academia. These factors emerged unexpectedly to challenge my hypothesis by making a case for the salience of non-relational support factors. Based on these findings, I theorised that there are thus two 'critical enabling areas', these being *A Rhodes University academic job* and *Relational support processes*.

6.4 Towards theory development

The most fundamental aim of this research study, and the purpose of this chapter, is to answer the broad research question that guided data collection and analysis processes. In doing this, I draw on both the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 and the foregoing discussion of findings in this chapter to explicate a theory that can explain *how* the relational enabling processes that have been identified to be significant operate to support women in academic positions at Rhodes University, who are also mothers, in balancing their full-time career responsibilities with mothering. In light of the above discussion of findings, I propose that the presence of these three relational support processes in the lives of academic mothers is indeed critical to their ability to cope with balancing their full-time academic careers and motherhood, but that each of these relationships plays a distinct supporting role.

The primary function performed by a woman's partner in this support process is to provide her with emotional support in the form of understanding, empathy, affection and encouragement. As detailed in the previous chapter, on a practical level, domestic assistance from partners is only helpful to the extent that it does not require energy expenditure on the part of the mother in order for it to occur. Given that partners were generally inclined to resist helping with domestic tasks

and/or they needed to be prompted to do so, working mothers who employ domestic helpers tend to find *their* assistance more practically supportive and enabling of their careers. However, this is only applicable to assistance with housework because when it comes to childcare specifically, a mother still wants and expects her partner to involve himself willingly and responsively in fathering.

Domestic workers are not regarded as a significant source of emotional support for most working mothers in general because, invariably, the asymmetrical power dynamic typically present in the relationship between them as employer and employee imposes barriers to communication and emotional exchanges. However, domestic workers are the childcare option of choice for working academic mothers, over day-care and after-care facilities. This domestic arrangement is especially valued for the elements of trust and reliability that may be established and the peace of mind that this comprehensive 'home-care' option affords a working mother.

Despite all the above supporting arrangements having been delineated and put in place, I further propose that academic mothers require 'something else' in terms of their support needs. Relationships with other working mothers employed in demanding professions, whose experiences thus serve to normalise her own, are an important source of support for an academic mother. These other women play an important role as they offer a working mother what, more often than not, her partner, her HOD, her colleagues, her employees, and her non-working friends are unable to offer – the understanding that arises from a 'shared experience'. I propose, in line with feminist theorising (Wilkinson, 1997b), that women are fundamentally relational beings. As such, their positive or negative evaluations of any life experience, as well as their ability to cope with hardship, are determined in response to the extent to which they support and are supported by multiple meaningful relationships with others.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS & REFLECTIONS

7.1 The extent to which the research answered the research question

In summing up what was found and interpreted in the material generated by this study, it can be concluded that the balancing of work and family roles for an academic mother at Rhodes University is a delicate activity that is sensitive to many facilitating as well as hindering factors. Through a comprehensive grounded theory analysis of a series of interviews with a sample of academic women, I was able to satisfy the aims of this research. The rich description that emerged from the analysis serves to address the hypothetical questions raised as a result of the pilot study, and to answer the central research question that guided this qualitative inquiry.

This guiding research question focused on the relational processes that enable academic mothers to cope with balancing mothering and their professional academic careers, and how these support processes operate. The findings revealed that the women's most significant relationships, in terms of the support they provide, are those with their spouses, domestic helpers, and friends who are working mothers. The theory proposes that each of these three relational processes has a unique and specific way in which it provides support to academic mothers in maintaining their dual-roles. These specific support functions are detailed in the previous chapter.

7.2 A reflection on the research process itself

My decision to conduct a qualitative study was appropriate due to the nature of the topic being researched. In terms of Creswell's (2009) assertion that qualitative research is concerned with *process* rather than outcomes, and with how people make sense of their life experiences, this decision was fitting with my intentions for this study. I was interested in the notion of 'balance', not as stasis or as some achievable destination, but as an ongoing battle to satisfy demands and fulfil expectations as though they were balls being juggled in the air. The more I have come to learn about balancing an academic career with motherhood, the more this juggler metaphor has become felicitous for me; because just as the balls will never hold themselves in the air, it is uncertain whether a self-sustaining state of 'balance' without the need to tirelessly orchestrate this balance, is ever attainable. Similarly, I conceived the ongoing activity of 'support' in this context to

exhibit many of the same qualities and to be an insatiable need for a working mother. The convergence of these two concepts and the interplay between them in relational processes piqued my interest in wanting to conduct this research. I was most interested in studying working mothers' own accounts of these processes and to gain insight into their meanings and motivations for how they have made these processes work in their lives. Qualitative research methods within the constructivist paradigm provided the tools to enable me to explore the deeply complex personal issues involved in this delicate balancing activity.

It is irrefutable that a woman's work-life impacts on her family-life and vice-versa. Research on the topics of work-family balance and role-conflict may be considered useful research; one reason for this being that for every woman everywhere in the world who wishes to pursue a career but who is not willing to forgo her maternal ambitions, there will be an employer and a spouse and a family (among others who are affected) who would be well-served to better understand the intricacies and hardships of the work-family balance conundrum for professional working-mothers. The women who participated in this study appeared to have a considerable interest in the topic, which indicates that the study of these issues is highly relevant to and valued by those women whose experiences it reflects. With two complementary studies now having been conducted in this area within the Rhodes University context (cf. Poulos, 2009 and this one), there is worthwhile, substantive information available on these issues. These 'theorisings' may have value for Rhodes University administrators in particular – and more widely, Higher Education institutions in South Africa – in a number of ways, from simply providing a way to better understand the needs and experiences of their parenting academics, to having a part to play in the formulation (or refinement) and implementation of family-friendly policies and practices.

The use of a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006) enabled me to address key issues, test and redefine hypotheses, and produce a tentative theory about the activity of balancing academic work and mothering in the context of Rhodes University; while ensuring that at all stages of the process, my interpretations were sufficiently 'grounded' in the original material. The practicalities of this grounded theory process provided a way for me to integrate a large amount of rich data into a single core category, without omitting any important material from the discussion. This core category was chosen based on its relevance to answering the broad research question which guided this study, as well as its ability to comprehensively cover all the important codes that emerged in the interviews.

The research process was given initial impetus by the success of the pilot study, which was well-received in the institutional context of Rhodes University and yielded valuable and workable results. Despite a number of setbacks and delays during the course of the research process, this study made an overall steady progression towards the final stages of compiling this research report without any major obstacles to carrying out the research design. The task of attracting participants was unproblematic, and I was fortunate to secure the involvement of willing and enthusiastic participants. For the most part, the research yielded findings that were anticipated (or hypothesised) and supported by prior research; however, there were some unexpected revelations and disconfirmed hypotheses, such as the relative unimportance of workplace relationships in supporting academic mothers' work-family balance. On that note there was one area of particular surprise where the findings of this study diverged from the related theory. Based on previous literature, I had expected to find significant differences across the faculties of Rhodes University in terms of academic women's experience of stereotyping, discrimination, and sexist attitudes from colleagues and superiors (usually negatively related to the prevalence of women in the discipline). It had seemed logical that the acceptance of women in a particular faculty may be based on the *theoretically* typical demographical concentration of women in that faculty, such as the discrepancy frequently found between the Humanities and the Sciences, for example (Orr, 2007). This was not found to be the case; or if it was the case, the academic mothers did not divulge these kinds of experiences to me as the interviewer. Rather this issue for women at Rhodes University appeared to be largely dependent on the presence of family-oriented people in the women's departments, and particularly in senior posts, regardless of what department or faculty they were employed in.

7.3 The strengths and limitations of the study

The strength of this research study lay in its particular focus on the exploration of specifically the *relational support processes* involved in the area of work-family balance for academic mothers. This unusual, multi-sphere focus for (what would otherwise be) a workplace study opens this field of research up to numerous other areas of Psychology, giving it inter-disciplinary appeal. Furthermore, the institutional context of Rhodes University has also not been covered by previous research in this area (apart from the pilot study for this very research) and as such, these works may create a platform for further research in this institution or South African Higher Education in general. As noted above, a value-adding attribute of this study is that it may provide the administrators of South African universities with a framework for understanding the diverse

experiences of their mothering academics in terms of work-family role-conflict and childcare needs. This may provide assistance in improving existing procedures and resource allocations to support academic women's career narratives.

The use of a constructivist form of grounded theory research design meant that I was able to bring something new to a field of study that has largely been dominated by career narrative work. This method allowed me to add value to the research process by making use of the focus I had begun to build up through my prior experience with the pilot study and my familiarity with the related literature and theory in the field, rather than trying to background this experience. Approaching the study with a 'store' of sensitising concepts from my personal experiences allowed me to design and conduct more refined and sophisticated data gathering and analysis processes (see Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997; Charmaz, 2006). My advantage primarily lay in having had access to the pilot study, and the constructivist grounded theory method provided me with a guide for how to make use of this advantage.

Another positive attribute of the study is that, through the use of only a single recruitment strategy, I was able to attract participants at a very good response rate. The email advertisement was successful in appealing to a large number of academic mothers within Rhodes University, at various stages in their lives and careers and various levels in the institutional hierarchy.

Furthermore, the sampling strategy conveniently attracted a sample of women who all fit the inclusion criteria, while at the same time, providing significant diversity across the group in terms of race, culture, marital status, living arrangements, educational qualifications, numbers and ages of children, discipline of study, and partner occupations. This meant that there was sufficient diversity in the initial convenience sample to significantly reduce the need to engage in successive attempts at participant recruitment. A diverse sample enabled me to make comparisons in the data, to enrich the emerging description, to engage in negative case analysis, and to challenge initial hypotheses. Given that the institutional context of Rhodes University was held constant, it was important to explore as much of the variety in the sample as possible.

Despite this research study having successfully achieved its objectives, there were a few areas of difficulty and aspects which could be improved upon. The most significant difficulty that I experienced from early on in the process, but which was an unavoidable corollary of the particular context for the research, was the small size of the Rhodes University academic community and hence the familiarity of the small audience for the research. There were several limitations to

working in a context like this, mostly relating to difficulties I have faced in reporting my findings. These circumstances make it immensely difficult to preserve academic mothers' identities and to claim anonymity when the chances of a participant being recognised are made likely by the intimacy of such a small campus community. I have had to work carefully and take extensive precautions to avoid identity disclosure of participants. It was necessary to negotiate with individual participants on the level of detail that I would use in this report and the way in which I could report on specific incidents so as not to compromise staff members' identities with the Director of Rhodes University HR, who will receive a copy of the report. Conversely, given the potential for reputational risk for Rhodes University when conducting research with its staff members, I have needed to work closely with the administrators of the University and adhere to any requests to provide clarity on my procedures or to follow particular stipulations in reporting my results. This created methodological frustrations for me as I am not conducting action research, where I would be inclined to consult various stakeholders on the 'gap' between policy and perceptions of policy for example, and triangulate a theory from there. I am conducting constructivist grounded theory research, where I am required to consider the subjective realities of the participants and what they perceive as true, real and important to write about.

A way in which the theory generated by the study will perhaps have limited application is that, despite the extensive diversity in the sample that was interviewed for this study, it comprised only heterosexual women (mostly in nuclear-patterned domestic arrangements). The experiences of relational enabling processes would likely be considerably different for women in same sex relationships or non-normative domestic arrangements, and so the theory would thus not be transferable to other such cases.

I acknowledge that the theory developed through this research study can only possibly be a partial account of the phenomenon under study. This is because, firstly, the topic of the study is extremely broad in terms of the concepts and views that have the potential to be included within its scope and the multitude of complex issues involved in both the field of women in academic work and the fields of mothering and maternal employment. When integrating these two fields to conduct a single, short study, the options and avenues are endless. Secondly, the large volume of data that was collected and coded meant that my intensive approach to analysis raised numerous hypotheses on a variety of different issues, not all of which could be developed further or else theory-building would not have been possible. Thirdly, the time constraints on the study served to further limit the number of these provisional hypotheses I was able to interrogate further. What

this has meant is that although I have raised questions about the trends emerging in the data in the analysis chapters, not all of these ideas have been pulled through into later chapters and discussed further. This may be seen as a limitation to the research as my emergent description then provides only a partial rendering of the true potential of the data that is contained in the analysis. This said, some grounded theory authors have questioned whether it is possible (or desirable) to seek out one final, true and valid account, and state that most theoretical readings of materials should be regarded as tentative (Pidgeon & Henwood, 1997).

Charmaz (2003) defines a theory as something which explains phenomena, specifies concepts which categorise those phenomena, explains relationships between concepts and is able to making predictions. Based on this standard for an adequate grounded theory, I consider the theory resulting from the analysis and discussion in this study to be a fair reflection of the main issues facing one very particular group of (middle-classed) academic mothers at Rhodes University because similar concerns surfaced in each one of the interviews. However, these results cannot be transferred to individuals outside of this highly contextualised setting due to the peculiarities of this small-city context and the unique nature of Rhodes University as an organisation. Each institution in Higher Education poses distinctive historical, philosophical, structural and policy variables, and any future research needs to be conducted with these differences in mind.

7.4 Possible areas for future research

An evaluation of this study indicates possible directions for further research to build on to the developing theory around relational support processes involved in academic women's work-family balance, as well as refinements that could be made to improve on the process and methods of this study. Firstly, with more time for the study, I would like to have engaged in focus group discussions with women in the sample to generate a collaborative account of their collective experience so that the notion of 'shared experience' might be extended further. Secondly, as noted above, many interesting hypotheses were raised in the analysis of this study that indicated possible areas to be explored with further research. In this way, the study may serve to provide some catalytic ideas for new research endeavours. Thirdly, it may be noted that there is an abundance of literature focused specifically on the issues of dual-career academic couples. As it became apparent that (most likely due to situational factors) a large proportion of Rhodes University academics are partnered with other academics, I would have liked to pursue the specificities of these arrangements and to expand the scope of the study so that a comparative analysis between these

women and others with non-academic husbands could be further explored (and the experiences of academic fathers also solicited).

Similarly, this research has potential to be integrated into a comparative analysis between academics at different universities in South Africa, especially since research specifically around the relational support processes for academic women is virtually non-existent in South African literature. If a wider sampling strategy were used to conduct such a comparative study across a number of universities, the issue of the Grahamstown lifestyle and the effect this has on an academic's choice to maintain employment at Rhodes University would come to the fore. This would make for research that could potentially be of great interest to the administrators of Rhodes University, because at present this concept is emerging with great prevalence in research on Rhodes University, but it has not been possible to interrogate the idea further as there is no sufficiently relevant literature available to which the findings may be compared.

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APPENDIX A: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

**RHODES UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
AGREEMENT
BETWEEN STUDENT RESEARCHER AND
RESEARCH PARTICIPANT**

I _____ agree to participate in the Masters research project of Tessa Poulos on *the relational processes that enable the balancing of academic work and motherhood for women employed as academics at Rhodes University.*

I understand that:

1. The researcher is a student conducting the research as part of the requirements for a Master's degree in Organisational Psychology at Rhodes University. The researcher may be contacted by email on *tess.poulos@gmail.com*.
2. The research project has been approved by the relevant research and ethics committees, and is under the close supervision of Prof. Lindy Wilbraham in the Psychology Department at Rhodes University, who may be contacted by email on *L.Wilbraham@ru.ac.za*.
3. The researcher is interested in the relational processes that are perceived by academic women at Rhodes University, who are also mothers, to facilitate them in balancing their role as a mother and their full-time career responsibilities.
4. My participation will involve my partaking in a series of between two and three personal interviews over the period of approximately one month, which will take about 45 minutes each.
5. I will be asked to answer questions of a personal nature but I can choose not to answer any question about aspects of my life which I am not willing to disclose.
6. I am invited to voice to the researcher any concerns I have about my participation in the study, or consequences I may experience as a result of my participation, and to have these addressed to my satisfaction.
7. I am free to withdraw from the study at any time – however I commit myself to full participation unless some unusual circumstances occur or I have concerns about my participation which I did not originally anticipate.
8. The report on the project may contain information about my personal experiences, attitudes and behaviours, but that the report will be designed in such a way that it will not be possible for me to be identified by the reader.

Signed on (Date): _____

Participant: _____

Researcher: _____

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

BIOGRAPHICAL AND CAREER INFORMATION

- 1) How did you come to be an academic employed at Rhodes University?
- 2) What position do you hold now?
- 3) At what point in your academic career were your children born?
- 4) How old are your children and do they live with you?
- 5) Are you married or do you live with your partner?
- 6) Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?

MANAGING THE BALANCE BETWEEN MOTHERING AND ACADEMIC WORK

- 7) Could you describe for me what a typical working day is like for you? What problems might arise with regard to childcare arrangements? How do you respond to these situations?
- 8) Are there any particular incidents that stand out for you when you experienced severe conflict between your roles as an academic and a mother? When did these occur? What were these incidents like?
- 9) What do you feel contributes to this strain or conflict?
- 10) How have you gone about managing this conflict?
- 11) Are there any significant relationships in your life that have supported you in managing your dual-roles of working and mothering? Could you describe how these relationships have helped you?
- 12) Do you employ somebody to assist you in caring for your children when you are attending to your paid work responsibilities? Describe your relationship with this person? How does this relationship support you?
- 13) Could you describe the most important lessons you have learned as a result of your experiences as a working academic mother? What advice would you give to an academic woman who is considering starting a family?

APPENDIX C: LIST OF INITIAL CODES

Academia is a difficult world
Academic job is a good job for mothers
Academics embarrassed about having children
Acknowledging nanny as a mother also
Adapting plans to fit your situation
Adjusting your perspectives
Allow yourself to ask for help
Averting problem of unavailable childminder
Avoid trying to split into two roles
Avoiding involvement in extra work activities
Bad experience with domestic workers
Being a good role model of a woman
Being able to say 'no' at work
Being available to children while they're young
Being creative in problem solving helps
Being made to feel like a bad mother
Being more productive with your time
Being more trusting of people helps
Being organised and planning ahead helps
Being realistic helps
Being too proud to ask for help is detrimental
Being wary of work spill-over
Being younger when you have children helps
Breakdown in support system
Bringing child to work
Building a relationship with your nanny
Cannot exit academia and re-enter easily
Certain responsibilities are gendered
Challenging dominant perceptions helps
Changes in couple's behaviour after children
Changes in couple's relationship after children
Changes in work after children
Childhood is a short, precious time
Childminder at home is better than day-care
Children are a shared interest for a couple
Children involved in multiple activities
Children stall research
Children's personality can make it difficult
Collaborative partnerships for childcare
Communicating expectations to childminder
Comparing academic job to other jobs
Comparing partner parenting styles
Conflict gets easier as kids get older
Conflict is unavoidable for mothers
Conflict on one side only
Conflict over leaving your children
Conflict over travelling for work
Conflict resolution with childminder
Coping strategies for dealing with stress
Creating awareness at work of different roles
Crèche is not the ideal childcare choice
Daily childcare is an endless cycle
Dealing with men and childless women
Dealing with moments of stress
Division of labour at home
Doing daily housework yourself
Doing less public mothering
Doing the job properly but differently
Domestic worker best option for childcare
Domestic worker helps to save you time
Domestic worker is an engaged helper
Don't try to do it all
Don't miss out on children growing up
Don't put off having children for too long
Easier to manage as a more junior academic
Emotional is most NB support from partner
Emotional support from family members
Emotional support from nanny
Emotional work spill-over
Employing a housekeeper is enabling
Employing multiple means of support
Encouragement from partner helps
Enjoying having multiple roles to fill
Enjoying your job helps
Ensuring dedicated family time
Falling into the gendered mother role
Father is present and involved
Father less involved with children
Father not as aware of children's needs
Father's relationship with children
Feeling betrayed by domestic worker
Feeling constant/day-to-day guilt
Feeling exhausted from work
Feeling guilty about employing helpers

Feeling judged by others
Feeling like a single mother
Feeling primarily responsible for childcare
Feeling that something is always suffering
Feeling that you are doing the wrong thing
Feelings of self-pity
Feelings of unpreparedness for motherhood
Fighting to get the support you need at home
Financial constraints make it harder
Financial support from partner/father
Fitting everything in
Flexibility of academia helps
Frustration with partner behaviour
Full-time day-care after school
Getting additional childcare on weekends
Getting upset about situation
Giving partner more autonomy in childcare
Going against your desires
Going with your instincts
Good time management helps
Guilt at not coping with either role
Guilt being imposed from outside
Guilt over living condition of domestic worker
Hard to keep up with research
Harder to get promoted after having children
Having a career is important for fulfilment
Having children later in life helps
Having control over your time
Having family close by helps
Having friends who are mothers helps
Having supportive parents helps
Having to run at half-speed
Having two roles makes you more efficient
Having understanding children helps
Having understanding department leaders
Having unrealistic expectations of a nanny
Help from friends in childcare
Help/support from partner
Helpful partners are rare
High pressure job even without children
Housework indirectly supportive in childcare
Importance of getting the right nanny
Important things in knowing your nanny
Integrating multiple roles into one person
It helps to know that your child is thriving
It is hardest to go back to work at first

It is helpful when HOD has children
It is important not to live for your job
Keeping things in perspective helps
Lack of understanding from the institution
Learning good skills through managing roles
Learning to recover from the hard blows
Letting children down
Life becomes controlled by parenting
Living in Grahamstown
Long working hours
Losing sleep to catch up tasks
Loves teaching/committed to teaching
Making difficult choices
Making sacrifices
Making up lost work hours
Men who grew up in sexist households
Merging family and work spaces publically
More strain from outside pressures than work
Mother more likely to drop work for children
Multiple work pressures
Nanny is enabling
Nanny's responsibilities
Need to allow others to help you
Need to get PhD done before having children
Needing to ask partners for help
Negotiating shared parenting arrangements
Never too late for a woman to make a career
No family close by to call on for help
No one can really understand the pressures
No such thing as a typical day
Not allowing yourself to feel guilty
Not being too hard on yourself
Not enough hours in a day
Not taking on the pressure from society
Obsession with always doing the right thing
One's own personality can make it easier
Options for when you don't use childminder
Partner does not help a lot at home
Partner has more respect for wife as a mother
Partner has progressive views on gender roles
Partner often unavailable with work
Partners as good friends
Partners having different personalities
Peace of mind from domestic help
Performance anxiety in both roles
Periods of high work demands

Popular discourse on mothering cause guilt
Practical support from domestic workers
Preparing for the week ahead
Pressure from non-working mothers
Pressure on academics to research and publish
Prioritising children over work
Private childcare has more flexible hours
Process of finding a good nanny
Pushing for what you need in the workplace
Put career on hold while children are young
Putting children's lives ahead of career goals
Putting contingency plans in place
Reaching compromises between roles
Real equally shared parenting is rare
Reciprocal support relationship with domestic
Regret putting motherhood on hold for career
Relationship between mother and nanny
Relationship between nanny and children
Relationships with domestics are difficult
Reliance on nanny
Research suffers when you try to do it all
Resentment from children towards work
Responding to peer-pressure outside of work
Role-conflict causes academic work to suffer
Roles are gender-stereotyped
Seeing children as resilient
Seeing domestic help as a luxury
Seeing problems as relative
Seeing stressful times as transient helps
Seeing the positive side to situations
Setting strict work-family boundaries
Sharing power in parenting

Society's gendered expectations cause conflict
Staying productive is important
Support from department is not automatic
Support from family members in childcare
Support from HOD helps
Support from HR helps
Support helps to resolve guilt
Supportive colleagues help
Switching off the motherhood role at work
Taking time off work when needed at home
Teaching as an important part of the job
The academic condition
Things that worsen the conflict
Things valued in a nanny
Time conflict with late meetings
Time for research is limited by teaching
Time together as a couple
Times of conflict between work & motherhood
Trusting instincts is hard for educated women
Trying to compartmentalise
Trying to minimise trauma for children
Using complex timetables to organise weeks
Using day-care because nanny is not an option
Wanting to spend more time with children
Weighing costs and benefits of decisions
Women practice impression management
Work provides an escape from motherhood
Work spill-over cuts into family time
Working hard gains you credibility at work
Working mothers have a shared experience
Working on research after hours
Worrying has a negative influence

APPENDIX D: FIRST CODING ATTEMPT

