

**THE WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT EXPERIENCED BY SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN
OF DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY**

by

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DECLARATION

Student number: 617-44-77

I declare that

The work-family conflict experienced by South African women of different race groups: A phenomenological study,

Is my work and that all sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

.....

Ms NF Tengimfene

.....

Date

| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | PAGE |
|--|---------------|
| List of Figures | xvi |
| List of Tables | xvii |
| Summary..... | xviii |
| Key terms..... | xix |
| CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH..... | 1 |
| 1.1 BACKGROUND AND MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCH | 1 |
| 1.1.1 The Role of the Researcher | 1 |
| 1.1.2 Relevance of the researcher's experience and background..... | 2 |
| 1.1.3 The impact of the women's participation in the workplace..... | 3 |
| 1.1.4 Changing family patterns..... | 5 |
| 1.1.5 Gender impact on work-family conflict | 6 |
| 1.1.6 Race impact on work-family conflict..... | 8 |
| 1.1.7 Limited research regarding work-family conflict within South African..... | 9 |
| 1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT..... | 10 |
| 1.2.1 General problem statement..... | 11 |
| 1.2.2 Aims..... | 11 |
| <i>1.2.2.1 General aim.....</i> | <i>12</i> |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| 1.2.2.2 | <i>Specific aim of the literature review</i> | 12 |
| 1.2.2.3 | <i>Specific aim of the phenomenological study</i> | 12 |
| 1.3 | PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE | 12 |
| 1.3.1 | Disciplinary relationship | 12 |
| 1.3.2 | Psychological paradigm | 13 |
| 1.3.3 | Paradigm perspective implications for the researcher | 14 |
| 1.3.4 | Methodological convictions based on the phenomenological perspective | 14 |
| 1.3.4.1 | <i>Sociological dimension</i> | <i>15</i> |
| 1.3.4.2 | <i>Ontological dimension</i> | <i>15</i> |
| 1.3.4.3 | <i>Teleological dimension</i> | <i>16</i> |
| 1.3.4.4 | <i>Epistemological dimension</i> | <i>16</i> |
| 1.3.4.5 | <i>Methodological convictions</i> | <i>17</i> |
| 1.3.5 | Meta-theoretical concepts | 18 |
| 1.3.6 | Central theoretical statement | 19 |
| 1.4 | RESEARCH DESIGN | 19 |
| 1.4.1 | Type of research | 20 |
| 1.4.2 | Unit of analysis | 21 |
| 1.4.3 | Ensuring scientific rigour | 21 |
| 1.5 | RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | 23 |
| 1.5.1 | Phase 1: Literature review | 23 |

| | | |
|-------------------|--|-----------|
| 1.5.2 | Phase 2 Phenomenological study..... | 23 |
| <i>1.5.2.1</i> | <i>Step 1: Population and sample.....</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.2</i> | <i>Step 2: Methods of gathering empirical material.....</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.3</i> | <i>Step 3: Gathering empirical material.....</i> | <i>25</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.4</i> | <i>Step 4: Analysing empirical material.....</i> | <i>25</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.5</i> | <i>Step 5: Evaluation, interpretation and reporting of findings.....</i> | <i>26</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.6</i> | <i>Step 6: Conclusion</i> | <i>27</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.7</i> | <i>Step 7: Limitations.....</i> | <i>27</i> |
| <i>1.5.2.8</i> | <i>Step 8: Recommendations.....</i> | <i>27</i> |
| 1.6 | CHAPTER DIVISION..... | 27 |
| 1.7 | CHAPTER SUMMARY..... | 28 |
| | | |
| CHAPTER 2. | LITERATURE REVIEW..... | 29 |
| | | |
| 2.1 | DEFINING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT..... | 30 |
| | | |
| 2.1.1 | Types of work-family conflict..... | 32 |
| | | |
| 2.1.2 | Manifestation of work-family conflict..... | 35 |
| | | |
| 2.1.3 | Understanding work-family conflict within existing social..... | 36 |
| | theories, assumptions and hypotheses | |
| <i>2.1.3.1</i> | <i>Role theory.....</i> | <i>36</i> |
| <i>2.1.3.2</i> | <i>System theory: a balancing act in maintaining societal components.....</i> | <i>37</i> |
| <i>2.1.3.3</i> | <i>Scarcity Hypothesis: limited time and energy versus far stretching roles.....</i> | <i>37</i> |
| <i>2.1.3.4</i> | <i>Enhancement hypothesis.....</i> | <i>38</i> |

| | | |
|------------|--|-----------|
| 2.1.3.5 | <i>Segmentation theory</i> | 38 |
| 2.1.3.6 | <i>Compensation theory</i> | 39 |
| 2.1.3.7 | <i>Spill-over theory</i> | 39 |
| 2.2 | THEORIES ON HOW WOMEN GET PREPARED FOR | |
| | THE ASSUMPTION OF GENDER SPECIFIC ROLES..... | 39 |
| 2.2.1 | Theories on gender identity development..... | 40 |
| 2.2.2 | Socialisation: a tool for developing gender specific societal roles..... | 41 |
| 2.3 | THE MULTIPLE ROLES WOMEN BALANCE IN THEIR LIVES..... | 43 |
| 2.3.1 | Assumption of the motherhood role..... | 43 |
| 2.3.2 | Working mothers..... | 45 |
| 2.3.2.1. | <i>Single working mothers</i> | 46 |
| 2.3.2.2. | <i>Advantages of the care-giving role</i> | 48 |
| 2.3.2.3 | <i>Women and their elderly mothers</i> | 49 |
| 2.4 | INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY STYLES ON ASSUMPTION | |
| | OF MULTIPLE ROLES..... | 49 |
| 2.4.1 | How personality influence the relationship between work and family | |
| | roles. | 50 |
| 2.5 | FEMINISTS' VIEWS REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF | |
| | WOMEN AT WORK..... | 54 |
| 2.5.1 | Advantages of women's labour participation..... | 55 |

| | | |
|--------------|---|-----------|
| 2.6 | COPING MECHANISMS WOMEN USE IN DEALING WITH | |
| | WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT..... | 56 |
| 2.6.1 | Social support from the extended family..... | 56 |
| 2.6.2 | The ability to afford a helper or maid makes thing easier..... | 57 |
| 2.6.3 | Supervisor support and work environment legal framework as | |
| | factors mitigating in work-family conflict..... | 57 |
| 2.7 | IMPACT OF RACE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND | |
| | FACTORS ON WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT..... | 59 |
| 2.8 | CHAPTER SUMMARY..... | 60 |

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL

| | | |
|----------------|---|-----------|
| | STUDY..... | 61 |
| 3.1 | BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY..... | 61 |
| 3.2 | EMPIRICAL GATHERING METHODS..... | 62 |
| 3.2.1 | Sample and population..... | 63 |
| <i>3.2.1.1</i> | <i>Age.....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>3.2.1.2</i> | <i>Gender.....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>3.2.1.3</i> | <i>Race.....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>3.2.1.4</i> | <i>Dependants.....</i> | <i>63</i> |
| <i>3.2.1.5</i> | <i>Marital Status.....</i> | <i>64</i> |

| | | |
|---------|--|----|
| 3.2.1.6 | <i>Biographical details summary</i> | 64 |
| 3.2.1.7 | <i>Employment, position and salary bracket</i> | 65 |
| 3.3 | THE METHODS OF COLLECTING EMPIRICAL MATERIAL | 67 |
| 3.3.1 | Interviews | 67 |
| 3.3.1.1 | <i>Semi-structured interview</i> | 67 |
| 3.3.2 | Significance of choosing the correct methods of collecting empirical material | 68 |
| 3.3.3 | Interviewer's role | 69 |
| 3.3.4 | Developing semi-structured interview questions | 70 |
| 3.3.5 | Semi-structured interview, structure, sequencing and process | 71 |
| 3.3.6 | Development of a biographical data form | 72 |
| 3.3.7 | Use of a pilot interview | 73 |
| 3.3.7.1 | <i>Analysis of the pilot interview</i> | 73 |
| 3.4 | ADMINISTRATION OF THE EMPIRICAL COLLECTION METHODS | 74 |
| 3.4.1 | Invitation to participate in the research interview | 74 |
| 3.4.2 | Planning of the introductory briefing | 74 |
| 3.4.3 | Planning the completion of the biographical data form | 75 |
| 3.4.4 | Planning of the semi-structured interview | 75 |
| 3.4.5 | Planning of the completion of interview feedback form | 76 |
| 3.5 | COLLECTING EMPIRICAL MATERIAL | 77 |

| | | |
|------------|---|-----------|
| | 3.5.1 Invitation to participate in the study and setting interview appointment.... | 77 |
| | 3.5.2 Introductory briefing..... | 77 |
| | 3.5.3 Completion the biographical data form..... | 77 |
| | 3.5.4 Semi-structured interview..... | 77 |
| | <i>3.5.4.1 Analysis of the semi-structured interview.....</i> | <i>78</i> |
| | 3.5.5 Completion of the interviewer feedback form..... | 78 |
| | 3.5.6 Interview transcription..... | 78 |
| | <i>3.5.6.1 Analysis of the interview transcription process.....</i> | <i>79</i> |
| 3.6 | DATA ANALYSIS..... | 80 |
| | 3.6.1 Making sense of data..... | 80 |
| | 3.6.2 Definition of conceptual similarities and patterns..... | 80 |
| | 3.6.3 Description of emerging themes or patterns..... | 81 |
| | <i>3.6.3.1 Interpretation of the meaning of data.....</i> | <i>82</i> |
| | 3.6.4 Data analysis audit trail..... | 82 |
| | <i>3.6.4.1 Reflection on the presentation of findings.....</i> | <i>83</i> |
| | <i>3.6.4.2 Reflection on the integration of findings with existing literature.....</i> | <i>84</i> |
| | <i>3.6.4.3 Impact of research on the researcher's personal life.....</i> | <i>84</i> |
| | <i>3.6.4.4 Challenges encountered with the dissertation submission.....</i> | <i>84</i> |
| | <i>3.6.4.5 Opportunity for the presentation of the dissertation to other experts.....</i> | <i>85</i> |
| 3.7 | IMPLEMENTING SCIENTIFIC RIGOUR DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS..... | 85 |

| | | |
|------------|---|------------|
| 3.7.1 | Audit trail..... | 85 |
| 3.7.2 | Precision of the competent social practitioner..... | 86 |
| 3.7.2.1 | <i>Researcher's critical life incidents: assessing potential bias pitfalls.....</i> | <i>87</i> |
| 3.7.2.2 | <i>Use of an expert.....</i> | <i>88</i> |
| 3.7.3 | Dialoguing the knowledge..... | 88 |
| 3.7.4 | Taking actions: pragmatic consequence of knowledge claims as truth.... | 89 |
| 3.8 | ETHICS..... | 89 |
| 3.9 | CHAPTER SUMMARY..... | 90 |
| | | |
| CHAPTER 4. | FINDINGS..... | 92 |
| 4.1 | DEFINING EXPERIENCES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN OF DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS..... | 92 |
| 4.1.1 | Strong emotions associated with raising children whilst working..... | 93 |
| 4.1.1.1 | <i>Integration.....</i> | <i>95</i> |
| 4.1.2 | Compromise on the quality of time dedicated to each role..... | 96 |
| 4.1.2.1 | <i>Lack of quality time with family.....</i> | <i>96</i> |
| 4.1.2.2 | <i>Using work time for family arrangements or emergencies.....</i> | <i>98</i> |
| 4.1.2.3 | <i>Children's limited participation in extramural and other social activities...</i> | <i>99</i> |
| 4.1.2.4 | <i>Developing time management skills.....</i> | <i>100</i> |
| 4.1.2.5 | <i>Integration.....</i> | <i>101</i> |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.1.3 After a hard day at work, women enter into a second shift..... | 102 |
| <i>4.1.3.1 Integration.....</i> | <i>106</i> |
| 4.1.4 Strain resulting from assuming sole custodian over children's upbringing | 107 |
| <i>4.1.4.1 Limited involvement of fathers in everyday childcare activities.....</i> | <i>109</i> |
| <i>4.1.4.2 Assumption of primary care giving responsibility, women's socialisation and childhood experiences.....</i> | <i>111</i> |
| <i>4.1.4.3 Societal attitudes and perceptions add further strain on working women whilst assuming sole custody of their children</i> | <i>113</i> |
| <i>4.1.4.4 Taking on other family responsibilities, whilst being sole custodians of their children, with little support.....</i> | <i>114</i> |
| <i>4.1.4.5 Reclaiming social life after children grow up and become independent.....</i> | <i>115</i> |
| <i>4.1.4.6 Integration.....</i> | <i>117</i> |
| 4.1.5 Making choices concerning a career, professional growth and children..... | 120 |
| <i>4.1.5.1 Is it worth it?.....</i> | <i>120</i> |
| <i>4.1.5.2 What choices do mothers prefer?.....</i> | <i>121</i> |
| <i>4.1.5.3 A gender-sensitised labour environment encourages women's participation in fulltime employment: At what expense?.....</i> | <i>123</i> |
| <i>4.1.5.4 Impact of a supportive work environment in mediating work-family demands</i> | <i>124</i> |
| <i>4.1.5.5 Integration.....</i> | <i>127</i> |
| 4.1.6 Reliance on strong coping mechanisms and social support systems..... | 129 |
| <i>4.1.6.1 Coping strategies and traits employed by subjects in mediating work-</i> | |

| | | |
|--------------|---|------------|
| | <i>family conflict.....</i> | <i>130</i> |
| 4.1.6.2 | <i>A helping hand from a supportive husband or father of the children.....</i> | <i>131</i> |
| 4.1.6.3 | <i>The extended family lending crucial support and reliable network.....</i> | <i>132</i> |
| 4.1.6.4 | <i>Reliance on a helper or maid for support.....</i> | <i>133</i> |
| 4.1.6.5 | <i>Mutual family living arrangements.....</i> | <i>135</i> |
| 4.1.6.6 | <i>Assistance from friends and other significant people.....</i> | <i>136</i> |
| 4.1.6.7 | <i>Integration.....</i> | <i>139</i> |
| 4.2 | IMPACT OF RACE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND FACTORS ON WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT..... | 139 |
| 4.3 | INTEGRATING CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE VARIOUS THEMES..... | 140 |
| 4.4 | CHAPTER SUMMARY..... | 143 |
| | CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 144 |
| 5.1 | CONCLUSION..... | 144 |
| 5.1.1 | Conclusions pertaining to the literature review objective..... | 144 |
| 5.1.1.1 | <i>Defining work-family conflict within the South African context.....</i> | <i>144</i> |
| 5.1.1.2 | <i>Developing skills in embracing motherhood and responsibilities..... attached thereto</i> | <i>146</i> |
| 5.1.1.3 | <i>Experienced of women in balancing multiple roles in their lives.....</i> | <i>146</i> |
| 5.1.1.4 | <i>Experiences of women's coping mechanisms regarding work-family conflict.....</i> | <i>146</i> |

| | | |
|--------------|--|------------|
| 5.1.1.5 | <i>Experiences of women with regards to race and cultural factors in relation to work-family conflict.....</i> | 147 |
| 5.1.1.6 | <i>Experiences regarding challenges and opportunities for women in a gender sensitised work environment.....</i> | 147 |
| 5.1.2 | Contribution of the literature review to the current study..... | 148 |
| 5.1.3 | Conclusions pertaining to the phenomenological study..... | 149 |
| 5.1.3.1 | <i>The untold story of women's unpaid and undervalued family work.....</i> | 149 |
| 5.1.3.2 | <i>Women shared strong emotions associated with raising children whilst being employed.....</i> | 150 |
| 5.1.3.3 | <i>Competing work and family demands result in a compromise regarding the quality of work whilst dedicated in each role.....</i> | 150 |
| 5.1.3.4 | <i>Experiences of strain resulting from assuming sole custodianship of their children's upbringing.....</i> | 151 |
| 5.1.3.5 | <i>Women providing a safety net for themselves against work-family conflict.....</i> | 151 |
| 5.1.3.6 | <i>Discrepancy between legislation on women's advancement and realities for women at the workplace.....</i> | 152 |
| 5.1.3.7 | <i>Choices women make with regards to having a career, professional growth and children.....</i> | 152 |
| 5.1.3.8 | <i>Impact of race and cultural background on work-family conflict.....</i> | 153 |
| 5.2 | HYPOTHESES..... | 153 |
| 5.2.1 | Overarching research hypothesis..... | 153 |

| | | |
|---------|---|-----|
| 5.2.1.1 | <i>Theoretical research hypothesis</i> | 153 |
| 5.2.2 | Hypotheses with regards to the literature review..... | 154 |
| 5.2.3 | Hypotheses based on the phenomenological study..... | 155 |
| 5.3 | LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY..... | 157 |
| 5.3.1 | Limitations in terms of the literature review..... | 157 |
| 5.3.2 | Limitations in terms of the phenomenological study..... | 158 |
| 5.4 | RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 159 |
| 5.4.1 | Recommendations in terms of the phenomenological study..... | 159 |
| 5.4.2 | Recommendations for possible research in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology field..... | 160 |
| 5.5 | CHAPTER SUMMARY..... | 161 |
| | REFERENCES LIST | 162 |
| | APPENDICES | 189 |
| | APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA GUIDE..... | 189 |
| | APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM..... | 190 |
| | APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE..... | 191 |
| | APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWER FEEDBACK FORM..... | 193 |

| LIST OF FIGURES | PAGE |
|--|-------------|
| Figure 2.1: A diagrammatical representation of work family role incompatibility..... | 33 |
| Figure 2.2: A diagrammatical representation of how personality influences the relationship between work and family roles..... | 52 |
| Figure 4.3: A diagrammatical representation of themes arising from the findings..... | 142 |

| LIST OF TABLES | PAGE |
|--|-------------|
| TABLE 3.1 Sample demographic details..... | 66 |

SUMMARY

THE WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT EXPERIENCED BY SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN OF DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

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Degree : MA

Subject : Industrial and Organisational Psychology

The family roles and responsibilities are still allocated along the gender lines. Women assume primary child care and household roles despite working fulltime. They suffer from work-family conflict as they battle with these competing demands. A phenomenological approach was adopted for this study. The existing literature was used in defining work-family conflict, looking at different work-family theories; development of gendered defined roles, motherhood and demands brought on by women working fulltime. The semi-structured interview was used for data collection. The themes which emerged showed that women experience strong emotions associated with raising children whilst working. There is compromise on quality time dedicated in each role. Women assume sole custodian over their children's upbringing. Women enter into a second shift after work. Having a career and children, is made easier through adoption of strong coping strategies and mechanisms. The conclusions and recommendations were made for future a research and organisational practices.

KEY TERMS

Work-family conflict, multiple roles, working women, motherhood, socialisation, role conflict, overload, interference, strong emotions, compromised quality time, second shift, sole custodianship, elderly parents, coping mechanisms, helper/maids.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

This chapter provides the background and motivation for the present research. Since the researcher plays a critical role in a qualitative study, it is also important to understand her background as well as any possible underlying self-interest that motivated her to assume this research. This section also examines what captivated her curiosity with regards to the study. Furthermore, consideration is given to the implications of women's participation in paid employment whilst continuing with their traditional family roles. This present author also reviews issues with respect to how race impacts on work-family conflict and research carried out in this regard. Lastly, the problem statement, paradigm perspective, the research design and research method are examined.

1.1 BACKGROUND FOR AND MOTIVATION OF THE RESEARCH

Individuals perform various roles within their communities. Women, as an example, make choices with regards to becoming mothers, bearing children, marrying or remaining single and pursuing careers, amongst all the roles they adopt in their lives. It is the researcher's interest to examine all the various responsibilities which women carry; why and how society bestows these responsibilities upon them; how these responsibilities interface, thus causing strain and resulting in work-family conflict; and the coping mechanisms employed to balance them. The section below furnishes the background of the researcher, the study itself and also discusses key issues underpinning work-family conflict pertaining to women of different racial groups in South Africa. Since a qualitative researcher plays a crucial role the next section discusses this role in greater depth.

1.1.1 The Role of the Researcher

The researcher in a phenomenological study commits herself to a strict discipline and "systematic efforts in setting aside prejudices regarding the phenomenon being investigated" (Moustakas, 1998, p.22). This assumption demands that the researcher listens attentively, openly,

removes her feelings and perceptions regarding issues and clearly hears the essence of the experiences of the subjects. The phenomenologists further argue that that which the researcher observes is in fact an interpreted reality (Welman & Kruger, 2003). The researcher is also tasked with uncovering the dynamics involved in the experiences of the subjects, which concerns understanding their emotions, perceptions and thoughts associated with their experiences (Moustakas, 1998).

The researcher is inextricably linked to and immersed in the research, viz., the development of research questions and all parts of the research process (May, 2001; Darlington & Scott, 2002). This calls for a high 'level of self-reflection about one's involvement in the phenomenon under study' (Darlington & Scott, 2002). It is important that the researcher develops an acute self-awareness and thus must remain cognisant of her background whilst conducting the research.

1.1.2 Relevance of the researcher's experience and background

The present researcher's two daughters, a teenager and toddler, offer a peek into the scope of the responsibilities faced by women regardless of cultural background. It is not surprising that the research topic resonates well with the researcher's life history, experiences and curiosity regarding the worldviews of other women with respect to being mothers with young children and facing demanding work commitments. Countless experiences come to mind in illustrating the conflict caused by the responsibilities of multiple roles.

In the first example, the researcher read with surprise her firstborn's English homework sentence which read, 'My mother came home early at 8pm yesterday'. This sent a clear message regarding the teenager's expectations and hinted how her mother tilted more towards meeting work rather than family demands. In the second instance, the toddler once accompanied the researcher to a strategic workshop, at the cost of the organisation, as she was still being breastfed. The questions that arise are: How many women are exposed to such flexible work arrangements? What choices do women make when faced with such scenarios? What influence do our backgrounds have on

the choices we make? What guides women's inner conscience when family and work demands are juxtaposed? It is with these questions in mind that the present researcher, as suggested by Creswell (2003a), explicitly identifies possible biases, values and personal interests with regards to the research topic and process.

The abovementioned situations illustrate an aspect of the introspection that the researcher underwent in order to identify the research question for this project as well as guard against subjectivity lest it interfere with the research process. It also reveals the reaction of the researcher's family to her absence owing to work engagements. As a result, by means of this study, she is interested in examining the impact of the participation of women in the workplace in relation to their other family roles.

1.1.3 The impact of the women's participation in the workplace

Family roles were traditionally clearly defined between those of men and women, with the former being breadwinners and the latter homemakers and pillars of their families (Booth, 1999). A further distinction in this division of labour is that men traded their labour for payment whilst women were uncompensated for their efforts at home (Witz, 1997). The economic pressures of inflation and poverty, amongst others, are forcing women to engage in a more active role outside the home and to pursue full-time careers (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Theunissen, Van Vuuren & Visser, 2003). In South Africa since the beginning of the twentieth century, black South African women were more likely to be working than their white counterparts (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Elloy & Smith, 2003; Witz, 1997). This trend is reflected globally and it is estimated that approximately two-thirds of new entrants to the labour force since the 1970s are single or married mothers (Noor, 2002; Person, 2003). The last decade also witnessed a sharp increase in the employment of women (both black and white) in the South African workforce (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Census96, 1999). Witz (1997) argues that some of the critical considerations for women's participation in paid labour include race, class, age, marital status, and whether or not they have children as dependants.

In contrast, Etaugh and Bridges (2006) attribute women's participation in paid labour firstly to their liberation campaigns aimed at moving women away from home. The second reason is that of access to higher educational levels, followed by the rising cost of living, which fuels the need for two incomes in a family. The latter point is in line with the discourse that suggests that it is the economy's demand for the most competent and productive workforce in order to remain globally competitive (Theunissen et al., 2003) that influences women's participation in paid labour.

Women, however, must still provide adequate care for their families at home (Gabarro, 1992). There is a competing demand between work and family for women's time and labour. The implications for business are that these issues pertaining to women's experiences in an employment context need to be addressed (Person, 2003) or catered for in order to mitigate their adverse effects. Consequently, organisations are demonstrating a growing interest in work and family issues (Theunissen et al., 2003) since changes in workforce demographics suggest that interference between work and family roles is likely to increase, causing greater levels of conflict in both the work and the family domains (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1996).

Furthermore, Cramer and Pearce (1990) maintain that work-and-family corporate policies and support programmes considered deviant a few years ago are now considered key tools for corporate productivity (Geber, 2000). Rodgers and Rodgers (1989) propose the following reasons as to why organisations are becoming interested in these issues. Firstly, the workforce demographics are changing. Talent and skills were always freely available and people were willing to make the traditional sacrifices, such as time, overtime and relocation in order to achieve success. Organisations currently experience difficulties in retaining talent owing to the competitive nature of the economy.

There are organisations which make use of progressive family policies as a means of competing for employees. Secondly, the perceptions of employees are changing. Women and men are realising the importance of both work and family. Thus people identify with employers that will allow them to act responsibly towards their families and still satisfy their career ambitions.

Lastly, organisations have realised that inflexibility may have an adverse impact on productivity: such as higher levels of stress, greater absenteeism and lower job satisfaction. One can thus conclude that organisations which consider the views and input of employees are likely to be more responsive to work-family concerns when they arise (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

1.1.4 Changing family patterns

There are few families now that fit the traditional mode in which the husband is the breadwinner and the wife the homemaker (Elloy & Smith, 2003; Geber, 2000; Karambayya & Reilly, 1992). At the researcher's home it was the norm that both her parents worked and the children were sent to boarding schools. The researcher's mother is the second generation of women within her family who opted for fulltime employment. This is typical of a dual-career family whereby "the woman and the man both pursued a lifelong career, relatively uninterrupted, and also established and developed a family life that often includes children" (Gilbert, 1993, p. 4).

This increasing participation in the labour market has not, however, liberated women from family responsibilities (Elloy & Smith, 2003; Gilbert, 1993). Families operate as social systems, with an inter-relationship between work and non-work roles, so that tensions in one area are inevitably transferred to the other (Elloy & Smith, 2003). The increasing numbers of dual-career families pose critical implications for family and work roles (Gilbert, 1993). This results in alterations in family interaction which may lead to work-family conflicts that are resolved through changes in each spouse's work behaviour, as well as family behaviour (Karambayya & Reilly, 1992). However, there appears to be little erosion in the strength of gender role expectations concerning men's and women's roles in society (Noor, 2002). Nickols (1994) describes this situation as a tipping point where old social norms have declined in importance but have not yet been replaced by new social norms to create alternative patterns of family and work life. As a result, support systems and work schedules have not been sufficiently adjusted to allow for the integration of work and family roles insofar as women are concerned.

Working women with young children are mostly likely to face the greatest conflict between work and family. Employed women with young children often plan their work schedules and demands

around the care and needs of their children, leaving work early, cutting down on travel and postponing career-enhancing moves. This means that women have taken on work responsibilities side by side with their traditional family obligations. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) maintain that work-family conflict emerges when time, devoted to the requirements of one role, restrains an individual from participation in another role and the specific behaviours required by one role make it difficult to fulfil the requirements of another role. Working women find it difficult to take care of their children and family needs whilst at work as they are contracted with their employers for specific hours or duration. Furthermore, working women may command respect from and exercise authority over their subordinates and consequently, could portray less emotion while the family environment allows for greater demonstration of emotions and vulnerability.

The aforementioned is defined as a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible in certain respects. Work-family conflict can further be viewed as a form of tension that occurs when the pressures associated with membership in one role interfere with membership in another (Boyar, Maertz, Pearson & Keough, 2003). If high expectations in both work and family spheres contribute to such conflict, that conflict is likely to be the highest for those in which both parents display high levels of work and family involvement (Karambayya & Reilly, 1992).

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) suggest that the most common type of work-family conflict is 'time-based conflict', experienced when the time devoted to one role renders the fulfilment of the other difficult. Hall (1990) points out that women are affected by the need to balance work and family demands. Work-family conflict has been found to be negatively related to several variables that are linked to career satisfaction, such as career progression and career involvement (Judge & Colquitt, 2004).

1.1.5 Gender impact on work-family conflict

Although both men and women may experience work-family conflict, women report more conflict than men (Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992a; Hammer, Allen & Gringsby, 1997; Lundberg, Mardberg & Frankenhauser, 1994). The majority of women are career-and-family

people who desire serious careers whilst nevertheless actively rearing their children. However, women who take career breaks to have children have found it difficult to resume their careers and operate in the fast-paced work environment although some organisations have begun to make plans for retaining their female resources. This means that women are asked to pay a price for success that is not demanded of men: they will be less likely to marry and raise children. They will thus continue to lack the same clear paths and role models enjoyed by men (Geber, 2000).

Amos-Wilson (1993) argues that it is popularly claimed that women are less ambitious than men. However, an alternative interpretation could be that while they are developing as children and young adults, women are led to believe that their careers in employment are damaged by motherhood. O'Driscoll, Poelmans and Spector (2003) argue that this position suggests that females will seek work roles that do not interfere with family roles, especially motherhood. Thus for many young women starting out on their careers an opportunity-cost dilemma appears to exist. No matter what a woman's whole life aspirations may be, if she also plans to choose motherhood, her expectation is that she will not be able to choose what she wants (Mackey & Coney, 2000). It may not be that the choice, one or the other, family or career, actually exists; it is the belief that it will. Reconciling the demands of work and family roles often involves getting off the 'fast track' and may only be possible for a very small minority who are either self-employed or employed by organisations with progressive human resource policies (Hessing, 1988; Voydanoff, 1989).

It is thus misleading to view women as less ambitious in their careers than men. Their aspirations may well be similar but the problem may emerge from a combination of being told that they cannot aspire to certain careers and being prevented from taking them up, because it is assumed that what women want to do must fit in with motherhood. If it is not the actual occasion of motherhood which deprives women of careers, perhaps it is the constrained 'dream' as well as the lack of opportunities and other factors regarding socialisation which limit career ambitions in women's lives. Thus it may not be biology or social roles which lay down these limits, but rather a combination of deep structures, including constraints in opportunities and assumptions about

the interaction of women's roles, which affect employers, advisers and women themselves (Amos-Wilson, 1993).

Greenhaus, Callanan and Godshalk (2000) differ from the notion of women being obliged to choose between work and family. They assert that the 1990s will probably be remembered as the decade in which the management of 'work-family conflict' and the achievement of a 'balanced life-style' became issues of national priority (in the United States of America). The 21st century will provide even more challenges to women and men pursuing demanding careers and active family and personal lives globally.

1.1.6 Race impact on work-family conflict

It was indicated earlier that race is one factor that should be taken into consideration when discussing work-family conflict and its effect on women. This is an acknowledgement that women are not a homogeneous group. They come from different cultural and racial group backgrounds, which may affect how they deal with life challenges or their socialisation. This section discusses how race impacts on work-family conflict.

Racism is usually equated with hostility and prejudice (Van der Walt, Van Niekerk, Doyle, Knipe & Du Toit, 2002). In South Africa, racism was entrenched through legislation which resulted in preferential treatment for one race over the other. Different racial groups developed separately and had unequal access to the country's resources. The work domain was not omitted from these segregationist policies. However, it is crucial to note that women of all races were given few opportunities for work advancement. It is largely this reason fact that women are mostly poor, have limited exposure to economic opportunities, earn lower salaries and are less educated (Baden, Hassim & Meintjies, 1998; Budlender, 2002).

The current study seeks to understand how women's separate development (due to racial segregation policies) influences their experiences of work-family conflict (because, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, employment opportunities have opened for women of all races). There is little literature and research, in South Africa, regarding this issue. This

observation also links to the recommendation made by Wallis and Price (2003) in their research with regards to the relationship between work and family amongst single mothers. They pointed to a need for further exploration of the impact of broader social and economic issues, particularly into the effects of race and class on the challenges faced by (single) mothers in South Africa.

This study is important since South Africa's history, demographics and culturally diverse population offer an opportunity to study the impact of race on work-family conflict. It is of particular significance to our country because of the complex nature and socio-political interaction in our society. Western models and theories cannot summarily be applied to South Africa (Van der Walt & Du Toit, 1999).

1.1.7 Limited research of research regarding work-family conflict within South Africa

A substantial body of research has been conducted regarding various issues of work-family conflict (Netemeyer, Boles & MacMurrain, 1996; Thomas & Ganster, 1995). South African research has largely depended on career theories and research emanating from the United States. Little effort has been devoted to examining the appropriateness of these theories in South Africa (Stead & Watson, 1998). Furthermore, most of this research has focused on Caucasian samples and has been centred primarily on the individual (Stead, 1996; Stead & Watson, 1998). South Africa offers unique opportunities for further research in this regard due to its labour environment and cultural diversity.

For instance, in the United States, Richie (2003) concluded that blacks (relative to their white counterparts) used more diverse and flexible coping responses in stressful situations. The same cannot be currently concluded about racial differences and their impact on work-family conflict in South Africa as there is limited research in this regard. Furthermore, cross-cultural researchers have relied mainly on cultural values as an explanation for differences in work-family conflict across countries. They thus seek to understand the content and macro-environmental influences on this type of conflict (Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco & Lau, 2003). The present study offers an opportunity to investigate women of various races and their experiences of work-family conflict.

The researcher was brought up within a middle class African family environment with both parents working as teachers. There was also an involvement of the extended family, particularly on the maternal side, in her upbringing. She went to boarding schools at an early age, like her siblings. This was perhaps her parents' way of ensuring that their children received the best education away from the politicised township environment. Furthermore, the boarding schools were her mother's coping mechanism with work-family conflict. Lastly, her parents often relocated in search of better employment opportunities. The present researcher has relocated and currently lives away from her home seeking better economic opportunities.

The above gives an indication of that which interested the researcher regarding the topic. Furthermore, work-family conflict affects women of different background; their experiences in this regard and coping mechanisms are worth investigating.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Work and family constitute two central domains in the lives of most adults. In recent years, research into the links between these two domains has increased greatly because of changes in the demographic composition of the workforce (as was noted in the previous discussion). Researchers have based most of the studies on work-family links on a conflict perspective stemming from the early work of Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal (1964) on organisational stress. These researchers identified inter-role conflict as a significant source of work stress (Noor, 2002). In applying the role conflict perspective of Khan et al. (1964) to this area of work and family, researchers view work-family conflict as a form of inter-role conflict whose demands on work and family roles are mutually incompatible. Therefore, meeting the demands in one domain makes it difficult to meet demands in the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

Coser (1995) argues that the popularity of inter-role conflict stems from the scarcity hypothesis, which assumes that individuals possess limited time and energy. Therefore, applying multiple roles creates inter-role conflict and role overload, which in turn causes psychological distress and physical exhaustion. Work-family conflict has been associated with diminished satisfaction and

lower levels of psychological wellbeing (Frone et al., 1992a; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Thomas & Ganster, 1995).

Research suggests that women on average place a greater emphasis on their family roles than men. Etaugh and Bridges (2004) argue that one of the factors that contribute to this situation is that of gender attitudes. People construct images of the roles expected for each gender and this construction guides their own behaviour (Van der Walt et al., 2002). According to this view many couples, including dual-income couples, have internalised the traditional gender beliefs that managing children and the home are primarily the wife's responsibility and that husbands should be the main financial providers. Therefore the gender of a person dictates the economic, social and cultural roles, behaviours, attributes and opportunities which are associated with being male or female (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Van der Walt et al., 2002). As a result women face the internal conflict of participating in the economy whilst still carrying out the bulk of their traditional family roles.

1.2.1 General problem statement

Although most college women want to discontinue their employment for the purposes of childrearing, black college women wish to do so for a shorter period of time than do white women (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), according to this study in the USA. This behaviour or attitude discrepancy between black and white college women necessitates research into what influences such decisions. One could view the issue as two groups facing a similar situation but choosing different solutions according to their race. However, few studies have examined the outcomes of family and work conflict for women in different (race) groups (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004), particularly in South Africa. This present study intends to do so.

1.2.2 Aims

This section discusses the reasons why the present research is carried out and the choice of the investigative approach taken.

1.2.2.1 General aim

The general aim of this study is to describe the work-family conflict experiences in a sample of South African women from diverse racial backgrounds.

1.2.2.2 Specific aim of the literature review

Contemporary literature on the experiences of work-family conflict on a sample of South African women from diverse racial backgrounds will be examined.

1.2.2.3 Specific aim of the phenomenological study

This study aims to investigate and analyse women's work-family conflict experiences through their unmediated voices.

1.3 PARADIGM PERSPECTIVE

The paradigm perspective consists of a 'cluster of beliefs and dictates for scientists in a particular discipline [which] influence what should be studied, how research should be done, how findings should be interpreted and so on' (Bryman, 1998, p. 4). It is the model or structure in accordance with which a study is undertaken (Dunn, 1999; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Mouton & Marais, 1999). The section below elaborates on the chosen paradigm.

1.3.1 Disciplinary relationship

This study falls within the boundary of Career Psychology, specifically, in that it aims to describe the work-family conflict applicable to women as a result of engaging in paid employment.

1.3.2 Psychological paradigm

The study will be conducted within a phenomenological paradigm which investigates the ways events appear when theories and constructs are for a moment put aside by the researcher. Huberman and Miles (2002) contend that the advantages of this general psychological structure are simply those of systematic reflection on and presentation of the complex structure of people's life experiences. Edmund Husserl, regarded as the founder of phenomenology, argued that true science conforms itself to its objects: to be rigorous it must develop the method best suited to its object of investigation (Fouche, 1993).

In this respect Giorgi (2006) maintains that phenomenology allows psychology to be able to account for the phenomena in terms of how they appear, or how they are experienced, and not in terms of some idea of how they ought to appear. A phenomenologist attempts to experience these phenomena as the people involved must have experienced them in their bones, in a manner of speaking (Henning, van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Welman & Kruger, 2003). Creswell (2003b) defines phenomenological research as that field in which the researcher identifies the 'essence' of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by subjects in a study. The understanding of the 'lived experiences' marks phenomenology as a philosophy, as well as a method and a procedure which involves studying a small number of subjects through extensive and prolonged engagement in order to develop patterns and relations of meanings (Moustakas, 1998).

The researcher, through the phenomenological paradigm, investigates the way experiences appear by putting aside her theories and constructs. In doing so, the researcher, by means of phenomenology, studies the ways in which a person's world is inevitably formed, in part, by the person who lives in it (Huberman & Miles, 2002). This is achieved through a reflection upon actual experiences and making available to one's colleagues the data and steps of analysis that lead to one's findings: so that they may see for themselves whether and how they could do similar things (Huberman & Miles, 2002). It is this level of study that throws most light on the relational nature of human affairs. The researcher in the phenomenological paradigm attempts to understand people in terms of their own definition of their world (Harré, 2006; Mouton, 1996).

The phenomenological approach is appropriate for this study since human experience, which is part of psychological research, cannot be separated from the person who is experiencing it (Huysamen, 1994). It is relevant to this study of women as it is a prerequisite where one wants to capture rich data regarding people's conceptual frameworks: their 'lived experience' according to Husserl's term (Henning et al., 2004). Furthermore, feminist psychologists advocate that a more accurate representation of women's lives is achieved with subjective procedures, such as women's qualitative accounts of their experiences (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004).

1.3.3. Paradigm perspective implications for the researcher

The researcher in this study is concerned with understanding the given phenomena and to extend the precision and scope by which they are ordered (Kuhn, 1970). This implies that the researcher aims at seeking to understand, as much as possible, the experiences of human existence in a manner that is free of the presuppositions of our cultural heritage. Secondly, another assumption is that humans can only know what they experience through paying attention to perceptions and meanings that awaken their consciousness (Patton, 2002). Thirdly, this is an approach that allows us to contact phenomena as humans actually live and experience their lives, while allowing them to speak for themselves (Kelly, 1998). The researcher facilitates and unlocks the lived experiences of the subjects, narrating it in their own language.

Lastly, the researcher should be characterised by an attitude of openness to whatever is significant for the understanding of the phenomena (De Koning, 1986). This implies that the researcher captures the subjects' experiences accurately. She should listen carefully and also observe non-verbal communication signs so as to fully cover the essence of each conversation whilst interacting with the subject.

1.3.4 Methodological convictions based on the phenomenological perspective

The phenomenological paradigm influences parameters under which a research project is conducted. It thus informs the methodological convictions to which the researcher should adhere. These refer to the underlying beliefs of social and scientific research methods. Mouton and

Marais (1999, p. 14) maintain that the methodological dimension of the research is concerned with how ‘the research should be planned, structured and executed to comply with the criteria of social research. The methodological convictions that will be applied to the current study are discussed below.

1.3.4.1 Sociological dimension

The qualitative researcher is confronted with making objective observations about subjects based on the latter’s accounts about their lived experiences. The acquiring of this objectivity is challenged by sociological factors such as that the researcher forms part of society; thus her understanding of self and others is influenced by her language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; May, 2001). Secondly, researchers employ different methods in their quest for better understanding of human experiences as no single method is fully equipped to unearth such observations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). The researcher further carries the obligation of ensuring that the selection of these qualitative methods does not compromise the quest for objectivity. This is more so because the researcher’s operations are guided and linked to existing research communities, mechanisms of social control, research ethics and ideological influences and interests (Mouton & Marais, 1999).

This dimension acknowledges that the researcher is a social being and a product of her social environment, adopting a research approach with a battery of methods to select from. It therefore makes assumptions of certain risks which are inherent from a sociological point of view in obtaining an object reality whilst conducting a study.

1.3.4.2 Ontological dimension

The ontological dimension is concerned with that which exists within society (Hughes, 1994). It broadly examines the relationship between different aspects of society such as social actors, cultural norms and social structures (Barron, 2006) and their relationship amongst each other. The interpretative and qualitative account on which this study is based, assumes that social reality “is a consistently shifting emergent property of individual creation” (Bryman, 1998, p.

20). The researcher, during this study, was guided by an understanding and acknowledgement that social reality is not fixed (Barron, 2006). Furthermore, the researcher in this study is also guided by the feminist approach, which aims to unveil and understand (Barron, 2006; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; May, 2001) the work-family conflict experienced by working women using an interpretative and qualitative account.

This dimension also examines the relationship between South African working women of different race groups, as social actors, and their experiences of work-family conflict using an interpretative account of their cultural upbringing and socialisation within a patriarchal society (Barron, 2006; May, 2001). The working women are viewed as social actors, living within particular cultural norms and social structures. The current research investigates how they identify themselves within family and work roles, how they are shaped for such roles and how they cope with the demands of the different roles.

1.3.4.3 Teleological dimension

The teleological dimension makes an assumption that the character of nature is such that, its processes or typical human activity, is directed towards a particular goal or is shaped by a purpose (Mouton & Marais, 1999). One of the aims of the current researcher is to investigate and analyse women's work-family conflict experiences through their unmediated voices. This study is undertaken in order to deepen the understanding of work-family conflict experiences of working women from different race groups in South Africa. It is also aimed at drawing conclusions based on the accounts of the subjects. These accounts give them a voice that tells their experiences from an authentic point of view, giving them status as "knowers". This dimension therefore highlights the importance of spelling out clear aims (as in section 1.2) for conducting this research project.

1.3.4.4 Epistemological dimension

There is a link, in terms of research, between ontological and epistemological dimensions (Hughes, 1994). This dimension deals with the search for truth. It is concerned with the issue of

knowledge, who is the 'knower', the nature, sources of human knowledge and its limits (Barron, 2006; Summer, 2006). The ontological dimension, as discussed in 1.3.4.2, is concerned with what exists whilst this dimension is about whether that which is known is a true reflection of social reality.

Epistemology is a philosophical analysis of the character of existing knowledge, how truth regarding the world is realised or can be realised, viz., that which is established as facts (Hughes, 1994). One assumption about reality or truth is that it lies with the being or 'knower', is contextual, varies from time to time, is affected by space and social groups (Summer, 2006). Feminists, for example, argue that women's experiences are best understood through their own point of view or accounts (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). The subjects' experiences are captured through semi-structured interviews. This allows for a detailed account of their lives with the researcher probing for deeper meaning.

Furthermore, there is an added advantage in having a female researcher in a study concerning women due to shared experiences from a gender perspective and since she also possesses pertinent research skills (May, 2001). This study is based on the working women's accounts with regards to their experiences of work-family conflict. It is acknowledged that the researcher is also a working mother and thus shares empathy with her subjects. This acknowledgement also cautions the researcher regarding imposing her views whilst carrying on with the study.

1.3.4.5 Methodological dimension

The ontological and epistemological dimensions are concerned with that which exists and counts as facts respectively, as discussed previously in sections 1.3.4.2 and 1.3.4.4. These two dimensions are regarded more as philosophical assumptions. What matters mostly in an argument or study is how conclusions about a phenomenon are derived through step by step activities based on an agreed-upon premise (Hughes, 1994). This means that if there is an agreed premise, and a consistent and rigorous adherence to steps, then conclusions follow as matter of logical sense (Hughes, 1994; Mouton & Marais, 1999).

A study is undertaken to establish a scientific knowledge claim. Highlen and Finley (1996) elaborate further on the point that the consideration of the basic paradigms used in qualitative research is an essential prerequisite to any discussion. The researcher within a phenomenological paradigm is guided by constructing the nature of the reality concerned, maintaining a close relationship with the subjects and acknowledging situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This methodological dimension cautions the researcher in making an appropriate selection of research methods best suited for the subjects, relevant to the type of topic and circumstances so as to reach objective conclusions. The methodological dimension is concerned in making reference to methodological methods, correct data collection and analysis procedures; and sources of references (Hughes, 1994; Mouton & Marais, 1999) as prescribed in the selected paradigm. This is a qualitative research study that used semi-structured interviews, recordings, interpretative data analysis and deriving themes in terms of the meanings that working women make of their work-family conflict experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Mouton & Marais, 1999).

The subjects of this study are women as their experiences are best told through their own voices. The research also includes an audit trail which examines the researcher's background and interest in the research thus mitigating sources of bias or inaccuracies. Data was recorded through audio tapes and additional notes taken for accurate coverage of the interviews. The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed for in-depth understanding of the subject's experiences. Lastly, data analysis also involved counter checking of details with the subjects, thus reducing discrepancies in the data.

1.3.5 Meta-theoretical concepts

The study will apply a feminist metatheory which proposes that research into women should increase our understanding of females and help change the world for them (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Kimmel & Garko, 1995). The present research will be guided by feminist principles that firstly advocate a focus on the experiences of women through the investigation of topics that are of interest to them. This also links with the ontological dimension that views women as social actors within the broader society. Their views about their lives should be heard, recognised and

acknowledged as true representation of their lived experiences. The working women in this study are viewed as the “knowers” of their lives as per the epistemological dimension. This study intends to intensify the understanding of work-family conflict and to draw related conclusions based on the researcher’s observations, thus satisfying the teleological dimension within this research.

Secondly, the researcher recognises that this is an important category for investigation based on the understanding that a person’s gender can influence expectations about and in response to that person (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004). Thirdly, organisations and employers are placed in a position where they must take the multiple roles of women employees into consideration if they want women to be fulfilled and productive employees (Redelinghuys, Botes & De Wet, 1999).

1.3.6 Central theoretical statement

Articulating the experience of work-family conflict amongst women from diverse racial backgrounds will further promote an understanding of the meaning of work-family conflict for such women.

1.4 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design is based on the phenomenological paradigm. Moustakas (1998) argues that a phenomenological research design aims to:

- Determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it. From the individual descriptions, general or universal meanings are derived, in other words, the essence of the structures of the experiences.
- Since description and understanding, rather than measurement and interpretation, will direct the research questions of this study (Person, 2003), a phenomenological approach is deemed relevant. In this approach, ‘the researcher identifies the “essence” of human experiences concerning a phenomenon, as described by subjects in a study’ (Creswell, 2003, p. 15).

The research design spells out the structure and logic behind the chosen research methodologies and how they relate to the research questions or hypotheses (Davies, 2006). The type of research and methods to ensure scientific rigour will be discussed below.

1.4.1 Type of research

A qualitative methodology was deemed appropriate in terms of the study's aims. Sarantakos (1998, p. 48) argues that qualitative research exhibits the following characteristics:

- It assumes that the social world is always a human interaction, not a discovery: consequently interpretative science tries to capture reality as it is, namely as seen and experienced by subjects;
- It tries to capture reality in interaction;
- It studies a small number of subjects;
- It employs no random sampling;
- It attempts to present the information gathered verbally in a detailed and complete form, not in numbers or formulae;
- It tries to approach reality without preconceived ideas and pre-structured models and patterns;
- It perceives the researcher and the researched as two equally important elements of the same situation. Subjects are not reduced to variables, units or hypotheses, but are perceived as parts of the whole. Reducing people to numerical symbols and statistics leads to the loss of one's perception of the subjective nature of human behaviour;
- It aims to study reality from the inside, not from the outside;
- Its purpose is to interpret meaningful human actions and the interpretations that people give of themselves or others;
- It attempts to capture the meanings and regularities of social action;
- It aims to understand people, not to measure them;
- It employs research procedures that produce descriptive data, representing in the subjects' own words their views and experiences; and
- It leads to an interpretive inquiry which ultimately is a moral one, in accordance with the phenomenological paradigm.

The next section looks at the unit of analysis.

1.4.2 Unit of analysis

Individual human beings are probably the most common object of social scientific research. Social scientists are of course interested in different categories of individuals (Mouton, 1996). The unit of analysis to be used in the current study comprises the experiences of individuals.

1.4.3 Ensuring scientific rigour

Husserl emphasised that scientific rigour, in social research, is obtained through using data as existing in the subjects' consciousness, and derives its logic from the assertion that humans know what is certain based on that which they experience and that this experience can be reconfirmed (Moustakas, 1998). Thus, one of the principles which guided the researcher was being free from making suppositions regarding the subjects, research topic and process.

Phenomenology acknowledges that human lived experiences, which exist in their consciousness, inner perceptions or through their reasoning, are self-evident (Moustakas, 1998). The researcher therefore accepts that which is presented as a true reflection of reality in terms of the subject's view and thus embraced this acquired knowledge as true and authentic. Data in this study, for example, was collected by means of semi-structured interviews. This approach allowed the subjects to share their experiences freely with the researcher probing for deepening understanding and seeking clarity. A pilot interview was conducted and submitted to the supervisor for input in order to ensure that the interview questions elicited the right responses while the researcher honed her interviewing skills. Further, the interview was recorded on tape while the researcher took notes. This ensured that the true essences of the subjects' experiences were accurately captured.

Furthermore, the researcher transcribed and together with an expert produced narrative reports of the interviews and lastly, the subjects were afforded an opportunity to comment on their individual interview transcripts order to ensure that their experiences were captured

authentically, close to reality, trustworthy and closely related to the construct of their real world (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Husserl further maintains that truth is established through confirming it with other people's experiences, which he referred to as intersubjective knowledge. This involves an interchange of ideas, perceptions, feelings and opinions in defining social reality (Moustakas, 1998), resulting in a common or shared definition of that which exists and is real in their world. There is an exchange of information during the dialoguing and discussion pertaining to individual experiences resulting in the subjects' changing their experiences with regards to their reality based on newly found information.

The data analysis involved a synthesis of the information as told by the subjects. It also involved deriving themes, analysing their meaning and description within the worldview of the subjects. For example, they were invited to contribute to the input during the data analysis and findings in order to ensure that the research conclusions reflected their reality and experiences. The dissertation was presented to external examiners whose feedback improved the quality of the research. This research was further presented by the researcher to the Society of Industrial and Organisational Psychology Association conference who appreciated and reinforced the authenticity of the research findings. Certain issues were highlighted by the researcher for further investigation or research.

Furthermore, the researcher recognised herself as a critical factor in the research process. She chose this research based on her own experience as a single working mother. There was an upfront declaration of her interest in the topic selected. This allowed her to develop a deep sense of self-awareness that served as a buffer against bias.

The audit trail, which appears at various stages of the research process and is summarised in section 3.7.1, was employed for reflection which allowed the researcher to analyse how she derived logic in examining the experiences of the subjects, describe her feelings associated with the step, and highlight certain scenarios she experienced during the research process.

1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The qualitative research project uses the assumptions of the phenomenological paradigm. These assumptions then inform the method of the following phenomenological study and the literature review.

1.5.1 Phase 1: Literature review

The researcher reviewed the current literature on the given conflict with particular reference to South Africa. This was integrated to provide a framework against which to explore the problem statement.

A researcher has an obligation to acquaint herself with any publications reporting major research conducted in the field; the most widely accepted theoretical positions; and the most recent debates. Mouton (1996) refers to the literature review, firstly, as a map or maps of the terrain. Secondly, a review of previous research also provides guidelines, or at least suggestions, for the design of one's project. Thirdly, an intensive study of the existing body of knowledge yields various kinds of resources. Fourthly, anyone planning to research a field which has hitherto enjoyed limited attention, either worldwide or locally, can learn a great deal by studying related fields and from the designs and methods used.

The literature review will be related to the topic of this study.

1.5.2 Phase 2: Phenomenological study

The phenomenological approach emphasises that the understanding of a subject is best viewed from people's own points of view or their interpretation of themselves (Barron, 2006). This section discusses how the population and sample will be selected, as well as describing the measuring instruments, data collection and processing methods, and indicating how the reporting and interpretation of findings, conclusions, limitations and recommendations will be undertaken. This would also include an audit trail undertaken throughout this phenomenological study.

1.5.2.1 Step 1: Population and sample

A small sample will be employed. As Mouton (1996) points out, in qualitative research social objects or phenomena are studied for their interest as representative examples of a larger population of similar objects or phenomena. Purposive sampled interviewees who are fit for the research (May, 2001) were approached by the researcher. The ‘purposive sampling demands that (one) think(s) critically about the parameters of the population interested in and choose (the) sample carefully on this basis’ (Silverman, 2000, p. 104). This ensured that the population is composed of various clearly recognisable, non-overlapping sub-populations or strata which differ from one another in terms of the variable in question (Huysamen, 1994; Oliver, 2006). Women who fit the research criteria, that is, who are working, bringing up young children and from different race groups, were sourced and interviewed (Oliver, 2006). Sampling was done in the recognition that limited resources deterred (Silverman, 2000) the researcher from interviewing each and every woman who fits these criteria.

1.5.2.2 Step 2: Methods of gathering empirical material

In this study, the researcher is recognised as the primary research tool because the phenomenological study depends, at every stage, on her skills, training, insights and capabilities. The human factor is simultaneously a great strength and the fundamental weakness of qualitative inquiry and analysis (Patton, 2002). The researcher situated herself in the world of the subjects. Guba and Lincoln (1981) advise caution as to whether the research findings in this scenario are a true reflection of the views of the subjects or those of the researcher. The bias of the researcher was kept in check by means of scrutiny of the research process by the dissertation supervisor while the researcher also constantly engaged in introspection in order to prevent over involvement.

The semi-structured interview was used as a tool for dialogue (Davies, 2006) between the researcher and the subjects, thereby ensuring in-depth interaction which afforded the researcher a view into the world of the subject.

1.5.2.3 Step 3: Gathering empirical material

The interview is probably the oldest and most often used device for obtaining information. An interview can obtain a great deal of information, is flexible and adaptable to individual situations and can often be used when no other method is possible or appropriate (Kerlinger, 1996). In a phenomenological study, the researcher usually works with a wealth of rich descriptive data, collected through methods such as in-depth interviewing (Mouton, 1996).

Semi-structured interviews, lasting 45 minutes, were conducted. Such interviews allowed the interviewer to use probes with a view to clearing up a vague response or asking for incomplete answers to be elaborated upon (Huysamen, 1994; May, 2001). Each interview was recorded on tape and transcribed. This ensured that the subjects' narration of their work-family conflict was captured.

The topics will comprise the following:

- Description, in much detail, of each subject's experiences in raising children and meeting work demands;
- Coping mechanisms which working women of different race groups in South Africa employ to deal with work and family demands; and
- Any other issue the subjects deem relevant to the topic.

1.5.2.4 Step 4: Analysing empirical material

Mouton (1996) points out that data collection methods produce new information or data about the world that requires further processing. Data analysis involves at least two kinds of operations, namely data reduction, during which qualitative data is summarised and analysed, followed by synthesis, which involves interpretation or explanation of the data.

As Huberman and Miles (2002) maintain, data analysis essentially concerns detection and considers that the tasks of defining, categorising, theorising, explaining, exploring and mapping are fundamental to the analyst's role. Data processing involves making sense of information,

organising it into manageable units and identifying information trends. Mason (2002) and Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) suggest the following techniques:

- Reading data: literally, interpretively or reflexively. This entails asking questions such as: What counts as data or evidence in relation to my research questions? How do I wish to read my data? Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) refer to this phase as familiarisation and immersion. They argue that gathering data should involve interpretation of information as it arrives by means of:
 - Deducing themes
 - Cross-sectional and categorical indexing. In this study, indexing and retrieving text will be carried out with Atlas, a computer aided method of qualitative data analysis;
 - Contextual, case study and holistic data organisation; and
 - Interpretation and checking. This will include the use of diagrams and charts.

The above will be applied during data analysis in this research.

1.5.2.5 Step 5: Evaluation, interpretation and reporting of findings

In view of the principle of public scrutiny, there is no sense in conducting research if the findings obtained are not released to the scientific community (Huysamen, 1994). Kerlinger (1996, p. 11) elaborates on the effect of this principle on report writing as follows: Every scientist writing a research report has other scientists reading what [she] writes while [she] writes it.

Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999) offer the following practical guidelines when reporting and interpreting findings: firstly, the report must be an insightful representation of the perspectives of both the insider and outsider; secondly, if the account (report) is well-crafted it should clearly distinguish when a researcher is descriptive and when she is interpretative; and thirdly, while subjects may not be able to confirm our interpretations they will be capable of confirming our description of their understanding.

1.5.2.6 Step 6: Conclusion

In this step the researcher will offer a critical evaluation of how well the study accounts for the phenomenon studied in terms of the consequences that flow from the research (Kelly, 1998). This involves detailing conclusions derived from the research and will include working hypotheses. It is also about making an assertion on whether data collected does or does not support the hypotheses (Jupp, 2006). It will provide an overall impression of whether the research aims have been met by means of the proposed research methods.

1.5.2.7 Step 7: Limitations

The limitations of the literature review and the phenomenological research as well as a critical assessment of these will be reported in this step.

1.5.2.8 Step 8: Recommendations

This section will cover the following:

- Recommendations for Industrial and Organisational Psychologists when practising in the field of work-family conflict; and
- Recommendations for further research based on the limitations and conclusions of this research.

1.6 CHAPTER DIVISION

The chapters will be demarcated as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction and background

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Phenomenological study

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 5: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter outlined the researcher's background, the motivation for the study, emergence of paid labour amongst women, the continued existence of the traditional gender division of labour, and the issues of role strain and the impact of race on work-family conflict. It further considered the problem statement, paradigm perspective, research design and chapter division of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Various research studies conducted on the concept of work-family conflict and related concepts will be examined in this particular chapter. It is critical that the study investigates how women are located within their community structures. Women form part of the society they live in, are socialised, assume certain roles and responsibilities and interact with the environment based on their expectations of them, whether placed by themselves or their significant others. In investigating how women exist in relation to their society at large, this chapter will also examine the cultural, patriarchal society and racial issues that affect decisions and expectations that are imposed on women. Women are not a homogeneous group, and this will be taken into account. This chapter will discuss factors that contribute towards women's being part of the world of work, the advantages of women's participation in the work domain, its impact on their family lives and how women cope with competing family and work demands, as found within the existing literature.

Furthermore, the discussion will take account the consequences women face while performing multiple roles, such as role strain and interference. Women's views on work-family conflict will also be investigated using existing literature. This chapter will define and describe all these key concepts and show how women, with specific reference to working mothers, perceive different aspects of the work-family conflict they experience.

The field of psychology consists of different theories and perspectives which are used for understanding human behaviour. The work-family conflict is no exception. This chapter will identify and critique these existing theories based on their assumptions and / or relevance when applied to women of South African origin, in particular. Lastly, this chapter will also investigate theories of the coping mechanisms that women use to deal with work-family conflict.

2.1. DEFINING WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

The allocation of roles according to gender is based firstly on the assumption ‘that most women’s lives are dominated by their capacity to bear children’ (Korabik, 1996, p. 3). Secondly, another assumption holds that because men and women are biologically different in nature, gender should determine the roles which they play in society (Hunter College, 1995). It seems that women are the more heavily burdened of the two genders since societal expectations are clear on their role insofar as household responsibilities are concerned.

It is this traditionally accepted notion that men and women perform different gender roles which influenced research into work-family conflict (Gerstel & Gross, 1987; Piotrkowski, Rapoport & Rapoport, 1987). These gendered role expectations have resulted in extensive research regarding the interconnectedness between family and work worlds (Barling & Sorensen, 1997; Greenhaus, 1989; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1994; Zedeck, 1992). Greenhaus and Parasuraman (1999) further argue that research into family and work links should examine men’s and women’s experiences in the ‘gendered society and work organisations’. The current study takes on this challenge by examining women’s voices on this issue in the belief that it is their story, about their lives, and is best told in their words and from their own perspectives.

Furthermore, this traditional division of labour according to gender is greatly affected by the increased participation of women in fulltime employment (Joplin et al., 2003) which results in ‘the growing proportions of (women) employees who are dual-career couples or single parents’ (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999, p. 391). Women are increasingly participating in the work domain whilst still not liberated from family responsibilities (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). They act as managers of childcare and household maintenance, providing support for their husbands’ careers and socialisation of children and youth (Vosler, 1996), whilst also maintaining their own careers.

The purpose of this research is to investigate experiences work-family conflict amongst South African working women from different race groups. It looks at whether the conflict between family and work demands (among women) results in increased dissatisfaction and stress experienced within both family and work spheres (Frone, Yardley & Markel, 1997; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999; Netemeyer et al., 1996; Parasuraman, Purohit, Goldshalk & Beutell, 1996), leading to negative consequences such as a poor quality of life (Higgins, Duxbury & Irving, 1992; Rice, Frone & McFarlin, 1992), as numerous studies reveal. The clash between workplace demands and family needs has produced a new, dominant image based not on separate but interconnected spheres that are in conflict with each other, (Gerson & Jacobs, 2001).

Work-family conflict can be defined as an inter-role friction, in which the demands of one role interfere with fulfilling the demands of the other (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Kahn et al., 1964; Voydanoff, 1988). The incompatibility of the afore-mentioned roles causes participation in one role to be 'difficult by virtue of participation in the other role' (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999, p. 392).

The researcher at times leaves a meeting because her child has fallen sick whilst at school. She does this in accordance with the workplace code of conduct which is full of policies that prescribe how to handle situations like these, ranging from phoning one's supervisor to filling in a leave form. Hence the effect of work on the quality of family life is considerable since its demands for work time and energy are more regulated (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). Research indicates that high work demands are strongly correlated to work-family conflict (Frone et al., 1992a; Frone et al., 1997; Judge, Boudreau & Bretz, 1994).

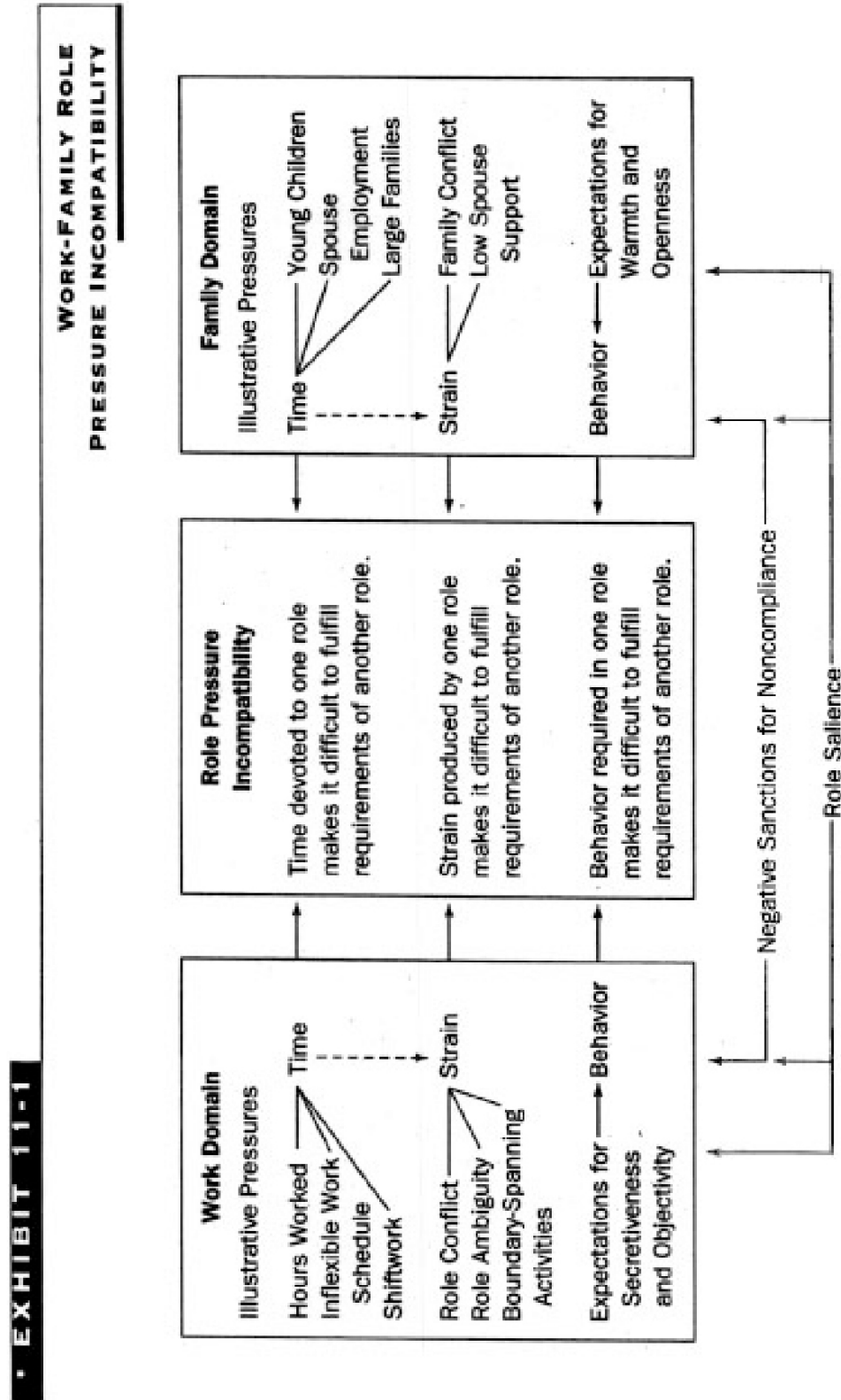
Furthermore, studies reveal that it is women, more than men, who experience conflict of this nature (Davidson & Fielden, 1999; Frone, Russell & Cooper, 1992b; Hammer et al., 1997; Wiersma, 1990; Williams & Alliger, 1994). Therefore this study is based on the premise that men suffer less from work-family conflict and consequently it will only investigate women's experiences of this phenomenon.

It was previously assumed that work-family conflict is a one-dimensional construct (Carlson, Derr & Wadsworth, 2003; Huang, Hammer, Neal & Perrin, 2004); however, recent definitions show it as bi-directional (Frone et al., 1992a; Netemeyer et al., 1996), with two components, viz., work interfering with family and family interfering with work. The former occurs when work demands affect the performance of family responsibilities and a family's quality of life, while the latter become evident when family demands impede work performance and quality of work life (Huang et al., 2004; Frone et al., 1992a; Stoeva, Chiu & Greenhaus, 2002). This study only examines the former. The section below discusses the different types of work-family conflict.

2.1.1 Types of work-family conflict

Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), as illustrated in figure 2.1 below, identified three dimensions of work-family conflict: time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based.

FIGURE 2.1 Time-based, strain based and behaviour-based work-family conflict dimensions



SOURCE: J. H. Greenhaus and N. J. Beutell, "Sources of Conflict between Work and Family Roles," *Academy of Management Review*, 1985, vol 10, p. 78. Reprinted with permission.

Time-based conflict develops when the time occupied by one category of activities hampers fulfilment of duties in another role. It takes two forms. Firstly, the time pressures of one role make it physically impossible to fulfil the requirements of another. The researcher only managed to watch her firstborn daughter play netball once in her lifetime since the game occurs between 14:00 and 16:00 and clashes with working hours. Most children stay in day-care, are at home on their own or under adult supervision because their parents finish work later than school hours. Others join their parents at work if employers are sufficiently flexible towards this arrangement.

Secondly, work-family conflict could result from time pressures due to the long hours required in fulfilling family role requirements, thus interfering with work-related activities (Greenhaus et al., 2000). The mothers either wake up early so as to fulfill childcare responsibilities or risk arriving late at work. Over-concentration on family responsibilities leaves them little or no time to engage in other roles such as social clubs or fundraising activities at school, or other community projects, for example.

Thirdly, strain-based work-family conflict occurs when the pressures of one role negatively affect the performance of another role, causing mental preoccupation with one role even when physically attempting to meet the demands of the other role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). Marital distress has been associated with decreased productivity at work (Forthofer, Markman, Cox, Stanley & Kessler, 1996). It is also common for individuals to interact negatively with their families owing to mental exhaustion from work (Carlson et al., 2003).

Lastly, behaviour-based work-conflict occurs when the behaviour expected in one role is difficult to adjust to the behaviour patterns expected in another role. Family members expect warmth and love whilst work demands aggressiveness and logical behaviour (Carlson et al., 2003). However, women bring different dimensions to the work environment, based on their

socialisation and family roles exposure. Women are good at multi-tasking, problem solving and reaching compromises (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006).

The section above distinguished the various forms of work-family conflict. This is crucial for discussing how these manifest themselves in women, in particular as per the next discussion.

2.1.2 Manifestation of work-family conflict

As Reitzes and Mutran (1994) maintain, roles form an important part of the social structure. As previously noted, work-family conflict is a result of competing family and work demands based on assigned roles for women and different expectations to deal with (Kossek, Noe & DeMaar, 1999) for those who have opted otherwise. People exchange their time and energy at their workplace, which their employers strictly monitor in ensuring that they receive value for their money. However, parents cannot divorce themselves entirely from family obligations, thus resulting in an undesirable state of internal conflict.

Role overload also stems from ‘a situation in which a person’s various roles carry more responsibilities than that person can reasonably manage’ (Schwartz & Scott, 1994, p. 303). Women are more prone to role overload in this regard (Kelly & Voydanoff, 1985). These prescribed activities for women stem from social and traditional gender expectations that expect them to be primary caregivers, and a lack of role models for women (Cooper & Lewis, 1993). Secondly, another form of work-family conflict is evident in role interference which occurs when two or more roles conflict to such an extent that none is accomplished (Duxbury & Higgins, 1998). As Piotrkowki (1979) argues, role conflict occurs when the demands of one role create practical difficulties in managing the demands of the other.

The above discussion of work-family conflict distinguished its various forms and is important as a basis for exploring existing theories in this regard.

2.1.3 Understanding work-family conflict within existing social theories, assumptions and hypotheses

Social theories offer individuals or communities solace and a shared consciousness through which daily experiences can be observed, thus creating common insights and interpretations of events. It is with this in mind that existing social theories and their ‘ability to explain and understand the findings of research within a conceptual framework (thus making) sense of the data’ (May, 2001, p. 29) are discussed below in an attempt to unravel the essence of work-family conflict. These theories are mainly those regarding role, system, the scarcity hypothesis, the enhancement hypothesis, compensation and spill-over theories hypothesis.

2.1.3.1 Role theory

It is normal in different nations, notwithstanding ‘cultural and societal expectations of women, that most individuals participate in multiple roles during their lives, such as those of work, family’ (Lambert, Hogan & Barton, 2002; Noor, 2002; O’Driscoll et al., 2003), students, community and or church leaders. How these roles are allocated is also a matter of interest for this study, because this may offer an explanation as to why some feel very obliged to carry out their responsibilities to their best of their abilities whilst others may put little effort into bearing their load.

Research findings indicate that parental responsibilities are the heaviest for mothers who may therefore feel more obligated to deal with family matters, even at the expense of their jobs (Kinnunen, Vermulst & Gerris, 2003; O’Driscoll et al., 2003). It is traditionally expected that

‘mothers matter most (in household care), they make costumes for the school play, organise parties, look after (children) when they have chicken pox, do school runs, make beds so friends can stay overnight, take them to kiddies movies’ (Campbell, 2002, p. 34).

2.1.3.2 Systems theory: a balancing act in maintaining societal components

One of the basic assumptions of the systems theory is, firstly, that different societal institutions or their parts exist in harmony. Secondly, it defines a society as a system whose components are interrelated (Hammer et al., 2003), holding ‘that changes in one part lead to changes in all parts’ (Hanson, 1995, p. 27). One can argue, in terms of this theory, that the gendered traditional division of labour is not on a par with the rising numbers of dual-career or single parent family scenarios. Women engage in work activities, seeking compensation and providing for their families whilst simultaneously being valued family members, which should ideally lead to personal fulfilment instead of work-family conflict. Researchers are thus advised to take the family system into account when studying work-family issues, including the interactive relationship between attitudes and behaviours of its members (Hammer et al., 2003).

2.1.3.3 Scarcity hypothesis: limited time and energy versus far reaching roles

The proponents of the scarcity hypothesis argue that holding different roles, and the building-up of pressures from multiple sources, result in inter-role conflict and overload (Carlson et al., 2003; Coser, 1974; Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Kossek et al., 1995; Marks, 1997; Reitzes & Mutran, 1994; Yoder, 2007). The working women, for example, are contracted with their employers for a certain number of hours per day. This competes with time for their family or attending their children’s school needs or other activity. It causes an inter-role conflict if a principal calls for an appointment during working hours. There is thus a negative consequence in carrying many roles and fitting them within the limited time available for optimum engagement in each role.

2.1.3.4 Enhancement hypothesis

It is an interesting phenomenon that parents are still opting for outside employment and there is no reversal of this development despite the scenario painted by the scarcity theorists and the negative consequences of work-family conflict on women. The enhancement theories argue that this is occurring because societal approval, social status, source of self-esteem and other benefits are associated with each role that individuals adopt (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), such as marriage, parenthood, and promotions at work, which concern embracing new roles and added responsibilities.

The enhancement theory further proposes that performing multiple roles minimises the risk of negative consequences in any role (Marks, 1997; Yoder, 2007). Hence parents will plan their weekends or holidays so that they can spend more time with their families. One also sees mothers shedding tears regarding troubles with their children but sighing that they derive satisfaction just by having them and experiencing their family lives (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). Spending time at work serves as a buffer of this family-based strain, according to the enhancement theory (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

2.1.3.5 Segmentation theory

The segmentation theory argues that work and family operate in different spheres since they occur at different times, in different space, demanding appropriate emotions, attitudes and behaviours (Lambert, 1990). Wallis and Price (2003) add three perspectives proposed in relation to interdependence and interference between the work and family spheres. However, work-family conflict is an illustration of the interdependence between work and family domains (Wallis & Price, 2003; Rotondo, Carlson & Kincaid, 2003).

The segmentation theory definition fails to embrace technological advancements that do not require a specific venue for work, since computers, emails and telephones make it possible to

meet deadlines outside designated physical parameters. It also does not recognise flexible arrangements that individuals may opt for in mitigating any negative effects of their various roles. This theory is most appropriate in reminding individuals about the norms and values applicable to each role. It, however, advises them not to overlap their other roles for fear of contaminating the other expected set of behavioural patterns.

2.1.3.6 Compensation theory

The compensation theory advocates that those people not happy or succeeding in one role tend to seek satisfaction in another (Lambert, 1990). It is well-known that people spend more time at work than with their families if there is little satisfaction derived from the latter.

2.1.3.7 Spill-over theory

Lastly, the spill-over theory maintains that individuals adopt certain attitudes and behaviours in performing certain roles which are transferred to other domains (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Leiter & Durup, 1996). There is little to suggest that an individual completely shuts down emotions, attitudes or behaviour learnt in one role; instead, these are transferred whilst one is engaged in another role. This consequently contradicts what the segmentation theory proposes since individuals' roles are interrelated and interface with each other. In taking this discussion further, one needs to examine the frames of reference that explain how work-family conflict develops and is experienced by women.

2.2 THEORIES ON HOW WOMEN ARE PREPARED FOR THE ASSUMPTION OF GENDER-SPECIFIC ROLES

Families serve as incubators for societal values, beliefs, customs, culture and tradition, while other institutions such as schools and churches refine and further mould these beliefs and value

systems. The family plays an important function which ensures that parts of the societal system operate as a unit since it also involves the development of self-identity and distinctions between roles and responsibilities. Girls and boys learn their ropes using immediate adults as their role models. This process is referred to as socialisation. The discussion below will highlight theories that serve as bedrock for this gender identity development process and discuss how it unfolds.

2.2.1 Theories on gender identity development

There are various theories on understanding how young children learn about gender differences, societal roles and responsibilities. These frameworks on gender identity development include the psychoanalytic, social learning, cognitive development and gender schema theories as mentioned below.

Children between the age of three and six years develop an acute awareness of biological differences between females and males, according to the psychoanalytic theory (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004). It is normal that toddlers explore and ask about their various body parts, enquire why daddy always wears trousers whilst mommy is in a dress, for example. This is a beginning to identify with the same-gender parent. The gender development process is based on how parents react to this inquiry and on the imprint with which the child is left.

The social learning theory maintains that it is the social environment that impacts on gender development by means of observational learning, reinforcement and punishment (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004). This theory paints an idealistic picture which assumes that parents are in control of the social environment. Children frequently rebel totally against their parents' values or social status, which is perhaps why the cognitive development theorists are in dispute with the social learning theory. They view children as active subjects in their pursuit to understand their social environment, according to Etaugh & Bridges (2004). This acknowledges children as individuals able to undertake independent thinking and analysis. Parents, teachers and other role models offer guidance, advice and guidelines on critical life survival skills. Lastly, the gender schema

theory propagated by Bem (1983) further noted that in terms of the social learning theory, children develop a mental scheme of expected behaviours and social expectations.

2.2.2 Socialisation: a tool for developing gender specific societal roles

Grandparents treasure story telling, sharing their history and playing games with their grandchildren, which leaves deep mental imprints on young minds whilst passing on valuable life lessons. This is one form of socialisation. It is defined as a process by which each generation passes along to children the knowledge, beliefs and skills which constitute the culture of the social group (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004). The older generation, such as parents and siblings, and institutions such as schools, churches, peers and media, transmit this information so as to shape young minds regarding what is expected of them. This socialisation occurs in the belief that adult psychological development involves an accumulation of experience which is crucial to the way individuals act (Nicolson, 1996).

Mothers use their childhood experience and positive or negative role models in raising their children (Daly, 1993), running their families and taking related decisions regarding their adult lives. Research also indicates that children show less stereotyping in their activity preferences if their fathers are highly involved in sharing child care and housework and if their mothers frequently engage in traditional masculine work (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004).

This point also relates to decisions such as having children, working fulltime, taking career breaks and the like. Relevant studies point out the importance of a mother's work experience in explaining her adult daughter's participation in the labour force (Bengtson, Acock, Allen, Dilworth-Anderson & Klein, 2005; Redelinguys et al., 1999; Starells, 1992). Women's employment patterns or the decision to take up continuous employment may reflect the value system internalised from the socialisation process (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Nicolson, 1996; Yi & Chien, 2002). If the parents' roles and responsibilities were shared along the gender line

(Redelinghuys et al., 1999), there is a high probability that similar arrangements in their children's families could occur.

The consequence of this patriarchal society socialisation for professional women is that certain aspects of their beliefs about gender are becoming increasingly difficult to sustain (Nicolson, 1996; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997). Transformation in the structure of work, alterations in the economy, the labour force and fundamental changes in gender roles, families and the life course all mean that conventional views of careers are no longer absolute (Moen & Han, 2001). Also, there is still an underlying expectation by society that women merely supplement household expenses whilst their husbands occupy valued roles as breadwinners in the family, even if the former bring in more money (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Magezis, 1996; Redelinghuys et al., 1999).

Women feel over-obligated towards their families owing to their traditional upbringing. What further makes matters difficult for women carrying household responsibilities is the fact that they view these as a personal service to those they care most about and not merely chores (Jackson, 1997). This notion correlates with Dublin's theory of Central Life Interests, which relates to an individual's expressed preference for carrying out an activity in a particular domain. It further stipulates that the individual attaches emotional significance to the situation since it embodies both physical and intellectual activities. This links to the earlier point that certain roles bestow a social status and recognition which affirms individuals.

In line with the above discussion, the father's limited involvement could be explained in terms of patriarchy which advocates constricted gender roles, maternal guilt and family-hostile career structures (Campbell, 2002). The sense of liberty that men exercise concerning the amount of family responsibility with which they can get away is interpreted as such within a patriarchal society. Perhaps, it serves to justify a conscience that seeks to explain societal injustice based on an outdated patriarchal system which is stuck in the hunting and gathering era despite modern socio-economic dynamics. However, it seems that with socialisation carried out appropriately by

the family and other institutions, women enter their adulthood with certain skills in facing challenges ahead.

2.3 THE MULTIPLE ROLES WOMEN BALANCE IN THEIR LIVES

Socialisation prepares women for the motherhood role, amongst others. This role traditionally occurs within a marriage. However, with rising divorce rates single mothers (the latter through divorce or choice not to marry) represent a force to be reckoned with. This section discusses the different roles women carry and how these roles relate or compete with each other.

2.3.1 Assumption of the motherhood role

Individuals derive identity from the status they occupy, which they view as descriptive of themselves (Thoits, 1995). Socialisation, discussed previously in section 2.2.2, prescribes the expectations and roles to which individuals should conform. Insofar as women are concerned, these expectations attempt to answer questions such as whether the sense of being a woman is based on biological traits or is derived from one's culture (Magezis, 1996).

Motherhood results in major consequences (Nicolson, 1997) since society views it as one's passage into adulthood. This is in recognition of a woman's biological capacity and socialisation into the female role (Magezis, 1996; Nicolson, 1996; Nicolson, 1997). In most cultures women are defined in terms of their parenting status which represents society's perspective on reaching the peak of femininity (Yoder, 2007). Perhaps this resonates well with Apter (1993) who maintains that femininity is encapsulated by the maternal instinct which is based on the myth that, firstly, all women possess a biological drive towards conceiving and bearing children. Hence women are expected to be available at all times and to care for their young children's needs (Russo, 1979); secondly, that the biological drive is a precursor towards nurturing children; and thirdly, that the skills and capabilities required to care for infants or children

emerge or evolve immediately after birth without the need for training. The researcher's motherhood experience differs from the last statements. Her family, parents in particular, took over raising her firstborn daughter until the latter started primary school. However, she is raising her second daughter on her own with little help from the family.

Reitzes and Mutran (1994) contend that patriarchy accords motherhood a mythological, mysterious and famous status. This role gives women a framework which develops their sense of who they are and of the purpose of their existence. Motherhood demands that women should be selfless, defining themselves in relation to others instead of creating a sense of themselves (Magezis, 1996; Nicolson, 1997). Also, since only women are granted this status, it is one to which all women are expected to aspire (Nicolson, 1997). As Magezis (1996) contends, some feminists maintain that the attitude of culture and society towards women reflects the ecosystem they live in. Consequently, since capitalism dominates, women's reproduction is linked to the production of new labour.

Predominantly, mothers are viewed according to Yoder (2007) as spending their time fully engaged in domestic duties making the family their sole job. She is always there and constitutes the core of the family. The phrase 'pregnant and bare footed' best captures this description and what is expected of a housewife or women in general. However, whilst this offers men time, moral support and comfort in pursuing their careers, the risks are higher for women who are forced into depending on their partners for financial sustainability, thus risking losing their independence.

The above discussion glorifies motherhood. It falls short of locating motherhood as a challenge, although potentially enjoyable, which is also hard work and routinely stressful (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Liamputtong, 2007; Magezis, 1996; Richardson, 1993). Nicolson (1997) points out that what women do and social beliefs about what women should do are sometimes at odds with each other. He argues that motherhood and womanhood stand in a complex and contradictory relationship with one another although this situation appears to be changing.

Furthermore, it is women, not men, who bear the psychological burden of taking the blame if their children display anti-social behaviour (Magezis, 1996; Nicolson, 1997).

While motherhood is still central to women's identity, recent demographic changes appear to suggest that motherhood alone no longer dictates the pattern of women's lives and may not be such a popular choice for women as it once was (Church & Sommerfield, 1995). The availability of contraceptives has made it easier for women to take control of their own fertility (Coopers & Lewis, 1993; Magezis, 1996; Nicolson, 1997) and decisions relating to motherhood. According to Coopers and Lewis (1993) couples who postpone parenthood until they have stable careers are better at handling competing demands and can afford quality childcare.

2.3.2 Working mothers

Joplin et al. (2003) observe that in the last few decades, many countries have experienced dramatic increases in the numbers of women active within the labour sphere. The concept of 'stay at home' mothers is gradually becoming an exception rather than the rule. This can be attributed to social aspects such as rising divorce rates, economic influences, labour laws and technological advancement which make communication easier, and also make it conducive for women of all racial groups to be in fulltime employment whilst also taking care of their families (Higginbotham, 1997; Joplin et al., 2003; Theunissen et al., 2003). Opportunities for women to receive higher education are also numerous since parents, government and other institutions, promote this trend. Furthermore, labour policies such as Affirmative Action and technological advancement (Joplin et al., 2003) support women's advancement and development.

Research undertaken into the employment of women concluded that they work for similar benefits to men: that is, income, financial status, identity, status (James, 1990; Poelmans, O'Driscoll & Beham, 2005) and in order to function as competent and productive members of society (Chester & Grossman, 1990). Consequently there is a lack of redefinition of their roles as far as the family sphere is concerned. Women are still largely responsible for housework and

childcare (Greenhaus et al., 2000; West & Zimmerman, 1998). Research has also established that because parents struggle over gender-defined responsibilities, to urge greater involvement of fathers in home care, child care, and elder care – assuming he's there (Hochschild, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 1989) – women thus enter into a 'second shift' focusing on home and family responsibilities after hours (Greenhaus et al., 2000; Yoder, 2007; West & Zimmerman, 1998). One can conclude that for women this means taking more responsibilities whilst men are at liberty to shape their family responsibilities around their careers rather than the other way around.

Greenhaus et al. (2000) conclude that this makes women prone to role overload owing to factors such as experiencing guilt over not spending enough time with their children. Secondly, they feel guilty about the little time they spend with their partners. Lastly, family and work responsibilities frequently leave little time for individuals themselves. However, research carried out by Jenkins (1996) showed that women, who define their roles out of conventional wisdom and demand excellence in each role they play, exhibited less role stress. Single mothers, according to some feminists, experience less stress than unhappily unmarried mothers whilst enjoying more independence and satisfaction in managing things on their own (Magezis, 1996).

2.3.2.1 Single working mothers

An increase has become evident in the number of families headed by single parents during the past decades. These are mostly run by women (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Vosler, 1996). Society, media and other institutions still celebrate marriage, declaring it 'as every girl's dream'. However there is a more general acceptance and support of single lifestyles than before (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), despite the negative depiction in the media that single women are different, social deviants and lonely (Fraser, 2002; Hoban, 2002; Israel, 2002). Single women swim against these stereotypes; they live life by their own standards, exploiting their freedom, enjoying the ability to make decisions on their own and identifying areas for their own self-development (Montenegro, 2003; Reynolds & Wetherell, 2003).

The 'daredevil' attitude is crucial in the single woman's psychological make-up because it gives her stamina in shuffling her responsibilities and surviving in a patriarchal society that promotes the nuclear family as an ideal arrangement. The independence and strong support systems that single women develop allow them to cope better with their midlife crisis and they also age better (Goutlieb, 1989; Newton & Keith, 2001) than their married counterparts. This correlates with the period when those who have been married are most likely to lose their partners by death or sickness, thus facing loneliness, making decisions and socialising on their own in their old age. They are more likely to suffer from depression or suicidal tendencies (Goutlieb, 1989) than single women, who perfect the art of making friendships and developing strong support networks earlier in their lives.

The workplace is also an arena for socialising and making friends (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), particularly for single women. However, research indicates that single mothers are more prone to role overload and poverty (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Vosler, 1996). This is largely due to the high cost of living, and the meagre salaries that women are paid compared to men (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). These single women stretch their salaries or resources in providing for a roof over their families, rates, school fees, transport, and groceries, etcetera, against a limited budget. They are prone to experiencing financial stress (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006).

Single women also juggle responsibilities of household maintenance, childcare and employment on their own and are thus challenged with problems involving time and coordination of activities (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998; Vosler, 1996). Women have developed coping skills in managing these responsibilities. Blacks, for instance, have been exposed to many role models because of their long history of maternal employment (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). Rural black women in South Africa not only took care of their family whilst their husbands worked in the city, but gradually looked for outside employment to supplement the family income. The migrant labour system adversely affected the family system and counts as a factor in black women's economic participation, as informal traders, domestics or other low-skilled workers.

In such situations, black women rely on their extended family support to assist with childcare. Alternatively, they opt for accommodating poor non-relatives at their homes who stay rent free in exchange for household assistance (Etaugh & Bridge, 2006). This does not suggest that women of other races have it easy. Volser (1996) adds that single mothers, in general, face several potential stresses related to economic stability unless the father pays sufficient child maintenance or unless they land a well-paid job. Single women often face these huge responsibilities with little or no physical help from their children's father for daily sustenance, including both childcare and household maintenance. However, Gringlas and Weinraub (1995) undertook a study on professional single and married mothers and concluded that there were no differences in terms of their parenting skills even though single mothers experienced higher stress levels. Furthermore, these women not only take care of their children and immediate families but are also responsible for their elderly parents.

2.3.2.2 Advantages of the care-giving role

The discussion above shows that women still perform most child-care activities such as feeding and bathing young children, attending school conferences and sports events, helping with homework, disciplining, taking children to the doctor and arranging for substitute care when there is a vacation or a child is sick, even though they may be employed fulltime (Laflamme, Pormerleau & Malcuit, 2002; Milkie, Bianchi, Mattingly & Robinson, 2002). Etaugh and Bridges (2006) argue that women continue with these responsibilities perhaps because their socialisation has led them to believe that childrearing and household work is their domain. If this is how women view motherhood, they then embrace this responsibility with warm hearts. It may explain why women make more time for household work (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). Women therefore play a critical role in holding the family unit together, transmitting its beliefs and values and preparing children for their adult roles such as parenting and the careers they may choose.

2.3.2.3 Women and their elderly parents

Most elderly and sick parents end up in their children's care, particularly with their daughters since this is the preferred housing arrangement (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Merrill, 1997). This is predominant in African communities. As a result women extend their caring and support role to their extended families despite the other responsibilities which they already carry. This also happens to women who work outside the home (Merill, 1997; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997), making their load heavier. The sons mostly assume this responsibility in the absence of a female sibling (Merill, 1997).

Women who emerge as proclaimed caregivers of the elderly (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Merill, 1997) give different accounts about this experience. Some feel sad, angry and frightened about what their parents are going through whilst others enjoy their time together with the ailing parent. Parents are on their last lap when their health is failing. It is also a time when they are mostly at peace with their lives, enjoy time with their grandchildren and the caregiver can receive emotional fulfilment by giving back to a parent who raised her when young and dependent. Lastly, taking care of an elderly parent is more predominant amongst ethnic minorities (as found in the US) than whites.

The above discussions illustrate the responsibilities that society bestows on women who carry out different roles ranging from motherhood, partners, workers and caregivers. Women who make all these choices are also influenced by their personalities.

2.4 INFLUENCE OF PERSONALITY STYLES ON ASSUMPTION OF MULTIPLE ROLES

Women assume motherhood, careers and make decisions on how these would be managed, while also being influenced by their individual personality style. Some personalities are predisposed

towards being independent, taking control of their environment and the scope of their responsibilities. A study undertaken by Long (1990) revealed that women who succeed with family and work demands engaged coping styles that involved or using one's inner self abilities, thus increasing feelings of a greater sense of control. Taking control of situations that women are confronted with makes it easier for them to bounce back from stressful environments. Friede and Ryan (2005) maintain that it is the individual's personality that determines how they view their life, experiences and their roles. If women are aware of what each role entails, and of their capabilities, personality predispositions and strength, their load becomes more bearable.

Studies carried out reveal that women prefer using personality traits such as confrontative coping, accepting responsibility, self-control and problem solving, as coping styles (Long, 1990; McDonald & Korabik, 1991). Hence women do not employ a blanket approach in confronting their challenges. It may involve dealing with the issue directly, that is, taking on a school should they feel that their children's falling grades are due to the teacher's poor teaching methods, or, alternatively, admitting their share of responsibility should their children's grades drop during a busy period at work and opting for alternative tutoring arrangements to bring the grades up. Furthermore, Bolger and Zucherman (1995) express the view, firstly, that various personalities may lead to a differential reactivity or individual differences in the felt intensity or reaction to stressors, and secondly, that personality directly influences the actual number or type of events that a person experiences which may cause stress.

2.4.1 How personality influences the relationship between work and family roles

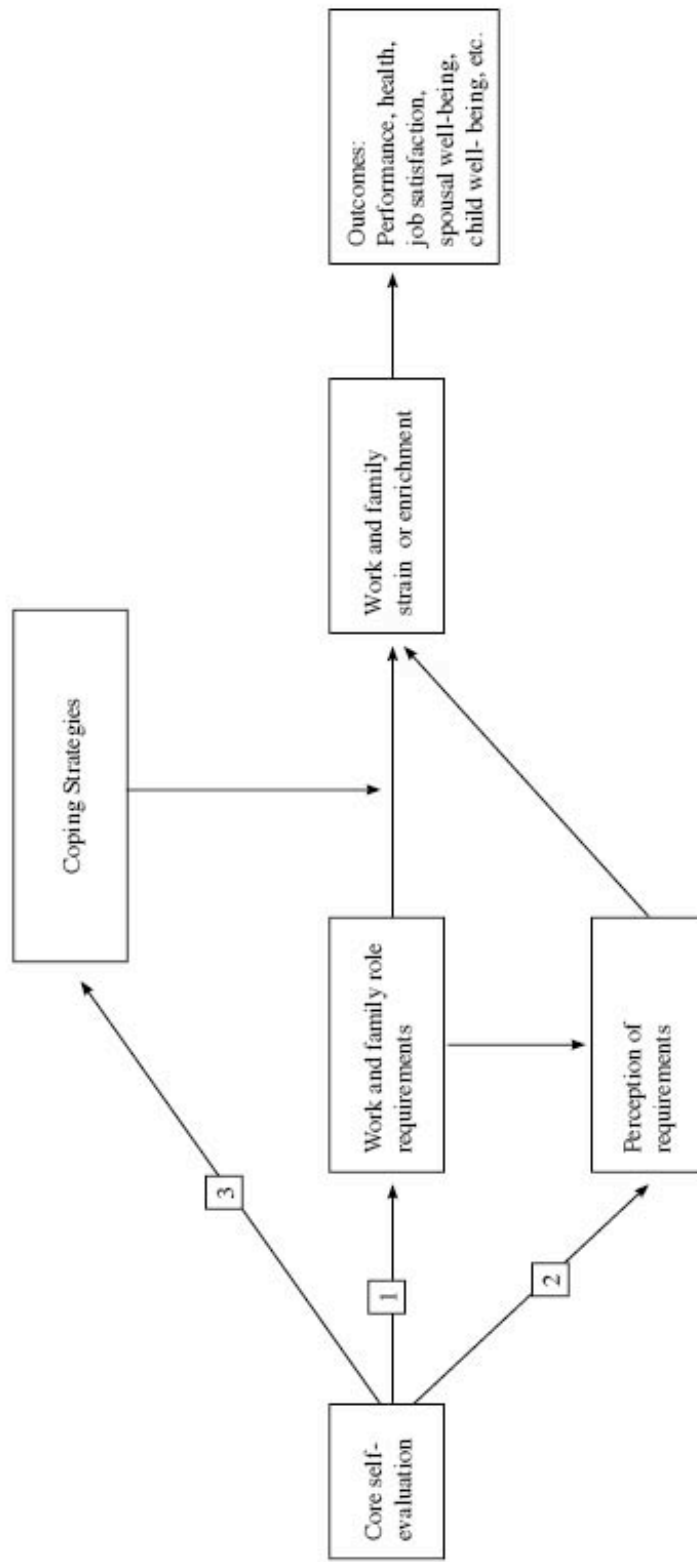
One cannot only conclude that the pressures individuals experience emanate from society or other external sources. Our interpretation of life is based on what we have internalised from our socialisation and behavioural traits that epitomise our individuality. In order to understand the impact of work-family conflict, Yoder (2007) argues that the focus should initially fall on what the role means to an individual, viz., role centrality. A woman who strongly identifies with family values will be distraught should she experience marital stress and thus experience general life dissatisfaction.

Greenhaus et al. (2000) add that individuals' expectations of themselves increase pressures to keep achieving both at the work and family front. Type A employees aspire to high success, work long hours and thus suffer more work-family conflict than Type Bs (Bruck & Allen, 2002; Greenhaus et al., 2000; Wayne & Musisca, 2004). It is thus clear that work-family conflict correlates with role significance in an individual's self-definition. 'Those who are deeply involved in both work and family are likely to experience the most conflict' (Greenhaus et al., 2000, p. 292).

On the contrary, Reitzes and Mutran (1994) argue that it is not the number of roles that matters but role quality, that is, the balance of good and bad one sees in each role. For example, parents complain about the time, energy and financial pressures children create but mostly feel it is worth all the pain (Yoder, 2007). This may also mean that whilst women enjoy work incentives and fulfilment in having children, their endeavour to reach their optimum, career-wise, could lead to spending too much time away from their families, thus compromising their role quality in both spheres, particularly for Type A personalities as discussed above. The work-family conflict is therefore the unintended consequence with which women with children deal during their career span.

The following discussion is based on Friede and Ryan (2005) (figure 2.2 below), regarding the manner in which personality influences the relationship between work and family roles.

FIGURE 2.2: Personality's influence on work and family role engagement



SOURCE: A. Friede & AM. Ryan - "The importance of the individual: How self-evaluations influence the work-family interface" in E.E Kossek & S.J Lambert (Eds), *Work and Life Integration: Organizational, Cultural and Individual Perspectives* pages 193-242.

The basis of this model is based on the concept of core self-evaluation that Judge, Erez and Bono (1998) define as the fundamental personality traits which individuals believe they possess or these individuals' positive self-concepts. Individuals acquire their own perception of who they are and thus of what defines them. This is based on four traits: self-esteem, generalised self-efficacy, locus of control and emotional stability (Friede & Ryan, 2005). Judge et al. (1998) define these traits as, firstly, self-esteem: this is the value an individual places on him/herself. Secondly, generalised self-efficacy is a self-judgement on how well one is coping with the various life roles. Thirdly, locus of control is the extent of one's control over life occurrences. Lastly, emotional stability is the way in which one experiences positive or negative affective states.

The gist of the present discussion is how personality impacts on work-family conflict. Friede and Ryan (2005) argue that it is the individual's personality which influences the actual type and amount of work and family role requirements that an individual experiences. Individuals may self-select themselves into more challenging or supportive environments in terms of their personality. Studies carried out by Judge et al. (1998) reveal that those individuals with positive self-evaluations choose situations where they can excel, seek complex jobs and experience greater job satisfaction.

People with a low self-evaluation experience more negative family and work stress. In addition, an individual's personality may influence the perceptions of work and family role requirements in the environment. Even under the same conditions, individuals with different personality types may perceive situations involving work-family conflict as enriching or may differ in the magnitude of their perceptions. Thirdly, personality may influence the strategies selected to approach the work-family interface, which may influence the amount of felt emotional strain or enrichment. This can be dealt with by the choice of coping strategies or the effectiveness of the coping strategies chosen. However, the feminists view this as inevitable because women groom the future labour force, provide unpaid household support for their partners or husbands and are compensated for their labour at cheaper rates than men.

2.5 FEMINISTS' VIEWS REGARDING THE PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AT WORK

It is argued that women's participation in paid labour perpetuates their oppression and the poor appreciation of their value to society. The feminist view is that the definition of women's work should include domestic work and caring tasks that are largely unpaid, as well as paid work, in order to better understand and analyse the gender-specific qualities that women bring to the tasks they perform both at home and work (Bhavnani, 1997; Witz, 1997). What makes women complete is the fact that they are individuals, mothers, partners and workers whose experiences in each of these roles nurture their effectiveness. However, participation in the aforementioned roles should not alienate women's self-concept but reinforce it as this may otherwise cause stress.

This is not to undermine the fact that there are stark differences between household and salaried work. Women are regarded as anointed caregivers, with no fixed job descriptions, agreed hours, conditions of work, trade unions, and no formal form of compensation, and their 'job' is based on strong personal ties (Jackson, 1997; Witz, 1997). Magezis (1996) adds that home is predominantly 'feminine' with qualities such as caring whilst (paid) work is viewed as a 'masculine' sphere of order and rationality. A certain perception propagates the views that since women display more feminine tendencies, work demands more from them than they can manage. The increase in employment dispels such myths as women rise up the ladder within available resources and support systems.

On the other hand women, anointed or not, express ambivalent feelings about their household role, since studies by Hunt (1980), Oakley (1984), and Westwood (1984) reveal that, firstly, they express dissatisfaction with the content, quantity and conditions of domestic labour. Secondly, they find household work monotonous, repetitive, unstimulating, isolating, tiring and never-ending (Magezis, 1996). Thirdly, women resent the low status of housework within society.

Lastly, they are aware that they carry an unfair burden particularly if they also participate in paid labour.

Feminist theory portrays women as victims of their society and the capitalist system. One can argue that women willingly make these choices; thus there is something that they gain as well. It could be that work provides positive spin-offs for women, which explain why they are willing subjects.

2.5.1 Advantages of women's labour participation

The above discussion concentrated on the different roles that women fulfil, one of which is work. Work, as discussed so far, is an extra load that women carry, which is stressful. Other positive consequences of work that women, in this case, experience should also be mentioned. Work adds quality to their family lives by providing income that directly permits comfortable living standards, good childcare, education and medical care. This is particularly true for single women. One can also add that work enables women to escape from poverty, gain independence and provide security for their lives. Moreover, work expands employees' social networks, and fosters an individual's personal and intellectual growth (Greenhaus et al., 2000).

Redelinghuys et al. (1999) argue firstly that women's participation in employment not only financially benefits them but, in addition, the whole family becomes better off. This is specifically evident to a single woman whose source of income provides not only for her but also her children and extended family when the need arises. Women also frequently take care of their elderly parents and therefore their financial standing enables them to make these decisions on their own. Secondly, women tend to be happy and more content with life. This positive attitude and predisposition overflows into the relationships of women with their children, partners or significant others.

Thirdly, women who juggle different roles are physically and mentally stronger than those who are home-based. Women develop more resilience and higher thresholds regarding stress and experience a distraction from household responsibilities. Fourthly, children whose mothers work develop a view that both genders are equal (Rapmund, 1996). They see their parents equally engaged in work activities, taking joint decisions on their finances and other responsibilities. Lastly, Redelinguys et al. (1999) conclude that working women experience a greater fulfilment from their intimate relationship than housewives, since the former gain confidence and self-esteem because of navigating work challenges on their own.

2.6 COPING MECHANISMS WOMEN USE IN DEALING WITH WORK-FAMILY

CONFLICT

If the above discussion is a fair reflection of what women experience with regards to work-family, the question is how do they manage? What drives them? How do they remain positive? What motivates them? Who is in their support system? Do they rely on external or internal coping systems? Women develop and adopt certain means in their quest to fairly meet the demands of their various responsibilities, as discussed below.

2.6.1 Social support from the extended family

Personality provides inner strength in coping with work-family conflict. However, it takes ‘a village to raise a child’, meaning that the spouse, grandparents, uncles, aunts, siblings and neighbours, amongst others, play significant roles in supporting a mother. There is evidence that receiving spousal and extended family support has a positive impact on women (Adams, King & King, 1996; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Frone et al., 1997) as these resources offer emotional companionship, assisting women to survive their lifelong challenges, changes and losses (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004). The emotional support provided by these relationships counterbalances the emotional drain owing to women’s involvement in their various roles (Ross, 1997). Furthermore, this social support could enable the individual to spend more time at work and other career

related activities. It also reduces the stress of work-family conflict. Finally, individuals who receive spousal support have more time for engaging in coaching and other developmental activities (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004).

2.6.2 The ability to afford a helper or maid makes things easier

Helpers or maids play a positive role in easing the burden of childcare and household management for women. Etaugh and Bridges (2004) concluded that financially advantaged women could afford to purchase services such as domestic help that they would normally perform themselves. It is common practice in South Africa that white women use domestic help on a fulltime basis (Theunissen et al., 2003). This has also become a common practice for South African middle and upper class women of all races. Women are able to shift their childcare responsibilities onto domestic workers, who serve over one million households in South Africa, totalling 18% of total female employment (Mills, 2002).

Bailey (1994) argues that employing a domestic worker leaves women with more time at their disposal and thus enables them to continue even when their children are young. Bailey's research (1994) indicates that women who have no help, or only part-time help, showed strain from the overload which they had to shoulder in order to cope with the double burden of work and home commitments. In such instances, women tend to lower their expectations of their various roles, such as, reducing hours spent on household work (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006).

2.6.3 Supervisor support and work environment as factors in mitigating the work-family conflict

Supervisors are the direct link between individuals and their employer. They implement policies and are active players in determining the work environment. Studies indicate that a supportive supervisor plays a crucial role in mitigating the effects of work-family conflict. Supervisors are therefore viewed as critical in providing the emotional and work support to reduce work-family

conflict (Allen, 2000; Bowen, 1998; Digman & West, 1988; Friedman, Christensen & De Groot, 2000; Lechner, 1993; Miller, Ellis, Zook & Lyles, 1990; Moen, Harris-Abbot, Lee & Roehling, 2000; Ray, 1987; Ray & Miller, 1994; Repetti, 1993; Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Rowley, Rosse & Harvey, 1992; Warren & Johnson, 1995).

Supervisors are appreciated in terms of their sensitivity to work-life issues: that is, understanding that workers must meet family responsibilities as well as those related to the job (Warren & Johnson, 1995). Furthermore, in terms of their ability to accommodate personal and family matters (Hopkins, 2005). Also, regarding their ability to use their discretion such as allowing workers to come in late or leave early (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994) as circumstances dictate. Lastly, organisations with supportive supervisors benefit through retention of their employees (Hopkins, 2005).

Female supervisors are viewed as being more 'intuitive' regarding work-family balance issues than their male counterparts who are seen as detached. This is recorded in various studies which show that women are more concerned than men about work-family issues (Bailey, Wolfe & Wolfe, 1996; Galansky, Bond & Friedman, 1993; Lambert, 1999; Roxburg, 1996; Swanberg, 1997). Black supervisors are viewed as more supportive than their white counterparts, in accordance with social identity theory (Hopkins, 2005).

The South African labour laws, such as the Labour Relations Act of 1995, Employment Equity and Skills Development Acts of 1998; and technological advancement level the playing fields for more women to enter into the labour market (Joplin et al., 2003). Hence, organisations and employers are placed in a position where they have to take the multiple roles of women employees into consideration if they want women to be fulfilled and productive employees' (Redelinghuys et al., 1999, p. 54). A women-friendly organisation is characterised by its accommodation of women in terms of policy and structure so as to reduce work-family conflict (Redelinghuys et al., 1999).

Women have clearly been defined thus far by their gender, but other distinct social descriptions differentiate them, such as race and cultural background. It is necessary to consider how such factors impact on their work-family conflict.

2.7 IMPACT OF RACE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND FACTORS ON WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

The researcher intends to investigate how work-family conflict affects women of different racial groups. This would be done according to DeReus, Few and Blume's (2005) assumptions, which underpin feminist epistemology, that, firstly, the diverse experiences of women and families are constructed by dynamic cultural discourses concerning gender, race, nationality, class, sexual orientation, age, ability and religion. Secondly, that identity is not a biologically inherent feature of individuals, families or social groups; rather, it is contingent on self and others.

Witz (1997) argues that job experiences for working class women differ from those of middle class women, just as those of black class women differ from those of white class women. These class and (race) inequalities are rarely interrogated as to how they are informed (Bhavnani, 1997).

Racial segregation is one factor that resulted in the unequal distribution of resources and development in South Africa. Racism is defined by Bhavnani (1997) as a system of domination and sub-domination based on the spurious biological notions that human beings can be boxed into racially discrete groups. It is also discrimination which perpetuates false notions of racial superiority (Magezis, 1996).

Jones (1983) identifies three forms of racism. Firstly, individual racism consists of the personal attitudes, prejudices and behaviours which individuals use to prejudge other racial groups negatively, whilst viewing their own positively. Secondly, institutional racism involves the

policies and practices of an organisation (or a country in the case of SA) which deny a racial group access to resources and power. Thirdly, cultural racism occurs when values, beliefs and ideas endorse the superiority of one culture over the other.

It stands to reason therefore that race, ethnicity, social class (and culture) represent critical dimensions for understanding the lives of women in South Africa since they influence the distinctive circumstances that such women (Higginbotham, 1997) survive in their various aspects of life. This is particularly relevant in the analysis of family and work in respect of women.

In the African context, motherhood is a responsibility shared with the extended family and includes mothering other children in the community. Motherhood further carries the role of fostering racial or ethnic identities to the mothers' children. In South Africa it is quite common that the children of domestic workers are reared by their grandmothers while they take care of their employer's children, who are of different racial groups in most instances. However, the Western cultural view defines motherhood within the nuclear family context. The question remains: are women socialised differently for motherhood, and do they develop distinct personality types or other coping strategies because of differing cultural or racial backgrounds?

2.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

The chapter defined work-family conflict, discussed its various types and how it manifests itself. The present author considered how this phenomenon occurs, commented on different theories and perspectives regarding it and also noted how women view it. Furthermore, the way in which society socialises individuals into these roles was investigated. The discussion also included the multiple roles women assume and how diversity impacts on work-family conflict. The coping mechanisms that women use in mitigating such conflict were also discussed. The researcher also shared her experience concerning some of the key concepts discussed in this chapter. In addition work-family conflict was reviewed in terms of the South African context. It was thus also discussed with respect to the country's racial and cultural context.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

This chapter describes the qualitative research procedures, informed by the assumption of the phenomenological paradigm, that were followed to investigate the research question and aims. Qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims, strategies of enquiry and methods of data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003b). There will be a detailed discussion of sampling, methods of collecting empirical material, as well as the processing, analysis and interpretation of data and reporting thereof. Issues ensuring the scientific rigour of the research project will also be addressed in this chapter. Lastly, it describes how the audit trail and ethics were applied in this study.

3.1 BASIC CHARACTERISTICS OF A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

It is appropriate that the fundamental characteristics of this research project are examined based on the phenomenological paradigm as discussed in Chapter 1. As Henning et al. (2004) point out, the main features of a qualitative study lie, firstly, in its quest for understanding and in-depth inquiry. Secondly, it is a study of the meaning constructed from the language that represents the data. Thirdly, the variables are usually not controlled because it is exactly this freedom and natural development of action and representation that the researcher wishes to capture.

The above factors represent the framework against which the phenomenological study in this research will be evaluated. Rossman and Rallis (1998) adduce the following characteristics of a sound qualitative study:

- Qualitative research takes place in a natural setting. The qualitative researcher often goes to the site (home or office) of the subject to conduct the research. This enables the researcher to develop a level of detailed understanding of the individual or place and to be very much involved in the actual experiences of the subjects.
- Qualitative research uses multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic.

- This point concurs with that of Henning et al. (2004): qualitative research is emergent rather than tightly prefigured. Several aspects emerge during a qualitative study. The research questions may alter and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and of whom it should be asked. The data collection process might evolve as doors open and close for data collection and the inquirer learns the best sites at which to investigate the central phenomenon of interest.
- Qualitative research is fundamentally interpretative.
- The qualitative researcher views social phenomena holistically.
- She or he systematically reflects on who he or she is in the inquiry, and is sensitive to his or her personal biography and how it shapes the study.
- The said researcher uses complex reasoning that is multifaceted, iterative and simultaneous.
- She or he adopts and uses one and more strategies of inquiry as a guide for the procedures applied in the qualitative research.

The phenomenological paradigm firstly, therefore, influenced the interview setting. The semi-structured interviews took place in the subjects' offices and at home in the case of Subject 4. These environments provided comfort, security a sense of familiarity and therefore calm for the subjects. Secondly, it allowed the researcher to re-visit interviews, transcriptions and analyses in consultation with the subjects and expert.

3.2 EMPIRICAL GATHERING METHODS

This section describes the processes and procedures that were used during data collection. It details how the subjects were selected based on certain fundamental criteria, viz., age, gender, race and dependants below 18 years of age. The biographical details considered also included the respondent's marital status, level of education and employment so as to make the sample easily comparable.

3.2.1 Sample and population

Creswell (2003b) argues that the researcher should identify purposefully selected individuals for the study. In this instance, the sampling procedure known as purposive sampling, which looks for people who fit the criteria of desirable subjects, was used (Henning et al., 2004). Further sampling criteria included (Henning, et al., 2004; May, 1994) informants who, on account of their position or experience, possess more information: those who are better able to articulate their experience and subjects who appear to be approachable. This research also necessitated a selection of subjects based on biographical data, as described below:

3.2.1.1 Age

The subjects' ages were between 40 to 43 years.

3.2.1.2 Gender

The main criterion for the selection of subjects was that they were women and working.

3.2.1.3 Race

It was essential that the subjects represented different racial groups in South Africa. The researcher ensured a fair distribution in taking cognisance of the different racial groups in South Africa, viz. Indian, Coloured, White and Black.

3.2.1.4 Dependents

The subjects had children below the age of 18 years as indicated below:

- Subject 1: Girls (9yrs and 6yrs)
- Subject 2: Boys (17yrs and 15 yrs)
- Subject 3: Girls (16yrs and 2yrs) and a boy (11yrs)
- Subject 4: Boy (16yrs) and a girl (3yrs)

Subjects 3 and 4 had their first children whilst in their twenties whilst Subject 2 conceived both children in her twenties. This means that they bore their children during their early working lives. Subject 1 had her children in her early thirties, making her a young mother whilst occupying a senior management position. Subjects 3 and 4 added another child to their families during their late thirties.

3.2.1.5 Marital status

Subjects indicated whether they were single or married. They further indicated whether they were living with their partners or husbands. Subjects 1 and 3 are both married, sharing a house with their husbands. The other two: subjects 2 and 4, are single. Subject 2 is divorced whilst 4 was never married previously.

3.2.1.6 Biographical details summary

All subjects had passed matric. Subject 1 was a qualified teacher before joining the public sector and was still studying towards a MBA degree while employed in the senior management echelon within the public sector. Subject 2 worked as a journalist within the various media institutions in South Africa before becoming a civil servant. She completed her degree immediately after her divorce whilst her children were young. Subject 3 attained post matric certificates and diplomas. Subject 4 worked as a researcher within the media industry before qualifying and registering as an Estate Agent.

3.2.1.7 Employment, position and salary bracket

Subjects indicated where they were employed. Subjects 1, 2 and 3 worked in the public sector whilst Subject 4 did so in the private sector before working as an Estate Agent. Table 3.1 below shows the demographical details of the sample.

TABLE 3.1 SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC DETAILS

| RACE | POSITION | QUALIFICATION | AGE | MARITAL STATUS | NO & AGE OF CHILDREN |
|--------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|
| Black N=1 | Estate Agent | Matric plus Estate Agent certificate | 43 | Single | 2 Boy- 16yrs Girl- 3yrs |
| Coloured N=1 | Chief Director | Matric, plus teacher's diploma | 40 | Married | 2 Girls- 9yrs & 6yrs |
| Indian N=1 | Assistant Director | Matric plus certificates | 40 | Married | 3 Girl - 16yrs Boy- 11yrs Girl - 2yrs |
| White N=1 | Deputy Director | Matric, degree | 42 | Single (divorced) | 2 Boys- 17yrs & 15yrs |
| Summary | Middle Management N=2 | Post graduate diploma/ degree | 35-40 | Single= N2 | Seven years & below N=3 |
| | Senior Management N=1 | N= 2 | N=2 | Married=N2 | Thirteen & below N=2 |
| | Consultant N=1 | Certificates N=2 | Above 40 N=2 | | Seventeen years & below N=4 |

3.3 THE METHODS OF COLLECTING EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

A qualitative study offers an opportunity for the selection of different methods; hence this section discusses the chosen data collection tools, viz., the biographical data form and the semi-structured interviews. It further considers the researcher's role during the data collection, and the development of the data collection tools.

3.3.1 Interviews

The interview is a potent and indispensable research tool, yielding data that no other research tool can. It is adaptable, capable of being used with all kinds of subjects in many kinds of research and is uniquely suited to in-depth exploration (Davies, 2006; May, 2001). Various forms of interviews exist, such as informal, structured, unstructured, naturalistic (Davies, 2006) and semi-structured. The last-mentioned falls between the structured and unstructured, with questions pre-set, but where the interviewer is free to probe, seeking for more clarification and elaboration (May, 2001).

3.3.1.1 Semi-structured interview

The researcher made use of the semi-structured interview with specific questions which also involved in-depth probing. This interviewing style provided 'a greater structure for comparability' (May, 2001, p. 110). The researcher set three broad questions for each interview. This allowed the subjects to talk about issues in their own terms of reference. It also enabled the interviewer to probe for a better understanding of the subject's point of view (May, 2001; Welman & Kruger, 2003). The researcher chose this interviewing style, given the focus on women's stories (Darlington & Scott, 2002, p. 69), thus allowing them to speak their 'truth' instead of the researcher making assumptions about their lives (May, 2001). The semi-structured interview gave women an opportunity for their voices to be heard.

3.3.2 Significance of choosing the correct methods of collecting empirical material

As Creswell (2003b) notes, qualitative researchers look for the involvement of their subjects in data collection, seeking to build rapport and credibility with individuals in their study. He further makes the observation that in many qualitative studies, researchers collect multiple forms of data and spend a considerable time in the natural setting, gathering information. The researcher's critical role is to argue the suitability and utility of her choice of measuring instruments. This involves choosing a coherent group of methods that complement one another and that display a 'goodness of fit' so as to deliver data and findings that will reflect the research question and suit the purpose of the research (Henning et al., 2004). Geertz (2004) adds that the methods chosen should be able to render a description of the theme of study and also to render a thick explanation of the methodology itself.

Interviewing is regarded as an essential part of most types of social research. This may be due to the fact that it requires a systematic approach to data collection which allows the researcher to maximise the chances of maintaining objectivity and achieving valid and reliable findings (Breakwell, 1995; Henning et al., 2004). Davies (2006) and Henning et al. (2004) define an interview as an encounter or dialogue between the researcher and a subject in which the latter is asked a series of questions relevant to the subject of the research. The respondent's answers constitute the raw data to be analysed at a later point in time by the researcher. Interviews deepen one's understanding of the respondent's history, experiences, opinions, values, attitudes and feelings (May, 2001).

Another crucial aspect of interviews is the language used, which is critical in understanding the subjects' worldview (Henning et al., 2004). Lankshear (2004) likewise maintains that this is crucial for gaining an in-depth view of subjects' concepts, purposes, values, beliefs, ideals, theories, notions of reality and the like, through which human life is organised into a shape and form which can be recognised and understood - it can be 'read' as having 'meaning' by ourselves and by others. The language used for this study was English. This is the mother tongue of three of the subjects and the business language of one of them. It is also a common language with

which the researcher is conversant. The interview process is heavily reliant on the interviewer's skills, ability to interact with the subject and to remain objective, as discussed below.

3.3.3 Interviewer's role

The first few moments of contact between the interviewer and interviewee are important. The motivational forces that encourage the subject to participate in the study must be mobilised and negative forces counteracted (Kidder & Judd, 1987). Interviewees need assurance about why the interview is conducted. It is the researcher's role to furnish this explanation. The other issues concern confidentiality and assurance that the information given shall be used only for the intended purpose.

The researcher, in a qualitative study, is a co-constructor of the meaning (the data), whether this is intentional or not (Henning et al., 2004). Further active participation occurs during data collection. The researcher's role can also be viewed in terms of the effect it has on the interviewee and hence on the type of material collected. Related to this also will be the impact of the interviewer's characteristics on the interviewee and the process (Henning et al., 2004; May, 1994). The ownership of the interview is primarily the privilege of the interviewer; unless she relinquishes her power and invites the subjects to be equal co-directors of the process (Henning et al., 2004).

The following represent some of the general principles that guided the researcher as per May (1994), Welman and Kruger (2003) and Henning et al. (2004):

- Dress in more or less the same way as the subjects.
- Avoid any indication of affiliation.
- Although interviewers may be dressed discreetly, factors over which they have no control such as sex, race, physical appearance and background, may affect the respondent's

responses. Consequently, interviewers should be careful not to engender resistance (amongst subjects) against them.

- There is often the danger that the subjects may view the interviewer as an intruder.
- All these factors may cause subjects to give false information.

One of the subjects is the researcher's subordinate. The researcher was sensitive to this and took extra care to make her feel comfortable as compared with other subjects and emphasised that the information was strictly for research purposes.

3.3.4 Developing semi-structured interview questions

In choosing a data collection tool the researcher needed to be mindful of the study's sensitive nature and was conscious that subjects were from diverse backgrounds (Welman & Kruger, 2003). The study is of a sensitive nature as it involves women's personal experiences on the subject under investigation. In this regard, the researcher listed key topics relevant to the study theme in the formulated questions, viz. experience with and the raising of children and support mechanisms. The researcher used exploratory phrases such as 'describe the experience' according to Creswell (2003a), or 'tell me more', so as to probe and deepens her understanding of the subjects' answers.

Furthermore, the researcher used open-ended questions. This ensured that subjects formulated their responses themselves and had a greater freedom to answer from their own frame of reference (Creswell, 2003b; Henning et al., 2004; Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; May, 1994). Creswell (2003b) stresses that the researcher should develop questions such as 'what' or 'how' in order to convey an open and emerging design. The research questions, firstly, should not be too general. Secondly, the questions should be phrased in simple language. Thirdly, they should avoid ambiguity. Fourthly, one must avoid using vague language as it encourages vague answers. Fifthly, leading questions should be omitted. Sixthly, one must avoid hypothetical questions. Seventhly, the researcher should exercise caution regarding personal questions for both ethical

and practical reasons. Lastly, she or he must avoid embarrassing questions (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; May, 1994; Welman & Kruger, 2003).

The researcher took her lead from the subjects regarding how personal they were willing to be. Using the right probing questions helped the researcher to elicit more information without alienating the subjects. It is important that the researcher does not become angry or make the subject close up during the interview as re-building trust may take forever, if it is lost.

3.3.5 Semi-structured interview structure, sequencing and process

As Henning et al. (2004) point out, the researcher must schedule interviews for a specific time and place. Each subject was consulted regarding the venue, date and time for the interview in order to maximise their convenience and comfort. Henning et al. (2004) advise that the interview should start off with a 'scene setting' phase. This involves thanking subjects for their time and willingness to participate in the research process. Mouton and Marais (1999) refer to this as establishing rapport, which aims to ensure the best possible interpersonal relationship with the respondent.

The researcher then explained the purpose of the study and how long the interview would take, assured the subjects of confidentiality and added that they should feel free to express their true feelings and opinions without fear of disapproval from the interviewer (May, 2001; Welman & Kruger, 2003).

She requested permission to use a tape recorder and notepad. Researchers often engage in multiple observations during the course of a qualitative study and subjects need to feel comfortable with whatever mode of recording is used (Creswell, 2003b; Henning et al., 2004). The researcher tested the recording equipment before commencing with the interview and kept checking that it was still operating. This is because machines are prone to mechanical failure when one least expects it (Creswell, 2003b; Henning et al., 2004).

After the researcher explained the purpose of the interview, she facilitated the filling in of the biographical data form by the subjects. She then proceeded to the semi-structured interview, asking questions and recording answers. She also requested clarifications and/or expansions, explored or allowed pauses where deemed appropriate, in accordance with the guidelines of Creswell (2003b) and Henning et al. (2004) in this regard.

After the allocated time and once the research interview questions had been posed, the researcher rounded the interview off by asking if there were any further questions. She subsequently summed up, concluded and thanked the subject for their input as also suggested by Henning et al. (2004).

3.3.6 Development of a biographical data form

Kerlinger and Lee (2000) maintain that biographical data such as age, race, marital status, education and income and the like are indispensable since these are used in studying the relationships amongst variables and checking the adequacy of samples. They further indicate that this information is ordinarily obtained at the beginning of the interview because much of it is neutral in character and assists the interviewer to establish rapport with the subjects. The researcher incorporated this data to ensure, amongst others, an even distribution of the sample and to make certain that women with dependants were interviewed.

The researcher reserved questions of a more personal nature, such as income, for later questioning (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000; Welman & Kruger, 2003). The timing of such questions must necessarily be a matter of judgement and experience (Warwick & Lininger, 1975). These questions were filled out towards the end of the biographical data form.

3.3.7 Use of a pilot interview

The researcher conducted a pilot study on one subject with similar characteristics to the subjects in the sample, so as to detect, firstly, possible flaws in the measurement procedure, secondly, to identify unclear and ambiguously formulated questions, and thirdly, to identify non-verbal behaviour (on the part of the subject) that might possibly signify discomfort or embarrassment regarding the content or wording of the questions (Welman & Kruger, 2003). Furthermore, comments from the research supervisor were integrated in order to enhance the interview process. This is in line with Welman and Kruger's (2003) advice to ask an experienced researcher or expert in the field to check the interview questions with a view to spotting glaring flaws.

3.3.7.1 Analysis of the pilot interview

The first interview was conducted with Subject 4. This served as a pilot interview which occurred after a second attempt when the researcher used another audio recorder owing to the operational failure of the audio recorder in the first instance. This proved to be the most difficult of all the interviews. The subject is an introvert and not talkative.

The pilot interview feedback from the supervisor revealed that the researcher had not probed sufficiently, was easily distracted, and gathered information that was irrelevant to the research. Subject 4 is friends with the researcher which made the latter less inclined to probe which resulted in information gaps. However, it provided a good opportunity to test the relevance of the questions, their sequence and duration.

The researcher interviewed all the subjects, bearing in mind the comments made by the supervisor. The researcher exercised greater control over the interview process and followed relevant leads that enhanced the quality of the data collected.

3.4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE EMPIRICAL COLLECTION METHODS

The research interview process comprised an introduction, an explanation of the purpose of the interview, the completion of the biographical data form, asking questions and the interviewer feedback form being filled in by the researcher. This entailed pre-planning and consultation so as to ensure that the subject and researcher were in agreement.

3.4.1 Invitation to participate in the research interview

The researcher made use of face-to-face and telephonic conversations to persuade subjects to take part in her research. Initial discussions entailed a broad explanation of the purpose of the study and why the subject was deemed important. Appointments were made telephonically. Subjects were given the freedom to choose the date, time and venue that was most convenient for them as regards face-to-face interviews.

3.4.2 Planning of the introductory briefing

The researcher used the introductory comments which are listed below (see Appendix A) as part of the introductory briefing:

- ‘Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview’;
- ‘Our telephonic discussion indicated that this interview is part of my dissertation on work-family life conflict amongst women of different racial backgrounds in South Africa. Your responses will form part of the data towards my research. Are you fine with that?’;
- ‘I seek permission to use a tape recorder and notes in order to ensure that I correctly capture what you say. Is that ok with you?’;
- ‘I wish to assure you that all your responses will be kept confidential. If you so wish, your responses shall be kept anonymous.’;
- ‘Our interview will last between 45 minutes and 60 minutes.’;

- ‘I have prepared a form to fill in your personal information. This will assist in getting to know you better.’; and
- ‘Shall we begin our interview? Are you ready?’

The last remark is an indication that both the researcher and subjects are ready to enter into the formal proceeding of the data collection process.

3.4.3 Planning the completion of the biographical data form

The researcher developed the biographical data form prior to the interview as illustrated in Appendix A. Immediately after the introductory briefing, the researcher commenced with filling in the biographical data form as per the subjects’ comments. Once this was done, the researcher announced that the interview would begin.

3.4.4 Planning of the semi-structured interview

The researcher proceeded with the semi-structured interview, as illustrated in Appendix C, immediately after completion of the biographical data form. The first question was open-ended, as indicated below:

- ‘Can you describe, in much detail, your experience in raising your child / children and meeting work demands?’

In-order to gain a deeper meaning and understanding of the subjects’ experiences, the researcher made use of probes such as:

- ‘Please tell me more.’
- ‘Can you expand on that?’

- ‘Can you give an example of that?’
- ‘I see’, ‘ok’, ‘mhh’ and ‘ok’.

The researcher further asked the following question:

- ‘What are your support mechanisms?’

The last interview questions were:

- ‘Do you share responsibility with the child/children’s father? What about the extended family?’

The researcher, after considering that the subject matter had been covered and the time allocated had expired, asked if the subject wished to add anything, summed up the interview, thanked the subject for her time and bade her farewell (Henning, et al., 2004).

3.4.5 Planning the completion of the interview feedback form

The researcher went home immediately after the interview, and filled in the interviewer feedback form, as indicated in Appendix D, including key highlights of subjects’ responses, non-verbal and emotional responses and additional notes that the researcher wished to remember regarding the interview. This information was collated with the biographical data; the recording tape (labelled with the subject’s particulars) and the researcher’s notes were filed for use during the transcription of the data.

3.5 COLLECTING EMPIRICAL MATERIAL

Each step involved in gathering data for this study was discussed extensively in section 3.5. Key points will be revisited in this instance.

3.5.1 Invitation to participate in the study and setting the interview appointment

Potential research subjects were invited by means of face to face encounters or telephonic requests. Subjects were also advised of the purpose of the research and the approximate length of the interview. The researcher then followed up with telephonic calls confirming the appointment.

3.5.2 Introductory briefing

The researcher's aim, during the introductory briefing, was to establish rapport with the subject, as discussed above. Amongst other matters, subjects were assured that their information and responses would be kept confidential.

3.5.3 Completion of the biographical data form

The completion of this form followed immediately after the introductory briefing. Subjects' responses were recorded by the researcher on the form developed for this purpose.

3.5.4 Semi-structured interview

The semi-structured interview was described in section 3.5. The researcher concluded the interview once she felt all the questions had been exhausted and thanked the subject for her time.

The researcher first developed the interview questions and structure. She made a mental note of possible subjects from her pool of friends, colleagues and acquaintances. It was important that the chosen subjects were accessible and available even after working hours. The researcher saw an advantage in approaching subjects with whom she has a relationship, which rendered approaching them for the interview easy and less strenuous, which was the case.

3.5.4.1 Analysis of the semi-structured interview

The researcher interviewed three subjects before going back to the initial subject used as pilot. She was conscious of making sure that the audio worked. She tested it by first making a recording, rewinding, listening to it and deleting the audio so as to make a fresh start once the interview commenced. She also used a notebook for scribbling during the interview. This was useful in noting issues for follow-up or further probing. The researcher referred to these notes for filling in gaps during transcription where the audio was inaudible.

3.5.5 Completion of the interviewer feedback form

The researcher filled in the interviewer feedback form immediately she reached home after each appointment.

3.5.6 Interview transcription

The researcher transcribed the tape recordings of two interviews while the others were carried out by a professional. These were combined with notes on observed non-verbal communication and other behaviours that enriched understanding of the issues discussed. This accurately captured all responses by the subject, comments by the researcher and all audible sounds made during the interview. The researcher's handwritten notes, particularly those on non-verbal communication, were incorporated to produce a comprehensive and true record of the interview.

Subjects were given their transcripts for comments which the researcher incorporated in the final versions. Issues for inclusion in the data were also noted by the researcher.

3.5.6.1 Analysis of the interview transcription process

The researcher transcribed the first two interviews, as discussed in 3.5.6. She completed this within three days of each interview whilst the information was still fresh in her mind. This consisted of compiling the first draft, listening to the audio recorder and filling in the gaps where necessary. This was very time consuming and at times the sentences did not make sense. She contracted a specialist transcriber for the next two interviews in response to the advice of her supervisor.

All transcripts were referred back to the subjects for their further input by email and telephonically. The researcher telephoned the subjects asking for clarification or further information if she detected any gaps. Also, input from the supervisor as an expert in such research improved the quality of the raw data. The supervisor also gave advice regarding when the data was saturated.

The next section discusses how the data analysis was undertaken.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

According to Henning et al. (2004), data analysis in qualitative research is an ongoing, emerging and iterative or non-linear process. Creswell (2003) concurs with this, because for him data analysis involves continual reflection regarding the data, asking analytical questions and writing memos throughout the study. He further argues that it involves open-ended data for the most part. Lastly, researchers need to shape data using other innovative data analysis approaches. The section below covers the processes of making sense of the data, the definition of conceptual similarities and patterns, and the description of emerging themes, which includes the interpretation or meaning of data.

3.6.1 Making sense of the data

The researcher read all data so as to develop an affinity with and understanding of the subjects. According to Creswell (2003a) and Henning et al. (2004), qualitative data analysis commences with obtaining a general sense of information and reflection on its meaning. This involved asking questions such as ‘What general ideas are subjects saying?’ ‘What is the general impression of the overall depth, credibility and use of information?’ (Creswell, 2003a, p. 191). The tape recorder allowed the researcher to concentrate on the conversation and record non-verbal gestures (May, 1994), in the notebook.

3.6.2 Definition of conceptual similarities and patterns

The researcher proceeded to organise data into segments (Henning et al., 2004) or groups based on emerging common patterns. This is the transformation of raw data (interview transcripts) into categories and classifications (Bulmer, 2006). Straus and Corbin (1990) define coding as the process of data conceptualisation, raising questions and giving provisional answers (hypotheses) with respect to categories and their relations. A code is the term for any product of this analysis

(whether a category or a relation among two or more categories). The researcher used the following recommended eight steps during coding, following Tesch (1990):

- Gain a sense of the whole. Read all transcripts carefully.
- Pick one document, the most interesting one. Go through it, asking “what is it all about”?
- When one has completed this task for several informants, one should make a list of all topics.
- With this list one goes back to the data, abbreviating the topics as codes and writing these next to the appropriate segment of the text.
- One finds the most descriptive wording for one’s topics and turns them into categories.
- She or he makes a final decision on the abbreviation for each category and alphabetises these codes.
- The data belonging to each category is assembled in one place and a preliminary analysis is performed.
- If necessary, the existing data should be recoded.

3.6.3 Description of emerging themes or patterns

According to Henning et al. (2004) descriptions form the basis of analysis, that is, data are broken down in order to be classified and clarified and for connections to be made between concepts which in turn provide the basis for fresh description. As Creswell (2003b) indicates, this description involves a detailed rendering of information about people, places or events in a particular setting. The present researcher developed an overarching description of work-family conflict experienced by women from different racial groups as this emerged from the research data. This analysis was undertaken, according to Henning et al. (2004, p. 128), ‘to truly reflect the subjects’ perceptions’. The research findings will be represented ‘in the qualitative narrative’ (Creswell, 2003a).

3.6.3.1 Interpretation of the meaning of data

Creswell (2003b) maintains that the final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or arriving at the meaning of the data. Analysis at this stage also included editing the tapes according to theoretical categories. This also assisted with comparative analyses of the interview situations. The researcher made a final analysis of the research lessons based on her personal interpretation, individual understanding, her culture, history and experiences. According to Mouton and Marais (1999) it remains incumbent upon qualitative researchers to stand back from their subject and the data and to interpret their viewpoints. During the analysis of data definite patterns and dimensions emerged (May, 1994). Once the data was classified, regularities, variations and peculiarities were examined and patterns were identified (Henning et al., 2004).

3.6.4 Data analysis audit trail

The data analysis involved re-reading of the transcripts. It involved colour coding chunks of the data that raised similar or pertinent issues in both electronic and hard copies, making notes on each transcript regarding the meaning or symbolism of the colour coded information. It was interesting for the researcher to note how certain portions of this information gelled and related to each other. Similar information was cut and pasted with headings being written for each. This process was the birth of the themes although they made little sense at first.

The researcher analysed the first interviews and submitted this analysis to the supervisor, assuming that the data was already saturated. It was the supervisor who advised that the researcher should interview more subjects. She reasoned that this would make it easier for comparability of the research findings. Secondly, it would broaden the sample's representativity of race. The first two subjects were of Coloured and Caucasian racial backgrounds. The sample therefore excluded subjects of the African and Indian racial groups which are amongst the major groups in South Africa.

This presented a crisis for the researcher. Firstly, it concerned taking a step back and doing interviews again. Secondly, the researcher found the research analysis tedious and just the thought of doing it again was draining on its own. Thirdly, the supervisor cautioned against fitting the previous data onto the existing themes or analysis. This could undermine the richness or trends presented and emanating from the later set of data. Furthermore, the researcher could analyse the latter set of data less rigorously than the first one.

Indeed the last set of data presented its own set of surprising trends which led the researcher to re-visit certain data that had already been discarded from the former set of data. Furthermore, it strengthened certain positions or themes, neutralising others and thus rendering others less prominent.

3.6.4.1 Reflection on the presentation of findings

The presentation of the findings and analysis thereof was subjected to intense scrutiny and deliberation between the supervisor and the researcher, particularly with regards to the formulation of the themes, the quantity versus quality of the themes and their integration with the existing literature. This resulted in reducing the themes from fifteen to nine and ultimately six. Some of the themes became sub-themes whilst others were reconstructed thus changing their meaning or emphasis, while others were discarded.

This process took time and the researcher also found herself making mental notes when something suddenly made sense, even when she was not busy with the research. She also came across newspaper clippings, magazines or movies that made observations on similar issues concerning her study topic. For the researcher, this was a period of heightened awareness with regards to the research topic and its implications for working women or herself as a mother.

3.6.4.2 Reflection on the integration of findings with existing literature

The integration of themes with existing literature also posed a difficult process. It necessitated that the researcher re-write chapter two, which was off the mark in relation to the findings. This was also a turning point for the researcher as she saw this as her point of entry as an Industrial and Organisational Psychology professional, while at the same time she experienced many questions and doubts with regards to embracing this role, particularly since her findings were subject to review by other experts in this field.

3.6.4.3 The impact of research on the researcher's personal life

The researcher spent much time agonising over her findings and observations, thus often retiring during the early hours of the morning, staying at work until late at night and over weekends. This resulted in her cutting down on her social life. It was at this point that the researcher's eldest daughter commented that she would never attempt Masters if this is what it takes. This was an unintended negative consequence of the researcher's academic pre-occupation with respect to her children. What she wished for more fully was that she served as their role model rather than discouraging them from reaching their full potential in life. The jury is still out on this since her children are still at school.

3.6.4.4 Challenges encountered with the dissertation submission

The researcher submitted her final dissertation which was returned because of certain inadequacies. She received theoretical and technical feedback that she needed to consider. This was one of the lowest points during her involvement with the study. However, this presented an opportunity for fine tuning the dissertation once more. It provided an opportunity for evaluating the dissertation and incorporating comments by independent and external experts who were not personally involved in the research process.

3.6.4.5 Opportunity for the presentation of the dissertation to other experts

The researcher took an opportunity to present her dissertation at a conference for the Society for Industrial and Organisational Psychology of South Africa. This presented an excellent opportunity to introduce the dissertation to other professionals. It was a platform for testing its impact and relevance against other existing studies or theories. Furthermore, the audience served as the mirror for any glaring omissions or contradictions. It was exciting for the researcher and supervisor that the study was well received.

3.7 IMPLEMENTING SCIENTIFIC RIGOUR DURING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Section 1.4.3 dealt with ensuring scientific rigour within social research which forms the basis for establishing truth and confirming knowledge. Phenomenology maintains that truth is established through assuming that people know their world best and thus their experiences, is self-evident and it is established in dialoguing and reaching an intersubjective definition of reality.

Barnister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindal (2001) argue that research occurs in a complex and dynamic social world. It involves the researcher's active engagement with subjects and acknowledges that understanding is constructed and that multiple realities exist. This all influences the truth about the findings. The discussion below examines the precision of the competent social practitioner, dialoguing with the knowledge, and taking actions: the pragmatic consequence of knowledge claims as truth, and the audit trail as steps being taken to ensure that the findings are indeed a reflection of reality.

3.7.1 Audit trail

The qualitative study, according to Akkerman, Admiraal, Brekelmans and Oost (2008), employs less standardised techniques for data gathering and analysis which could undermine the

trustworthiness of the findings, which is important for the researcher to ensure. The audit trail is an appropriate procedure for quality judgement (Akkerman et al., 2008). It is a technique used for establishing confirmability of qualitative research findings (Cutcliffe & McKenna, 2004; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail was incorporated in each step of the present research process.

The above ensured that scientific rigour is maintained throughout the research process.

3.7.2 Precision of the competent social practitioner

The competency of the social practitioner is critical in order to ensure precision, starting from the design of the research process (Henning et al., 2004). As previously discussed, it is important that the researcher clarifies potential biases that she brings to the study. This self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers. Sarantakos (1998) adds that objective reality can be enhanced through checking for the researcher's effect on the subject and vice versa.

The researcher chose the research topic, influenced by her own experiences as a woman and a mother but also by her desire to contribute towards research on women within the South African experience. Barnister et al. (2001) argue that this initial process of decision-making and connection between the researcher and research topic is often overlooked. This made the researcher aware of potential biases and subjectivity in the research topic. The increased self-awareness served as a balance check for the interviewer in this regard. She also acknowledges that she forms part of society and consequently her perspective is influenced by her background. According to Barnister et al. (2001), this is a recognition that the researcher is subjectively and centrally engaged with the choice of the research topic as well as the particular questions asked from the outset. It is the researcher who conceptualises and finalises a research topic.

3.7.2.1 Researcher's critical life incidents: assessing potential bias pitfalls

It is important that this section also highlights critical life incidents of the researcher – which also forms part of the research audit. This would allow for introspection regarding areas where the researcher could discover blind spots. However, the afore-mentioning of these critical life incidents increases the researcher's consciousness and self-restraint with regards to falling into a trap of bias.

The researcher is the firstborn daughter in a family of seven children with two elder brothers. However, being the firstborn daughter puts her in an influential and powerful position within a Nguni and patriarchal family structure. She is the anointed carer, not only of her family but also of the clan values and lineage. She was thus exposed to family responsibility and leadership at an early age. This is part of the gendered socialisation that the researcher experienced. It influenced the roles she assumed with respect to her siblings and aging parents.

The researcher describes herself as an independent thinker: something she attributes to growing up outside her immediate family influence and protection at an early age. Currently, she is a single mother of two girls, having migrated to Gauteng from Eastern Cape Province, where she grew up and her family home is situated.

Lastly, it is important to mention that the researcher gave birth to her last born three weeks before sitting for her first year Master's exams. This had a profound effect on the choice of research topic as she felt overwhelmed by her responsibilities during that period. She was also grateful for all the support her family (although living outside Gauteng) and her domestic helper offered her.

The above provides an insight into that which shapes the researcher's worldview. This is important since the researcher is intensely engaged with each step of the research process. Further insight was received from the supervisor who guided the research process. The

supervisor interrogated the research process, thus deepening the researcher's technical expertise. Furthermore, she offered sound advice during data analysis, amongst others, resulting in the development of concrete and sound themes.

3.7.2.2 Use of an expert

The researcher referred to the supervisor as an expert on the subject as well as other peers to discuss and share research actions (Henning et al., 2004). This was important in identifying discrepancies, receiving critical views about the research process and thus enhancing the quality of the findings.

3.7.3 Dialoguing the knowledge

In chapter 1, section 1.4.3, the author indicated that truth is derived through dialoguing and becomes an intersubjective reality. It involves talking about each other's experiences, shifting each other's frame of references, highlighting misinterpretations of reality and reaching consensus about what constitutes reality. In this regard, the researcher telephoned the subjects asking for further detail concerning certain issues subsequent to the interviews. She also referred the transcripts and her data analysis to the subjects for their comments. This contributed towards determining the accuracy of the qualitative findings. Creswell (2003b) and Sarantakos (1998) argue, firstly, that by taking the final report or specific descriptions or themes back to the subjects enhances the accuracy of the findings. Secondly, the researcher made use of peer debriefing to enhance the accuracy of the account. This process involved asking peers to review certain parts of the research so that the account would resonate with people other than the researcher. Thirdly, the dissertation was examined by external supervisors who considered the entire project. They served as auditors, who were new to the researcher and the project, and thus provided an assessment of the process of the research.

The truth or essence of the research findings also pertains to the ideas being accepted by the broader community (Henning et al., 2004). As mentioned, these research findings were presented

and well received by peers and other experts at a conference for Industrial and Organisational Psychologists.

Mouton and Marais (1999) argue that the fact that human beings are being studied can lead to atypical behaviour. Examples of such effects are the beliefs of the subjects that they can answer any question and their gambling over what they consider as appropriate answers (Mouton & Marais, 1999) during an interview. Subjects act up so as to fit into what they think the researcher is looking for. Open-ended questions were used so as to minimise the risk of subjects giving appropriate answers instead of an authentic account of their experiences. The researcher ensured that each subject felt valued and appreciated for her time and contribution. This, amongst other techniques, would ensure that the researcher succeeded in capturing the point of view of the subject through maintaining a close relationship, interviewing and observation in close proximity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

3.7.4 Taking actions: pragmatic consequence of knowledge claims as truth

These research findings were submitted through the university and thus enhanced the knowledge base regarding this topic. Furthermore, the author made recommendations for future research on the related research topics. In addition, fundamental conclusions were drawn that impact on the Industrial and Organisational Psychology field as a whole.

The next section examines the ethics that were adhered to during research.

3.8 ETHICS

The qualitative researcher seeks a deepening understanding of human phenomena and consequently enters into the private lives of the subjects. It is important that the subject is a willing to participate in the research. This means that the researcher receives an informed consent from the subject. This implies that the subject is made aware of the nature of the research and how it is going to be used (Christians, 2003; Henning et al., 2004; May, 2001). The

researcher includes a preamble to each interview with the acknowledgement that the subjects willingly agreed to be interviewed. Secondly, it is acknowledged that the research forms part of the researcher's academic studies. Thirdly, the information will only be used towards this research project and for no other purpose. Lastly, the audio recorder was used to ensure that the researcher accurately captured the interview process. The latter is also an important ethical consideration since fabrications or omissions could undermine the validity of the study (Christians, 2003).

The other ethical consideration was maintaining the anonymity of the subjects (Christians, 2003; Henning et al., 2004). Their names, critical details and that of their families were not recorded on the transcripts. Each subject was allocated an alphabetical code, securing their identity during referencing in the research report.

It was important that the researcher respected and protected the privacy of the subjects. All the discussions were held in a secure environment, thereby reducing risks such as overhearing of the interview by other parties. The researcher further ensured that the audio tapes of all the interviews were locked away and immediately coded so as to disguise the identity of the subjects. Lastly, discussions during the interviews were kept confidential (Christians, 2003; May, 2001). Only the researcher is able to identify the subjects.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed steps undertaken in the research methodology. It described the qualitative research approach, paying particular attention to the assumptions of the phenomenological paradigm. An account of the researcher's experience and background in relation to the topic was furnished. The author also discussed data collection matters such as sampling, population and biographical data. Discussion also included steps taken in developing the tools used during data collection, the interviewer's role and the structure of the interview. The pilot interview was considered along with the administration of the data collection tools. Furthermore, the researcher

elaborated on data collection, processing, analysis and interpretation. The steps were followed in order to ensure the scientific rigours of the study were explored. It also included an audit trail and the ethics considered and applied during the research.

CHAPTER 4 : FINDINGS

The objective of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the findings of the present phenomenological study. Furthermore, it integrates the findings with the existing literature. Lastly, it details conclusions emanating from the findings and the said literature.

4.1 DEFINING EXPERIENCES OF WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT AMONGST SOUTH AFRICAN WOMEN OF DIFFERENT RACE GROUPS

This section provides an overall view of the material the research subjects shared in this respect, before proceeding to specific and detailed discussions on emerging themes. It is structured according to the latter, relating to an analysis and comparison of the findings of the semi-structured interviews.

Firstly, the researcher observed that women are exposed to work-family conflict. Secondly, work-family conflict is a topic that arouses strong feelings and sentiments. The competing work-family responsibilities keep women on their toes and they constantly need to prioritise where their energies and time should be directed during the course of any day. Thirdly, there is a sense that women believe that they have to bear with these competing demands and celebrate only once the children are grown up and independent. Hopefully, then mothers can start being involved with what they have missed, in their social lives in particular. Fourthly, the fathers of these children, according to the subjects, are only involved in child care when freed from their economic activities or are separated from this responsibility due to divorce. However, the children still look up to their fathers for their other needs despite their everyday absence. It is their mothers that see their children first thing in the morning, make them ready for school, assist with homework, and prepare supper. Fifthly, these women report a strong support network and use available technology such as cellphones whilst at work in ensuring the wellbeing of their children. Lastly, their workplace experiences range from having over-concerned supervisors to ones who cannot be bothered about family issues. It is apparent that little is done by employers in making amenities such as day care or aftercare resources available, nor do they offer any kind of

assistance in mitigating these competing demands, except for allowing time off to manage family related obligations. Based on the above discussion the emerging themes of the study are:

- Experiences of strong emotions associated with raising children whilst working.
- Experiences of compromising on the quality of work dedicated to each role.
- Experiences that after a hard day at work, women enter into their second shift.
- Experiences of strain resulting from assuming sole custodianship over children's upbringing.
- Experiences of making choices in terms of a career, professional growth and children.
- Experiences of reliance on strong coping mechanisms and social support systems.

The above themes are discussed next; each is followed by an integration of the existing literature. This involves a detailed description using the subjects' own words, identifying the similarities and differences of their experiences. The researcher will also add her own perspective on these experiences. Lastly, the interaction between the different themes will be illustrated.

4.1.1 Strong emotions associated with raising children whilst working

Many different feelings are attributed to the subjects' work-family conflict experiences. They may feel overwhelmed by the scope of their responsibilities or frustrated at being their families' pillar of support. Women feel despondent at being left in the lurch by their partners or fathers of their children. This translates into anger at watching their lives and career opportunities pass by. Yet there is a sense of joy over the abundance of love and the bonds that they share with their children.

Subject 1 commented as follows:

'It's very frustrating particularly because my kids are very young.'

Subject 4 expressed her feelings in these words:

'It's not an easy task. It has its ups and downs, stresses, and everything that you can think of.....'

Subject 3 echoed similar sentiments:

'It's being totally responsible for this person, this soul, until that age where they can take care of themselves. For me, that is very draining.'

The researcher noted that the subjects' facial expressions and gestures during interviews betrayed a sense of guilt in sharing the above feelings. The observations included that of putting their hands over their mouths, which seems to suggest a disassociation from the statement even if it represents their truth. Subject 2 swapped the word 'burden' to 'challenges' mid-sentence whilst describing her experiences. This was coupled with the subjects simultaneously being grateful and relieved at being afforded a platform to voice their innermost experiences. The admission of the negative feelings associated with motherhood is a disjuncture from their role or self-identity as mothers who brought these children into the world. It is an admission that all is not well with them in carrying so many responsibilities. This is a role for which they are prepared earlier in life as society's 'anointed primary care givers'. These feelings therefore represent the silenced voices of women that grace boardrooms whilst their minds wonder 'what's for dinner?' It is a reflection of the societal imbalances created in the name of tradition or patriarchy. The feelings also celebrate what is positive: the joys of motherhood and its challenges as well.

The above section briefly presented the findings of the study and the researcher's analysis. These findings will now be discussed in view of the existing literature as discussed in Chapter 2 and reiterated below.

4.1.1.1 Integration

It is necessary that one considers why women, rather than men, are mostly affected by work-family conflict. The discussion in section 2.1.1 argues that women derive their identity from the status they occupy as prescribed by society (Thoits, 1995). Motherhood, in this case, is one particular role that women embrace, as do all subjects in this research. This role is imposed on women by certain constituencies such as parents, family, peers and institutions (Apter, 1993; Nicolson, 1996).

The above indicates that motherhood provides a source of fulfilment and a most meaningful experience (Josselson, 1996). Furthermore, mothers experience a great sense of joy, power and purpose combined with guilt and a huge burden of responsibility (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006; Greenhaus et al., 2000). It is indeed challenging, although potentially enjoyable, hard work and routinely stressful (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Magezis, 1996; Richardson, 1993).

There is direct impact stemming from the advancement of contraceptives and the awareness from which the subjects benefitted. The subjects were aided by the availability of contraceptives in determining when the time was ripe for children and thus took control of their fertility (Hakim, 2000; LaRossa, Simonds, & Ritzes, 2005; Magezis, 1996; Nicolson, 1997), unlike their mothers and grandmothers who bore more children than the subjects. The subjects had two children each except for Subject 3. Subject 1 made a conscious decision to delay having her children.

The findings point out that all subjects fully embrace their responsibilities and dedicate time and energy to fulfilling these despite the odds and the demanding positions they occupy at work. However, it is due to these demands which are at odds with each other that the subjects shared mixed emotions of enjoyment, frustration, guilt and a huge sense of responsibility in being mothers and fulltime workers. The subjects also alluded to the fact ‘that family and work responsibilities frequently leave little time for individuals themselves’ (Greenhaus et al., 2000, p. 298). This was particularly shared by subjects who are single and live on their own. The subjects,

especially the single ones, did not just lament about the ‘little time spent with (their) partner(s)’ (Greenhaus et al., 2000, p. 298) but took this completely off their list of responsibilities. Their lives are currently arranged around their children; thus the individual mother’s needs are secondary. Subject 2 expressed the hope that perhaps when her children are older and more independent there would be time for a relationship or for pursuing individual interests. Her further concern, currently, relates more to introducing a step-father and the complexities this may create for her children.

Their role overload is partly a consequence of the limited time available in fulfilling work and family demands. This necessitates compromise regarding the quality of time dedicated to each role: another theme which emerged from the study and is discussed below also with reference to existing literature.

4.1.2 Compromise on the quality of time dedicated to each role

There is much that one can possibly fit into a day, especially for women with young children. This is straightforward once one sharpens one’s time management skills; that is, perfecting the packaging of responsibilities into slots within the relevant allocated periods of time. It is the ability to spend quality time with their family that counts for women, as does allowing children time to engage in activities that build their character and are for recreational purposes. The compromise on the quality of dedicated time in each role manifests itself differently, viz., lack of quality time with the family; using work time for family arrangements or emergencies; limiting children’s participation in extramural and other social activities and developing time management skills, as discussed below.

4.1.2.1 Lack of quality time with family

The subjects stretch their time between competing tasks within their families and at work. It seems that what is most important for the subjects, in general, is that they give their families undivided attention, enjoy their company, see them as they grow from strength to strength and are there when it most matters, not being tired or distracted.

Subject 2 shared her views as follows:

‘The thing that is most difficult is not the practical(s) with food, clothing issues. The issue is quality of contact and also when it comes to time because I am single.’

Subject 3 summarised her feelings with respect to how a stressful day at work compromises the quality of time with her family in the following words:

‘... when your days are negative and horrible, you end up not being the person you want to be with your family and children. You can’t have fun when you are tied down by (work) responsibility.....’

Subject 1 concluded:

‘If I was financially secured enough to stay home (stop) I would. I think I am not investing as much time as I would want to in my children right now.’

The above remarks indicate how the subjects felt that work and its pressures impact negatively on their family responsibilities. There is not enough time for bonding with their families, particularly during the week. They will ordinarily wake their offspring up, prepare them for and drop them off at school, go to work and come home for dinner preparation, homework and bedtime. This paints the picture of a parent who barks orders for the children to get on with the task or tasks at hand rather than of one who is attentively engaged with what they were up to at school, their fears, and joys of their day.

This is best captured by Subject 1 as follows:

‘I sit in a position where there is no time limit. Basically any day for me extends beyond 14 hours. (As a teacher) I knew that growing, learning and finding opportunities to just become an individual in life was not about going to school from 8am to 2pm and then flying home. It was about socializing after school, finding different friends, sharing experiences and doing things

together. And for me it is just heartbreaking because I know that it should be done yet I can't. I can't afford my children that exposure.'

Subjects strongly identify with their family responsibilities. It makes them sad that they experience limited quality time in this respect. They leave home early for work and come home very tired (as are the children). The weekends are also full of other community or extended family responsibilities, as indicated by the subjects, thus further compromising their qualitative engagement with their families. However, this is true for the workplace as well. The situation is not eased by the subjects' quest to keep tabs on their family; they may thus use work time for family arrangements or emergencies as elaborated below.

4.1.2.2 Using work time for family arrangements or emergencies

It is consequently inevitable that the subjects develop divided attention whilst at work because of their difficulty in incorporating family demands into office hours. This constitutes stealing time from their employers to attend to family responsibilities or emergencies. It is not possible for women to completely shut off their other roles. What is crucial is how women feel and experience the issue of paying divided attention to each role.

This was best expressed by Subject 3, who takes time off work to fetch her son from school. She related this as follows:

'I feel like it's the highlight of his day when I go and pick him up.it means so much to him. He gets very excited.'

There are times when due to time pressures Subject 3 is unable to move from her desk, thus denying her son his highlight of the day, with negative consequences. She expressed this in the following words:

'He is extremely sensitive and you know, the moment his school work is affected, it disturbs me and I don't know. I can't deal with it.'

Subjects 1, 2 and 3 keep track of their children by cell phones and telephones, regarding whether they have arrived at school, are proceeding to their transport that takes them home, or are at extra-mural activities, whether they are on time and other matters. This was physically demonstrated whilst interviewing Subject 2 when the telephone rang, with her older son giving his mother feedback about his visit to the hairdresser. Subject 1 related receiving urgent calls from home during a meeting, forcing her to step outside. This was her younger daughter asking for assistance with her spelling homework. These interactions last for a few seconds but decrease these women's anxiety levels. They also serve in affirming their love and care for their children even when physically removed because of work commitments.

The above matters demonstrate that women worry about their families' wellbeing whilst at work even though these two spheres are physically differentiated. It is perhaps this geographical divide, which removes them from the other part of their life, that makes them worry whether everything is in order. However, technological advances such as telephones, as demonstrated above, make it easier to keep an eye on children, albeit at the expense of the employer's time and resources. Children on the other hand, despite these technological interventions, are limited in their extramural participation and other social activities, because of their mothers' schedules at work.

4.1.2.3 Children's limited participation in extramural and other social activities

One of the negative consequences of the subjects' limited time with their family, as discussed above, manifests itself in depriving children of participating in extra-mural activities, mainly because their timing coincides with office hours. The coordination of transport logistics, availability of child minders to oversee children and the geographic location of these activities beyond school boundaries, does make it a daunting task of coordination for working mothers. They are thus unable to ensure that the children partake in extra-mural activities; that their safety is guaranteed and that they are well taken care of. However, the mothers shared regret at not being able to afford their children these opportunities.

Subject 1 explained this as follows:

'My kids are not participating as much as I would like them to, in extra mural activities. So that type of (work) pressure does not allow for a fixed extra mural activity programme at school.... we have to deny them that pleasure and that is unfortunate.'

Subject 2's children participate in these activities so long as they are at school or close to their grandparents' workplace. These are her views on this:

'For instance they cannot go to extra mural activities in the afternoon if the extra murals are out of school because in my mother's house there is no one to take them. They do not visit friends unless they live close by. So all the things to do with trying to give your kids the extra stuff does not happen'

One gains a sense that these mothers are torn between deciding whether their children's well being or making a living should be their priority. The work gives them financial security and yet their children should not be denied the opportunities of gaining exposure to developmental opportunities. However, all is not lost in managing these competing demands, as it seems that the subjects fine tune their time management skills and thus juggle their responsibilities with reasonable ease.

4.1.2.4 Developing time management skills

One of the skills women use to cope is that of time management. Subject 2 concluded in the following words:

'For me it was always about managing your time and about making sure that you have got your priorities right.'

Subject 1 indicated that she employs time management as her coping skill:

‘So how do I cope? Like I said at the beginning I have a very a great ability to package things and deal with them in little pockets of time. Because of my strong mental abilities to create those divisions it’s helped me cope but it is not right.’

The subjects demonstrated that nothing is impossible if one bolsters their confidence in prioritising their key responsibilities, allocating appropriate times and attention. This reduces the tensions created if all activities are squeezed within a short space of time, or clash with each other. However, this depends on everything at work remaining constant, finishing at 5pm for instance. Subject 1 alluded to the fact that there is no time limit to her hours. This means that dinner and homework will run late if she does not finish at 5pm or that she may call on her support networks to fill in for her in order to reduce the strain or mediate the competing demands.

The next section integrates the theme and sub-themes discussed above with the existing literature.

4.1.2.5 Integration

In summary, the effect of work on the quality of family life is more evident since its demands on a mother’s time and energy are more regulated (Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). The discussion in 4.1.1.1 indicated that the subjects fully embrace their motherhood role despite its pressures. They prefer giving their families undivided attention; enjoying their company, being fully present and not being distracted by work demands.

This goal is unattainable because work pressures occur simultaneously and at times are incompatible (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985) with family demands. Distractions also occur as a result of telephone calls to and from family during working hours as related by the subjects, so that the pressures of one role negatively affected the performance of another (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Greenhaus et al., 2000). The physical separation between work and family makes

it hard to bring the two spheres close and attend to pressing needs without jeopardising the meeting of the other demands. This is best illustrated by the subjects' inability to enable their children's participation in extramural and other social activities because of work pressures.

The findings echoed sentiments about not spending enough time with their children, partners and social activities that matter to mothers themselves (Adams et al., 1996; Aryee, 1992; Frone et al., 1997; Hammer et al., 1997; Higgins et al., 1992; Judge et al., 1994; Miller, 1997; O'Driscoll, Ilgen & Hildreth, 1992; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

As noted, the subjects had difficulty in answering whether their children's wellbeing or making a living was a priority. Benefits are derived from both work (in terms of financial rewards) and family (in terms of sense of belonging). The latter, in particular children, must grow up grounded and exposed in developmental opportunities. One of the observations deriving from the study is consequently that the subjects experienced time-based work-family conflict but developed time management skills in coping with these competing work and family demands.

These competing demands caused the subjects to endure long hours yet still enter into a second shift at home, as discussed in the next theme.

4.1.3 After a hard day at work, women enter into a second shift

The subjects also endure waking up early to prepare breakfast and lunch boxes, and see to the physical appearance of their children, particularly when the latter are still young. This also occurs while they make themselves ready for work, drop their offspring off at school, withstand the traffic to work, meet their work targets and also check whether the children are progressing as planned at and after school. Once the working day has finished another set of family demands begins.

Subject 3 noted that even though she becomes tired at work, her next shift is in her kitchen, as illustrated below:

'When I walk in, I put my bag down and I start cooking. I always feel that, if I am not there then maybe they didn't eat and I worry about them. I will come home very tired and make sure that there is a meal for them.'

Subject 2 had this to say on her experience with young children whilst she was studying:

'I would come back from university, feed (the baby) and feed the older boy who was at nursery school and make supper. So I made supper every night. In between feeding them and making supper, I would sleep. And if I had something for studying I would do it later on. So I worked hard.'

The above scenario has not changed thirteen years later owing to her experience as a single mother. As Subject 2 commented:

'You get home. I will be tired most of the time, (but start) cooking. Then you go to bed tired and wake up in the morning and do it again. You know.'

Subject 4 shared her experiences as follows:

'(My son) was at aftercare and then (I) got home and still had to do homework because he had a problem with concentration at school and the teachers were always diagnosing him, this child with poor concentration, you know?'

Subject 1 also shared her experiences and added the following about her day:

‘So what my typical day is like is to try and finish off (at work) by 5 pm or to be out of the office at least by 5 pm because what it means is rushing home to release the helper so she can go home. (Then) setting out cooking and then going back to (finish off my) work (assignments).’

A further strain is that the education system is viewed as giving piles of homework to children that parents are expected to monitor and supervise. Single subjects face this responsibility on their own since they live with their children. This adds to the pressure on already tired and overstretched mothers. The subjects accept and embrace this as their duty without questioning the fathers’ lack of commitment towards it.

As Subject 2 said:

‘The things that are difficult are things like homework and making sure that they have got exactly what they need for school the next day. The assumption is that you will do the work with your child not that the teacher will do the work with your child.’

Subject 3, although married, also noted the added responsibility of homework:

‘It never ends, you know? When my daughter was very little (the big one), I used to focus a whole lot on homework. It’s very stressful. While I am cooking, she would be doing her homework and I would stress, lose the hair on my head, I promise you, I have the t-shirt from being stressed!.’

Subject 3's husband does nothing in assisting in this regard. However, Subject 1's experience in dealing with the added homework responsibility is at times eased by her husband's involvement when available:

'If he knows that he won't be home by six and it's a very heavy day for homework, he will go home during lunchtime and start cooking. He will cook, (Although) by the time we (get) home he (would) be gone (at least) there will be food (ready).'

One hears an admission that having to assist with the children's homework adds strain to women after a hard day at work. However, they also express the importance of being there, assisting the children themselves instead of finding outside help. The subjects feel that sourcing external assistants for homework denies them an opportunity in engaging with their children due to the limited time available during working days.

Subject 1 captured this sentiment as follows:

'(My husband) and I have spoken about it. We have spoken about getting these au pairs, the university students to come in so that they do homework and take the kids out. Then you ask yourself what are you inculcating? What cultures are you inculcating? I am very close to the culture that I was raised up that whole social circle'.

The subject's work apparently never ends. Subject 1 mentioned that she wakes up in the morning, prepares herself and assists her young children with physical grooming and making sure that they eat breakfast. This is also true for Subject 3; although her children are big enough to get themselves ready in the morning, she calls to them in order to wake them up whilst her husband is still asleep. This is followed by dropping the children off at school, which marks the end of the early morning shift with the family.

The women then embark on their work shift, keeping tabs on their children or sneaking off to take them home, in the case of Subject 3, during lunch. The last shift, as indicated, concerns getting dirty in the kitchen, making dinner, helping with homework, preparing lunch boxes and setting out school clothes for the next day. It also concerns finishing work assignments for Subject 1 who admitted to bringing work home sometimes. This depicts a very long day for women. The fathers' role remains minimal and most subjects did not even mention what they do, except when probed by the researcher.

It is now necessary to examine how the findings discussed above are reflected in the existing literature. The next section considers this integration.

4.1.3.1 Integration

The findings of this study concur with the literature review on chapter 2 where it was observed that women increasingly participate in the work domain whilst still not liberated from family responsibilities (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Greenhaus & Parasuraman, 1999). The concept of a mother, as experienced by all subjects, is contrary to the view that a mother should traditionally be nurturing, fulltime, domestically bound and continuously present. It does however concur with the notion that motherhood is viewed in the context of an employed woman with multiple roles: jobs, self and family. 'She is viewed as a super mom who combines employment with mothering' (Yoder 2007, p. 180).

It was also noted that the majority of the 'second-shift' family work is performed by women (Hochschild & Machung, 1989; Meneghan & Parcel, 1991). The second shift does not affect fathers in this study, thus reflecting the notion that parents struggle over gender-defined responsibilities (Hochschild, 1997; Hochschild & Machung, 1989). Only Subject 1 reported that her husband assisted, though within the confines of his busy work schedule and travels. The single subjects, 2 and 4, ruled out the participation of their ex-partners in childcare responsibilities whilst Subject 3 expected no assistance from her husband although they shared the same house. Subject 2 viewed her ex-husband as irresponsible and unreliable. She thus took

on all the responsibilities concerning her children. Subject 3 gave up on her husband sharing these responsibilities. Subject 4 receives financial maintenance from one of the fathers and so does not expect any further involvement.

It seems that the subjects also experience strain owing to assuming sole custodianship over their children's upbringing. The next section discusses this theme further.

4.1.4 Strain resulting from assuming sole custodianship over children's upbringing

As indicated above, the subjects enter into a second shift after work and take strain as a direct consequence of assuming this responsibility. If one follows the flow of the subjects' daily lives and routine, it becomes clear that their children are at the centre of what gets done and at what time. The mothers prioritise their well-being and care giving responsibilities. Consequently other aspects of the mothers' social needs are left unattended.

Subject 2 explained her selflessness as follows:

'I mean, I also just kind of gave up everything else. If you know what I mean. I sing in a choir. But in terms of quality of life for myself I live through my children. I know I do, ok.'

Subject 3 expressed similar views as follows:

‘Some days I tell myself, if I had a second choice in life, I wouldn’t have them (the children). Not because I don’t love them. They become the centre of your life. Your whole life tends to revolve around this person, because of the responsibility, which is too much. I think the emotional responsibility is too much.’

The above is also true for Subject 4 who is a single parent with a teenager and a toddler. She shared her views as follows:

‘Two children is a fulltime job. Its school. Its homework. Its friends. Its parties. One being a teenager. Its cheekiness and laziness. You have got to be THERE all the time.’

Furthermore, Subject 4 commented as followed about her social life:

‘(Social life?) No, it is on hold!’

Subjects 2 and 4 are both single. The issues of time out and assuming sole custodianship of children were expressed sharply by them. The in-laws of subjects 1 and 3 are always on call in assisting with the children. This is a dream for Subjects 2 and 4 (the former’s in-laws only met their grandchildren less than five times during their lifetimes). They rely more on their friends for support, compared to the married subjects.

Subject 1 adds a different twist on this through lamenting her decision in delaying conceiving children, thus being obliged to cope with a demanding senior position whilst dealing with primary school age offspring. Hence, there are consequences in the choices that women make.

Their salvation comes about when their children become more independent on growing up, as illustrated by Subject 3:

‘Well, I joined a gym this year. I was quite excited but I felt very guilty that I had taken that money for myself and enjoyed myself and then I realized I could also take my children. At the moment they are too busy and they never want to go. With that response I don’t mind going (alone).’

The undercurrent in these subjects’ voices is that their interests and social lives are undermined by putting their children’s wellbeing first. Subject 3 makes it clear that the decision whether to have children or not placed her in this position, owing to the choices she made earlier on about her life. However, these choices were made with their husbands or partners who are now absent and do not suffer from the strain of long hours and the unending family demands that the subjects endure.

4.1.4.1 Limited involvement of fathers in everyday childcare activities

It is evident that the fathers of the subjects’ children play a limited role in terms of everyday childcare. The former’s excuses for not being available as the first point of reference for childcare responsibilities, range from business obligations that take them frequently away from home, not having custody and generally incapability.

Subject 1 noted her supportive husband’s input on childcare. However, this only occurs when he is around. She explained this as follows:

‘Their father is very, very helpful when he is around but he is a business person who travels the province, travels nationally and even internationally.’

The opposite is true for Subject 2 who lives alone with her boys and responded in these words with respect to the role her ex-husband plays towards his childcare responsibilities:

‘I do not ask him because I know he cannot be relied upon. So I cannot rely on him so I had established a sort of system that allows my boys to have a nice easy routine and even time. There is no hiccups or cries that dad did not fetch me.’

Subject 3, who is married, shared her experience as follows:

‘Nothing! Absolutely nothing. You know, there used to be times that I was not there. None of them even got up! Nobody went to school; nobody did anything he can’t even get up in the morning!’

Subject 4 related her experience of being self-reliant, as opposed to Subject 1, whose husband pitches in when available as follows:

‘(My son’s) father? Not a single cent! (My daughter’s) father? At least he contributes every month! So his contribution has only been in terms of financial support.’

Although the absence of the fathers from the care of their children is more apparent with single mothers, viz., Subjects 2 and 4, who were granted full custody, Subjects 1 and 3 also reported little or no involvement by their husbands as well. One can conclude that primary care giving seems to be the woman’s domain whether she is married, single, or not. The fathers are pre-occupied with economic activities or with entertaining their children in the case of Subject 3’s husband. It is worth noting that Subject 3 becomes annoyed, but puts up with her husband’s lack of involvement in child care and reckless behaviour in not giving guidance to the children in her absence. Subject 2 painted the picture that her ex-husband is a lost cause in this regard but refuses to lift a finger in rectifying the situation. It seems that Subject 4 never bothered with approaching the Maintenance Court, thus enabling the firstborn’s father to get away without contributing to his son’s well-being. This appears as if the subjects unconsciously embrace and accept their societally imposed yoke as their mothers had done previously.

4.1.4.2 Assumption of primary care giving responsibility, women's socialisation and childhood experiences

Women are often exposed to child care responsibilities at an early stage as a result of certain life events. They also take cues from their mothers or significant others. There is a possibility that if a mother holds onto a fulltime position this is also what her daughter is likely to assume in adult life.

Subject 1 explained how she became a surrogate mother to her siblings in the following way:

'I was the eldest so I became the mother. My mother went out to work. (My father) was boarded (due to ill health). The net effect of that is we did not see our mother even more because now after work she had to go first to hospital. So the other three siblings began to see me as the mother figure. I can see now that the mistakes made, it was left up to the eldest to raise these three children.'

Subject 4 was exposed at an early age to caring for a younger cousin, which was her exposure to the experience of parenting:

'I had a cousin and there were problems with the mother so I also had to take care of her. My grandmother didn't really come and take care of her that much so I still feel like I was also a parent to her.'

However, Subject 3 felt unprepared for parenting as a young girl. She shared this as follows:

'I was the youngest at home. I was the only daughter and I had three older brothers so I was quite spoilt and you know. I never did anything. I never made tea for anybody. I never picked up anything. I never did anything for my family. I was very, very spoilt.'

Subject 3's socialisation did not equip her with household upkeep or child nurturing experience. The family serves as the unit for the socialisation of girls into being primary caregivers, as

illustrated by Subjects 1 and 4, owing to the abdication of these responsibilities by their parents or extended families. However, Subject 3 only learnt about basic domestic responsibilities when confronted with societal realities. This means that women are unable to escape the expectations of society and the network of socialisation, meaning that if the family fails other institutions or pressures come into effect, ensuring the necessary socialisation occurs prior to the birth of children.

Subject's 1 exposure also encompassed a traditional role swap, where her father took care of the children prior to his falling sick whilst her mother consistently worked long hours. She asserted that for this reason she cannot understand the female and male division of labour in her household. She noted her views:

'Why I appreciate my dad so much in my life is because, he was a teacher as well, and we left with him (for school). All four children left home with him and we'll come home with him. So he played a major, major role in our lives. He, if you would like, played the conventional mother's role about teaching girls how to cook and all that was his role. So from Monday to Friday he was setting (us) kids out.'

Subject 3 mentioned that her mother made breakfast for them before leaving for school when she was young and felt guilty that she could not offer her children the same. She saw it as her responsibility to wake the children up whilst her husband slept. Subject 1 was exposed to such matters differently and this still influences her opinion regarding the division of roles.

'That is why I can never understand the separation of roles between men and women because in my household where we grew up my father played that role.'

It is worth commenting that her experience regarding this issue does not translate into greater involvement by her husband in childcare, as was the case with her father. Her husband is, however, the most involved of all the fathers of the subjects' children.

It seems that these subjects were prepared for parenting by remembering childhood experiences. They embrace these responsibilities whether single or married because their husbands are pre-occupied with being breadwinners or simply abandon these responsibilities to the subjects. On top of such responsibilities, it also appears that the subjects are obliged to deal with societal attitudes and perceptions.

4.1.4.3 Societal attitudes and perceptions add further strain on working women whilst assuming sole custody of their children

The women furthermore expressed divergent views on the attitudes, perceptions and other family responsibilities they also bear. Single women felt that they struggled to win the trust of societal institutions such as schools, particularly in terms of acceptance of their children as normal, with a strong family background. Their difficulty was also to do with demands on their time in relation to meeting with teachers.

Subject 2 held strong views on being a single woman and dealing with societal prejudices:

'I had huge problems when my children were younger with the school trying to make them repeat a year or stuff like that. Mainly because their perception was that because they are in a single parent house therefore there must be something wrong.'

Subject 4 experienced difficulty in proving that her son was a normal child. She shared her experience thus:

'His teachers were always writing letters and diagnosing this child. I just put my foot down one day and I told them that my child is not sick. If they did their job as teachers, as educators, it would all stop. I just told them that I do my job as a parent.'

Work-family conflict is also caused by time clashes between work and school hours which run parallel, as discussed earlier. This is one area that single women must confront on their own because their extended families and friends cannot stand in and represent them at school as parents to their children. Consequently they are at risk of arriving late or asking to be excused from work whilst meeting the school's demands, or of neglecting this responsibility in favour of being at work all the time. They are torn between a job that is their sole source of financial security and being responsible parents.

Subject 2 shared her experiences in these words:

'So for an example in the junior school, I will have to be late for work because in the social events my child would have to be with me. There was never any consideration that I work fulltime. If I needed to interview a teacher, they will assume that I will be able to go to the school at 1pm in the afternoon and I will be able to sit with them for an hour.'

The above discussion makes a distinction between the subjects' experiences based on their marital status. These issues, raised above, were only mentioned by single subjects. The husbands of subjects 1 and 3 deal with these institutions collectively with their wives. In addition, the institution reaches unfounded conclusions that single parent families are unable to provide a sound family structure for their children and that the latter's well-being is thus compromised. The next section deals with the added responsibilities the subjects take on whilst also being sole custodians of their children.

4.1.4.4 Taking on other family responsibilities, whilst being sole custodians of their children, with little support

The subjects take overall responsibility for their children, enter into a second shift after work, in some instances have to deal with negative attitudes and perceptions on the part of society yet still

are burdened with added family responsibilities, such as taking care of ailing parents or making alternative living arrangements so as to make the latter comfortable.

Subject 1 is confronted with this reality which she shared as follows:

‘(My mother) is going to need a lot of nursing which is an additional burden. I do not want to say burden but an additional pressure given the career, kids, running the house and now my mom.’

Subject 1, as quoted above, quickly moved from the word ‘burden’ to ‘additional pressure’ in describing her load of responsibilities. Her children and ailing mother must not represent a burden according to her social conscience. However, one can view her response as a suppressed voice crying for help, begging for more social support and asking why she has been entrusted with so many responsibilities.

Whilst Subject 1 faced the added responsibility of her ailing mother, Subject 3 felt that her husband puts his own set of responsibilities onto her plate. She expressed this as follows:

‘If I don’t buy my husbands clothes he would never think about it. If I don’t think that he should get new socks he would never buy. He could have all the money in the world but would never buy (clothes)’.

In spite of all the above difficulties, the subjects seem optimistic that once their children become independent they intend reclaiming their social life.

4.1.4.5 Reclaiming social life after children grow up and become independent

The subjects expressed the hope that this stage too will end. Their children will grow up. The pressure will subside and they will be able to pick up the pieces of their lives, focusing more on the things they care most about but were unable to do owing to family demands.

Subject 2 shared her positive outlook in this respect:

'And I know that when they (children) get older and they will pull away. It's actually quite liberating. You suddenly start seeing gaps where you can do something else like singing in a choir for me is very important. So I have actually (begun) taking that time.'

Subject 1 still has a long way to go; however she is hopeful that things will be different when her children are older:

'I may feel differently about this when they go to high school as teenagers show that they do not need their parents. They would obviously need less of my influence.'

Subject 4, who has a teenager and toddler, also felt that her parental freedom is still a long way away, sharing this as follows:

'..... (social life?)... when I have no idea! I thought that I would be enjoying my life at 40! But (my daughter) happened and I am starting all over again [laughs] so I still have to learn how to cope with this little one now. I am starting from scratch.'

Subject 2 is eagerly looking forward to the day when her boys finally leave home:

'They are going to grow. They are going to go away between now and when they are twenty-five years. They are going to be out of my hands. I am not going to have worry about them or have any say on their lives.'

Subject 2, above, summed up the aspirations and what women longed for whilst bound by parental responsibilities and to a large extent saddled with other obligations. They look forward to owning their time; to doing what they enjoy without feeling guilty about neglecting their

parental duties; and to reclaiming their social life in its different facets. The next section integrates the above theme with the existing literature.

4.1.4.6 Integration

This discussion takes as its point of departure the way in which the subjects assume sole custodianship over their children and undergo strain in meeting family responsibilities on their own. Nicolson (1996) argues that research done on how women become accustomed to juggling the demands of motherhood (and work) establishes a direct link to their childhood experience, which forms part of their socialisation. The present research findings confirm that the subjects, except for one, were exposed to childcare activities or took care of their siblings and or relatives whilst still young. Nicolson (1996) argues that socialisation is also carried out by schools, churches, peers and the media who transmit this information so as to shape young minds in terms of what is expected of them.

Earlier it was noted that mothers use their childhood experience and positive or negative role models in raising their children (Daly, 1993). The family is a ‘gender factory’ (Redelinguys et al., 1999, p. 56) in terms of the division of roles and responsibilities across male and female lines. Research also indicates that the children show less stereotyping in their home activity (or role) preferences ‘if their fathers are highly involved in sharing child care and housework and if their mothers frequently engage in traditional masculine work’ (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004, p. 99). The subjects’ mothers worked fulltime and were hardly present in the house, which confirms the notion that the employment patterns of women or the decision to take continuous employment may reflect the value system internalised from the socialization process (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Lee, MacDermid, Dohring, & Kossek, 2005; Nicolson, 1996; Redelinguys et al., 1999; Starrells, 1992; Yi & Chien, 2002). Relevant studies also point out the importance of a mother’s work experience in explaining her adult daughter’s participation in the labour force (Bengtson et al., 2005; Redelinguys et al., 1999; Starrells, 1992).

The subjects suffer from strain in assuming sole responsibility over their children's upbringing, partly because of the limited involvement of the children's fathers in everyday childcare activities. This absence of and limited support from fathers results in women carrying most of the family demands and thus being more susceptible to work-family conflict (Frone et al., 1992b; Hammer et al., 1997; Wiersma, 1990; Williams & Alliger, 1994). The findings support the notion that the fathers of the subjects' children play a limited role in terms of everyday childcare.

The subjects depicted a scenario in which 'mothers matter most' (Campbell, 2002, p. 34). This situation is attributed to cultural and societal expectations which result in parental responsibility being strongest for mothers, who feel more obligated to deal with family matters even at the expense of the job (Kinnunen et al., 2003; O'Driscoll et al., 2003). The subjects alluded to keeping tabs on their children during working hours, and to staying home when the latter are sick, while Subject 3 picks up her son after school even if it means arriving late at work after lunch.

Subjects' reasons for the fathers' excuses regarding the neglect of their children's upbringing ranged from business obligations, custody, the marital status of the parents to expectations based on their past relationships. Subject 1 noted her supportive husband's input in childcare. However, this only happens when he is around. The opposite is true for Subjects 2, 3 and 4. The fathers' limited involvement is perhaps best explained through the system of patriarchy that advocates constricted gender roles, maternal guilt and family-hostile career structures (Campbell, 2002).

It seems that a patriarchal society overburdens the single subjects, in particular, with societal attitudes and perceptions. Subjects 2 and 4, who are single, shared their perceptions of being discriminated against in their interaction with the education system. This is in line with the study which Gringlas and Weinraub (1995) undertook on professional single and married mothers. They concluded that there were no differences in terms of their parenting skills even though single mothers display higher stress levels. This is despite the fact that both single subjects in the present study appeared as confident, proud, decisive, experiencing a sense of achievement and independence (Smith, 1997).

In addition to taking care of their own family demands, the subjects also assumed other responsibilities that women carry as part of the extended family. A 'growing number of elderly children find themselves taking care of their parents (and) nearly half of all caregivers are (eldest) daughters' (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004, pp. 402- 403). This is also the case with women who work outside the home (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 1997). In this case, the literature reviewed supports Subject's 1 method of integrating her ailing mother into her family. 'One traditional...choice for older persons has been to move into the home of a relative, usually an adult daughter' (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004, p. 408). She also felt sad and frightened about what her mother was going through, whilst also enjoying their time together. Lastly, taking care of the elderly parent is more predominant amongst blacks than whites (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004), as is the case with Subject 1.

The discussion to this point has spelled out all the responsibilities that the subjects carry. While the process does look endless, subjects shared an optimism that it would come to an end. The findings illustrate that subjects experience a sense of relief from family responsibilities once the children are grown up. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), in the diagram below, illustrated that fulfilling responsibilities towards young children demands more time, thus competing negatively with work demands and thereby causing a strain for women.

The discussion above provided a long list of the subjects' responsibilities. One is tempted to ask whether the subjects possess any choices in opting for a career or family. If given such an opportunity, what would they choose? The next theme considers this point.

4.1.5 Making choices concerning a career, professional growth and children

It is apparent from the above views that subjects regard their roles, both as professionals and as primary caregivers, as being equally important. The question below therefore arises.

4.1.5.1 Is it worth it?

Is it worth having children and being a fulltime mother? This is evidently a question that some women struggle with for the rest of their working lives or whilst raising children. Alternatively, it relates to subcontracting childcare responsibilities to other agencies, such as childcare minders or au pairs or extended families whilst climbing up the ladder. The question that remains is whether their achievements at work were at the expense of their families.

Subject 1 voiced her sentiments on this matter as follows:

'I shoot myself down and wonder whether it's worth it making the money in this position, whether there will be more to gain from having a well rounded family.'

Subject 1 further expressed her ambivalence about being a fulltime mother. She questioned whether this suits her personal identity as she identifies with being a career woman. In this respect one should also examine the benefits that women receive from their exposure in the workplace. This goes beyond their financial rewards and fulfilling their material needs. Subject 3 rationalised that she needs a job for survival; she feels wanted at work and is therefore positive, which impacts on her relationship with the children as expressed below.

'Your job becomes a necessity. It's (also) the thing that makes me get up and go, because I know I am wanted and I know I can make a difference. I feel like, by having these kinds of feelings,

coming to the workplace and going home, you tend to feel so positive that you are good to your children (feeling well).'

The decisions that women make about having children also impact on their work options and obligations later on in their life. The responsibilities of meeting family and work demands are harder when children are younger since they demand strong supervision and care. This has serious implications particularly where a woman works in a demanding position. The subjects therefore make conscious decisions on whether they should bear children earlier on and stay at home whilst the children are young, rejoin the workplace later on or conceive them whilst starting with their career so that, when occupying senior positions, the latter are older.

Subject 1 captured her dilemma as follows:

'For me when I look back, I regret that we started late because as you can see they (children) are both still at primary school and [I] am almost hitting forty years. One is still in grade one so there is an enormous pressure. If I look at my peers some of them have children in universities so they can afford to progress at work. Whereas I found myself making progress at work but having to put in an extra effort to put the kids through the primary phase of school.'

The above discussion remains inconclusive in terms of what choices suit women best. The situation seems to be one of making choices and living with those. There is no denying these choices for women since legislation exists concerning the emancipation of women in making the right decisions about their reproductive rights and career developments. They are responsible enough to evaluate the unintended consequences of their decisions for their families and employers. It is therefore the woman's prerogative to constantly re-evaluate having a career and raising children.

4.1.5.2 What choices do mothers prefer?

The discussion so far presents women as being squeezed between a rock and a hard place. They assume sole custodianship of their children and shoulder the bulk of family responsibilities

despite long hours, struggling both for economic security and the protection of the family as an institution. This boils down to the decisions that women make about how much of their time they can trade off for money. In the case of Subject 4, she left her nine-to-five job for a flexible work arrangement and shared her experience as follows:

My hours are mine. I set up my own appointments..... I can start at any time.....Yes, there are times when a person wants to see a house NOW and you have to drop everything NOW.'

This is easier said than done. Bearing children should not turn into a hindrance to fully fledged career advancement and growth. What Subject 4 chose, as above, is what Subject 1 often ponders about and shared thus:

'So I suppose the solution is to find a career where I would have a flexi-time. Where it will be flexible enough for me to drop the kids off, find happiness in being busy, come home and be able to sort out extra curriculum activities. I am also mindful of the fact that they may not even want to go to these extra curriculum activities and I may be sitting here giving up a career for that you know.'

It appears that women are not abdicating any of their roles or choosing one over the other, according to the findings. They are constantly searching for control over their time and how they spend it. This is about not being restricted behind their desks from nine to five. They prefer flexible hours that allow them space to juggle their responsibilities. On the other hand, the intensity of their involvement with family eases once their children are older, as discussed earlier. It is therefore important that women's careers grow steadily so that when their children need less nurturing there is a promising career on which they can concentrate for their individual fulfilment.

One would imagine that women would prefer their homes, not work, as centres of both economic and family activities. Subject 1 mentioned that her previous supervisor created virtual offices if there was a family crisis. However, the findings above show that women would rather accommodate family around their work schedule, with the exception of Subject 4. This is

indicative that women are more comfortable in the boardroom than at home, as would traditionally have been expected. The onus is therefore on the woman to ensure that work and family demands interface with each other in a complementary manner.

4.1.5.3 A gender-sensitised labour environment encourages women's participation in fulltime employment: At what expense?

South African women are entitled to maternity, and family responsibility, leave and are protected against gender discrimination at work as legislated by different Acts. These laws create conducive conditions for women to work without fear of losing their jobs should they decide to have children.

Subject 1 shared her experience in these words:

'Yes. I was pregnant (when I went for a job interview). Even knowing that I will be away for nine months. She appointed me and I worked for three to four weeks in the new job. Appointed me, let me go for six months and when I got back she realized that I needed immediate training, and sent me for training which took about three months.'

This was unheard of prior to the promulgation of the Labour Relations Act (1995) and the Employment Equity Act (1998). Women either chose to stay at home, to enter the workplace when their children were older or take unpaid leave and risk losing their jobs when they returned. Those who bore children whilst single were dismissed from their jobs, particularly by the Department of Education. These Acts alleviate the strain of choosing between career and motherhood. Subject 3 felt that her work environment accommodates family-related emergencies and related this as follows:

'You know we have this thing (at work) when we can send a message to say I have a crisis and will be late for work. We have this communication link that is open which makes life easier.'

The legislation quoted above protects and encourages women to enter the workplace without fear of unfair discrimination. There is often a geographical divide between the workplace and their children's schools. Subject 1 indicated that one former manager allowed her to work from home or bring children to work. Furthermore, her former workplace toyed with the idea of providing a childcare centre. Subject 3 made mention of being late at work when her child is ill. What would happen if her manager did not understand? Subjects 2 and 4 also complained about spending time at their children's schools during working hours. The essence of the above argument is that the legislation levelled entrance into the workplace but does not seem to have created an environment that has fused both family and work responsibilities for women.

4.1.5.4 Impact of a supportive work environment in mediating work-family demands

Supervisors represent the immediate line of authority that plays a critical role in shaping the work environment. They possess discretionary powers in allowing employees to attend to family matters. The subjects concurred that their supervisors' sensitivity towards family demands makes a big difference in alleviating work-family conflict.

Subject 4 shared her experiences thus:

'When I had the nine-to-five job, (my son) was going to after-care.....but fortunately I had a very understanding boss. He was very understanding and very supportive. So I think I was very fortunate.'

A distinction was made between male and female supervisors. The latter were perceived as more intuitive and supportive towards family demands. Subject 3 noted that her supervisor's understanding arises partly because she is also a mother:

'You know, I think she is also a mother, I think she also understands.... if I do happen to have a crisis.'

Subject 1 concurred with the above observation and added the following observations on male supervisors:

'Females are a lot more intuitive and more understanding of career and home pressures and how they impact on each other whereas male supervisors actually do not care. Even if they did care, will not raise it.'

As indicated, Subject 1's former supervisor created a virtual office when a subordinate experienced a family crisis. She shared her experiences in these words:

'(The supervisor) would move the office to your house if you were at home for the day and you needed to discuss something. We piloted it at the department where if people were off-sick we would move to their houses for two days, set-up the laptops, create a virtual office, have meetings going.'

Supervisors make a difference in containing work-family conflict for women, since they act as the face of the company and are exposed to the daily realities of what employees deal with in their private lives. There is a balancing act between meeting deadlines and keeping diverse employees motivated, which also calls for making the environment more caring and less alienated from the employees' other spheres of life and responsibilities. It seems that this is more easily done by female supervisors.

Furthermore, there are work environments that are more individual, than team, based. In the former case the individual should be at work at all times, or else production slows. The subjects asserted that a work environment which features strong team work and support makes it easier to hand over assignments should family duties demand, in contrast to a situation where one works alone and unsupported.

Subject 2 explained her work environment and the effect of team support on work continuity as follows:

'I actually find (my) work environment quite effective. Basically because it's open and because we are all together towards a common goal. We are in the same team ok; it's possible to get people to do things for you and to do things for people without the constant feel of hierarchy. The worst stress for me is when I worked in a consultancy where everything had to go pass one ridiculous man. Ok.'

Subject 1 also shared her positive work experience as follows:

'So if you needed to deliver on a project for instance and your child fell ill at home, someone from the office will cover for you or take the project over for you. We had that kind of a relationship.'

A desirable environment in this respect is one where strong support networks and coordinated work efforts exist. This makes it easier for women to be excused in order to attend to their family demands without making their absence too great a liability at work. The employer will also be viewed in this case as bending backwards to support its employees. This positively motivates them.

Subject 1 explained her feelings about her supervisor as follows:

'This is why I cannot easily leave (this institution) because I often feel (my former supervisor) made me feel that (this institution) was investing in me. There have been other opportunities elsewhere before but I feel so committed to (this institution) because of one lady's perceptions about work and career life.'

This supportive team work and family friendly environment may also lead to increased productivity. The above discussion on whether the subjects prefer a career or being mothers seems to lean towards their wanting both of the two spheres. They appreciate the financial

independence and social support networks that the workplace provides and the emotional investments derived from being mothers despite the challenges. It is consequently important to consider what the existing literature says in this regard, as discussed in the next section.

4.1.5.5 Integration

All the subjects have been working since their children were born, or about a year old. This could be due to the 'economic pressures of inflation and poverty (that) are forcing women to take a more active role outside home and to pursue a fulltime career' (Theunissen et al., 2003, p. 18). Subject 2 began working immediately after her divorce. This is understandable if one takes account of the South African situation, where amongst other factors the soaring divorce rates and economic realities demand participation from both parents (Higginbotham, 1997).

It is evident from the above discussion that the work environment is levelled for women and greatly assisted by the existence of labour laws and policies such as those mentioned. The findings of this study are also in agreement with the fact that labour policies such as Affirmative Action and technological advancement (Joplin et al., 2003) make it conducive for women of all racial groups to be in fulltime employment.

The government sets policies; however, their effective implementation rests with the various companies or organisations. Supervisors, as managers, are tasked with managing not only productivity but also need to interface with employees on a daily basis. The subjects were in agreement regarding the critical role which a supportive supervisor plays in mitigating the effects of work-family conflict (Allen, 2000; Bowen, 1998; Digman & West, 1988; Friedman et al., 2000; Lechner, 1993; Miller et al., 1990; Moen et al., 2000; Ray, 1987; Ray & Miller, 1994; Repetti, 1993; Rodgers & Rodgers, 1989; Rowley et al., 1992; Warren & Johnson, 1995).

The findings confirm that supervisors are appreciated in terms of:

- sensitivity to work-life issues - understanding that workers have to meet family responsibilities as well as those related to the job (Warren & Johnson, 1995);
- accommodating personal and family matters (Hopkins, 2005);
- using their discretion such as allowing workers to come in late or leave early (Hughes & Galinsky, 1994) as circumstances dictate.

There was no unanimity as to whether an organisation with supportive supervisors also ‘benefits through greater retention of employees’ (Hopkins, 2005). However, one subject confirmed that her loyalty is due to the positive relationship she experienced with one supervisor earlier on in her career with the same organisation. The findings further demonstrate female supervisors as being more ‘intuitive’ regarding work-family balance issues than their male counterparts, as recorded in various studies (Bailey, 1994; Galansky et al., 1993; Lambert, 1999; Roxburg, 1996; Swanberg, 1997). The supportive supervisors mentioned by two subjects stemmed from both cultures, black and white. Thus gender and not race could be considered as constituting some of the influencing characteristics in the present case, as social identity theory advances (Hopkins, 2005).

Furthermore, there is also an indication that family and work responsibilities frequently leave little time for individuals themselves (Greenhaus et al., 2000, p. 298), despite the supportive work environment and legislation. Research also indicates that single mothers are more prone to role overload and poverty (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Vosler, 1996). Subjects 2 and 4 are single women, thus representing an increase in the number of single-headed families during the past decades, mostly headed by women (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Vosler, 1996). The single subjects in this study admit that they are not poor but are not rich either.

It is evident from subjects 2 and 4’s experiences that their attempts in juggling the responsibilities of household maintenance, child care and employment on their own are related to problems involving time and coordination of activities (Hertz & Ferguson, 1998). These may also include ‘roles such as juggling three full-time family work jobs: two jobs to fulfil the

provider role plus a full-time family work schedule. In addition, assuming that she is involved in employed work, she will be solely responsible not only for after-hours dependent care, child rearing, youth supervision and also arranging all transportation to and from both child care, work and for any backup - such as sick care - for both herself and her child(ren)' (Volser, 1996, p. 91). Subjects 2, 3 and 4 face huge responsibilities, with little or no physical help from their children's father in any respect.

If given the choice of engaging in household duties fulltime, it seems that the subjects prefer to fit family responsibilities around these. The studies done by Hunt (1980), Oakley (1984), and Westwood (1984) reveal women's dissatisfaction with domestic labour in general. In addition, they find household work monotonous and the like (Magezis, 1996). They also resent the low status of housework within society. Lastly, they are aware that they carry an unfair burden, particularly if they also participate in paid labour.

Making a choice between a career and family is not a viable option for Subjects 2 and 4 who are single and, as research indicates, more prone to role overload and poverty (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Vosler, 1996). This is largely due to the high cost of living and meagre salaries (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006). Even though they are prone to experiencing financial stress (Etaugh & Bridges, 2006), the single subjects declared that they make do with whatever resources are available.

The next section discusses the findings regarding the coping strategies and mechanisms that subjects apply in dealing with the strain caused by competing work and family demands.

4.1.6 Reliance on strong coping mechanisms and social support systems

The subjects either started their careers with young children, or others were born along the way. Their children knew no better than a mother who wakes them up for school and returns at night in a business suit for homework and other family responsibilities. They might not comprehend, particularly whilst young, how much it takes for their mothers to juggle both motherhood and careers. The study suggested that it takes certain traits, coping strategies, family, friends and paid

assistance to create a strong support network in order for women to cope with their responsibilities as discussed below.

4.1.6.1 Coping strategies and traits employed by subjects in mediating work-family conflict

The coping strategies and traits which the subjects employed appear to play a critical part in mitigating work-family conflict. It seems that the subjects call on their inner abilities and strengths.

Subject 4 noted her internal coping capabilities as keeping her going, in the following words:

‘I think just by being a positive person and being strong. You have got to fight hard. You’ve got ... I think you need to be positive. To have faith. And you gain strength from that.’

On the other, Subject 2 admitted that at certain times she chooses not to negotiate too much or to attempt to convince her employer about taking time off to meet family demands. She attributes this to having an arrogant streak. She related this as follows:

‘I have also got very arrogant. (If) I am not allowed to do something; I would find a way to make it possible even if it means taking day’s leave or calling in sick. So I am not used to hearing no and so I am not expecting it.’

Subject 1 maintained that it is her ability to cut off from family issues whilst at work, unless in emergencies, that makes her cope better, explaining this as follows:

‘So on arrival at work I cut myself completely away from the home situation unless there is a crisis or an emergency that forces that I think about it. Ok. I suppose that I have become very good at putting up little items into boxes. I think I am very good at separating the two.’

The subjects seem to rely on their inherent traits in dealing with competing family and work demands, which assists them to survive both unexpected and expected life circumstances. Subject 2 makes use of her arrogance in navigating her way between work and family demands. For Subject 4 the issue is also about relying on one's faith and positive attitude.

This means that women make use of their traits to remain in control of the various spheres of their lives. There is no formula for which the personality trait works best or in what situation, as Subjects 2 and 4 showed above. It is mostly a question of what each individual deems fit and appropriate at a given moment.

4.1.6.2 A helping hand from a supportive husband or father of the children

The discussions to this point have painted a picture of one gender assuming overall responsibility for the children despite altering socio-economic family arrangements, but there were contradictory responses regarding the way in which the children's fathers represent sources for support and are relied upon by the subjects.

Subject 1 was very satisfied with the role her husband played towards their children, expressing this as follows:

'I have also got a very, very supportive husband. A husband who has no qualms about coming home to cook.'

Subjects 2, 3 and 4 have experienced the opposite of the above. Subject 3 categorically stated her view with regards to the support she receives from her husband:

'Oh absolutely nothing.'

It is worth noting that marriage is no guarantee of the equitable involvement of fathers in family demands and or responsibilities, to which Subject 3 alluded. Furthermore, Subject 1 qualified her response by adding that her husband's business travels limit his shouldering of the family responsibilities. One conclusion that may be drawn from this is that males are predominantly pre-occupied more with their economic than family activities, despite women being 'equally' involved with their careers.

Single women, such as Subjects 2 and 4, also shoulder their responsibilities on their own. Subject 4 did not even bother to enforce maintenance for her elder son, thus leaving his father free of both emotional and economic obligations towards his child. The study therefore demonstrated that women, single or married, bear the brunt of childcare and family responsibilities. The biological fathers' involvement appears to be an exception rather than the norm.

4.1.6.3 The extended family lending crucial support and a reliable network

The subjects rely on their mothers, sisters and extended family members for childcare support in particular. This is evidence that working women broaden their social network beyond their nuclear family in such situations.

All the subjects acknowledged that they depend on their strong family support structure in coping with their family demands. Subject 2 captured this as follows:

'You know. There is always somebody. My mother is a very big help to me. And because I cannot expect any of the care givers to look after my children so they go to my mother's place in the afternoon. So there is big extended family in my family. Eh, I have got three sisters.'

Families offer assistance during emergencies, take care of certain responsibilities, and also assist with technical and professional advice should the subjects so require.

Subject 2 shared her reliance on family support where such issues are concerned in these words:

'My other sister is a lawyer so she helps in anything to do with problems I might have with things, like at school should it start anything with me in terms of keeping them a year..... And if I ever needed my older sister, she will also be there to assist me in anyway should I need a lawyer.'

The subjects shared different and opposite experiences with respect to the involvement of their children's paternal relatives as support in child care. It seems that the involvement of in-laws here largely depends on their relationship with the mother. Both married Subjects, 1 and 3, relied extensively on their in-laws for assistance. Subject 2 explained a different scenario:

'(My ex-husband) has got a mother and a father. The father has seen the boys three times and the mother has probably seen the boys about ten times (since they were born).'

The researcher's experience is that grandmothers in particular, from both sides, develop special relationships with their grandchildren. This involves spending quality time, sharing secrets and unconditional love. Grandfathers on the other side can offer father role modelling, if the biological is missing. There is strong evidence that at times, though not always, the extended family offers valuable and reliable support for women, serving as their bedrock and comfort, particularly in alleviating the negative impact of family and work demands.

4.1.6.4 Reliance on a helper or maid for support

The women are advantaged by participating in the economy, which translates into financial independence. This enables them to contract outside help for childcare responsibilities. Subjects unanimously agreed on the role which helpers or maids play in easing childcare and household management. The differences were expressed in terms of the actual expectation and extent of their roles.

Subjects 1, 2 and 3 felt fortunate that they could afford a maid as this is not possible for other women. Subject 3 expressed this as follows:

'I appreciate her presence, knowing that there is someone I can count on, someone that is going to be there. You know, I don't make demands on her. I don't tell her all the time.'

Helpers or maids in this case are also women who live away from their families. It is worth noting that they are likewise separated from their families, ranging from hours in a day to weeks, depending where their children live. They also rely on their mothers to take up the child caring responsibilities of their own offspring. Subject 2 captured this paradoxical situation as follows:

'My maid is the mother who lives away from her children. She lives in Johannesburg and they (children) are in Pietersburg. And I actually think that's quite difficult for her. So they are with her mother. So her coping mechanism is her mother and she is my coping mechanism.'

However, the relationship between subjects and their helpers or maids is one of co-dependency and is not parasitical in nature, as explained by Subject 1 who described the role of her helper and the value the latter adds to her family as follows:

'Oh, she is a substitute mom and dad. She brings a lot of home values that parents should be bringing into the house. We rely on her to do that for us. If friends come by and (she) thinks it's the wrong pick of friends she would kick them out. She has got such maturity, she sits us often down as parents and says you making a mistake by not doing this and or (your daughter) needs this. So she is very advisory. She is just fantastic and almost like an elder sister to myself. And definitely a mother and father figure to the children.'

Subject 2 also added the following on this:

'Because she works for me she can pay for (the children's) education. So it's not just the negative. But she has chosen not to bring them to Johannesburg.'

The helpers or maids offer much support for women. Subject 4 survives without one, mostly owing to her flexible work arrangements. She thus relies on her elder sibling for baby-sitting should a need arise.

4.1.6.5 Mutual family living arrangements

The subjects sent their children to similar schools with their relatives or siblings. Furthermore, they chose schools close to the family house and that of the extended family. This also suggests a tendency to club siblings and/or cousins together at the same school so as to ease childcare responsibilities and transport arrangements.

Subject 2 related this as follows:

'(My siblings and I) have children and they are sort of in the same age range. Three of those children, go to the same high school. So if there is a problem, I could ask any of my sisters to fetch (my children). So I have set it up (that my children) go to the primary school and then high school which is really close to my mother's house. So I fetch them from my mother's house in the evenings.'

Subject 1 has also placed her children in the same school for added convenience, as she explains:

'They are in the same school, luckily.'

Subject 3 lives close to her brothers and cousin. She shared her experience as follows:

'My two brothers (also) live in Johannesburg, my cousin lives next door to me, and she loves my baby and if she doesn't want to eat food, it stresses me at night and I tell them please take her because she really does not want to eat or have her nap. So she goes to have supper there and then comes back home. And there are times that they will take her, they will go and they will bath her and when she is tired they will bring her back to me.'

Furthermore, Subject 1's mother moved in with her due to poor health. This has also meant added support for her regarding childcare.

'So for me the coping mechanism right now is much easier because I know that mom is home. So if I need to stay until nine in the office it will be fine.'

Their close proximity to family and relatives evidently represents an added advantage for single women as regards receiving family support.

4.1.6.6 Assistance from friends and other significant people

In addition to the extended family, there are also other people, such as friends, who are willing to assist in reducing excessive work-family demands. Some of these friends are parents of children's friends, or neighbours with children of a similar age, and these parents meet at school. These friends or acquaintances make it easier to share lifts to and from schools, extra-mural activities or children's parties.

Subject 2 acknowledged other people who also lend a hand:

'There were always people who were willing and available to help. Ok, I do have friends that I know if I had to I could phone and say please go and fetch any of them (her boys) whenever and will bring them home.'

However, Subject 3 solely depends on her family, not friends, for support regarding her children, as expressed below:

‘I have my friends, but I only realized now that I never I asked them for assistance with the children. We keep in touch and I know that if I need anything I can always count on them.’

Subject 4 also relies on her older child for support with the toddler and described this as follows:

‘Luckily (my son) is older and I think my smacking and my shouting and everything did a lot of good [laughs]. Because he does help me with the little one.’

The extended family plays a key role in assisting with childcare responsibilities. This largely depends on how close women live to their relatives. Urbanisation drives some individuals away from their immediate family. Subject 4, for example, lives with her children and a brother in Johannesburg whilst her home is in KwaZulu-Natal. However, her friends step in whenever possible. Subject 2 makes use of both her family and friends, illustrating that more hands are needed in assisting with childcare responsibilities. The above discussion on coping mechanisms is integrated below with existing literature in this regard.

4.1.6.7 Integration

One of the findings confirms ‘that personality (traits) [should] be given greater consideration in understanding how an individual views and experiences multiple life roles’ (Friede & Ryan, 2005, p. 193). Subject 1’s ability to ‘box issues’ at appropriate times and Subject 2’s ability to adopt an arrogant attitude allow them to cope better. The latter is in line with Bolger and Zucherman’s (1995) view, firstly that personality (traits) may lead to differential reactivity or individual differences in the felt intensity or reaction to stressors. Secondly, that personality directly influences the actual number or type of events that a person experiences and that can cause stress. All subjects displayed a good ‘self-esteem’, understanding how well they were

managing various aspects in their different roles; thus displaying ‘generalised self-efficacy’, a strong ‘locus of control’ and ‘emotional stability’ (Friede & Ryan, 2005).

The subjects acknowledged the assistance received from husbands (although this was limited to Subject 1), extended family, friends, older siblings and paid help (Frone, 2003; Galansky & Bond, 1998; Ozer, 1995). The women offered contradictory responses to the question as to whether the children’s father was a source of support and offered a coping mechanism. However, there is evidence that receiving spousal and extended family support has a positive impact on women (Adams et al., 1996; Etaugh & Bridges, 2004; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000; Frone et al., 1997), as attested to by the subjects. This social support could, firstly, enable the subjects to spend more time at work and other career related activities. Secondly, it thus reduces the stress of work-family conflict. Thirdly, Subject 1 who received spousal support has more time for engaging in coaching and other developmental activities (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004).

The findings furthermore confirm that siblings, grandparents and friends also ‘offer emotional support and companionship that sustain women as they meet their challenges, changes and losses of later life’ (Etaugh & Bridges, 2004, p. 403).

The subjects also confirm the role helpers or maids play in easing the chores of childcare and household management. The differences were expressed in terms of the actual expectations and limits of their roles. Etaugh and Bridges (2004, p. 269), conclude that ‘women who have the financial resources can purchase services they would otherwise perform, such as housecleaning and meal preparation’. This practice knows no colour since women of all races who work also employ domestics. Bailey (1994) argues that employing a domestic worker leaves women with more time at their disposal, even when their children are young. The one subject without help ‘mentioned the overload which (she) had to shoulder in order to cope with the double burden of work and home commitments’ (Bailey, 1994, p. 359). However, she relies on her eldest child for minding the little one. All subjects who employed helpers expressed the feeling that they would be found wanting without them. The next section tackles this study’s findings on the impact of race and cultural backgrounds on work-family conflict.

4.2. IMPACT OF RACE AND CULTURAL BACKGROUND FACTORS ON WORK-FAMILY CONFLICT

There was no evidence ‘that race, ethnicity, social class (and culture) are critical dimensions for understanding lives of women, in South Africa, as they influence the distinctive circumstances of women’ (Higginbotham, 1997), as discussed in Chapter 2. There were similarities in the sense that they began their careers or had children during their work life. They are the primary custodians of their children and take care of their needs after long working hours.

Furthermore, Collins (1994) noted that there are cultural differences in the definition of motherhood. In the African context, motherhood is a responsibility shared with the extended family and includes mothering other children in the community. However, the Western cultural view defines it within the nuclear family context. No such distinction was observed in the present study. The African definition of motherhood or parenthood seems to be negatively affected by the subjects residing away from their families of origin, thus needing to depend on paid help and other institutions for substitute child care. This study showed that the subjects are able to shift their child care responsibilities onto domestic workers, who are common in South Africa (Mills, 2002). The majority of the subjects rely extensively on their extended family for childcare support in particular.

While Witz (1997) argues that work experiences for working class women differ from those of middle class women, just as those of black women differ from white women (see also Bhavnani, 1997 and Joplin et al., 2003; Ratcliffe, 2004), all subjects in this study were middle class and their experiences were similar in terms of work-family conflict. This study appears to demonstrate that gender, rather than race or cultural background, matters most in such conflict.

The next section integrates and discusses all the themes in view of the existing literature and considers how they interact with each other.

4.3 INTEGRATING CONCLUSIONS DERIVED FROM THE VARIOUS THEMES

The above discussion offers a glimpse of what the subjects experience in dealing with competing work and family demands. One gains the impression that the subjects embrace motherhood, with its joys and pains. It seems there is no actual measure of how deep their commitment towards their family is. But they all seem to wrestle with the issue of how much more effort they can put into their families after lengthy working days.

This is not to suggest that the subjects are oblivious to what their families mean to them. It seems that they wish that they could be there when it matters most for their children in particular. This concerns the quality of the time with them and creating space for children in just being children, engaging in social activities and outdoor sports that contribute towards building their character. The bone of contention seems to be that their involvement with work deprives the subjects of being fully present with their families.

Actually, this is also how they feel about taking care of their families whilst at work. It is also worth noting that the subjects are equally committed towards their careers. However, they are of the view that their family demands will diminish once their children are older and they therefore must have a career to focus on. The issue of their career is also a reality for the subjects. They need it for the financial independence, social networks and self actualisation that it provides.

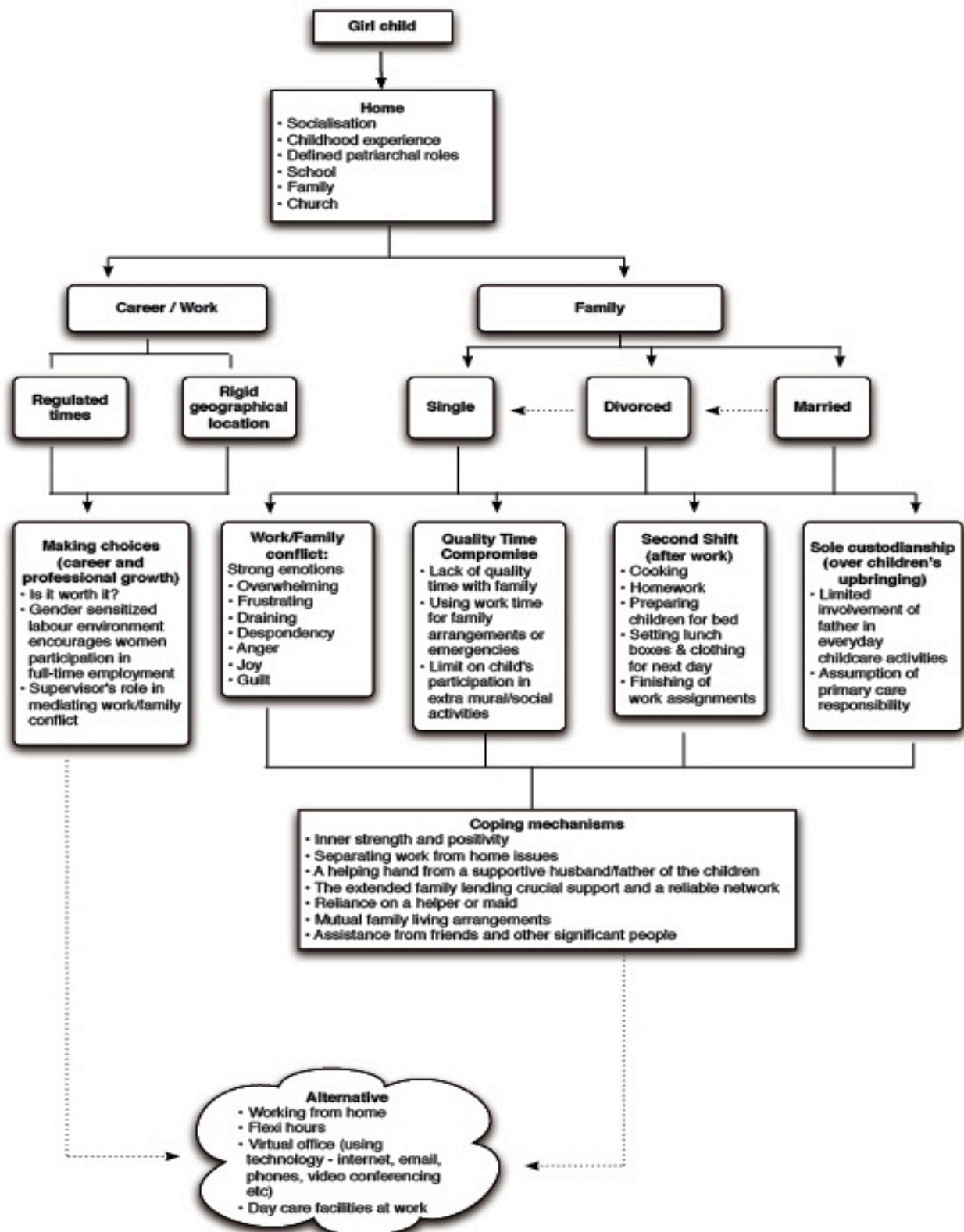
What further emerges is the issue of the non-commitment of the children's father regarding childcare and other household responsibilities. There is a linkage between how women are raised along gender defined roles and their assuming sole responsibility over their children. The subjects came across as being the sole custodians of their children irrespective of their marital status.

In investigating the issues of long hours, commitment to work and entering into a second shift at home, one therefore appreciates how the subjects developed strong coping mechanism and support networks, including family, friends and paid help. This appears to assist in buffering the

negative effect of work-family conflict on the subjects. However, there is much more that organisations could do, such as providing a day-care centre at work or flexi-hours.

The figure 4.3 below offers a diagram of this study's findings.

FIGURE 4.3: A diagrammatic representation of the findings of experiences of work-family conflict amongst South African women of different race groups



4.4 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter furnished a detailed description and analysis of the semi-structured interviews. It gave an account of emerging themes that were both similar and divergent at times. The accounts of the subjects' experiences were left untampered with, so as not to dilute or alter their true meaning as shared in terms of their worldview. The last section discussed the themes emerging from the findings in terms of the existing literature. In chapter five conclusions are advanced, limitations identified and recommendations made.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses conclusions, limitations and recommendations stemming from both the literature review and the phenomenological study. The research aims introduced in Chapter 1 are used as guidelines in evaluating conclusions derived from both these activities. The limitations of the literature review and the study also constitute part of this chapter. Furthermore, future research recommendations based on the study are made.

5.1 CONCLUSION

This section contains conclusions derived from the literature review and the study.

5.1.1 Conclusions pertaining to the literature review objective

The primary objective of the literature review was spelled out in Chapter 1:

- To examine contemporary literature with regards to the experiences of work-family conflict amongst women from different racial groups in South Africa in order to provide a framework for the phenomenological study.

The above aim was achieved by means of the literature review.

5.1.1.1 Defining work-family conflict within the South African context

It was crucial that the concept of work-family conflict was broadly defined while taking cognisance of existing literature, particularly within the South African context. There is extensive interest, research and literature with regards to how women's multiple roles and

responsibilities impact on them, their families, social and work spheres. However, limited research has been conducted regarding this topic, in South Africa, despite the fact of women increasingly occupying fulltime employment in the high management echelons in the private and public sector. Few studies have been undertaken by South African women on this topic as well.

However, the literature review revealed that one of the common topics regarding work-family conflict is the way in which women balance and or cope with their competing work and family roles. Hence there are ongoing discussions and investigations with regards to this tension.

Various theories and assumptions seek to explain the impact of such conflict on women; these schools of thought range from forms of feminist theories, through time-based, strain-based, behaviour-based, system, scarcity, enhancement, compensation to gender identity development theories. The above theories define work-family conflict, identify the key concepts, indicate how women mostly carry their multiple roles, who assigns or how they acquire such roles, investigating how they balance or acquire tactics to manage their roles and how the work environment impacts on women's multiple role load or lessens its adverse effects.

It is obvious that women make informed choices about continuing in employment while maintaining the optimal functioning of their families. They develop an extensive support system channelled through their families, friends and spouses (where applicable) in order to lessen the impact of work-family conflict. South Africa has also promulgated a string of pro-women laws that enshrine women's rights, advancement at work and recourse against discrimination based on their reproductive role and family obligations.

5.1.1.2 Developing skills to embrace motherhood and the responsibilities attached thereto

The literature review pointed out that certain life experiences of young girls prepare them for motherhood. This training takes place within the family, social institutions, peers and the community at large. These tasks range from taking care of the siblings, to cooking, cleaning and other household chores. The literature further highlights that if the family fails in its socialising role, the other institutions (such as schools and churches or religious formations) line up to fulfil this obligation.

5.1.1.3 Experiences of women in balancing multiple roles in their lives

Women are socialised into the role of motherhood as per the dictates of patriarchy, as discussed above. However, changing economic realities also see them being fulltime workers. Women battle in meeting family and work demands owing to limited time. This is further compounded by men who are reluctant in assisting with childcare responsibilities. Furthermore, the literature review attested that women are increasingly shouldering the parenting responsibilities on their own as a result of high divorce rates, societal acceptance of bearing children outside of wedlock and other natural causes such as spousal deaths. Lastly, women are also expected to take care of their elderly parent(s), which adds to their load.

5.1.1.4 Experiences of women's coping mechanisms regarding work-family conflict

The literature review ascertained that women choose both motherhood and fulltime employment. They employ a range of coping mechanisms which mitigate the negative consequences of work-family conflict, such as personality, extended family, friends, helpers or maids and situating children's schools or activities close to home or the extended family.

5.1.1.5 Experiences of women with regards to race and cultural factors in relation to work-family conflict

Sufficient studies were found in the literature with regards to the race and cultural factors that contribute to work-family conflict in the United States of America and Asia. These offer different insights in accordance with the respective country's social, historical and economic realities. However, limited South African research has been conducted in this regard. Most of the studies carried out in South Africa were on domestic workers, which were excluded from the present study.

The literature reviewed showed that the impact of race on the middle and working class work-family experiences differs. The subjects of this study stemmed from the middle class and from different racial groups. The literature review confirmed that these women 'share a similar material interest of overcoming patriarchy'. This is true for women despite their diversity in terms of race and cultural factors. It seems that certain socio-economic factors, i.e. the resources associated with the middle class, afford women similar opportunities in mitigating work-family conflict such as affording maids and child day care facilities. These resources are made accessible for women across race and cultural background.

5.1.1.6 Experiences regarding challenges and opportunities for women in a gender-sensitised work environment

The literature review revealed that South African women are affirmed as a result of legislation, such as the Labour Relations Act (1995) and Employment Equity Act (1998), to mention just two. This levels the playing fields for women, allowing them opportunities to take maternity leave, accelerate promotional opportunities and offering them a mechanism for redress when discrimination occurs. There is a gap in terms of legislation on addressing issues around reasonable accommodation of women within the workplace. Women deal with varying attitudes of supervisors, being positive, negative or non-committal regarding family issues. The task of

interpretation of and commitment to these laws is thus left to women who are obliged to fight for their entrenchment within the working environment. There are no facilities within the workplace or flexi-hours unless by job design. Women are expected to take leave in such cases, which falls short of absorbing the time needed for emergencies.

5.1.2 Contribution of the literature review to the current study

The literature review contributed to the study as follows:

- It profoundly deepened understanding by defining the key concepts of work-family conflict, and considering what responsibilities women carry in terms of their participation in fulltime employment and their being ‘sole custodians of childcare responsibilities’. Furthermore, different theories and perspectives on work-family conflict were examined, which broadened the researcher’s knowledge of the concept. The literature review depicted the scenario of how women become strained or overloaded by juggling family and work demands.
- It proposed that women are socialised into the responsibilities of motherhood through experiences within their families or roles that are entrenched whilst they are young girls.
- As well as ascertaining that women juggle and balance work and family demands, a link was established between what women experience in either of the two spheres and the impact either way. This suggests that although work and family spheres may be spatially separated, women spend time worrying about their family well-being in between work activities and also take work home.
- It highlighted the coping mechanisms that women adopt which mitigate the negative consequences of family and work responsibilities.
- It demonstrated the impact on work-family conflict with regards to the issue of race and cultural background. Women (from different races in South Africa) shared similar issues and a common opposition to patriarchy.

- Overall, the literature review was sketchy regarding South African based studies and case studies on women (even more, those by women), race and on work-family conflict at large. The USA literature, for instance, offered greater insight with regards to conducive labour policies such as affirmative action, the rising divorce rate and high inflation as constituting some of the driving factors in women's fulltime employment. However, their studies featured black women, mostly occupying low level positions, whilst their white counterparts occupied higher positions. Affirmative action in South Africa recognises that all women, despite their race, were excluded from favourable employment opportunities.

5.1.3 Conclusions pertaining to the phenomenological study

The specific aim of the research was:

- To describe the work-family conflict experiences of South African women from different racial backgrounds

5.1.3.1 The untold story of women's unpaid and undervalued family work

The present study showed the researcher that women rarely take stock of what they go through in their lives from the moment that they wake up to the last thing they do at night. It was revealing for them to recount how they spend their time, what they do and experience for the sake of their families. Most women exclaimed immediately after the interview, or a day later, that it caused them to think about why they carry so many responsibilities on their own. This formed an introspective period of their lives, particularly with respect to what could change for the better. They were ashamed of expressing their guilt about motherhood though.

However, the subjects are determined to do their best in being mothers and being employed at the same time. It is their hope that the intensity of motherhood is limited only to the period whilst

their children are young and they are set to reclaim their lives once this is over. The strength of these women shines through as comprising the bedrock of their family. Their fears for their family, the joys of caregiving and their warmth make them pearls of their communities, for whom no financial compensation of their selflessness in carrying their responsibilities is ever good enough.

5.1.3.2 Women shared strong emotions associated with raising children whilst being employed

The study established that women experienced a variety of emotions as sole custodians of their children's upbringing while holding down fulltime jobs with little help. These emotions range from frustration, anger, and joy to being proud of their achievements. This mixture of feelings does not paralyse them in their quest for being good mothers and productive workers. It is healthy that they acknowledged these feelings and thus did not present a picture that all was well or pretended to be robot-like super moms.

5.1.3.3 Competing work and family demands result in a compromise regarding the quality of work while being dedicated in each role

The women acknowledged that it is only human that their attention becomes distracted by family demands and emergencies whilst at work. It is also natural that they take their laptops and the feelings resulting from their work experience home. The aforementioned scenario suggests that work and family environments overlap. Women, in this case, serve as carriers and cross pollinate these two spheres with good and negative experiences. What matters most to women is that they do not spend quality time with their family because of their intensity of involvement at work.

5.1.3.4 Experiences of strain resulting from assuming sole custodianship of their children's upbringing

It was apparent that women, irrespective of their marital status, took overall responsibility for their children. Their partners or the fathers of their children are absent for reasons ranging from economic activities, divorce or separation or simple pre-occupation with everything else but their families. This responsibility alone seems overwhelming for women. It can involve worrying about the children's general physical wellbeing, social grooming, grades at school, birthday parties, friends and their becoming responsible adults. They also worry on their own with their partners being unavailable, even for emotional support.

5.1.3.5 Women providing a safety net for themselves against work-family conflict

The findings established that among the coping strategies women used was that of employing paid help or maids. Subjects were full of praises about what these helpers mean to them. It was also a revealing discovery that there is a circle of women who help each other. The subjects reported that their mothers stepped in as guardians, in situations such as taking children to the doctor during emergencies. This assistance occurs over and above that of the paid helper. The latter, also a woman, stays away from her children for varying lengths of time ranging from hours, and weeks even to months. Their mothers also take care of their own children. Missing fathers are obvious in all these networks, in the case of both middle class and domestic women. One also notices a form of comradeship between women in the sense that the domestic women earn their livelihood through raising the middle class women's children, whilst the grandmother taking care of the children of the domestic worker is guaranteed food on her table as a result of the money sent by her daughter. This situation presents its own set of recurring issues, since grandmothers are oftentimes pensioners and aged when they take over these responsibilities. This may lead to children living under poor conditions, a lack of exposure to conditions conducive to development, leading to poor performance at school and subsequent engagement in deviant behaviour.

5.1.3.6 Discrepancy between legislation regarding women's advancement and realities for women in the workplace

Evidently South African policy makers have achieved good and great intentions in levelling opportunities for women. The implementation of these laws is also speeding up since women themselves are conscious of their rights. South African organisations, including those in the public sector, are slow in introducing innovative measures to make women more comfortable in the workplace. This goes beyond just increasing the representative percentage of women in senior management echelons. It also goes further than expecting women to form part of the golf, cigar or wine clubs where organisational strategies are muted. It is about re-defining the environment in order to embrace the diversity that women bring into the work environment, and not insisting they conform to the male dominated culture. Studies show that men are less inclined towards childcare responsibilities and are thus less inclined to spending time worrying about the geographical divide of where the next childcare facility is in relation to work or home. This is an issue that concerns women and which organisations ought to take into their plans, particularly if the average age of their employee is within the childbearing age.

5.1.3.7 Choices women make with regards to having a career, professional growth and children.

It became intriguing for the researcher to determine what choices these women would make if given a chance. The women are dedicated to their children and would do anything to take good care of them. However, they are also mindful that once their children become independent, they need their careers. It is thus important that their careers grow with time. The findings indicate that the strain results from having limited quality time with their children prior to their becoming independent. This strain also occurs concurrent with their career development and its increasing demands.

5.1.3.8 Impact of race and cultural background factors on work-family conflict

The findings of the present study and themes which emerged were similarly experienced by these women across all racial and cultural backgrounds. This ranged from how women socialised, emotions associated with work-family conflict, the assumption of sole custodianship over their children to the coping mechanisms they used. It seems that the impact of race and cultural background did not feature in this study. What matters is that all subjects were of the same gender. This would seem to suggest that when a child is born, it is gender that shapes his or her destiny, not the skin colour or religious and cultural beliefs. The subjects were also of the same socio-economic status.

5.2 HYPOTHESES

Hypotheses were formulated based on the above conclusions. This section also looks into the formulation of an overarching research hypothesis, including more specific hypotheses based on the literature review and findings of the present study.

5.2.1 Overarching research hypothesis

This section discusses the theoretical and practical research hypotheses.

5.2.1.1 Theoretical research hypothesis

It seems that women responded positively to narrating their own life stories through using their own voices and interpretations of their life experiences in dealing with work-family conflict. The qualitative methods applied in this study seem to have resonated very well within this female gender oriented examination of work-family conflict, probably because, firstly, the researcher allowed the subjects freedom of speech and participation during the data collection stage.

Secondly, the data saturation occurred sooner than the researcher anticipated. Thirdly, the qualitative approach allowed the researcher to cross-check and reference data with the subjects so as to maintain the integrity of each narrative. It seems therefore that women's studies must choose research methods that do not silence their voices. Fourthly, the current researcher chose those research methods that accord women a central focus in relating their stories. Lastly, those research methods that promote women as equal partners during the research process were employed.

5.2.2 Hypotheses with regards to the literature review

The following hypotheses can be formulated, based on the literature review:

- Apparently socialisation is a crucial process in developing the skills which women need for care giving and assuming sole custody over their children's upbringing, because women in the study were exposed to experiences whilst young girls caring for their siblings or relatives.
- It seems that the women developed strain and overload from juggling family and work demands. Not enough time was dedicated to each of their responsibilities, thus compromising the quality of engagement in family and work activities.
- Given that the women use certain coping strategies, help from family, friends and maids, it appears that work-family conflict is mitigated by such coping mechanisms that women develop and adopt in managing and juggling work and family responsibilities.
- It seems that the labour environment, as legislated, offers women equal opportunities in participating at work without fear of discrimination. This is because the Labour Relations Act (1995) and Employment Equity Act (1998) offer a shield in ensuring that women's rights as enshrined in the South African institutions are upheld in the workplace. Women therefore have a right to maternity leave, equal representation in all occupations and an accelerated career development.
- The gender-sensitised work environment is apparently insufficient to mitigate the work-family conflict that women experience, however, because they still carry their traditional

responsibilities as the primary caregiver despite working fulltime. The work environment seems rigid regarding flexi-time for women to be able to take care of their family should they need to.

- It appears that race and cultural backgrounds have little or no impact on how women experience work-family conflict, because this conflict is based on their gender despite their racial or cultural origins.

5.2.3 Hypotheses based on the phenomenological study

The key hypothesis which has emanated from this study is:

- Women seem prone to work-family conflict because their traditional role, dating back to the hunting and gathering era of human development (as the anointed homemakers, children's caregivers and being family pillars while men are away at war or hunting), remains unchanged. This is so despite the increasing inflation, divorce rate and fulltime employment of women. The subjects continue to experience strong feelings of attachment to their families and concern for their wellbeing. They take strain from compromising their quality time at work and with their families owing to competing demands because they continue to assume sole custody of their children's upbringing. This causes them to endure long hours taking care of both their work and their family demands. Furthermore, single women suffer from negative perceptions and attitudes doubting their ability to raise well rounded children. All these negative experiences regarding work-family conflict tend to be mitigated by the development of strong coping mechanisms by women and their reliance on support networks.

The secondary hypotheses derived from the findings of this study which underpin the key hypothesis follow:

- It seems that, as a woman, strong emotions are associated with raising children whilst working fulltime. This occurs because women experience frustration, anger and become overwhelmed with competing work and family demands.

- The said demands apparently compromise the quality of time dedicated to each role, as evidenced by subjects tracking their children by means of telephones and taking work home. Furthermore, these women only see their children early in the morning and early evening whilst making dinner, helping with their homework and setting them for the next day. This leaves little quality of engagement between the mother and children during the day.
- It seems that women endure long hours because after finishing their hours at work, they enter into a second shift involving supervising homework, finishing their work assignment and putting the children into bed.
- The strain that women suffer from seems to be caused by assuming sole custodianship over their children's upbringing because of the fathers' engagement in economic activities, divorce or just abandoning this responsibility to women despite their also working fulltime.
- Women, those who are single as a result of divorce and / or never having been married, in particular, appear to be overburdened with societal attitudes, such as perceptions of being incapable of providing a sound family for their children, as evidenced by their difficulties encountered in dealing with their children's school, which seems to take the view that their children are not coping at school because of the family environment.
- It appears that women choose a career, professional growth and children because they yearn for economic independence and experience joy in bringing up well-rounded children.
- The work-family conflict experienced by subjects seems to be mitigated by a reliance on the strong coping mechanisms that women employ and social support systems which include their extended families, friends and maids.
- Race and cultural factors appear not to have an impact on work-family conflict as experienced by women because the subjects, irrespective of race or background, experienced similar strong feelings associated with work-family conflict, likewise assume sole custody over their children's upbringing, endure long hours engaged at work and home and lastly apply similar coping mechanisms and rely on support networks in order to mitigate the work-family conflict.

- It seems that the socio-economic status women share, despite their race or cultural backgrounds, acts as a factor in how they experience such conflict and the coping mechanisms they adopt.

5.3 LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The next section discusses the limitations of the study, focusing on the literature available and the phenomenological study.

5.3.1 Limitations in terms of the literature review

Much of the international research regarding work-family conflict has been conducted with case studies in the context of America, England and some Asian countries. The American research, in particular, does contain comparative studies concerning race, culture and class issues. However, these studies mostly looked at women where Caucasian samples occupied a higher social status than that of the blacks, who were employed in low ranking jobs such as domestic work with minimal wages. This scenario was also replicated in South Africa as well during the apartheid period and thereafter.

There is little literature and research, in South Africa, on how women's separate development (due to racial segregation policies) influences their experiences of work-family conflict (because, since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, employment opportunities have opened for women of all races).

It would also have been of great assistance if there had been more literature and research carried out by women regarding issues that affect them in general, and South Africans in particular. The present researcher relied on authors such as Etaugh and Bridges who conducted most of their research in America. It is difficult to make a comparison based on their findings or observations with the present study conducted in South Africa.

5.3.2 Limitations in terms of the phenomenological study

Three quarters of the subjects stemmed from one organisation within the public sector. The inclusion of more subjects from diverse sectors of employment could have added value and a wide range of experiences. In addition, selecting a sample that included women with children across salary bands such as cleaners, messengers, secretaries, etcetera, would have added further dimensions to the research findings. For instance, the issue concerning work-family conflict and its impact on domestic workers emerged by default from one of the subjects. It caused the researcher to be aware that the sample could have been diversified to consider the experiences of lower-class women such as domestic, working class and contract workers. This might have seen the emergence of class and race issues.

The researcher was satisfied that the data on work-family conflict became saturated after interviewing four women. However, this had an impact on analysing how racial differences affect work-family conflict. It became clear that the subjects were from a similar socio-economic background; thus racial differences did not affect their work-family conflict.

The literature review revealed that role conflict is two dimensional, viz., work-family conflict and family-work conflict, whilst this study only considered the former. There is a temptation to use these terms interchangeably or ignore the impact of each on women, in particular. The family-work conflict automatically emerged during the data gathering process and was not afforded the emphasis it deserved during data analysis, owing to an attempt to keep the research within its parameters.

Lastly, the above point lists a pitfall that tempted the researcher to extend the boundaries of the research topic. The researcher acknowledges that work-family conflict remains an interesting topic. However, as a fulltime mother herself there are limited time and available resources for her to expand the topic owing to the rigorous scientific rules and regulations that govern social scientific research within the Industrial Psychology field.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section makes recommendations for future research on work-family conflict; in terms of the phenomenological study and the discipline of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

5.4.1 Recommendations in terms of the phenomenological study

It seems that this study could be repeated with a more diversified sample which is larger and would include women selected from various income and professional levels. The subjects could also work in different organisations across the public, private sectors and also include those who are self-employed.

There is also a need for more research exploration in terms of the best models that women need in order to minimise their work-family conflict and create a balance between the competing roles. Maternity leave, for instance, allows only for four months, while women breastfeed beyond that and are still expected to take their children for immunisations. Mothers are still expected to spend yet more time away from work attending to schooling demands, and to engagements concerning extra-mural and other social activities as their children grow older. It would be more convenient if a mother could take the child with her to work and leave her in the hands of trained professionals, thus making it easier to continue breastfeeding, for an example.

Furthermore, it seems viable for organisations to make suitable arrangements with health officials for immunisation from time to time. Lastly, it would benefit women with very young children if they are eased gradually into the working environment after maternity leave. This could involve a compulsory period of one year's leave and / or flexible working hours. It could also allow women a period where they could work from home.

Evident is a growing trend where men, according to various media houses, opt for being single or are single because of divorce or the death of their spouses and who raise their children alone. Some, although married, choose to be the primary caregiver if their partners travel a lot, for example. A study in this regard could be of great scientific interest.

Furthermore, future research could expand on investigating work-family conflict and also include *family-work* conflict experiences with respect to South African women from different racial groups.

5.4.2 Recommendations for possible research in the Industrial and Organisational Psychology field

The following recommendations can be made for the Industrial and Organisational Psychology field:

There is a great deal of scope for conducting research that investigates work-family conflict in South Africa. Much is recorded about legislation in the labour environment and it seems that organisations are slow to transform the work environment in order to render it more conducive to women's participation and to mitigate work-family conflict. If investigated, this situation should go a long way in developing the body of knowledge in the fields mentioned.

Organisations should institutionalise and promote employee wellness programmes based on issues that affect their staff. This involves researching the specific organisational culture, the demographics and the support that employees mostly require in keeping motivated and productive. If an organisation employs young working women, there is room for developing institutionalised support in terms of aftercare services, flexibility in terms of taking time off for immunisation, working from home and / or arriving late. However, mature working women may

demand less support of this kind as their focus would fall on dealing with teenagers or young adult children.

5.5 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter contained conclusions with respect to the literature, the phenomenological study and the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology. It further considered the limitations of the literature reviewed and those of the study. Recommendations were provided for future research.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA GUIDE

Interviewer: Thank you for availing yourself for this interview and sharing your demands. This will form part of the data for my dissertation. The interview will be 45 to 60 minutes.

All your responses remain confidential and will be used only for purposes as indicated above.

In order to record your responses correctly, I wish to use a tape recorder and note book. Is that fine with you?

Subject: Response

Interviewer proceeds with completion of the biographical data form.

APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHICAL DATA FORM

GENERAL DETAILS

| | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Name (Optional) | |
| Race | |
| Marital Status | |
| No of dependants & age | |
| Highest level of Education passed | |
| Name type of job occupied | |
| Length in the current position | |
| Mention key job responsibilities | |
| Indicate your salary bracket | A : below R5 000 B: R5 001 – R10 000 C: R10 001 – R15 000 D: R15 000 – R20 000 E: above R20 001 |

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interviewer : Thank you for agreeing to be part of this interview

Subject's : Response

Interviewer : Shall we begin our interview? Are you ready?

Subject's : Response

Interviewer : Can you describe, in much detail, your experience in raising your child/ children and meeting work demands?

- Reflect and probe
e.g. "Please tell me more"
"Can you expand on that?"
"I see", "ok", umh" and "ok"

- Ask for examples
Can you give an example of that?

(Subject provides more examples and clarification. Interviewer paraphrases the question. For example, Can you tell me more on your experiences in raising children as well?)

Interviewer: What are your support mechanisms?

- Reflect and probe

e.g. Do you share responsibility with the child/children's father? What about extended family?

- Ask for examples

Interviewer: Is there anything you would like to add on this issue?

- Reflect and probe
- Ask for examples

Interviewer: We have reached the end of the interview. Once more, thank you for your time and inputs in this research process.

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEWER FEEDBACK FORM

| | |
|--|--|
| Name of subject | |
| Date and time of interview | |
| Venue of interview | |
| Summary and description of interview process highlights: | |
| | |
| Analysis of responses to interview: | |
| | |
| Analysis of emotional response to interview: | |
| | |
| Nonverbal behaviour of subjects: | |
| | |
| Verbal behaviour of subjects: | |
| | |
| Additional notes: | |
| | |

