Uncovering women's experiences in balancing motherhood with employment.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation, *Uncovering women's experiences of balancing motherhood with employment* is my own original work. All citations, references and borrowed texts have been duly acknowledged. This research has not previously been submitted to any other institution for degree or examination purposes.

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I would like to thank my supervisors, lecturers, family, boyfriend and friends. You have all made a contribution to this challenging chapter of my life. Be it in the form of imparting to me valuable knowledge and wisdom; guiding and mentoring me; supporting me; encouraging me and making me laugh during times when I needed it the most. Without all of you, this would not be possible and I will forever be grateful.

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Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to understand the experiences of women balancing the roles of motherhood and employment, within the South African organisational context. A review of the literature suggests that despite efforts towards gender equality and the increased level of participation of women in the workforce, societal norms still create and reinforce expectations for women to bear the responsibility for both child-rearing and domestic duties.

Drawing from a social constructionist paradigm, this study adopted a qualitative methodology in order to unravel the socially constructed perceptions of work and motherhood within two South African organisations in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. The sample consisted of eight working mothers, who were located using both a purposive and snowball sampling strategy. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data, which was analysed using the Voice Relational Method.

The findings indicate that the place of working mothers is socially constructed by the circulating discourse within society surrounding work and motherhood. Working mothers are involved in a complex interplay of role/identity construction/reconstruction by challenging and accepting aspects of normative or ideological discourse to make it relevant to their local circumstances. Becoming a mother seems to be life-changing for a woman and requires a lot of adjustment on a woman's part in terms of her identity and perceptions, requires the learning of new skills and strategies and at times can feel lonely and isolating. Working mother's face both pros and cons when trying to balance their multiple roles. These pros and cons were psychological, emotional, social, financial, ideological and structural. This research also uncovered the impact of existing ideology on mothering and work in the way that participants utilise the voice of "I" and "you". The voice of "I" was often used by participants to emphasise

their personal anxieties and fears in relation to their perceptions of the normative experiences of mothers, i.e. the voice of "you".

In conclusion, this study was useful in privileging the voice of working mothers in and on their own terms who face a deep sense of isolation, loneliness, and inadequacies in their gendered lived experience; but also celebrate their own individuality and collectivity as women who find fulfilment and satisfaction in navigating multiple roles in their journey of motherhood and work.

Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

"First, from the early 1950s, many employed mothers began to challenge, although not

overturn, the dominant discourse of the ideal mother as exclusively bound to the home. The

simple fact that so many women were drawn to work outside the home despite criticism

demonstrates the monetary and psychological importance of employment for women"

(Wilson, 2006, p. 206)

The quote above illustrates the struggle women face and have faced in navigating the conflicting roles of motherhood and work. On the one hand, the discourse has traditionally idealised the role of mothers as primary caregiver and homemaker. On the other hand, contemporary discourse idealises the role of work as both 'psychologically' and 'financially' important for women. Further, societal messages in recent years tell women that 'they can have it all', balancing a rewarding career and raising their children successfully (Slaughter, 2012). According to Ussher, Hunter and Brown (2000), this leads women to believe that they should be able to cope with various conflicting demands like some sort of "superwoman" (p.137). This is congruent with Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) as women in their study felt obliged to live up to all their responsibilities and to be able to juggle anything thrown at them. Given the recent discourse around the rewarding nature of work for women, it is not surprising that there has been a significant increase in women participating in the paid workforce (Holloway, 1999). The discourse has somewhat shifted from the traditional notion of men as 'breadwinners' and women as 'caregivers' (Holloway, 1999), to women as both 'caregivers' and 'economic providers' (Wilson, 2006).

It is against this backdrop that it is important to explore the lived experience of women faced with the challenge of negotiating their roles within these conflicting domains. This study, therefore, privileges the voices of working mothers in the South African context by utilising the voice-centered relational approach to qualitative research.

1.2 Background

As this study is conducted within the South African context it is important to recognise that women make up the majority of the population (51%) and that most recent statistics quote that 44% of the skilled workforce (including managers, professionals, and technicians) are women (Statistics SA, 2017). The increase in the number of women entering the labour market was more significant between 1995 and 2001, with 3.2 million women becoming economically active directly after the end of the Apartheid era (Casale, 2004). This was supported by the turn of democracy in 1994 leading to an entrenchment of gender-equality as a Constitutional right (Republic of South Africa, 1996). Further, reformist legislation such as The Employment Equity Act (EEA, No. 55 of 1998), the Labour Relations Act (LRA 66 of 1995) and the Preferential Procurement Framework Act (PPFA No 5 of 2000), has provided a fertile ground for women's participation in the labour market.

Internationally over the last 30 years, there has been a growth in the labour participation of women who have pre-school aged children (Holloway, 1999). In the United States during the 1960s, 20% of married women with children worked outside the home whereas today more than half of married mothers combine childrearing and paid employment (Hennessy, 2009). In 2007 it was estimated that 60% of mothers in the United States were working and two out of three women in the United States work during pregnancy and return to work 12 weeks after childbirth (Johnson, 2008; U.S. Department of Labour, 2007). Women are also becoming increasingly likely to be the main breadwinners. For example, in the United Kingdom among

heterosexual households, approximately 20% of women earn more than their male partners (Ford & Collinson, 2011).

With the increase in women's participation in the labour market, one would expect an increase in the participation of men in childrearing and household duties, however, according to Özbilgin, Beauregard, Tatli, and Bell (2011) fathers are still unwelcome in work-life balance initiatives. The poor child orientation by fathers can be attributed to historical, gendered and organisational views about parenting practices reinforcing traditional gender roles (Miller, 2011). These gendered parental roles and responsibilities are still institutionalised and remain popular among policymakers and organisations (Gatrell & Cooper, 2007; Miller 2005, 2010) making aspects of family life a women's duty thereby disproportionately allocating the balance of work and family life to women (Borg Xuereb, 2008; Butler & Skattebo, 2004; Craig, 2006; McMahon, 1999). Although post-2000s, opportunities to work flexibly to accommodate a work-life balance are offered to parents of both gender, Lewis and Copper (2005) found that in practice such initiatives were offered to women only. Özbilgin et al. (201l) argue that work-life practices should be developed for both men and women to redress the gender inequities that are present in the "organisation of life".

Although research on fatherhood since the 1990s is showing that employed fathers are improving in their child orientated (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Holter, 2007; Miller, 2010, 2011) fathers are still being represented as "economic providers" and mothers as "child-carers" making the responsibility for the stability of the home and for children's emotional and physical needs primarily a women's role (Delphy & Leonard, 1992; Featherstone, 2009; Gatrell, 2005; Miller, 2005; Morgan, 1996).

Acker (1990) states that social structures within organisations are still characterised along gendered lines where women are concentrated in lower paying jobs and fewer women than

men reach higher positions within the organisation. This could be due to gendered assumptions that men, even if they are fathers, are more primarily dedicated to paid work whereas women, who are mothers, are presumed to divide their commitments between their family and job (Acker, 1990; Hakim's, 2010). These gendered notions will hinder changes in social practices and limit parent's opportunities to step out of the mould created for them by society (Janasz, Forret, Haack, & Jonsen,, 2013; Ladge, Clair & Greenberg, 2012; Miller, 2011).

A working mother can be defined as a woman who combines a career with the added responsibility of raising a child or children. In today's world, both parents are often compelled to work due to the necessities of daily life and material aspirations. Despite having young children to care for, the natural process following motherhood is to return to paid employment after maternity leave (Borg & Xuereb, 2008; Costello & Stone, 1994). This could be attributed to the financial need to work due to the rising cost of living, the changing attitude of society towards working women, or merely a women's own preferences and aspirations. More women are being educated and therefore more likely to take on paid work after completing their education to maintain a satisfying career and to be financially independent (Jayita & Murali, 2009; Khalil & Davies, 2000; Lupton, 2000; Solera, 2008; Wilson, Woods & Phal, 2006). Despite the partner working it may also be necessary for the mother to retain her job for insurance benefits and for better retirement benefits (Edelman, 2002). Working mothers rebel the traditional thinking that women must choose between a career and family and have therefore been criticised as selfish and are viewed as unnatural and even dangerous to their children and society (Wilson, 2006).

Becoming a mother influences a female employee's overall well-being and identity (Bailey, 2000; Heilman & Okimoto, 2008; Nelson, 2003). Not only is she a daughter, friend, partner, and employee but she has acquired the new role of mother as well. Balancing motherhood with multiple roles can be complex and require both energy and psychological resources on the part

of a woman (Barnett, 1999; Campione, 2008; Elgar & Chester, 2007). Some women struggle to unify both their roles of being an employee and mother, creating psychological problems when validating themselves as a good mother, while simultaneously validating themselves as a good worker. This can be further complicated by many women reporting that on their return to work they felt invisible and undervalued in their workplace (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011; Gould & Fontenla, 2006; Johnston, Swanson, & Luidens, 2008; Johnston & Swanson, 2007).

Studies in the existing literature have been conducted largely on work-life balance after childbirth and the policies, participation and practices among parents (Baird, 2011; Brough, O'Driscoll & Biggs, 2009; Fox, Pascall & Warren, 2009; Gatrell, Burnett, Cooper & Sparrow, 2014; Guendelman, Goodman, Kharrazi & Lahiff, 2013; Pesonen, 2015). There has also been a reasonable amount of studies that have looked at factors that influence mothers' decisions to return to work after maternity leave (Coulson, Skouteris & Dissanayake, 2012; Coulson, Skouteris, Milgrom, Noblet & Dissanayake, 2010; Ericksen, Jürgens, Garrett & Swedburg, 2008; Houston & Marks, 2003; Lyness, Thompson, Francesco & Judiesch, 1999). Other studies include the effects of returning to work has on breastfeeding duration, practices and the barriers breastfeeding mothers encounter on returning to work (Chatterji & Frick, 2005; Desmond & Meaney, 2016; Skafida, 2012); the potential impacts maternal employment has on children's development (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010; Gottfried & Gottfried, 2008; Tan, 2008); gender inequalities that exist within organisational cultures, problems faced by women's participation in the labour force and how maternity leave impacts on the earning capacity of mothers who work and their job protection (Baker, 2010; Baker & Milligan, 2008; Cahusac & Kanji, 2014; Uddin Bhuiyan, 2016; Warren, Pascall & Fox, 2010); and the impact of a women's social class in the balancing of their work-life commitments (Hennessy, 2009; Holloway, 1999; Sihto, 2015).

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However, many of these previous studies have been quantitative in nature and were predominately situated in countries like Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States. It would appear that the in-depth experiences of mothers readjusting their life to work and motherhood after maternity leave are inadequately described (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011). Although motherhood continues to be celebrated as the ultimate experience of womanhood, it is a surprisingly under-researched topic in South Africa with a gap particularly in studies surrounding work and motherhood in the South African context (Frizelle & Kell, 2010). With the responsibility of childrearing still falling on women's shoulders and the increase of mothers in the paid workforce in recent years, it is important to develop an understanding of the readjustment experienced through women's narratives as it could help inform women of what to expect and consider when deciding to return to work after maternity leave. It may also offer insights for managers and co-workers regarding the challenges employed mothers face, how they can provide appropriate support (both formally and informally) and, engage and retain women staff. Women want their managers and co-workers to understand the pressures, demands and compromises they have to face as working mothers in the hopes that their workplaces will accommodate them in terms of providing them with flexibility and opportunities. This may lead to women being more willing to accommodate the needs of their workplace when considering their return-to-work (Parcsi and Curtin, 2013). It is also imperative for employers, the public health services and policymakers as they all have the responsibility of considering the needs of employed mothers and thus promoting their health and well-being (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011).

1.3 Research Aim

The aim of this research is to uncover women's experiences in balancing work and motherhood after maternity leave in the South African context.

1.3.1 Research Objectives

To uncover how women experience their work prior to becoming a mother.

- To determine how they perceive the experience of negotiating maternity leave with their managers.

To understand women's experiences of work now that they are a mother.

- To uncover if their priorities or perceptions have changed surrounding work and motherhood.

- To determine if they feel they have support and information from their manager and colleagues on their return to work as a mother.

To uncover the strategies women have incorporated or changes in lifestyle women have had to make to balance both their roles of mother and employee.

1.3.2 Research Questions

- How do women experience work pre-motherhood?
- How do women experience work post-motherhood?
- How do women balance their roles as both mother and employee?

1.4 Chapter summary

In this chapter, the rationale for the study is outlined using relevant literature and statistics indicating the increase of women into the labour force in recent years. It is argued that despite these societal changes women are still largely responsible for traditional childcare and domestic roles with men continuing to be inactive participants in the work-life distribution and policies. It has been highlighted that women balancing both work and motherhood is no easy task and has psychological consequences for women, yet it remains an under-researched topic. Better insight into working mothers' narratives could play an important role when informing other

women on what to expect when deciding to return to work from maternity leave; will help managers and colleagues in understanding the challenges women face and how to better support and retain women staff and help inform public health services and policymakers to improve the promotion of the needs and well-being of mothers. Lastly, the aim of the study, objectives and research questions were presented.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter examines the relevant literature on the discourse surrounding work and motherhood, role conflict, stress and experiences within and outside of the workplace for working mothers. The South African maternity leave policy within the African context, is examined in comparison to international best practices, as well as the assumptions and contradictions behind better maternity/parental leave policies are highlighted. This is followed by outlining the theoretical framework this study is conceptualised in, namely the Social Constructionism framework.

2.2 Discourse Surrounding Work and Motherhood

Since the 1950s the stereotypical stay-at-home mother has been regarded as the "traditional" and "good" mother. This narrow image of mothering gained its popularity initially within U.S. culture, amidst a particular economic and political context, post-World War II. This image of motherhood was created around white, middle-class, married women in a heterogeneous relationship. This is problematic as not only does this social construction represent one experience of mothering, but it has also prevailed despite societal changes in women's labour force participation; divorce becoming more acceptable; same-sex marriages, single-parent households and non-marital births increasing (Arendell, 2000; Coontz,2005). This stereotypical mother also rests on the assumptions that good mothering needs to be associated with a certain type of home and defined through "intensive mothering" (Hays, 1996).

This "intensive mothering" ideology puts forth the idea that children are innately good and innocent; biological mothers are the only primary caregiver a child needs; there is a

psychological bond between mother and child, therefore, she can interpret and respond to their needs intuitively; that mothers should not only be physically at home but spend quality time with their children regardless of other responsibilities and should be monitoring their cognitive and emotional development with age-appropriate interaction and stimulation. Mothers should also forego any interests they may have or paid work activities and their sole activity should be investing all their time, energy and resources into mothering and prioritising the family as it is their "calling and choice" (Hays, 1996).

This means women can either be devoted to work or devoted to their children but not both. Therefore, lending itself to the absurd notion that mothers who work cannot be good mothers. However, working mothers still use this "golden standard" of "intense mothering" ideology as a means of judging their success as a mother. In this model, working middle-class women with a working spouse, are portrayed as self-centered career women who sacrifice the needs of their children for prestige, occupational status, or economic and non-economic rewards. This is in contrast to the 'stay-at-home mother' who is portrayed as the epitome of the "perfect mother", as she is selfless, self-sacrificing and thus is rewarded with the emotional connection and involvement in her children's lives (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Hays, 1996).

According to Johnson (2002), middle-class women often have a choice to give up work for motherhood, however, working-class women are often forced to work due to financial need. Yet working women are judged by themselves and others according to the same model created by middle-class women. When middle-class women choose to opt out of the workforce, they could be seen as choosing subordination as individuals and reinforcing gender inequality within society. This is because middle-class mothers' practices have a greater influence on the expectations of the work and family lives of working mothers rather than the reverse. When they opt out of the workforce other mothers tend to believe that they should too and feel guilty for not doing so (Johnson, 2002).

On the other hand, those that advocate for women pursuing a career often refers to such women as a "supermom", implying that they have to work harder than stay-at-home mothers to balance both roles. In any case, this "supermom" term still inherently reinforces the fact women are disproportionately responsible for child caring. Feminist activists need to focus on trying to dismantle this programmed linking of women with family, caregiving and the home (Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Hays, 1996).

"Mommy wars" presented by the media is a driven ideological construction that exaggerates differences among women, drawing attention away from the real dilemma facing families, which is a lack of parenting options (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Peskowitz, 2005; Warner, 2005). Women's work and family choices are complex and are not wholly self-sacrificing or wholly self-interested, they are shaped by the realities of limited resources, their responsibility for children, in addition to socially shared understandings of what women should do as mothers and workers (Hennessy, 2009). A women's employment outside the home is also often decided by weighing up the costs and benefits. Women normally take on employment when their social, financial, and psychological needs are not met within the domestic role (Parry, 1986). Caring for young children is considered legitimate work for women within society and some mothers make a rational choice not to do additional work outside the home and find the tasks of child caring and homemaking personally meaningful (Parry, 1986).

Organisational discourse is also still highly gendered. In the construct of 'Work-life balance', 'life' is often automatically equated with female care responsibilities. Although these care commitments are an important issue, especially among mothers, it is essential to acknowledge and overcome this conventional understanding of life and the limits it imposes on work-life balance debates and policies (Eikhof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007). Organisations internationally have started moving away from women policies in favour of family policies in the pursuit of gender equality. Work-life research has been primarily focused on reducing the

discrimination and inequality faced by women in employment. It is believed unless men start becoming more equally involved in childcare and utilising work-life policies, it is forecast inequality will likely persist and the take-up of family benefits will continue to have discriminatory consequences for women (Hegewisch & Gornick, 2011).

A better 'Work-life balance' will not be fully achieved from merely more flexible working hours for women but rather require men to also pick up equitable domestic responsibility. 40% of young Australian men plan for their future wives to do all the housework and less than two-thirds of young Australian females expect to share the housework equitably (Pocock, 2006). The move to using more gender-neutral terms often continues to reinforce the masculine subject as normative and implies that both men and women have equal opportunities and responsibilities when it comes to work and family life. However, this is not the case as women are still largely responsible for family care. Perhaps a counterargument is that equality should not be understood as a blanket statement of uniform treatment amongst the sexes, as equal treatment relies on the acceptance that to achieve equality, people need different treatment based on their needs. Often within the pursuit of equality women have to prove themselves as "better than a man", however this to the detriment of women's unique identity and their unique contributions to society (Smithson & Stokoe, 2005).

2.3 Role Conflict and Sources of Stress

Glover (2002) has concluded that there are two main spheres women have to balance, formal paid labour and informal unpaid domestic work. This leads to role juggling. However, domestic work is split into a number of sub-spheres that relate to interpersonal roles and household work. Work-life conflict is defined by Frone (2003) as a form of inter-role conflict as the role pressures from the work and family life domains can be regarded as mutually incompatible. Gregory and Milner (2009) have also described work and family life as mutually incompatible pressures, where women have to manage the two domains through processes of compromise

between what is desirable and what is essentially feasible. In heterosexual-couple households in the United Kingdom, women reported experiencing increased pressure in terms of their time management in juggling their work and household duties and caring for children (Baldock & Hadlow, 2004). A perceived inability to manage a work-life balance has been reported to have a negative influence on women's mental health, often being associated with distress and dissatisfaction within the family life and work domains (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011; Grice et al. 2007; Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002).

According to Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner and Wan (1991), role juggling is an identified stressor as it requires increased demands on the cognitive capacity of an individual, leading to psychological strain. For an individual to evaluate a suitable response to various task interruptions and appraise and resolve these various role interruptions requires cognitive effort and at times it can be challenging. Role juggling may also lead to negative affect and frustration as efforts to obtain desired goals or objectives may be impeded. During role-juggling episodes mothers are attempting to simultaneously satisfy different demands and meet different objectives, however, they often report having low satisfaction with their ability to do so. Mother's also state negative affect occurs when they feel they have less control over events intruding from another role onto their current role (Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner & Wan, 1991). Finally, it could be argued that role-juggling effects are made worse when a woman experiences an increased workload. Distress in working mothers was found to be not from simultaneous activity but from the very fact that the women actually have to accomplish more tasks and therefore juggle more roles than men (Ibid, 1991).

Frankenhaeuser Lundberg and Mardberg (1990) found that the average workload of paid and unpaid work for working women was 78 hours per week compared to 68 hours for men. These long working hours are a possible contributing factor to the stress experienced by working women and them having to undertake this additional daily shift in the home might account for

why women are happier with shorter working hours (Booth & van Ours, 2005; Frankenhaeuser, Lundberg & Mardberg, 1990; Gutek, Repetti & Silver, 1998; Karasek, Swartz & Theorell, 1982; Lambert, 1990; Long & Porter, 1984; Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997). A survey was conducted in the United Kingdom in 2005 by the office for National statistics which confirms Frakenhauser et al. (1990) findings of women working longer hours. This survey demonstrated a strong gendering of work time as women spend less time on paid work per day, however, women spend more time on unpaid work which includes household duties such as cooking, cleaning and caring for children as opposed to men. Therefore, women may work longer hours but on duties that take place outside of work, and thus are uncompensated for a large proportion of the work they do in a day with it often going unnoticed and unappreciated by society (Warren, Pascall & Fox, 2010).

Eikhof, Warhurst and Haunschild (2007) found that women in their study used work as an escape from the stresses of their domestic roles. Paid work is now considered a mandatory add-on-role for women (Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997). Working mothers often have to negotiate a trade-off between time and money. As family income increases, a mother's time with her child decreases or vice versa. In the former case, mothers may often compensate for this decrease in time with their child by decreasing social, educational and personal activities that do not involve their children (Chase-Lansdale et al., 2003).

The multiple roles of work and family life women engage in is seen as a cause for overload and role conflict, leading to women being more prone to poor mental health in comparison to men (Gove & Tudor, 1973). Home and work roles need to be renegotiated in order for women to cope with the demands placed on them while trying to manage these multiple roles, particularly when returning to work after motherhood (Baxter, 2009; Killien, 2005; Webber & Williams, 2008).

Some research studies have however found positive contradictory findings whereby working mothers reported greater psychological health, in particular, higher self-esteem, less depression as well as more social and psychological gratification as compared to non-working mothers (Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Kessler & McCrae, 1982; Thoits, 1983). However, that being said, an employed mother's well-being tends to be enhanced when they feel their husbands are doing their fair share of household and childcare duties (Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997).

Rout, Cooper and Kerslake (1997) conducted a study in North-West England among 79 working mothers and found the three main sources of stress are children, finances and household duties. Other interconnecting sources of stress included juggling priorities and trying to balance their work and family life, feeling guilty for working, lacking a social life, not having time for themselves and feeling like they do not have social support from their families (Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997).

Although the literature does suggest the significant merits in employability for women with children, the ability to harmonise all aspects of life is shaped by a women's social class, level of education and economic resources available (Fuchs Epstein & Kalleberg, 2001; Holloway, 1999). In other words, women from middle to lower-level income households are disadvantaged by the lack of financial resources to support their performance in the various roles. In relation to the current study, it must be noted that although the discourse around the merits of being a working mother is substantial, this is not the case for the average working-class women, i.e. the majority of working mothers in South Africa as they lack the financial resources to support such a lifestyle as maintained by the upper classes of society.

Another barrier to fulfilling this idealistic 'career-mom' lifestyle, especially for those of lower socio-economic classes of women relates to a lack of spousal support as many women are single working mothers. In Dziak, Janzen and Muhajarine (2010) study, single working-

mothers reported significantly higher levels of psychological distress compared to partnered mothers. More importantly, this greater distress among single mothers' could be explained by their greater exposure to psychosocial work stress, work-life conflict and financial strain. The single mothers reported working more hours per week than partnered mothers and were more likely to perceive that their income did not adequately cover their shelter, food and clothing expenses. Employed, single mothers are also more likely to work in lower-skilled and lower paying jobs. Thus psychological, economic and social benefits associated with employment for mothers decreases for single mothers as their lower-skilled and paying jobs often involve little creativity or freedom in decision making. Lower-status jobs may also provide less support for mothers to meet their family demands as they frequently lack flexible working hours and supportive managers. Many of the employed, single mothers coped with this by extensively utilising assistance and support from their extended family and community (Dziak et al., 2010).

2.4 Experiences outside the Workplace

Traditional understandings of "good mothering" are being reworked by women to be applicable to the local circumstances they find themselves in. These 'moral geographies' play an important role in influencing and validating some mothers' decision to undertake paid work. A mothers' non-familial, local social networks can be an important mechanism through which women shape their childcare choices and services (Holloway, 1999).

What often weighs heavily on new mothers are feelings of worry and guilt surrounding the perceived expectations of others and their own expectations of themselves surrounding good mothering (Johnston & Swanson, 2006; Johnston, Swanson & Luidens, 2008; Khalil & Davies, 2000; Pare & Dillaway, 2005). Women face a lot of pressure in terms of their parenting choices. "Mommy Wars" surround women in both the media and daily living with criticisms being lodged despite what their choice to be a stay-at-home mother or working mother (Fuchs Epstein, 2004; Peters, 2008). There seems to be no 'win-win' scenario because regardless of

whether mothers work or stay-at-home, there is always some form of societal criticism. A study conducted by Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011) found that women feel more dependent on others for support once becoming mothers and as such become more sensitive to how they are perceived by others. Social support is considered fundamental in helping women balance the demands of work and childrearing (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012).

Studies conducted by both Byrne-Doran (2012) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) found gendered notions of how it is expected by society for women to be responsible for domestic and child caring duties despite being in full time paid employment. Feelings of stress and exhaustion surround mothers on their return to work from maternity leave as they have to balance a role overload of being a mother, wife, and employee and as well as trying to maintain their own individuality (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Many women try to resume to their pre-maternity work role and identity as well as hold onto ideals of the traditional mother they want to be but, in reality, this is impractical (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011). Compromise is needed, and women have to make adjustments in their lives to try and balance work and family life. This includes renegotiating their values, beliefs, routines and former identities that do not support their new combined role of mother and worker (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013).

Women regularly identify time management as an important factor in helping them reduce their stress as it allows them to balance these multiple roles. This is because women have to learn to do more tasks in a reduced amount of time than they normally would have before motherhood (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Reflecting on and identifying what is important to them now that they are a mother makes it easier to time manage, cope and balance their various roles (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013). During this reflection, it becomes clear that in some women that their priorities have changed, and work has taken a back seat as spending family

time with their husband and child has become more important to them (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012).

Women have commented on how their relationship dynamics changed once they have returned to work from maternity leave. With their husbands, they have less couple time but find the limited time they do get to spend with their infant precious (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Parcsi & Curtin, 2013; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Moreover, finding time for themselves had now become a challenge (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Research has revealed that access to and the use of leisure in maintaining a work-life balance is strongly gendered and classed. With women, especially poorer class women, often subordinating their own leisure needs in favour of those of their families (Clough 2001). Women have also reported that on returning to work the routine they established as mothers were disrupted (Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Although the most negative aspects considered among women returning to work after maternity leave is having to leave their child in the care of other people, the sense of longing they have to be with their child while at work and a fear they will miss out on their child's developmental milestones (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011; Parcsi & Curtin, 2013; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012).

Despite the challenges and compromise working women face when trying to balance and manage their home and work life, some women still state that it is worth it and gives them a sense of accomplishment (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012).

2.5 Experiences inside the Workplace and Return to Work Decisions

The decision of new mothers to return to work can be one fraught with guilt and anxiety. This can create practical and emotional challenges for them when they embark on this transition (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen 2011; Baxter, 2009; Davey, Murrells & Robinson, 2005; Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012). Women who resume work after a few months are frequently torn

between career ambitions and natural childrearing instincts. Among 12 Irish women that were interviewed, it was found that a majority who return to work after maternity leave and are still breastfeeding, do not disclose this to managers or colleagues as they fear that they will be judged or criticised for continuing to breastfeed after their return to work. Some of the women reported that they experienced emotional stress and anxiety as they felt under pressure to get their babies onto a bottle before they returned to work (Desmond & Meaney, 2016). Moreover a woman's decision to return to work may be further complicated by the fact that she may not have family members who are available to care for the child and her income may not make it financially viable in relation to the cost of childcare services (Houston & Marks, 2003). Women concerned over the quality of the care setting they have had to place their child in have been found to be less productive at work (Blau & Currie, 2003; OECD, 2002). It has been found that a woman is able to overcome this guilt and experience more satisfaction as a working mother when the father is equally involved in child-rearing (Jayita & Murali, 2009).

An important motivating factor, apart from financial reasons, that has been identified for women returning to work after maternity leave is the social aspects of working (Alstveit et al., 2011; Davey et al., 2005). Women regularly identify friendships, adult company, mental stimulation and support as significant factors in their decision to return to work and equally important in their decision to remain in the workplace despite the challenges of trying to raise children and work (Gould & Fontenla, 2006; Khalil & Davies, 2000; Parcsi & Curtin, 2013). Work can also be seen by some women as providing an "escape from domestic stress" (Eikhof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007). Women's recovery from childbirth and their resumption of family and work commitments are likely to be influenced by the availability of social support from family and friends and work-related factors, for example, job stress and workplace support (Jayita & Murali, 2009).

The work-life conflict has been found to be a common stressor for women leading to work dissatisfaction and higher turnover intentions. Perceived workplace and supervisor support can, however, counteract this and an increase in the availability of flexible work for women leads to increased productivity and organisational commitment (Hill, 2005; Noor, 2002). A study conducted by Killien (2005) among 94 postpartum women who were married or partnered, employed, and residing in a large urban area in the northwestern United States found that in both four months 68% of mothers and at twelve months 64% of mothers were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their decision to return to work. There was also correlations in the data among mothers perceived ability to successfully perform their roles and the affirmation, emotional support and information provided by supervisors.

Studies have also found that if women perceive their organisational culture and manager to be more supportive they are more likely to return to work quickly after having a baby, they are more committed and less likely to change jobs and exit the labour market after having a child (Glass & Riley, 1998; Houston & Marks, 2003; Kelly et al., 2008; Lyness et al., 1999). However, in a study conducted by Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) women reported that they felt there was a lack of support from their workplaces and managers on their return to work and felt undervalued and as if their supervisor was insensitive to the experiences they were going through. Another distress of women uncovered in Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011) study were how they were perceived in the workplace by their colleagues and superiors as they had to reduce their working hours and had to be away from work sometimes for family responsibility issues to do with their children. They felt like a burden or felt they were seen as less committed and could not be trusted or relied upon in the workplace. This is because working mothers have a desire to be seen by their colleagues as coping and to hold onto their professional identity and credibility. They seek approval and appreciation in their work by their

colleagues and supervisors as it is important to their own self-identity (Byrne-Doran, 2012; Parcsi & Curtin, 2013).

Luotonen (2013) research has divided mothers' return-to-work strategies into three, somewhat intertwining categories. There is what he terms the "soft landing" where a mother gradually returns from maternity leave back to employment, for example, by doing occasional shifts at work during their maternity leave. There is the "change of attitude" where a mother changes their relationship with work, giving it less importance than before having children. Then there is also the "Returning on child's terms" where a mother radically changes her job or career plans, for example, by changing her field of work or reducing her work from full-time to part-time to be able to care for her children at home. This is consistent with Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011) study which found that many women changed their jobs on becoming mothers for practical reasons such as distance to work, more flexible working hours and to avoid working overtime in order to fulfill their child's best interests.

According to Luotonen (2013) those women who choose the strategy of "Returning on child's terms" do not experience strong work engagement, and the return is mostly motivated by financial reasons. This is consistent with Davey et al. (2005) and Gould and Fontenla (2006) who found that women who use part-time work as a method to balance both their role of mother and employee are criticised in the workplace for lacking commitment to their work and are seen as being "less dedicated" in comparison to their full-time colleagues.

Women with lower qualifications have been found to be more likely to stop paid work on having children and if they do return to work they take on part-time jobs that are lower paying and end up working in poorer working conditions (Holloway, 1999; Warren, Pascall & Fox, 2010). Research shows that women with more education, higher wages and vocational preparation are less likely to withdraw from the labour force early on in pregnancy and were

more likely to return sooner after childbirth. Boushey (2005) found that the role of paid leave and a woman's level of education has an interaction effect influencing her decision to return to work after childbirth or not. Women with lower levels of education are less likely to return to work after giving birth. This could be due to the fact that lower skilled jobs are less likely to provide paid leave benefits, provide fewer financial incentives to return to work, as well as provide fewer financial resources to pay for the childcare services that are needed for a woman to be able to return to work. The strongest individual predictor of whether a woman will work after childbirth is her interpretation of her role as a wife and mother. Women with less traditional attitudes towards parenting and married life will generally work later into their pregnancies and return to work more quickly following childbirth (Lyness, Thompson, Francesco & Judiesch, 1999). A woman's perception of her spouse's desired employment and childrearing pattern also affected her decision to become a working mother (Gorman & Fritzsche, 2002).

Although women have increased their participation in the workforce, women's inferior position persists and they attain less senior positions than men. This could be due to the dominant hegemonic male culture that persists within organisations. They suffer occupational downgrading and many move into part-time work which is seen by society as an acceptable form of work for a mother (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Women who are in the labour force often work in inferior positions and jobs to that of men making up the majority of the temporary, part-time and casual work (Tzannatos, 1999). 60% or so of women who do return to work for their pre-birth employer, 40% do so on a part-time basis and to relatively marginal positions, irrespective of their qualifications and experience (Houston & Marks, 2003; Rake, 2000). Similarly, Whitehouse et al. (2006) and Brough, O'Driscoll and Biggs (2009) reported that 68% of mothers who worked full-time prior to the birth of their child ended up working part-time after their child's birth.

Connolly and Gregory (2008) and Tomlinson, Olsen and Purdey (2009) have demonstrated that on becoming mothers many women have to move to part-time work undertaking jobs for which they are overqualified for and forfeiting the best paying jobs as they require full-time work status. This could partially explain the "pay penalty" working mothers may experience. The "pay penalty" refers to an inferior salary women receive in comparison to men due to the regular breaks in employment required by mothers. It has also been found that there are negative implications linked to the length of time a woman is out of the workforce after childbirth. These include a decrease in her lifetime earnings and a loss of experience leading to pay penalties in comparison to women who have not had children (Dex et al., 1998; Joshi et al., 1999; Kanji, 2011).

The women without children or those who have a partner that attends to domestic duties and childcare are more likely to achieve "honourable man status" and be tolerated at top levels of organisations leading to career success. Although women are far less likely to have their partner involved in child and domestic duties as it attracts disapproval from society (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014). Access to maternity leave is also supposed to reduce the labour market inequalities between women and men by reducing wage penalties associated with motherhood and provide women with job protection (Glass & Riley, 1998; Hofferth, 1996; Joesch, 1997). However, motherhood wage penalties are found to still exist within organisations with mothers earning 91% of men's salaries before having children to mothers earning 67% of men's salaries after having children, their earning capacity only recovers slightly when their children have grown up (Rake, 2000). Women also experience a downgrading of social interactions within organisations and report their treatment in the workplace deteriorates either during their pregnancy or on their return to work (Borrilland Kidd, 1994; Buzzanell & Liu, 2007; Gatrell, 2011; Lovejoy & Stone, 2011).

In Millward (2006), ten women aged 25-40 from various occupations were interviewed. The women reported that once their pregnancy was known they were treated as mothers-to-be rather than valid, contributing employees by the organisation. This left the women feeling systematically excluded prior to their maternity leave and as if they do not have a viable future in the organisation. They were excluded from longer-term projects and many had their maternity leave cover arranged for them without their consultation or involvement. Despite legal assurances of their right to return, these exclusionary practices left these women feeling profoundly insecure about their future job prospects. In Millward (2006), like in Halpert and Burg (1997), motherhood is perceived in many ways as being in dispute with the concept of a working woman and all the participants in their study felt that they had to at some point stop and face the reality of how they were going to cope with juggling work, a baby and family life. Most of their participants were able to resolve the conflict of being a good mother with their decision to return to work however, all the women felt under unreasonable pressure to prove themselves again as valid employees. Returning women felt they had to find their own sources of support in the organisation and did this by seeking out similar others as a reference to validate their self-worth. Some women also began to withdraw themselves psychologically due to the lack of organisational support and instead of seeing themselves as working mothers with strong organisational identities they now saw themselves as mothers-who-work (Millward, 2006).

Twenty-six women in London were interviewed in Cahusac and Kanji (2014) study from a variety of occupations with pre-school aged children. The study found strategies for secrecy regarding being a mother as a common theme among the women interviewed. If it was known they had children, the women commonly pretended that their children's interests were of little importance to them. This ties into Wajcman (1998) and Hoobler, Lemmon and Wayne (2014) studies which considers not having children as a requirement if a woman wants to have a

successful management career. Similarly, in Gatrell's (2011) study of pregnant women, many withheld or were advised to withhold information about their pregnancy for as long as possible. The advice to lie about children aimed to make women appear to have achieved the "cultural" separation between work and the home which is considered a necessary requirement in the world of work. Haynes (2008) believes this is due to the notion that the pregnant female body disrupts the illusion of control, which is a central theme embodied by organisations and so-called "being a professional" and thus is interpreted as a sign of being distracted from corporate goals. Children getting sick was received negatively by the organisation and served as a "reminder" that employees care more about their children and not enough about the organisation. Time conflicts and deadlines were the pinnacle clash between care and work leading to role strain as well as caused mothers to become preoccupied about scheduling their life. The mothers interviewed stated that they could not or did not want to conform to the hegemonic masculine norms of working long hours that organisations encompass. The employed mothers felt that they were judged when they left the office early and that it was highly visible to their colleagues when they did. It seemed to these women that their work hours were more constructed as "necessary" by an unspoken norm rather than actually being necessary to complete the required work (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

What was a surprising finding in Cahusac and Kanji (2014) study was that although men in the higher up ranks within their organisations turned down requests to change working times which may be understandable per se as they have no clue regarding the challenges women face but it was, in fact, the childless female colleagues' behaviour and lack of sympathy that seemed to aggrieve them more. Leaving early also caused conflict for mothers who perceived leaving earlier than their colleagues as unfair and this was particularly so if they had a more senior status. This is because home and work are regarded as completely separate spheres to organisations and therefore leaving early cannot be justified in organisational terms. Requests

for new work times were turned down and therefore a "compromise" to work flexible or reduced hours was seen as a favour to women as they tried to negotiate both their roles despite the penalty of pay. This downgraded work did become less appealing over time for these women and they started feeling less grateful than they did initially. Those who now found themselves in part-time work arrangements reported a feeling of vulnerability when the company had to cut back on hours or staff members. However, for those women in professional or senior positions, there was no negotiating for them as their high-status jobs were classified as full-time which in organisational terms means 'all the time' (Cahusac & Kanji, 2014).

2.6 International Best Practice

The Commission of the European Communities (CEC) (2006) declared that in order for equality to be achieved between men and women, one of its goals should be to support the work-life balance of women who are both mothers and employees. Another goal stated by the CEC (2008) is that they want to increase the employment rate of women (aged 15-64). In order to do this, they proposed extending the maternity leave granted to women and providing more childcare for children under the age of three. The crucial motivation for maternity leave is to provide the mother an opportunity to bond with her new-born, to settle into motherhood and to recover from giving birth. According to the World Health Organisation (2000), women need at least 16 weeks of maternity leave in order to protect the health of both mother and child. There are benefits to maternity leave including longer periods of breastfeeding (The benefits of breastfeeding are widely acknowledged worldwide which has lead the World Health Organisation (2005) to recommend breastfeeding exclusively for the first six months of life), better mental and physical health of mother's postpartum, increased labour market participation of women and better physical health, cognitive and emotional development of children (Baker & Milligan, 2008; Berger, Hill, & Waldfogel, 2005; Brooks-Gunn et al.,2002; Han, Waldfogel, & Brooks-Gunn, 2001; Ruhm, 2000, 2004). Premature termination of breastfeeding, maternal

depressive symptoms and less sensitivity in the interaction with the infant was associated with shorter maternity leave (Ryan et al., 2006).

More than 100 countries around the world have implemented some form of parental leave policy. The general aim of a parental leave policy is to protect the employment rights of mothers and income of families during a disruptive period in their life, which is the birth of a child (Yen Feng & Han, 2010). For example, in the United Kingdom, an employee is entitled to 65 weeks of leave with 12 weeks at full pay. In Canada, employees are provided with 52 weeks of leave, 29 of which are fully paid. The Scandinavian countries have the most generous and gender-equalitarian parental leave policies worldwide with 85 weeks of leave, with almost half of the leave duration fully paid. Mothers are granted 30–42 weeks of full-time wage and fathers are provided with comparatively generous benefits (Yen Feng & Han, 2010). Even the more conservative European countries which provide less generous benefits to mothers and weak paternity incentives for fathers, such as France and Germany, still provide 12-16 weeks of fully paid leave. Yet countries such as the United States, despite being a developed country, lags behind in terms of their maternity policy providing only 12 weeks of unpaid leave (Han, Ruhm, Waldfogel, & Washbrook, 2008). In developing Asian countries such as Taiwan, the minimum maternity leave granted is approximately 8 weeks fully paid and 3 days fully paid for fathers (Yen Feng & Han, 2010). New-Zealand offers paid parental leave covering 14 weeks for the primary caregiver and weekly financial support is given. In contrast, Australia has no statutory paid parental leave policy but the government provides parents with a lump sum monetary payment on the birth of a child. Despite there being no statutory policies many individual organisations in Australia offer their employees paid parental leave between 1-24 weeks (Brough, O'Driscoll & Biggs, 2009).

After reviewing research evidence regarding parental leave Gornick and Meyers (2003), UNICEF (2008) and Warren, Pascall and Fox (2010) argue that leave around one year offers

the best fit between children's parental care needs, parents' financial needs, and gender equality requirements.

2.7 The African Context

It is alarming that out of fifteen Southern African Development Community (SADC) member states, only 5 have policies that protect women during pregnancy and after childbirth. South Africa has the most extensive and detailed policy protecting women during pregnancy, six months after giving birth and lactating women for the duration of breastfeeding their children (South Africa, 1997). However, the SADC states regard maternity leave as a social right and not a universal right such as in the Scandinavian countries. Therefore, within the SADC some states have specific qualifying conditions for maternity leave leading to women being excluded from accessing this right regardless of their labour market participation. Legislation in thirteen of the countries clearly stipulates that women are protected against discriminatory dismissal on account of pregnancy and that they are guaranteed the right to return to their places of work at the end of their maternity leave. These countries are Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe. In addition, although some of the SADC countries stipulate in their maternity leave policies that the six week period after birth is considered compulsory leave, this specification rests on the notion to protect the health of child and mother rather than enhancing women's social rights (Smit, 2011).

A gender ideology that views women as the primary caregivers of children prevails in the different SADC countries leading to a situation where women will be the ones to take parental leave. There have been studies conducted in South Africa which have found that some men are embracing the culture of 'new fatherhood' and have become more active and nurturing in childcare (Rothmann, 2009; Smit, 2008). These studies indicate that some men may welcome the option of taking parental leave. Instead of suggesting long periods of parental leave, which

is likely to be unpaid in developing countries, shorter leave with some financial benefits may be a more viable option. Other suggestions to improve family policies within SADC countries include: a degree of flexibility that allows for both parents to spread out blocks of leave during a child's early childhood; governments' must direct a larger percentage of the total public expenditure on education towards pre-primary education in order to make early childhood education and care more affordable and employers must be encouraged to make provision for child-care facilities as part of a family-friendly work environment. In making suggestions one, however, should not lose sight of the possible reasons why SADC member states pay less attention to family-related policies. Governments' in these countries are confronted with an overabundance of social development and welfare issues. Therefore, Parental policy matters must compete with other policy issues such as universal healthcare, housing shortages, payments of child support grants to primary caregivers of children in need and high HIV/Aids prevalence rates (Smit, 2011).

In terms of South Africa's maternity policy in accordance to section 25 in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997), a woman is entitled to at least four consecutive months (16 weeks) of maternity leave. Although it is not a requirement that employers pay employees during maternity leave, many organisations offer a package and pay a portion of their wages while they are on maternity leave. A worker on maternity leave may claim from the Unemployment Insurance Fund if they have contributed to the fund for more than four months. This makes them eligible for a maternity benefit of 38% to 60% of their average earnings in the last six months, depending on the insured person's level of income (Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001). In terms of paternity leave, according to section 27 of the Basic Conditions of Employment Act the birth of a child is classified as family responsibility leave and therefore the father is entitled to three days of paid leave.

2.8 The Assumptions and Contradictions behind Better Maternity/Parental Leave

There is a deeply entrenched ideology within our society that women and men occupy different spheres within society and perform different roles. Men's role is to be worker and breadwinner with women's role being child bearer and carer. The male sphere is that of the public world of work in which our economic and legal systems have been directed around and the female sphere is separate to men being the private world of the family, home and providing nurturing support to men and children (Finley, 1986).

The values that are natural to women and necessary for success in the home such as responsiveness to others needs, mutual dependence and nurturing are regarded as incompatible with the world of work and female tasks and qualities are devalued by our society, as the world of work is assigned economic importance by society and is, therefore, more valued. This assignment of women to the home and the incompatibility of women's natural caregiving role to the world of work is based on an unquestioned assumption within society allowing it to continue manifesting in social relationships, impeding women from becoming fully integrated into the world of work (Finley, 1986).

The lack of integration of women into the world of work has made workplaces unresponsive to the values of interconnectedness and the concern for the needs of others, as well as, denies men the opportunity to participate more meaningfully in the private home sphere. This ideology of the incompatibility of home and work spheres is entrenched by a general lack of adequate pregnancy and maternity leave and benefit policies in many countries by forcing women either out of the workplace or back into the workplace sooner than is healthy for both mother and child in order to preserve their job rights. This creates a situation where women's' perspectives, needs and interests have to be defined by the male-defined needs and interests of the workplace (Finley, 1986).

Over the past two decades the wage gap between men and women appears to have become narrower (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009). However, the wage gap between women with children and those without children has been simultaneously widening. One reason for this could be institutional structures emphasise equal opportunity and pay in recent years but have neglected to incorporate family policies (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009). Those industrialised welfare countries that have incorporated both gender and family policies successfully have managed to narrow both the gender and family gap (Waldfogel, 1998). The more generous parental leave policies, for example, the Scandinavian countries, the U.K. and Canada are first world welfare countries and they have the resources to assist their citizens with providing a variety of social policies and benefits. Generous legal parental leave and childcare policies are an important indicator of the "family-friendliness" of a welfare state (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009).

Generous maternity policies in these countries came about with a flood in research during the 1980s and 1990s where feminist researchers aimed to incorporate the issue of gender into welfare state policies which they felt was largely ignored (Ray, Gornick & Schmitt, 2010). As a group, women's economic and social needs were not sufficiently taken into account so welfare states started to provide women with access to paid work to enhance women's capacity to form and maintain self-sufficient households (Lewis & Ostner, 1991). The hope of bringing about policies such as maternity leave policies catered to women in that it would help encompass the need of connecting and benefiting from paid work as well as the distinctive connection women have to care for their children which counts as unpaid work (Sainsbury 1994, 1999). This was to bring about true gender equality and correct the traditional male breadwinner model. Feminist scholars in the past have critiqued the assumption that social policies in terms of men and women labour should be the same as this neglects the unique contributions of women's caregiving within society (Leira, 1992). A women-friendly welfare

state, therefore, incorporates a support system to women through employment achievement and opportunities and to grant women the right to take time for caring for children as it is important to mother and child (Fraser, 1994).

In recent years these welfare states are aiming to take maternity policies further to become a parental leave policy to support a more dual-carer/dual-earner model as a true gender egalitarian society would mean that men and women equally balance paid employment and unpaid child caregiving and home duties (Ray, Gornick & Schmitt, 2010). These gender-neutral policies are still being utilised mostly by women with men taking little or no time off from work to care for their children, thus gender inequality remains in paid and unpaid work (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009; Gornick, Meyers & Ross, 1998; Lewis & Campbell, 2007; Ruhm, 1998). Therefore, in order for countries to progress, they need to strengthen men's ties to caregiving and women's ties to employment, in order to do that state interventions need to include better parental leave policies (Ray, Gornick & Schmitt, 2010).

Maternity leave policies offer families support in two ways through job-protected leave and financially supported leave. However, the assumptions surrounding maternity leave are in contradiction. On the one side, it is believed that it helps women balance their multiple roles; results in healthier children and improves women's position in the labour force as it minimises work-life conflicts, therefore mothers are no longer forced to withdraw from paid employment. On the other side, it is thought women taking time off work does not improve their wages and employment but rather disadvantages women. Maternity leave could be seen to cause an increase in gender inequality as there is a wage gap created between men and women, as well as, women struggling to reach and maintain high positions within organisations. This is more common in countries with extensive parental leave policies (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009; Gornick, Meyers & Ross, 1998; Lewis & Campbell, 2007; Ruhm, 1998).

It seems there are fewer career punishments for women if they return to work sooner rather than later despite the parental policies that have been institutionalised, and employers are more accommodating if they have voluntarily agreed to the terms and conditions of an employee's parental leave as oppose to it being enforced. This punishment could be because of the economic costs to the employer, as well as, the belief among employers that once a woman becomes a mother they will be no longer committed to their job and will probably not return to work after childbirth. This is harmful as it can make supervisors discriminate against female employees who are pregnant, as well as, makes them reluctant to embrace maternity/ parental leave policies (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009; Gornick, Meyers & Ross, 1998; Lewis & Campbell, 2007; Ruhm, 1998). An organisations culture has a huge determining effect on whether employees embrace these family responsive benefits and policies. Corporate cultures often reinforce the assumption that career dedication is measured by the amount of time an employee spends at work; that career paths are straight and uninterrupted and parental leave is only appropriately used by those employees who are not concerned about their career advancement. Many female employees from a variety of professions report that they were reluctant to take advantage of these policies for fear of damaging their career advancement. This means that organisations are less supportive of programmes that aid their employees in leading a more balanced life and have the ability to influence their employees' perceptions negatively of the acceptability of participating in such programmes (Lyness, Thompson, Francesco & Judiesch, 1999).

When comparing the United States (a universal-breadwinner strategy is promoted); Sweden (an earner-carer strategy is promoted) and Germany (a caregiver-parity strategy is promoted) the return rates of women back into the workforce after having a child differs as 75% of all women are back at work within six months; 75% are back after five years and less than 75% are back even after eight years respectively. In the United States, they have created a culture

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where few women take family leave as even with such a short maternity leave they still experience a risk to the upward mobility in their careers. In Sweden, it is only when maternity leave exceeds fifteen months that a woman's chances of upward mobility may be negatively affected. In Germany the longer a woman's maternity leave the greater the risk of her having to change to a new job, however, this does necessarily have to be a downward move (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009).

This comparison is useful as it indicates that despite what the maternity leave policies in a country are, long time-out periods do destabilise women's careers. Although the negative effect of this time out is most alarming in the United States where mothers' careers suffer regardless of the amount of time they take off for maternity leave. This is contextualised by the nearly complete absence of affordable public childcare and family leave policies in the United States. This results sadly with women in the United States being granted no protection against the labour market and many women drop out of the labour force altogether for some years due to no other alternative. In Sweden, on the other hand, where parental leave policies are generous, childcare is also inexpensive and readily available to everyone with children between the ages of one to six years. The earner-carer strategy promoted in Sweden allows women to take a year or more of maternity leave and keep their ties to the labour market. However, even within family-friendly policies in Sweden women's career prospects improve if they return to work sooner rather than later. It has been observed that women who stay out of the labour market for more than eight years generally do not return to the labour market. This group of women is larger in Germany than the United States or Sweden, and it is assumed that these women who take very long maternity leave have lower career aspirations and prospects if they do return to work. In the end, these findings point to the need for fathers to increase their share of parental responsibilities and leave (Aisenbrey, Evertsson & Grunow, 2009).

In the past nearly 50% of women around the world are in the labour force, with roughly one-third of workers being constituted by women (Tzannatos, 1999). The reality is that every organisation will employ women, and these women are either already mothers or will become mothers. Therefore, an increasingly imperative issue society needs to focus on is how to ensure these women return to work after childbirth. This is not only important for gender equality but also in terms of skill retention that is beneficial to organisations, particularly organisations that have invested in employee training and development (Millward, 2006). When work demands conflict with family demands many women choose to not have children. This can be seen in the declining childbirth rates among women who choose to shape their work lives before having a family (Dorman, 2001). Structures need to be placed within any society that encourages women to have children but also facilitates women to increase their skills and participate in the paid workforce (Baird, 2004; Baird, Brenna & Cutcher, 2002). Maternity leave if implemented correctly has the ability to protect a woman's' position within an organisation, her salary, improves the likelihood of her returning to work, increases her level of work experience and allows her to advance in her career (Waldfogel, 1998).

In a developing world context such as South Africa improving the quality of human life and combating poverty is on the social development agenda. As a country, South Africa has tried to make strides towards improving their family-related policies to empower and improve their citizens' lives. Although South Africa's maternity policy may be more progressive in comparison to the United States and other African countries, there is still room for improvement. As a country, South Africa should be striving towards the parental policies used by welfare states in order to bring about equality between men and women. Family-related policies are important in providing parents with options in trying to reconcile their responsibilities associated with employment and family life (Smit, 2011). It is evident that

gender notions of child caring still lie largely as the responsibility of women and becoming a mother and returning to work after maternity leave requires adjustment on part of women.

There is a gap in the literature surrounding the readjustment experiences of women to work and motherhood, particularly within the South African context. There is a deficit of published studies conducted on this topic. This could be due to the historical context of South African society which was conventionally patriarchal. This 'invisibility' of women affected all race groups to varying degrees and women's role was that of domestic duties with their participation in economic activities discouraged. It is only with the arrival of democracy that women's contributions and roles started gaining recognition within society as well as economic activity encouraged. This is a particularly appropriate time to study the experiences of women within this country to progress democracy and bring about true gender equality (South African History Online, 2011).

Identifying the challenges mothers face in their engagement in the labour market will help in developing solutions within the country. Supporting women will not only spur economic growth but is imperative in advancing women's human rights. The challenges working mothers face reduce their employability, constrain their ability to participate on their own terms, restrict the options available to them and limit the likelihood of them utilising their full potentials. These challenges facing women balancing motherhood and employment is informed by a manifestation of attitudes, assumptions, norms and traditions as well as current legislation regarding parental leave and benefits. These experiences and challenges need to be investigated so that they can be remedied in order for the South Africa envisaged in the Constitution to be realised. This new found knowledge could help improve upon organisational and state policies ensuring that women's needs are incorporated, more support is given to employed mothers and labour market participation of women is retained. The health and psychological well-being of

employed mothers' is imperative if they are responsible for raising the countries future generations (South African Department of Labour, 2015).

2.9 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in which this research resides in is Social Constructionism. Social Constructionism highlights how we co-construct our lives in and around the people, culture and spaces we inhabit (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985). This means reality can be said to be socially constructed and the creation of knowledge occurs by analysing the processes in which this occurs. Ordinary people inhabit a world that is "real" to them as they can confidently identify processes or characteristics in this world. This reality, therefore, will vary depending on an individual's perceptions. Thus, what constitutes knowledge is not a "true" reflection of the world that is stable across time and place but is accounts from individuals' highlighting socially negotiated assumptions, values and needs of a specific community, based on their particular context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Burr, 1995; Gergen, Josselson & Freeman, 2015; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996).

This knowledge that is created by people is transmitted and maintained through social interactions among people in everyday life. In order to uncover this knowledge, a researcher needs to seek out, analyse and understand the social processes, interactions and relationships among people in which they construct their everyday life and knowledge. Everyday reality is a "taken-for-granted" norm. These "taken-for-granted" norms appear independent and objective of people, despite the fact that this reality is in fact socially constructed within a particular social, historical and cultural context. This will result in multiple truths, which can be observed in the differences amongst people and contexts. The language that one uses to construct reality creates an objectification of reality, however, this language was constructed by people to make sense of their reality in the first place. Therefore, as people, we 'distort' reality as soon as we begin to use the common language to interpret it. Language is the most

crucial form of expressivity, as it allows for vocal expressivity. An understanding of language is thus essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life. Language allows for people to transmit knowledge through time as it is able to describe situations that are not present and therefore can be passed on to future generations (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

The most important experience of others takes place in the face-to-face social interaction. Expressivity in this social interaction is created by the expressions of body language, movement, tone and the language used which are all then internalised resulting simultaneously in a patterned reaction unless challenged by the other individual. The relationships that a person involves themselves in are dialectical (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Reality is inter-subjective as people share the meaning of reality with others, therefore a person cannot exist in everyday life without continually interacting and communicating with others. As a result, common sense knowledge is created which is common knowledge and routines that one shares with others, affecting the way in which people interact with one another. This common knowledge is not equally distributed in society and depending on the socialisation and role accumulation a person has gone through, they will end up being more knowledgeable about the aspects of reality they have had to frequently deal with. The self could, therefore, be said to be determined by other people, through the interrelationships that one forms in the human environment (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

Patterns of behaviour are created which form habits. Once habits are formed the meaningfulness of the activity becomes "taken-for-granted", due to the routineness of the action. Therefore, the choices that appear to individuals come across as seemingly narrowed. The actions that become habits are what constitute institutions within a society and these institutions are shared by all its members. These institutions create a power dynamic, as these form the basis of acceptable conduct for people. People seem to forget that they were initially

the authors of this reality (due to the objectification of reality), creating a perceived power dynamic. Additionally, people play a role in society, which is created by society. This role is internalised and reified by an individual allowing for it to gain control over the individual. Institutions and roles are legitimated by locating them in this meaningful world, therefore identities are dependent on the social roles allocated to an individual. This often happens at the expense of the uniqueness of every individual. As the social world is made up of morals, beliefs, values and myths this becomes internalised within an individual's consciousness and remains unquestioned by society. Therefore, non-compliance with socially defined role standards may result in punishment, which varies in severity depending on the context (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

This theory is fitting as the place of women employees and the place of mothers are socially constructed (Burr, 1995). Although the research was undertaken as part of basic research, the purpose of it is however to understand working mother's interpretations of their subjectively meaningful everyday life. As it is this subject matter that informs the empirical science of psychology and sociology. This "real" world originates in people's thoughts and actions and is maintained by such. This gives rise to a descriptive method of research. A detailed analysis within this theoretical framework will be focused on uncovering the various layers of experience and the different structures of meaning involved in being a working mother. What is of interest is uncovering the working mother's awareness of the tensions or multiple realities of her world and how she is able to consciously take note and make sense of it (Berger & Luckmann, 1966).

This theoretical framework will allow for the narratives of mothers working to voice their own experiences and perceptions, allowing for a multiplicity of truths and perspectives to emerge. Motherhood can be understood as a site of conflicting socially constructed discourses. This multitude of discourses working mothers are exposed to reveal cultural norms, values, morals

and expectations of society that feed into their behaviours, identity, roles, experiences and beliefs they hold for themselves and the expectations they believe others hold for them. It will allow us to understand how these working mothers describe, account for or explain the world in which they live and themselves as individuals. Social constructionism allows us to reconsider the ways in which we think about human life and relationships and give meaning to our experiences as people (Lindley, 2013).

Within this theoretical framework it is believed that research is not value-neutral and values enter into the scientific process through the selection of the topic, the theoretical framework chosen, methodology used and the interpretation of results. Therefore research is seen as a means to give expression to people's social, political and moral values. Social constructionism as a theory gives importance to the use of language and social processes in knowledge creation and how discourses are created within a language and culture and give rise to the dynamics of power and oppression. Social constructionism allows for a critique of social life and as a researcher, there is a responsibility to not only understand and explain human behaviour but to showcase issues within discourse and try to move society towards change (Burr, 1995; Gergen, Josselson & Freeman, 2015; Gergen & Thatchenkery, 1996).

2.10 Chapter summary

The chapter covered the most relevant literature on the discourses shaping women's identity as workers and mothers; as well as the complex interchange of factors shaping their return to work decisions and what it means to be a good mother and employee. It is not easy balancing work with motherhood as seen through their experiences inside and outside of the workplace. Studies found in the literature point to an association between taking longer maternity leave and reduced wages and limited career progression. The African context maternity policies were compared to international maternity policies. The chapter ended with the social constructionist theoretical approach in which this study is located.

<p style="text-align:center">Chapter Three</p>

<p style="text-align:center">Methodology</p>

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology used in the study is explained. In the first section the research design namely, a feminist qualitative approach is addressed followed by the sample description and sampling method used. An explanation of the data collection procedure, ethical considerations and the method through which the data will be analysed will also be discussed in detail.

3.2 Design of Study

This is a feminist qualitative research study as it is uncovering women's narratives and giving women a voice. By giving women a voice their experiences, the power dynamics and challenges they face will be highlighted (Jeannes & Shefer, 2004). Jeannes and Shefer (2004) like Kruger (2006), argue that while it is important to acknowledge the unique experiences of mothers, these experiences cannot be separated from the social and political structures that are perpetuated and maintained through discourse. Kruger (2006) proposes that in order to uncover the experiences of mothers, a feminist research agenda should be adopted. A feminist research agenda will bring to the surface the different experiences of women mothering in different contexts, as well as, the various social processes that produce these experiences (Frizelle & Kell, 2010).

An Interpretive approach is appropriate as it allows for an exploration of the experiences of women readjusting their life to balancing both motherhood and employment by searching for the "how's" and "whys" within these women and taking into account the lived experiences, understandings, perspectives and feelings of these participants. An interpretive approach also allows for a richness of data; an in-depth analysis and is useful when trying to explore, explain

and describe a topic or phenomena, as the language or words used are the focal point in knowledge production, which ties into social constructionism as the theoretical framework (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006). This approach gives respect to the complexities of social life surrounding work and motherhood, as well as, each woman's own unique experiences because as people although some aspects are universal we do experience things differently (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014). Due to the highly transformative nature of this experience for women, and the challenges they face as they try to learn and adapt to motherhood on top of balancing employment, making this research topic purely quantifiable would be an injustice. This is because it would ignore the interactional context in which these women construct their own individual sense-making, as well as, would ignore the complexity of this whole experience (Millward, 2006).

An interpretive approach fits in with Social Constructionism as a theoretical framework. This is because social constructionism believes that society is based on socially constructed meanings, and in order to interpret the world, one must gain the socially constructed meaning of events by the individuals who have experienced them, in their particular historical and cultural context (Ormston, Spencer, Barnard & Snape, 2014).

3.3 Sample Description

The sample consisted of eight women who are mothers, who work full time and who have recently returned to work from maternity leave. Two organisations located in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal were chosen to make up the sample of women.

Table 1: Demographics of the participants

	Peyton	**Paula**	**Talia**	**Erin**	**Mbali**	**Natalie**	**Minx**	**Lauren**
Age of participant	25	31	28	39	32	40	28	33
Race of participant	Indian	Coloured	White	White	Black	White	Coloured	White
Marital status of participant	Married	Married	Single	Married	Married	Married	Single	Widowed
Number of children participant has	1	2	2	3	3	2	1	1
Job title of participant	HR Officer	HR Business Partner	Regional Accounts Manager	HR Manager	Bookkeeper	General Manager	Customer Service Agent	Accountant Assistant

Pseudonyms used to protect the participants identities'

3.4 Sampling Strategy

Both a purposive and snowball sampling strategy was utilised. It was purposive in that the sample was made up specifically of women who have returned to work recently from maternity leave. Therefore, the criterion used to select participants as per purposive sampling - was that the mothers had to have returned to work full-time after maternity leave. The first working mother was selected by the gatekeeper as they had direct access to such information pertaining to the organisation, which then snowballed into further access to other mothers who met the criterion in the same organisation, this process was repeated in the second organisation. Hence, once the first working mother was located a snowball sampling strategy was employed. The probability of finding enough women to interview that meet the criteria in a single organisation was difficult and therefore the sample was made of employed mothers in two different organisations. This sampling strategy was used until a point of saturation was reached and there

was a sufficient attempt on part of the researcher to gather enough data. Saturation was reached when the narratives became repetitive and no new information was uncovered.

3.5 Data Collection

A semi-structured interview guide was used (see Appendix 1) and the interviews were conducted in-depth and face-to-face with participants. Except for one interview which was conducted via a teleconference call at the one organisation, as the participant was located in their Port Elizabeth branch. The interviews took place at a time and place that was convenient to the participants and organisations. Originally eleven interviews were conducted but only eight were chosen. This is because during the interview it was discovered the participant either did not fit the sample characteristics or they were reserved and reluctant to talk during the interview so not enough data was gathered from them. The questions that were asked in the interview guide was based on previous studies interview schedules in the literature. These studies were by Parcsi and Curtin (2013) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) and they too were looking at women's experiences of returning to work from maternity leave. The questions chosen from these interview schedules were based on the link to the research questions and objectives this research aimed to answer. The interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed verbatim. The use of a semi-structured interview guide was useful as it ensured the same questions were asked of each participant, thus, allowing for an easier comparison of the data but still allowing a prompting of discussion on part of the researcher around points raised and allowing the respondents flexibility in narrating and explaining their experiences openly and uniquely surrounding the topic. It was also an appropriate method to use since there was only one chance to interview a particular participant and the researcher had limited experience with interviewing (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013; Spiteri and Xuereb, 2012).

3.6 Ensuring rigour in the research study

Despite rigour being an applicable construct to quantitative research, it is important to apply aspects of rigour in qualitative research, such as 'trustworthiness' (Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018). Guba and Lincoln (1989) propose that in order to satisfy the requirements of trustworthiness in qualitative research, there are certain aspects that need to be addressed, these include: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The research study focused on credibility, transferability and confirmability

Credibility refers to ensuring that the study measures what it intends to measure and is an accurate depiction of the participants' realities. This was achieved in the study as the researcher allowed for rapport to be built with the participants before engaging in the narrative, allowing the participant to feel more comfortable in disclosing their narratives (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018).

Transferability refers to the research being generalised to other settings. The current research study allowed for transferability by having a 'thick description.' A thick description was achieved as the narratives were recorded allowing for all information to be gathered during the interview process. All patterns and observations were made based on the narratives provided by the participants, therefore, the research can be transferred to contexts that are similar (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018).

Confirmability refers to the 'objectivity' of the study, therefore, ensuring that research biases have been recognised and eliminated to ensure the quality of the research study. This was ensured by the researcher as biases and researcher opinions were recognised and eliminated to ensure that all aspects of the narratives were analysed in an objective perspective (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings & de Eyto, 2018). Additionally, a researcher's reflection was also conducted where the researcher acknowledged their influence in the research study.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Before the data was collected, the study followed all the required ethical procedures as set out by the Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Gatekeeper's permission was granted from the Human Resource departments of both organisations (see Appendices 5 and 6). Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the

Human and Social Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal (HSS/1062/017M) (see Appendix 7).

Before collecting the data, the Human Resource departments were first approached by the researcher to gain permission to conduct the research within the organisation and approach women who fit the sample requirements. The researcher had a personal contact in each of the organisations and they were contacted and asked to refer the researcher to another potential participant and so forth. Each participant was either contacted via email or phone and were informed about the aim and objectives of the study, how the data will be collected, and the ethical principles involved in the study were discussed with them (namely voluntary participation in the study; anonymity of the participants; confidentiality of the data; how their information as experiences will be written up; and their right to withdraw from the study at any point in time with no negative consequences to them). Only then were they invited to participate in the study voluntarily. Those that volunteered were given the informed written consent document to sign before the start of the interview in which the aims and objectives and ethical principles (as stated above) were outlined again (see Appendices 2, 3 and 4). The data collection was completed within an hour, as stated upfront to those that were willing to participate. Pseudonyms of the participants, which were created by the participants themselves, are used in the reporting of the results and discussion sections of the dissertation and the organisation's names have not been mentioned to maintain confidentiality and anonymity.

3.8 Data Analysis

The data which consisted of transcripts that have been typed verbatim from the voice recordings; were analysed within the voice-relational method of analysis which was originally developed by Lyn Brown & Carol Gilligan and adapted by Mauthner & Doucet. Through this method, the researcher attempts to translate relational ontology. This means that the individual is seen to be located within a complex web of intimate relationships and larger social

relationships which can be analysed to explore their individual experiences in terms of their relationship to themselves, others and the relationship to broader structural, cultural and social contexts in which they live. It is this emphasis on a relational ontology that makes this method appropriate to explore motherhood combined with employment (in terms of discourse, social identity and practice) and how contextual factors intersect and influence this transformative experience (Frizelle & Kell, 2010). It is evident how this data analysis method is particularly appropriate to use with this research being located within the social constructionism framework, which also places an emphasis on language and the social and cultural context and relationships an individual is located in as it informs their reality and identity.

This voice-relational method requires four readings of the transcripts to analyse the data and uncover emerging ideas or themes. The first reading "Reading for the plot and our responses to the narrative" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.11) entails two aspects. The first aspect is about reading through the participants narratives to get a sense of their overall story or plot being told and looking for recurring words, images, characters, metaphors, contradictions and themes. The second aspect of this reading is the reader needs to place herself within the text bringing her own experiences, history and background in relation to the participant. This is when the researcher is reading the narrative and responding intellectually and emotionally to the human being. The first reading requires self-awareness on the researcher's part as she must become aware of how her worldviews or assumptions may influence the interpretation of the data (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

The second reading is "Reading for the Voice of I" (Mauthner & Doucet,1998, p12). This reading should focus on how the participant feels, experiences, and speaks about herself. This is demonstrated by the participant using personal pronouns such as "I", "my", "we" and "you" in talking about themselves. The purpose of looking for the active pronouns of "I" and "my" is to show a participant's agency as they narrate their personal lived experiences within their

social location. The swopping of the personal pronouns to "you" or "we" is a demonstration of the complexity and the use of multi-layered voices within their sense-making and lived experiences and that many of these experiences are socially shared by others who make up their social group of a working mother (Mauthner & Doucet; Walker, 1995).

The third reading is "Reading for Relationships" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.16). This reading is about observing where the participants make reference to significant interpersonal relationships or broader social networks. This reading focuses on how participants speak about their interpersonal relationships. These relationships can comprise of their friends, children, family, partner, their colleagues and even the broader social networks in which they work, parent and live. This reading identifies the gendered division of labour, social support networks and information sources (Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

Reading four is "Placing People within Cultural Context and Social Structures" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, p.17). This reading focuses on placing the respondent's accounts and experiences within their broader social, political, cultural, and structural contexts. This reading allows the researcher to contextualise women's experiences of motherhood and employment and how wider social, organizational, political and cultural constructions impact on it (Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Mauthner & Doucet, 1998).

Although the analysis is broken up into four separate readings, in reality, the readings cannot be separated from each other and there is an overlap between the readings. This highlights the interaction of various social factors that shape motherhood and employment for women. The reading process helps the researcher in their analysis to try unravelling the multilayered and complex accounts, identities and experiences regarding motherhood and employment (Frizelle & Kell, 2010).

A reflective journal was kept during the research process as it is considered an integral part of the interpretive research process and is useful during the analysis of data. This is because it is considered that research is not value-neutral and it is acknowledged that the researcher has an influence on the collection and interpretation of data (van Manen, 1990). Keeping a reflective journal allowed the researcher to acknowledge their own feelings, opinions, biases and judgements that could have coloured the way the research was interpreted. Within this interpretive paradigm the relationship between the researcher and participants or social phenomena is interactive, therefore the researcher could have affected the type of data the participants gave, and participants could have affected the way the researcher interpreted and understood their narratives (Ormston et al., 2014).

3.9 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, all the necessary methodological procedures for the research study were explained. First, the feminist qualitative research design was explained, followed by the sample description and sampling procedure. The data collection process and the ethical principles that were followed were also described. The chapter ends with a discussion of the voice-relational method which was used in the data analysis to enable the answering of the research questions.

<center>**Chapter Four**</center>

<center>**Results & Discussion**</center>

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, the results are discussed in relation to the four readings proposed by the Voice Relational Method outlined by Mauthner & Doucet (1998). To reiterate, the four readings include: "Reading One: reading for the plot and our responses to the narrative (Ibid, p.11)."; "Reading Two: Reading for the voice of I (Ibid, p12); "Reading Three: Reading for relationships (Ibid, p.16)"; and "Reading four: placing people within cultural contexts and social structures (Ibid, p.17)."

4.2 Reading One: Dominant Discourses Surrounding Motherhood and Work

Through reading one, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) outline that an analysis should involve "examining the plot and responses to the narrative" (p.11). This involves, firstly reading the overall story from the participant narratives paying attention to recurring themes, words, images and characters and secondly responding to the participants from a personalised perspective. Using this process, the analysis of participant narratives revealed dominant discourses surrounding motherhood and work as well as discursive resistance or assimilation of these discourses as a means of self-evaluation. The themes that were teased out include (a) 'Intensive Mothering' whereby participants reinforce existing ideology of the ideal mother, scrutinise themselves in relation to this ideology and regulate their behaviour accordingly; (b) 'Organisational Discourses' whereby participants use the dominant discourse around 'work' to evaluate and pressurise themselves into performing.

4.2.1 Intensive Mothering

The dominant discourse surrounding motherhood emerging from participant narratives can be likened to the "intensive mothering" ideology purported by Hays (1996). This ideology renders motherhood as solely the imperative of the mother and as such, mothers need to devote

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themselves entirely to this endeavour. The discourse of "intensive mothering" has emerged from the template of a white, middle-class, married woman, who tend to be in heterogeneous relationships (Ibid, 1996). Contrastingly, the sample of mothers selected for this study were not all white, middle-class married women: three were single mothers, four were 'non-white' mothers and all the mothers were in full-time employment. Therefore, this notion of intensive mothering is by all means unachievable for them, yet all participants strongly prescribed to this ideology and allowed it to regulate their behaviour (Arendell, 2000; Coontz, 2005; Dillaway & Paré, 2008; Hays, 1996). This is seen in the participant's narratives to the extent that discourse centers around needing to spend quality time with their children regardless of any other responsibilities or commitments (Hays, 1996). This is captured by one participant in her description of what it means to be a mother:

Mbali: "Showing your children love, spending time with them even though you have other things to do…making sure whenever your child needs you then you are there for them. You have to give them love and be so supportive as well."

Hays (1996) also indicates that this "intensive mothering" ideology puts forward the notion that as mothers, family and children are prioritised and should be prioritised. Other participants reflect on their priorities stating that:

Natalie: "Making sure my kids have what they need as they come first…being there for my family…family comes first"

Peyton: "You need to be there for your children constantly"

Mothers are expected to invest all their resources and energy into mothering to ensure appropriate cognitive and emotional development of their children by providing age-appropriate interaction and stimulation (Hays, 1996). One participant, Lauren spoke to this in particular:

Lauren: "You need to invest in your child"

Lauren lost her job during her pregnancy and was, therefore, able to take a year of maternity leave with her child. She believes this allowed her to invest in her child in the sense that she had a positive impact on her child's development as she had the time to provide this interaction and stimulation. Lauren also stated that she believes this is important and feels all mothers should be granted this opportunity.

"Intensive mothering" is also associated with creating a certain type of home environment and the notion that children are innately good and innocent and require protection (Hays, 1996). This is demonstrated in the quote below:

Paula: "You need to be creating an environment where they feel safe and loved."

It appears that in reaction to the "intensive mothering" discourse, participants tend to reject themselves as 'good enough' rather than rejecting the implausibility of the ideology (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998). The quotes below reveal the extent to which these women have internalised the 'need to intensively mother' and subsequently evaluate themselves negatively:

Erin: "…I think I'm probably not there, so I think someone that is loving and patient, and someone that they can learn from, and guide them in the right direction, and just be there I suppose when they need you. And then I say that because I'm not….I don't think that I'm patient (laughter). But I need to be more patient. So sometimes, like an incident will happen and then I think I could have maybe handled that a bit better, not lashed out….so maybe I need to er…change my tone. But it's in the moment you know when everything else is going on…You try to do all those things, I want to do all those things, er…so I do think they are important."

In saying "*I do think they are important*", Erin is reinforcing the plausibility of an ideal to be 'patient', 'always available', 'never lashing out', and 'trying to do and be everything'. In relation to 'Reading 2: Reading for the voice of I', it is clear from Erin's quote that she

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differentiates herself from *"someone that is loving and patient"* by using her voice of "I" – to the extent that she finds the ideology important but sees herself as unfit in relation to the desired norm. Although she takes ownership of her limitations in 'intensive mothering' she does not accept these limitations and is continuously striving towards reaching that ideal. This is reiterated by Paula who states: *"we are not perfect, but we try to be".* However, in this case, Paula uses the voice of *"we"*, accepting that she is not isolated in this experience, this battle of striving for perfection and never being able to achieve it is part of being a mother. According to Swanson and Johnston (2003), Paula uses an internalised notion of motherhood to make sense of her reality and that of mothers in general, it becomes part of accepted group norms.

In summary, the participant below captures how the participants have internalised the 'intense mothering' ideology and incorporated this notion into their identity (Swanson & Johnston, 2003):

Minx: *"As a mother, firstly, you're always questioning yourself if you meet that standard of a good mother.....um a mom is supposed to be a superhero...you need to teach your child things...its immense pressure and when you feel you're falling short, that's when you doubt yourself and there are insecurities."*

According to Swanson and Johnston (2003) the internalised ideology *"a mom is supposed to be a superhero"* creates expectations for how they construct their identity. In this case, it is evidenced that such ideology results in negative self-evaluations and insecurity. According to Rose (1998), there is a link between ideology and the way in which we regulate our behaviour. In the case of this study, participants engage in processes of "self-scrutiny" and "self-evaluation" in order to 'self-regulate' (Ibid, p.77).

In summary, the 'intensive mothering' ideology derived from a context of colonial middle-class white-privilege still serves as a powerful regulator of participants ways of being and sense

of self, despite being irrelevant to the current context for these women. Further, participants seem to be unaware of the extent to which they are governed by an implausible ideal and thus are unable to challenge and resist it in ways that may be more empowering for them. It is therefore recommended that organisational efforts that target women's issues incorporate exercises that increase awareness of potentially disempowering ideologies. That being said, the next theme to be discussed is that of 'organisational discourse', which too needs to be challenged.

4.2.2 Organisational Discourses

The second theme that emerged from an analysis of participants narratives in relation to Mauthner and Doucets (1998) reading one centered around an apparent internalisation of the organisational discourse on what it means to be a 'good employee'. Therefore, in addition to being governed by the 'intensive mothering' ideology of what it means to be a good mother, participants are also governed by an ideology of what it means to be a good employee. In particular, the most common words used by participants in this context were the need to: achieve 'work-life balance', high performance and personalise company values.

The first organisational discourse that will be discussed relates to the popular organisational catch-phrase 'work-life balance'. Hoffman and Cowan (2008) conceptualise work-life balance as a 'corporate ideology' that encompasses four characteristics: "1. Work is the most important element of life; 2. Life means family; 3. Individuals are responsible for managing the relationship between paid work and the rest of life and 4. Organisations control work-life programs" (p.233-234). In summary, these characteristics result in greater control over employees by the organisation and placing the responsibility for the achievement of work-life balance on employees. All participants in this study used this ideology as a means of evaluating themselves, and all considered themselves to be failing to "get the balance right":

Paula: "You might have stresses coming to work in terms of your children being ill or perhaps you've got some issues at home, but you still need to be at work…it's so important to get the balance right."

Lauren: "I think I have always left home at home, and work at work….It is, it maybe is difficult, especially having a younger child, you come to work you've got lack of sleep…you know your child is sick, now your child is at school, and you are worried about your child…It can be… but I think you have to balance it out."

The primacy of work effect relates to how work is of primary significance and work is always positioned before life, i.e. work-life balance rather than life-work balance (Ibid, 2008). This is evidenced in Mbali's quote below where she talks about balancing everything, with an emphasis on work in particular rather than life:

Mbali: "You have to be able to balance everything. Make sure you still do your work."

The participant's quote below shows the turmoil the ideology of 'work-life balance' creates for people, especially working mothers whereby participants talk about the need to separate their 'personal life' from their 'work-life':

Peyton: "A good employee means fulfilling your duties…not letting your personal life interfere with your work… Err…a little bit…it can be difficult, but you have to draw the line…there are many things people go through…you come to work, you have a job to do."

Peyton's reflection and drawn out speech *"err…a little bit…"* and silent pauses in her speech demonstrate her reluctance to admit how challenging and unrealistic this expectation is. She then further goes on to rationalise it by saying *"you have to draw the line"* almost as if she believes the problem lies with the individual and not the organisational discourse, thus reinforcing the status quo (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998).

Interestingly, participants in this study did not refer to the dichotomy of 'motherhood' and 'worker role', but were more immersed in the discourse surrounding 'work-life balance', thereby placing additional pressure on themselves to perform well at work and in their personal lives, without acknowledging that motherhood places them into a completely new category as distinct from 'women without children', or 'women from upper-socio-economic backgrounds' who have high levels of economic support. In other words, they are internalising discourses that are not applicable to them and subsequently feel inadequate as employees, as women and as mothers. For example, the contradiction of the 'work-life balance' dichotomy is evident in Paula's quote below, where she draws on the discourse of 'getting the balance right' as a solution to the stress created by having to balance the roles of mother and employee. This results in a personalisation of the problem rather than a structural and ideological problem, reinforcing gender inequality, maintaining the status quo (Eisenhart & Finkel, 1998), and leading to high levels of stress and perceptions of inadequacy:

Paula: "You might have stresses coming to work in terms of your children being ill or perhaps you've got some issues at home, but you still need to be at work…it's so important to get the balance right."

In addition to the corporate ideology of work-life balance, there is the push for 'high-performance'. The 'high performance' and 'work-life balance' discourses seem to be at odds with one another. High performance generally demands that the employee dedicate additional time, over and above the average eight-hour work day, whereas, work-life balance demands that the employee utilises their time away from work more effectively. The contradiction is that work, together with high performance becomes increasingly skewed in favour of work (Shaw & Allen, 2009). The quotes below illustrate the emphasis on hard work and performance:

Erin: *"Working hard to build relationships with all my colleagues…I put in extra hours...I do work hard at doing a good job…everybody's got their duties…targets and things to reach… and we've got responsibilities…but if you're living by the company values, you would be considered a good employee that we would want to retain."*

Natalie: *"Having respect for your company, working hard, not taking liberties…. living by the company values…doing the job you are supposed to do."*

Both Erin and Natalie also touch on the idea of *"living by the company's values"* indicating a personalisation of company values. Studying the internalisation of organisational values are important to understanding the lived experiences of individuals working in that organisational environment. Values of an organisation infiltrating into a person's sense of 'self' demonstrates a power dynamic that is created by organisations as they work to create a homogenous identity for organisational members often at the expense of people's own individual identities (Shaw & Allen, 2009). For example, Natalie mentions values of '*respect for your company', 'hard work' and 'not taking liberties'*. Organisational values also create pressures, norms and constraints on their organisational members which restrict or allow them to act in certain ways and tend to generate organisational commitment and loyalty by their members (Ibid, 2009). Which can be demonstrated in Mbali's quote:

Mbali: *"You have to be loyal at work."*

In summary, it is evident that participants in this study are taking strain under the pressures to conform to idealistic notions of what it means to be a good mother and a good employee. These ideologies are internalised thereby altering the individual's subjectivities in line with capitalist values of hard work, high performance, loyalty to the company, primacy of work effect, work-life balance skewed in favour of work or as Nikolas Rose (1990) concedes: 'the governing of the soul'.

4.3 Reading Two: Reading for the Voice of "I"

Through reading two, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) outline that analysis should focus on how the participant feels, experiences, and speaks about herself. This is demonstrated by the participant using personal pronouns such as "I", "my", "we" and "you" in talking about themselves. The purpose of looking for the active pronouns of "I" and "my" is to show a participant's agency as they narrate their personal lived experiences within their social location. The swopping of the personal pronouns to "you" or "we" is a demonstration of the complexity and the use of multi-layered voices within their sense-making and lived experiences and that many of these experiences are socially shared by others who make up their social group of a working mother (Ibid, 1998; Walker, 1995). In the case of this study, the themes that were uncovered include: (a) 'Reflecting on Life Before Children' whereby participants discuss how they felt and experienced work and life before motherhood; (b) 'Experiences After Children' whereby participants discuss their experiences of work and life after motherhood; and (c) 'Role Juggling' whereby the experiences and feelings surrounding balancing both motherhood and employment and coping strategies utilised are discussed.

4.3.1 Reflecting on Life Before Children

The participants mentioned it was easier to manage their work before having children as they could work extra hours at the office or at home and they could stay at work later if they needed to or come to work earlier in the mornings if they needed to. This allowed them to stay on top of their work and they felt they were performing their best at work during this time. Paula demonstrates this change in working lifestyle by using the personal pronoun of *"I"* or *"my"* when she is referring to herself before having children, almost as if she is indicating she felt she had her own individual identity, but when speaking about herself after having children she uses the pronoun of *"you"* perhaps this is to indicate that she now views herself as a "working

mother" and no longer just "Paula" and what she is experiencing is a shared experience amongst working mothers:

*Paula: "Working life before **I** became a mother was quite easy… **I** had a lot of time for **myself** and for **my** work. Um, now **you** have to switch off completely when **you're** at home because there are kids around. Previously before **I** had **my** children, **you** would still, say, for instance, **you** didn't complete tasks at work, **you** would take your work home, but now when **you** have your kids, **you** can't do that anymore because they also need your attention. So, it was more just involving **your** work and doing the best that **you** can and **you** having the time to do so. But now with the kids, it's difficult because **you** have to get that work and family balance right. So, it was much easier to focus on your work before kids now."*

Paula's quote illustrates the notion of "loss of self" typically experienced by mothers purported by Alldred (1996) and Jeannes and Shefer (2004). This "loss of self" is not due to mothers losing their pre-existing identities but rather on becoming a mother, women now need to negotiate multiple identities, however, their identity as mothers is pushed to the foreground and becomes the dominant identity. This could be due to this notion that mothers need to be "selfless" and there is an expectation that as a mother you need to center your whole being around your children's needs (Alldred, 1996; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004).

This pressure of "selflessness" that mothers experience according to Jeannes and Shefer (2004) surfaces again in Natalie's account below, where she speaks about feeling a sense of guilt when work causes her to forfeit precious time that she believes she "should be" spending with her children:

*Natalie: "**I** didn't have the guilt of…like **I** travel a lot… so **I** travelled a lot more freely and **I** really didn't have…the guilt that **I** have now after having kids that **I** am not always there… **you know** it's that kind of mother's guilt **I** suppose that **I** have now."*

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It is interesting that Natalie terms this as *"mother's guilt"* implying this is a shared experience amongst mothers. What is also interesting is whilst Natalie is describing this *"mother's guilt"* she says, *"you know"* to the researcher demonstrating that Natalie sees this lived experience as 'taken-for-granted-knowledge' and the researcher would fully understand what she is feeling or experiencing.

Erin reinforces this *"mother's guilt"* Natalie is feeling and experiencing with her quote below:

> *Erin: "when **I** know I've got a deadline, and **I** know I've got to put in a few hours' work at home, it's almost, like there's that pressure, like just get the stuff done, get the kids into bed…. and **I** am almost putting my job first… I know **I** shouldn't do that, because they really should come first, and because **I** have limited time in the evening with them."*

Erin stating *"I know **I** shouldn't do that, because they really should come first"* in reference to her children, highlights how motherhood is pushed to the forefront and becomes a woman's dominant identity, despite balancing multiple identities, because as a mother you are expected to sacrifice your own needs, wishes, dreams and desires to put your children's needs first (Alldred, 1996; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004).

Similarly, as in Byrne-Doran (2012) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies, the women in this study frequently reported that they had plenty time for themselves prior to motherhood but on becoming a mother and balancing that with full-time employment it has made finding time for themselves challenging. When the women were asked if they did anything for themselves, outside of work and motherhood, they commonly said "No". This rarity of 'me time' can be demonstrated by the participant's quotes below:

> *Lauren: "Me-time is when **you** put your child in bed at half past 7 (laughed). And then **you** go and have your bath, **you** have your glass of wine, and ja."*

*Paula: "That's the thing hey. Like last week, **I** told my husband I'm going to do **my** nails and I'll just take some time out for myself now because **I** used to do that before my kids."*

The lack of social, personal and educational activities the participants in this study reported as emphasised by Natalie, *"No, never. No, like it would take a lot for **me** to go and get **my** hair done, **I** don't go for…**I** don't really do anything..."* could be explained by the fact that working mothers must often negotiate a trade-off between time and money; therefore, these working mothers try to compensate for this decrease in time with their child by decreasing their social, educational and personal activities that do not involve their children (Chase-Lansdale et al., 2003; Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997).

Another strategy utilised by the working mothers in this study, to compensate for the lack of time they get to spend with their children during the week due to being in full-time employment (Ibid, 2003; Ibid, 1997), is they structure their weekends and leisure activities around family time and their children. This is seen in the quote below by Lauren where she explains how the entertainment she engages in needs to be child-friendly:

*Lauren: "before **you** will be jolling at night, whereas with children **you** will be going to Ushaka…**you're** not going to go to a fancy restaurant, **you're** going to go to Spur or Wimpy…where there is a playground."*

The use of the pronoun *"you"* throughout Lauren's quote indicates that this is a strategy that is commonly utilised by working mothers.

This pressure of putting your children first, being "selfless", and the ideology that to be a "good enough" mother you need to invest all your time, energy and resources into spending time with your child and being there for your child regardless of your own dreams, wishes, desires or needs (Alldred, 1996; Hays, 1996; Jeannes & Shefer, 2004) is demonstrated by Paula:

*Paula: "**I** have neglected myself, **I** think, in a way because **you** want to spend as much time with them but sometimes, **you** need a breather."*

Paula, in admitting that she believes as a mother she has neglected herself with the use of the pronoun *"I"*, but when reasoning why this is the case i.e. *"because **you** want to spend as much time with them"*, (them referring to her children) she uses the pronoun of *"you"* and she also uses the pronoun of *"you"* when stating *"but sometimes you need a breather"* as if she is speaking on behalf of all working mothers and believes this feeling and experience is shared.

Talia reinforces what Paula is saying about this sense of longing for a *"breather"*:

Talia: "Going to the beach to just be at peace. And quiet ... (laughs) alone and no work and no rush and no anything...Not that I don't, like I love my children obviously."

Talia's quote demonstrates a mother even dreaming about a *"breather"* brings on this sense of guilt and need for justification by her stating *"Not that I don't, like I love my children obviously".* Talia also does not make any use of pronouns initially during her speech, almost as if she is not making this longing for 'me time' specific to herself, but rather a universalised idealisation for working mothers that is distant and unobtainable. Then she reverts this back to herself by reassuring the researcher she does love her children, perhaps out of fear of being judged by the researcher as a "bad mother", as the intensive mothering discourse proposed by Hays (1996) prescribes a "good mother' as one who should always be available and giving, not one who could ever desire 'time out'. The fact that she brings this idea back to herself is indicative that this is her own personal longing.

In summary, participants reflection on life before children is experienced from the position of 'mother' rather than the person they were before they became a mother. This reflects the transformation of their entire worldview as centered around motherhood, and even to imagine time-out from the role of being a mother is met with a sense of guilt. The next theme examines

participants reflection on life after children which is more aligned with participants current context and thus participants seemed to find it easier to talk about.

4.3.2 Experiences of Life After Children

Consistent with Parcsi and Curtin (2013) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies, the women in this study reported that they have undergone perception or attitude changes upon becoming mothers. The participants commonly reported that the transition into motherhood has matured them, based on the large responsibility of caring for another human being. Upon examining participant narratives it appears that their children have taken the center stage of their lives, so much so that their career has taken a backseat. Work post-motherhood is met with a sense of anxiety for these participants. Work is now experienced as more valuable as their jobs have become a means to provide for their children thus heightening a sense of fear over potential job loss. This is shown in Natalie's and Lauren's quotes below:

*Natalie: "**You** just have to become a little bit more mature about things and not so selfish **you know**…it's not just **me** that **I** have to worry about, it's my kids too so now work becomes a bit more important because **I** can't risk not having a job."*

*Lauren: "**I** think **you** do mature a lot more, after having a child. It is an extra responsibility and it is, it is not like a dog or a plant, it is now this little human being. **You know you** have to work because they need stuff as well."*

The constant interchanging between the pronoun of *"I", "you"* and the statement *"you know"* to the researcher, in both Natalie's and Lauren's quotes, demonstrate the multiple voices that have been used to shape these working mothers attitude and perception changes and how it has been (re)constructed that it has become the "normal" or "taken-for-granted" worldview for working mothers. In Natalie's quote, she uses the voice of "I" in relation to her anxiety, "*I have to worry*" or "*I can't risk*" and the voice of "you" in relation to her perception of the common

experience of mothering, i.e. "*"**You** just have to become a little bit more mature about things and not so selfish **you know** …".* Lauren also talks about the maturity required in the voice of you, i.e. "**you** *do mature a lot more, after having a child".* It appears to be a common theme for participants to use the voice of "I" in relation to their own anxiety and fear, which may actually heighten the anxiety when one feels alone with this condition.

The return to work after maternity leave was described as emotional by the participants. Peyton and Mbali highlight the emotional turmoil mothers feel when they return to work:

Peyton: *"the first day was the worst day ever because it's like that disconnect from* **your** *child… it's all of these different emotions that* **you** *feel."*

Mbali: *"After maternity leave,* **your** *mind would be at home…it's not easy. It's very emotional."*

Many of the women also described that they felt distracted when they initially returned to work from maternity leave as they felt a sense of longing to be with their child. This longing is demonstrated in Mbali's quote above where she states, *"your mind would be at home"* and would be consistent with the findings in Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011); Parcsi and Curtin (2013); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies. The mothers also mentioned experiencing a sense of anxiety around the competencies of those employed to care for their children while they're at work:

Talia: *"**You** have got distractions, wondering like if they are okay, did the people feed them, have they changed their nappies the right amount of times and things like that."*

A negative aspect for women returning to work after maternity leave as uncovered by Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011); Parcsi and Curtin (2013); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies is a fear of missing out on their child's developmental milestones. Once again, the fear and anxiety in participants voices are raised in the voice of "I" as demonstrated below:

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*Peyton: "I thought to myself, gosh **I'm** going to miss all these important moments. **I'm** not going to see when she gets her first tooth, the first time that she walks, her first word."*

*Mbali: "Now he's walking. He just started walking. And you're like Oh my God, **I** missed out."*

For the mothers it would seem it is important for them to be with their child every step of the way, tying into the "intensive mothering" discourse as proposed by Hays (1996) and discussed above.

The women also commonly reported that they feared to have to leave their child in the care of another person, especially a stranger, which too is consistent with Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011); Parcsi and Curtin (2013); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies. This was due to mistrusting another person to ensure no harm will happen to their child and this other person not parenting their child as well as they believe they can as the child's mother. This reinforces the notion that mothers are the primary and most important carer to children, as outlined by the "intensive mothering" discourse discussed above (Jeanne & Sheffer, 2004; Hays, 1996). Paula and Talia touch on this fear of leaving their child in the care of another person:

*Paula: "It's important to have people **you** can trust with your kids. Because these days, **you** can't leave them with anyone."*

*Talia: "Now **you** are just leaving them with someone, a stranger who **you** are relying on to look after them to come to work… it is very hard to trust other people…there is no one that **I** think can do it…but **me**… the way it needs to be done and look after them the way it needs to be done."*

Another theme of post-motherhood life experience relates to the need to adjust to working again after returning from maternity leave. Participants described this experience as trying to *"find your feet again"* and *"kicking their brain"* back into a work mode. Many stated they

remember feeling "*rusty*" on their job roles and had to navigate again what they should be doing and how they should be doing tasks. The participants in this study stated the adjustment period overall lasts for about the first month and the first week back is always the hardest. Talia's quote below summarises all the different areas of adjustment and emotional responses that were raised by all study participants. She effortlessly glides from making use of the pronoun of *"I"* to making use of the pronoun of *"you"* and so forth, showing her own personal experiences have become blurred with her social experiences of being a working mother:

*Talia: "Uhm the first week **I** would say was hard. **You** get, okay, so when **you** are working **you** into like a whole routine, **you** know what **you** are doing, **you** know how **your** day goes, everything. When **you** haven't been at work for four months, **you** get back to work and **you** are like what do **I** need to do? How do **I** do that? Like it just feels very new… it's overwhelming… so **I** think the first week coming back... is quite a big change and then it starts settling back and it becomes just **your** normal life."*

Natalie and Erin reiterate what Talia is saying:

*Natalie: "Uuh…it was a little bit strange, little bit uuh…daunting having been out of it for so long because **you know** four months away it's quite a long time."*

*Erin: "Ja, **I** mean it takes, obviously, time to get the brain working again and **you know**… to get back into the swing of things."*

All the mothers felt their transition back to work from maternity leave was successful and looking back on it there is nothing they feel they would have liked to change.

*Mbali: "It was successful, **I** wouldn't change anything."*

*Peyton: "It was a successful transition, **I** would say it was."*

In summary, five key themes emerged from the research participants when asked about their experiences of life after children: firstly, an enhanced level of anxiety around work as a means to provide for your children; secondly, anxiety around leaving their children in the care of others; thirdly, a fear of missing out on critical developmental milestones; fourthly, the emotional turmoil of being separated from their children during working hours; and finally the stress of re-acclimatising to the workplace. Overall, life after children is characterised mainly by an emotional mixture of fear and longing. In particular, the voice of "I" was most commonly used when they identified their own fears in relation to the voice of "you", the perception of shared experiences as mothers.

4.3.3 Role Juggling

Byrne-Doran (2012); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies found that when mothers returned to work from maternity leave, they commonly experienced feelings of stress and exhaustion due to having to balance a role overload. Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner and Wan (1991) state that role juggling by working mothers has been identified as a stressor as it requires increased demands on the cognitive capacity of an individual as they try to find suitable ways of negotiating, navigating and managing the various tasks from competing roles, leading to psychological strain. This role juggling leading to psychological strain is manifested in the working mothers reporting that at times they feel overwhelmed and they tend to feel fatigued by the end of the day. Minx's quote speaks to this fatigue:

*Minx: "By the end of the day, **I** think being fatigued is an understatement"*

Some of the mothers even reported that they turned to energy supplements or vitamins to help them to deal with this fatigue and to have enough energy to get through the day. Mbali speaks to this in her quote below:

*Mbali: "**I** have some supplements… to make sure **I** have energy when **I** get home…to make sure that **I** do perform at work as well."*

It is interesting that Mbali reinforces that she performs at work as well. This speaks to the organisational discourse already discussed above regarding an expectation of high performance by employees (Shaw & Allen, 2009). Once again, the voice of "I" is used in relation to a sense of personal inadequacy rather than a common experience for working mothers. Perhaps participants would feel less overwhelmed if they were to use the voice of "you" in acknowledgment that they are not alone in this experience.

Both Frone (2003) and Gregory and Milner (2009) have described work and family roles as mutually incompatible pressures and state it requires compromise on part of women. This could explain why there was a sense from the mothers that they are almost being tugged in different directions and there is a continuous effort on their part not to be tugged too hard in one direction. This is illustrated by Talia drawing on a personal example of when her children were hospitalised and how she had to compromise by finding time to do her work in the hospital to be there for her children and at the same time she could not afford to neglect her work:

*Talia: "It's very difficult to give 100% to one place when **you** need to give 100% somewhere else... It is difficult like for an example this week **my** children have been sick, so **I** have had to work from hospital and work from home and work from wherever **I** can to try and make sure **I** am giving **my** best at work but also being there for **my** children and making sure that their needs are still taken care of."*

Williams, Suls, Alliger, Learner and Wan (1991) study has also found that role juggling by women may lead to frustration, as the desired goals and objectives to be achieved in their various roles are often impeded by one another. This could be why working mothers often report low satisfaction in their ability to meet their demands and goals from their roles

(Williams et al., 1991). Talia and Peyton reiterate this in relating to the challenge of managing the various tasks from their competing roles and imply a sense of frustration and low satisfaction with their ability to give 100% of their effort in the achievement of the desired goals in both roles:

*Peyton: "It's difficult to fulfill both at the same time because **you're** juggling work, **you're** juggling being a parent, so at times **you're** not going to give your daughter 100% of **your** time, because obviously, **you** have work to do, you can't."*

*Talia: "Ja **I** don't think you can, well **I try and do my best** at both places but sometimes it's very difficult to give 100% to one place when **you** need to give 100% somewhere else"*

Talia saying, *"I try and do my best"* again speaks to the pressure discussed above where women are internalising both "organisational" and "intensive mothering" discourse and continue to strive for that ideal despite it being implausible, which leaves them feeling frustrated and "not good enough" (Hays, 1996; Swanson & Johnson, 2003). On the other hand, participants use the voice of "you" with reference to role juggling, which indicates an awareness of a shared experience, however, this shared experience potentially relates to the work-life balance ideology that does not relieve the ideological pressure to perform as a mother and employee at an intensive level.

Baldock and Hadlow (2004) study found that working women experienced increased pressure in terms of their 'time management' in trying to juggle work and domestic and child caring duties. Therefore, according to both Byrne-Doran (2012) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies women regularly identified time management as an important factor in helping them reduce their stress and balance their multiple roles. Time management is thus seen to aid women in getting through the increased tasks they now have from both roles within a day. This view of 'time management' was also expressed by participants in this study as they frequently reported

it as a vital strategy or lifestyle change they "have to" make in order to cope with balancing both their roles and the increased demand in tasks. However, what participants were not aware of was how 'time management' as a strategy counter-intuitively serves to increase their levels of anxiety, rather than reducing it by placing unrealistic pressure on them to perform their various roles perfectly, e.g. in Talia's quote above she states "*it's very difficult to give 100% to one place when **you** need to give 100% somewhere else*". Time management is another organisational ideology tied closely to 'work-life balance' ideology highlighted by Hoffman and Cowan (2008). This ideology places the burden of responsibility for poor performance in managing ones 'time' entirely on the individual rather than structural factors or the paradoxical nature of the ideology itself. Mbali, for example, illustrates the extent to which the participants identify with the 'strategy' of time management:

Mbali: "Time management is very, very important."

Talia's narrative reveals the paradox of multiple additional workloads and time management, yet doesn't quite resolve the paradox:

*Talia: "There are a lot more things to do in **your** day … Ja, **you** definitely need to have time management…. **you** have just got a lot more to think about and to do every day."*

At this point, the need for 'time management' is narrated in the 'you' position, however, the impact of this ideology is demonstrated in participants "I" position that is characterised by an incessant need to plan, organise, control.

*Paula: "Yes, it's time management. It's having, **I** believe in a checklist hey. **I** have a checklist at home, **I** have a checklist at work. So, when **I** get to work in the mornings, okay this is **my** task that **I** have to do today, don't derive from it, and stick to that so that **you** don't forget anything… It's almost like OCD, **you know**."*

Paula's level of intensified anxiety is not only explicit in her narrative, but also in her demeanor in the interview where her identity shifted into an almost manic state. The voice of "I" is pronounced, along with the repetition of the word "checklist". This preoccupation with scheduling life was also found in Cahusac and Kanji's (2014) study where time conflicts and deadlines became a pinnacle clash between care and work for their participants. Sabelis (2001) aptly captures this paradox accordingly:

> "*To control one's time in detail suggests and confirms the idea of 'the one best way', thereby endowing it with value standards which, unfortunately, some of us cannot meet. But because this is considered the 'rule of the game', not meeting the standards is viewed as a personal choice or individual inadequacy, in time management literature as well…. Time management has thus become one of the symptoms of the ideology of control... it bears the risk of a total loss of individual responsibility paradoxically combined with the idea of total control*" (p.398).

The voice of "I" and "you" in participant's narratives show the extent to which participants personalise (voice of I) this paradoxical strategy whereby on the one hand the voice of "you" is used to authenticate the validity of the strategy and "I" to reveal their levels of anxiety and preoccupation with control which ultimately serves to create a greater sense of lack of control. An alternate, yet similar strategy of control utilised by participants was to rigidly stick to a structured routine, as per Lauren's quote below, however, Natalie captures the difficulty in applying this strategy:

> Lauren: "***I** have always been a mother that has stuck to a routine.*"

> Natalie: "*It's certainly not easy juggling a baby and a job.*"

The general consensus among participants in this study is that despite it being challenging, balancing motherhood with employment is rewarding. This coincides with and Spiteri and

Xuereb (2012) study where the working mothers also reported having a career and children is rewarding. Most of the women found a sense of fulfillment in their role as a mother and felt blessed:

> Mbali: "It's hard but I enjoy motherhood…it's a blessing".

Work, on the other hand, is believed by the women to provide them with feelings of growth, independence, mental stimulation and a sense of meaning and purpose, which Talia speaks to:

> Talia: "I do like working… it gives me purpose like I feel like I have done something, I have used my brain, do you know what I mean… I like being independent."

Work was also seen as something that added to their individual identity, outside of being a mother, as highlighted by Minx:

> Minx: "As an individual, let's separate motherhood. It empowers you…develops your mind, develops you as a person."

As evidenced above, despite the challenge participants face with integrating the 'work-life balance' and 'time management' strategy into their lived experience, participants express a sense of fulfillment in being able to participate in both motherhood and work. Perhaps this sense of fulfillment may be enhanced by letting go of the need to conform to the ideological expectations contained in the various organisational and intensive mothering discourses.

In summary, the theme around role juggling revealed both positive and negative emotional responses by participants. On the one hand, the pressure to control the various roles in an ideological, paradoxical and unrealistic manner created a heightened sense of anxiety, but the ability to experience both roles was met with a sense of personal fulfillment.

4.4 Reading Three: Reading for Relationships

Through reading three, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) outline that analysis should focus on how participants speak about their interpersonal relationships. These relationships can comprise of their friends, children, family, partner, colleagues and even the broader social networks in which they work, parent and live. This reading identifies the gendered division of domestic duties, social support networks, and sources of information (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998). In the case of this study the themes that have been identified include: (a) 'Gendered Support' which is where the participants talk about their own mothers or mothers-in-law providing them with childcare support; (b) 'Partners' which discusses the support or lack of understanding they feel from their husbands/partners; and (c) 'Workplace Support' which covers the relationships and support these working mothers experience in their organisations.

4.4.1 Gendered Support

The participants in this study commonly made reference to their mothers supporting and helping them with their child caring duties, with a few participants also stating that over and above their own mothers providing support their mothers-in-law also assist them with their child caring duties. This is reflected in participant accounts below:

Paula: "I've got my mom and mother-in-law who are both at home they normally take care of the little one for me."

Minx: "My mother has taken it upon herself to take care of him in the day until I can pick him up after work."

Similarly, as in Frizelle and Kells (2010) study, Minx's quote above puts forward this underlying expectation and the assumption by women that on becoming mothers their own mothers will provide them with the necessary support.

There is this sense from the participants that they long for and feel they need the support and guidance from their own mothers who serve as a maternal figure who can affirm their mothering abilities and experiences (Pacella, 2005). Mbali touches on this idea in her quote below where she demonstrates how important her mother has become to her and how she feels she needs her mother since becoming a mother herself:

Mbali: *"You feel that you really need-you see the importance of your mother."*

The expectation that a woman's mother or mother-in-law will provide this child-caring support reinforces the gendered notion that support and care roles are women's work (Frizelle & Kell, 2010). What is interesting is the "intensive mothering" ideology as proposed by Hays (1996) creates this belief that mothers are able to interpret and respond to their child's needs intuitively. However, the fact that the participants in this study look to a more experienced maternal figure, underlies a need for acknowledgement that perhaps mothering is not some innate instinct but a skill that new mothers need to learn from experienced mothers (Frizelle & Kell, 2010). Natalie's quote below supports this idea that motherhood does not necessarily just come naturally as is often depicted by society:

Natalie: *"it's quite an adjustment, screaming little baby, you don't know what to do"*

In summary, participants achieve a great sense of social support from the maternal figures in their lives, however, this becomes problematic as it reifies the ideology around child-care as an innate and gendered imperative. Such an ideology not only places additional pressure on women to 'do gender' in terms of motherhood but excludes fathers and men from this rewarding process. Men are both redeemed from the responsibility of caring for children, but also deemed as innately unfit as compared to mothers in caring.

4.4.2 Partners

An employed mother's well-being seems to be enhanced when they feel their husbands are doing their 'fair share' of household and childcare duties (Rout, Cooper & Kerslake, 1997). This is seen among some of the participants in this study as the women who perceived having a hands-on husband/partner who shared in the child caring and domestic duties with them, showed more satisfaction in both their roles, as this assistance was believed to allow them to manage work and mothering better. This enhanced a sense of well-being and perceived ability to role juggle due to mothers having help and support from their husbands/partners are shown in Paula's and Natalie's accounts below:

> *Paula: "So he helps me, and he assists me a lot in terms of that and I'm very grateful for that. I think that's also making me fulfill my role at work more easily because I know he'll be there to care for them if I'm not there."*

> *Natalie: "He is a very good dad, he plays a lot with them, and he actually does most of the cooking at night time…it has helped me big time."*

What is interesting from the participant's narratives above is the words used in describing the kind of support they receive, suggesting that such support is out of the ordinary for men, i.e. "*I'm very **grateful** for that*" or "*he **actually** does most of the cooking*". This once again exemplifies the gendered nature of child-caring and domestic duties, and for a man to provide such support is out of the norm and subsequently, a sense of 'gratitude' emerges. The ideology that suggests that men should be commended for child-rearing and domestic support creates an unchallenged level of inequality between the genders which is incongruent with the current reality whereby both parties are working, yet the responsibility for work, child-rearing and domestic duties are still considered 'women's work'. Participants commend their

husbands/partners for their support, however, they do not commend themselves for their contribution in these duties that are presently unequally distributed in disfavour of women.

However, although women do commend their husbands/partners for what they do in support, they are strongly aware of the inadequacies in the level of support they do receive. In particular, a strong sense of dissatisfaction with their husbands/partners was expressed in terms of their level of understanding or empathy for the struggles or work that is involved in being a mother. This finding is similar to Frizelle and Kell's (2010) findings. This lack of understanding on behalf of their husbands/partners is reflected in the excerpts from Paula; Natalie; and Erin below:

Paula: "he assists you with regards to the nappy changes and all of that, but your nighttime feeds, you'll be up alone, and you'll be like really now, you're snoring or you're sleeping next to me (chuckles) and I'm up at two or three in the morning and you're like so relaxed when you get up and your life just goes on as per normal. Whilst I go through all these changes. Um in some way, you do feel irritated by them, I would say because that's how I felt with my first one towards my husband. I was irritated all the time because everything changed for me, but your life just went on as per normal."

Natalie: "I spent most of the day in the hospital by myself with the new baby and he would come in the mornings before work and in the evenings after work and uuh…then when I came home he was there for the first two days but that's it then you are on your own you know… And it's quite an adjustment, screaming little baby, you don't know what to do…"

Paula and Natalie indicate that women experience a sense of isolation and loneliness as they try to adjust to motherhood, which seems to be worsened by their partner's lack of understanding or empathy to what they are going through.

Erin: "I always say that he's amazing during the week, we have a good routine in the evening. We have to, with three of them. On the weekends, er… he's a little bit lazy, I call it (laughs) but it's like the weekend, so I do tend to pick up the slack obviously on the weekend when he likes to relax, and I'm still busy with all three of them."

Although Erin stated during her interview that she has mentioned to her husband that it is unfair that she has to do 'most of the parenting' as the mother, there is still a level of acceptance of the lack of equality when it comes to domestic and child caring duties, where it is seen as acceptable for men not to valuably contribute their fair half towards caring for their children (Benn, 1999). This is seen by Erin laughing and rationalising her husband's behaviour by stating, *"he's a little bit lazy, I call it (laughs) but it's like the weekend, so I do tend to pick up the slack obviously on the weekend when he likes to relax"*.

In summary, all participants express this level of frustration at the injustice of having to do 'most of the parenting' and the lack of understanding and empathy from their partners in acknowledging this inequality, the injustice of it, and a complete lack of awareness that for women, becoming a mother is life-changing. Perhaps this is because men are not expected to make their father role the center of their identity, whereas, women are expected to undergo this identity transformation when they become mothers and place mothering at the forefront of their identities (Backett, 1982).

4.4.3 Workplace Support

Apart from financial reasons, an important motivating factor that has been identified for women to return to work after maternity leave is for social reasons such as friendships, adult company, mental stimulation and support (Alstveit et al., 2011; Davey et al., 2005; Gould & Fontenla, 2006; Khalil & Davies, 2000; Parcsi & Curtin, 2013). Apart, from working to financially provide for their children, as the participants did state that living expenses have become quite

expensive and relying on one salary would leave their family under financial strain. The excitement of socially interacting with colleagues and engaging in adult conversation again was a motivating factor for participants, as highlighted by Natalie:

Natalie: "I was looking forward to coming back to work in a way to get some adult conversation and stimulation."

Paula indicates that the workplace provides working mothers with a way to interact with people and form friendships:

Paula: "I actually looked forward to seeing everyone, you know. You form a bond with the people that you work with."

Perhaps for some mothers, this may be the only time they really get to interact with other adults as often they are rushing between work and mothering. Many of the participants in this study claimed that their social life has taken a back seat on becoming a mother and report they hardly see their friends anymore. Talia speaks to this in her quote below:

*Talia: "**I** think **I** have only got one friend now…. a month goes past before **you** have even seen each other or have heard from each other."*

This friend Talia is referring to is also a mother, therefore her use of the pronoun of "you" in her speech where she states "*a month goes past before **you** have even seen each other"* is suggesting that having limited time for social interactions as a working mother is a shared experience.

It has been reported that women often use work as an escape from the stresses of their domestic roles (Eikhof, Warhurst & Haunschild, 2007). Erin implies that work is an escape from mothering and domestic duties during her discussion surrounding why she enjoys work:

Erin: "Actually I quite enjoy coming to work and having that break and chatting with my friends or whatever…"

Erin specifically saying *"having that break"* indicates that going to work and socialising at work may be a form of 'time out' from children or domestic duties for working mothers.

According to Holloway (1999) a mothers' non-familial, local social networks, can be an important mechanism through which women shape their childcare choices and services. This is illustrated by Erin who stated that she was overwhelmed with trying to find childcare services when she returned to work. In the end, she found her childcare services through a recommendation from a colleague who was also a friend to her:

Erin: "Yes, and I really didn't even know where to start or where to find someone…my very good friend who I work with, her daughter had started at this daycare, so I felt comfortable enough sending my child there."

The working mothers in Eikhof, Warhurst and Haunschild (2007) and Hegewisch and Gornick (2011) studies reported feeling a sense of judgement from their organisations if their child-caring responsibilities got in the way of their work and feared this would cause them to lose their jobs. This emerged in the one participants account below:

Minx: "There's definitely a sense of judgment um to the type of person that you are because in the business world when you're not punctual and you constantly have excuses they think or they refer it to, it's like you're not living up to that standard as an employee. There are people in line that are willing to come to work earlier than you are, and you are easily replaceable…you are worried about the outcome of you being late, and especially if it's a regular thing because of your child. You are put in the same bracket as the woman without a child."

It is evident in Minx's quote that she does feel her organisation judges her and does not support her as a working mother. Her stating that the organisation has implied to her that *"There are people in line that are willing to come to work earlier than you are, and you are easily replaceable...you are worried about the outcome of you being late"* demonstrates her fear of losing her job. Minx also stating, "*You are put in the same bracket as the woman without a child"* and *"you constantly have excuses they think"* is indicating that she feels her supervisors and organisation are insensitive to what she feels she is going through trying to balance motherhood and full-time employment. Mothers feeling a lack of support from their workplaces when they return to work; feeling that their supervisors are insensitive to the experiences they are going through; and are concerned about how their workplaces judge or perceive them as employees when they have to take time off work because of their children is not uncommon to Minx, or this study, as these same findings have also been found in Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011); Cahusac and Kanji (2014); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) studies.

Millward (2006) found that once women returned to work they felt this pressure to prove themselves again as valid employees, they often did this by seeking out similar others in the organisation as a source of support and as a reference to validate their self-worth. Minx validates this in her quote below by stating she has spoken to other women in the organisation that have children and it seems that they are struggling with the same issues such as being late or having to take time off for family responsibility:

Minx: "I've spoken to other women in my company that have kids. They have the same issues that I'm going through when they come to work late, or they have a problem with their managers when they take time off to sort out family responsibility."

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It is evident from Minx also stating in her previous quote "*um it's like you're not living up to that standard as an employee*" she acknowledges a pressure to try validate herself as a "good enough" employee and her feeling like she is not meeting this standard is impacting on her self-worth, hence the reason why she sought out similar others to reassure herself that this is not because of something she has done but the mere fact that she is trying to balance motherhood with work.

However, in this study, it would seem that there was a split among the participants regarding whether they felt their workplace was supportive or judgemental towards their mothering role. The organisational environment or culture appears to have a huge impact on how participants perceived this level of support or judgement surrounding having to take maternity leave or having to take time off from work because of their children. For example, Erin was from a different organisation to Minx and all the participants that worked in the same organisation as Erin felt their organisation was embracing and non-judgemental. This embracing, supportive and understanding organisational culture is reflected in Erin's quote below:

Erin: "No, not at all a lot of us are moms, so everyone is very understanding, even the CEO is a dad you know, so everyone is very understanding."

In summary, in terms of support, the study participants perceive inadequate consideration from their partners or the organisation, however, are satisfied with the support provided by the maternal figures in their lives. This reiterates the notion of gendered support which is both challenged and reinforced in participant narratives.

4.5 Reading Four: Placing People within Cultural Contexts and Social Structures

Through reading four, Mauthner and Doucet (1998) outline that analysis should focus on placing the respondent's accounts and experiences within their broader social, political, cultural, and structural contexts. The themes in this study that fall under reading four include:

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(a) 'Influential Experts' where the participants make reference to forms of expertise that influence their experiences of motherhood; (b) 'Woman Equals Domestic Duties: The Impact of Social & Cultural Influences' where it is highlighted how women are still largely expected to be responsible for child caring and domestic duties and the potential social and cultural influences that aid this gendered division; (c) 'Maternity Leave' where participants discuss the maternity leave policy within South African organisations.

4.5.1 Influential Experts

The working mothers within this study referenced friends and family who were also mothers, online material and magazines as forms of "expertise" that influenced their experiences of motherhood. These various forms of "expertise" can be seen to surface in the following participant's accounts:

Talia: "It is definitely influenced by other people most of the time, because when you think you have made the right decision then someone will be like, what, why are you doing it that way? Why don't you do this? ...then you rethink like am I doing what's best for my child and so everything becomes questioned and everyone has an opinion once you have got a child and they will give you their opinion whether you want it or not ...(laughs) I take their advice with a pinch of salt... if I am 100% sure of my decision that I have already made then I just say thank you for the information ...(laughs)."

Minx: "Parenthood doesn't come with a manual, so you don't know what to make of the situation, how to tackle it. There's um material online, but you often don't even have time to read that material.... constantly you're being told on what you should or shouldn't be doing, and other people want to challenge you as a parent, when you're just trying to be you, you're just trying to be you."

Lauren: "I always read magazines, what you must do for the child, and at the end of the day you know your child best, people try and give me advice on what to do and, I can't, I can't take their advice and listen to people."

It is evident in Talia, Minx, and Lauren's quotes there is this sense of annoyance and frustration with these "experts". Perhaps it is because these mothers are continuously made to feel "not good enough" and under scrutiny. This can only be disheartening especially when they feel they are trying their best to parent well. In this sense, the agency and resistance of alternative viewpoints expressed by participants are motivated by a defence mechanism that serves to protect their identities as mothers.

It is interesting that the "experts" that the women mentioned and have the greatest influence on them were not health professionals or scientists, which has been the common finding in other studies such as Alstveit, Severinsson and Karlsen (2011); Byrne-Doran (2012); Desmond & Meaney (2016); and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012). Rather, participants were more receptive to advice from friends and family, indicative of the great influence our social relationships have on us as people and that knowledge construction is relational and constructed in and around the people and spaces we inhabit (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985).

The media and online material mentioned by the participants is perhaps because as Alldred (1998) points out, there has been a shift in society from giving scientific advice to mothers to giving mothers more psychological information. "Psychological information" is often the claimed subject matter of magazines and online material. Due to these magazines and online material not providing this "psychological information" in an authoritative tone but more empathetically as if they are only "trying to give support" to mothers, it can often come across as reassuring to mothers and this "expertise" and a form of control is often masked, as well as, the issue that these "experts" are only concerned about the child's physical and psychological

health not the mothers (Ibid, 1998). This is congruent with the researcher's previous suggestion that participants tend to reject information when it is interpreted as a form of judgement or a personal attack on their personal identity as mothers.

However, in Talia's and Lauren's quotes, there is evidence of them expressing their agency and not just accepting the advice of these "experts" placidly. This is seen by Talia stating "*I take their advice with a pinch of salt… if I am 100% sure of my decision that I have already made then I just say thank you for the information …(laughs)"* and Lauren stating *"at the end of the day you know your child best, people try and give me advice on what to do and, I can't, I can't take their advice and listen to people."* This demonstrates the complexity of peoples' knowledge (re)construction, social interactions, and our internalisation of ideologies leading to our identity (re)construction and defending one's identity. Alldred (1998) points out that mothers do not just passively accept and collude with the information or ideologies in circulation that is reinforced by the "experts" and if the mother does challenge what others prescribe as the normative notions of motherhood, this does not mean she rejects these notions entirely. This can be seen among the participants, for example, they are challenging advice given to them by society in this instance but still ascribing to Hays (1996) "intensive mothering" in other instances. Alldred (1998) argues that this highlights the complexity of the ideological forces operating at the subjective level and how nobody is in a "either/or" state.

In summary, mothers are involved in a complex interplay of challenging discourses and practices around motherhood, but also accepting and incorporating them into their sense of self, leading to both resistance and regulation (Alldred, 1998; Frizelle & Kell, 2010).

4.5.2 Woman Equals Domestic Duties: The Impact of Social & Cultural Influences

Studies conducted by both Byrne-Doran (2012) and Spiteri and Xuereb (2012) found gendered notions of how it is expected by society for women to be responsible for domestic and child

caring duties despite being in full-time paid employment. The women commonly reported in this study that they were expected to be responsible for the domestic and childcaring tasks despite being in full-time paid employment just like their husbands/partners were. Peyton demonstrates this in her quote below:

Peyton: "I only… I finish at 16:00 and I get home at 18:30. I still have to cook, I have to clean, I have to see to my daughter, see to my husband…I also work just like him, in fact, I get home later than he does"

Peyton saying *"I have to"* in her quote implies these domestic and child caring responsibilities are hers alone and are expected of her. Working mothers commonly report that they feel as though they work longer hours than men, due to having their paid employment during the day and then unpaid employment (domestic duties and childcaring) when they get home at night (Frankenhaeuser, Lundberg & Mardberg, 1990; Warren, Pascall & Fox, 2010). This is validated by Talia stating the following:

Talia: "so it is like leaving a job to go to another job in a way"

Similarly, as in Frizelle and Kell (2010), there are cultural and social influences that would impact on these women's experiences of mothering. In particular, the incorporation of gendered organisational and intensive mothering discourses into social and cultural spaces are seen in the narratives of all women interviewed across race groups.

Four women made specific reference to hiring a nanny to assist them in their child caring and domestic duties. Of the four women who made use of a nanny or domestic worker, three were white, the remaining non-white participants do not have access to hired help. The ability to harmonise all aspects of life which include paid and unpaid work is shaped by a women's social class and levels of economic resources available, according to Epstein and Kalleberg (2001) and Holloway (1999). In the South African context, access to domestic support is associated

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with white privilege inherited from past historical socio-economic and political conditions. Similarly, as in Frizelle and Kell (2010), it would appear the participants in this study too underestimate and take for granted, the impact these women serving as domestic workers have on their mothering experiences. This is reflected in the way that none of these mothers discussed their domestic worker in detail when they were speaking about the influence of their other social relationships:

Erin: "Er… well, I've got an amazing nanny. Because before I was doing it all and it was fine, it was manageable when you only had the one, because the washing is less, and the food prep is less, and all of that, and dishes and bottles and everything is less. She does a lot, because the twins are at home with her, so in terms of… ja, she obviously does the housework, she manages the twins, and she can do the washing, ironing and pack away the same day… Ja, and I couldn't then do… have the time with them in the evening and possibly have to do some work and ja… She's there and you know she leaves at 17:00 when I get home, so I still… I still do dinner and all of that."

Erin was one of the white women who mentioned having a domestic worker. Erin's quote highlights how having a *"nanny"* as she terms her domestic worker has helped her balance motherhood and employment, especially having three children. Yet it is evident in her reflection she does not discuss her domestic worker in any detail or how this woman has impacted on her mothering experiences, all she mentions is the tasks this woman helps her with and implies this has helped her cope with both her roles.

Similarly, as in Frizelle and Kell (2010), all the working mothers in this study are married or are in a relationship and identify as heterosexual. According to Richards (1996), heterosexuality is characterised by a division in gender and depends on this gender division for meaning. Therefore, the relationship between the genders in a heterosexual relationship serves

to produce a gendered division of labour (Ibid, 1996). This gendered division of labour has been historically and socially produced and has become a 'taken-for-granted assumption' that has positioned women as the "natural" carer within heterosexual relationships and reinforces motherhood as the "natural task" for a woman.

In summary, although participants in this study express a sense of frustration at times with their husbands/partners due to their lack of involvement in childcaring and domestic duties, they still do not actively challenge the social assumption that they as women should take the responsibility for the caring of children and domestic duties. In this way, they are accepting of their situation and continue to evaluate themselves negatively in relation to the normative conceptualisations of "the good enough mother" prescribed by the socio-economic context of the white middle-class. Although one could perceive that the mothers' acceptance of their ascribed role by society as the "natural" caregiver is part of some "patriarchal conspiracy", it must also be understood that there is evidence to suggest despite the struggles motherhood brings, mothers often value their role as a mother. The very fact that women are life-givers is something that should be celebrated without being clouded by notions that it is endorsing women's submission to men (Frizelle & Kell, 2010; Walker, 1991).

4.5.3 Maternity Leave

The women seemed to report no negative perceptions surrounding getting their entitled maternity leave from their organisations. However, there seems to be no negotiation process for mothers with their managers regarding the length of their maternity leave, as South African organisations seem to stick to the four months maternity leave as prescribed by the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997). This lack of negotiation and ascribing to the four months of maternity leave by organisations is revealed in Mbali's quote below:

Mbali: "It wasn't really a negotiation kind of a thing. We never negotiated anything because there's a policy…. its, uhm, four months."

According to the World Health Organisation (2000), women need at least 16 weeks of maternity leave in order to protect the health of both mother and child. This would mean South Africa's maternity leave policy is in line with the World Health Organisations recommendation as in accordance to section 25 in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (1997) women are entitled to at least four consecutive months (16 weeks) of maternity leave.

Although it is not a requirement that employers pay employees during maternity leave, many organisations offer a package and pay a portion of the woman's wages while she is on maternity leave, the rest of the compensation comes from women claiming from the Unemployment Insurance Fund (Unemployment Insurance Act, 2001). However, many of the mothers stated this compensation was not enough and that you experience financial strain while on maternity leave as you still have bills to pay with the added expense of a baby but with half the amount of money. Natalie speaks to this difficulty of financial loss during maternity leave and the inadequacy of the compensation within South Africa regarding maternity leave:

Natalie: "Uuh…so ja you know what like I think the government could do more in terms of making maternity leave a little bit more paid, like I know we get UIF, but the government stipulation is you have to get four months maternity unpaid so that you can claim UIF…we lucky our company pays us 50% of our salaries… A lot of companies don't… we claim the rest from UIF but UIF has a cap on it… It's not a lot no, so you really have to plan for having kids and to plan for that loss of income."

After reviewing research evidence regarding parental leave Gornick and Meyers (2003), UNICEF (2008) and Warren, Pascall and Fox (2010) argue that leave around one year offers the best fit between children's parental care needs, parents' financial needs, and gender equality

requirements. The participants in this study believed maternity leave should be extended to around six months to a year. The reason for this is that they felt four months was not enough time to form a bond with their baby and set their developmental foundation properly. They also felt that at four months a baby is still very small to not have the intensive care of their mother, and you end up missing out on all the exciting developmental stages that happen after four months. Talia's quote below sums up these feelings of all the other participants:

Talia: *"If you could have like six months or a year you are at least getting that time to bond with your child, set the foundation properly, and see all their first things or whatever...I think that is really important."*

Reflecting on participant's quotes, in order for South Africa to increase their maternity leave to six months to a year the financial compensation of maternity leave would need to be improved upon in order to make this a viable option for mothers.

One organisation employed four participants in this study and all these participants expressed satisfaction with the organisational support provided, they stated that the organisation has recently started making advancements in improving the organisational maternity leave policy. Women in this organisation are now being given the option of taking six months of maternity leave (however the extra two months are unpaid). Erin speaks to this improved change in her organisations maternity policy:

Erin: *"Well at X we had the standard 4 months, and we are paid 50% of our salary while on maternity leave, then just before I went on maternity leave with my twins the organisation introduced an extra 2 months of unpaid maternity leave."*

In terms of paternity leave in South Africa, The Basic Conditions of Employment Act, section 27, grants fathers only three days of paid leave, that is classified as family responsibility leave. It is interesting that in this study the participants did not talk about paternity leave directly,

however they spoke about the struggles they faced not having their husband/partner around in the early days to assist and support them in looking after their new-born. This left them feeling overwhelmed and alone. Natalie speaks to this in her excerpt below:

Natalie: "I spent most of the day in the hospital by myself with the new baby and he would come in the mornings before work and in the evenings after work and uuh…then when I came home he was there for the first two days but that's it then you are on your own you know… And it's quite an adjustment, screaming little baby, you don't know what to do…"

It seems that South African organisations have made no attempt to improve their paternity policy for expecting fathers, thus leaving a lack of options for parents (Douglas & Michaels, 2004; Peskowitz, 2005; Warner, 2005).

In summary, participants were generally dissatisfied with the amount of paid maternity leave provided. The dissatisfactions expressed were around the perception that 4 months is not enough time to adequately bond with your child, mothers lose out on important developmental milestones, there is a lack of support provided by fathers which is compounded by a lack of paternity leave and finally the financial constraints placed on working parents makes it implausible for mothers to spend additional unpaid time with their children. It is therefore recommended that organisations and government relook at alternative options in terms of both maternity and paternity leave.

4.6 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, the results from this chapter illustrate that working mothers face challenges with trying to balance their multiple roles. It would seem these challenges are made easier depending on the amount of support they receive from their mothers/maternal figures, husband/partners and workplaces. It is evident that the discourses surrounding motherhood and work have infiltrated into these working mothers sense of self and they use these discourses and practices

to mould their behaviour and to negatively evaluate their efforts, placing a lot of pressure on themselves. Becoming a mother seems to be life-changing for a woman and requires a lot of adjustment on a woman's part in terms of her identity and perceptions and requires the learning of new skills and strategies and at times can feel lonely and isolating. It seems becoming a mother and returning to work is not easy and it takes some time getting used to it. It is also demonstrated among these working mothers' accounts that childcaring and domestic duties are still largely believed to be the responsibility of women, despite their increased participation in paid labour. Despite the challenges and sacrifice, it would seem working mothers find fulfillment in both their roles and therefore find the whole lived experience of being a working mother worth it. The women in this study did indicate that the Maternity policies within South Africa have room for improvement.

<center>**Chapter Five**</center>

<center>**Limitations, Recommendations & Conclusion**</center>

6.1 Overview of the Study

The aim of this research was to uncover women's experiences of balancing work and motherhood after maternity leave in the South African context. There was a particular focus on the following: uncovering how women experienced their work prior to becoming a mother and how they perceived the experience of negotiating maternity leave with their managers; to understand women's experiences of work now that they are a mother and uncover if their priorities or perceptions have changed surrounding work and motherhood, as well as, to determine if they felt they had support and information from their manager and colleagues on their return to work as a mother; and to uncover the strategies women have incorporated or changes in lifestyle women have had to make to balance both their roles of mother and employee. A qualitative feminist approach was employed to uncover these experiences. This allowed for the study to highlight social structures and power dynamics surrounding motherhood and employment that are maintained through discourse. Eight working mothers were identified using both a purposive and snowball sampling method. Semi-structured interviews were recorded, transcribed and then analysed using the Voice Relational Method.

The discussion below will present a conclusion of the study's main findings, recommendations for future research practice, limitations of the study, as well as, a researcher's reflection.

6.2 Conclusion of the Main Findings

In conclusion, this study illustrates that working mother's face both pros and cons when trying to balance their multiple roles. These pros and cons are psychological, emotional, social and financial, ideological and structural. It is evident that the identity of working mothers is socially constructed and the discourses surrounding motherhood and work have infiltrated into these working mothers sense of self (Burr, 1995). This study has demonstrated how working mothers use discourse as a means of self-evaluation and self-governance which often serves to intensify the pressure they accept upon themselves and/or reinforce ideological power dynamics within society. All participants narrate their experience of motherhood as life-changing, particularly for women, that requires: major adjustments in terms of identity and perceptions; learning of new skills and strategies and at times can feel lonely and isolating. It is also demonstrated among these working mothers' accounts that child caring, and domestic duties are still largely believed to be the responsibility of women, despite their increase in participation in full-time employment. Despite the challenges and sacrifice, research participants find fulfillment in both roles and therefore find the whole lived experience of being a working mother as "*worth it*". The parental leave policies within South African legislation, that organisations use to inform their maternity and paternity policies, have room for improvement and should be improved upon.

6.3 Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

The findings of this study are important for women wanting to balance a family life with a career, as it emphasises the kind of experiences they can expect when they decide to return to work from maternity leave. But also, a sense of awareness around the implausibility of such ideology in practice. This research study, in conjunction with other research studies, could help inform women's return to work decisions and provide them with peace of mind that these

experiences or tensions that they are experiencing are common to other working mothers (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013).

It is important, that in order for women to have a more positive experience of returning to work from maternity leave, that they analyse for themselves what issues they may experience, what they are willing to compromise on, and what notions of being the 'ideal worker' and 'ideal mother' they are willing to let go of. These findings can be used to assist women in renegotiating their roles (at work and at home) so that they have a positive return-to-work experience (Alstveit, Severinsson & Karlsen, 2011).

Working mothers should adapt their view of work by focussing on the motivating and positive aspects such as adult conversation, friendships and mental stimulation, as well as, be more comfortable with having to be less career-oriented (Spiteri & Xuereb, 2012).

The findings of this study also have relevance to managers and colleagues within South African organisations. As it indicates how vital both formal and informal support is to women returning to work from maternity leave. Providing this support could make women more willing to accommodate the needs of the workplace in their return to work. Working mothers want a workplace where colleagues and managers understand the tensions and compromises they have to face; who recognise their value as employees; and who provide support and offer them flexibility and opportunities. Creating a supportive workplace culture by investing energy and time into supporting returning mothers could reduce them taking time off work and would mean retaining valuable female employees (Parcsi & Curtin, 2013).

The findings of this study are relevant to South African legislation as well, in terms of improving upon the maternity and paternity policy. This means extending both maternity and paternity leave and perhaps creating a more comprehensive parental leave policy to aid in bringing about gender equality. This also means increasing the financial substitution women

receive on maternity leave, as the compensation that is currently available leaves women under financial strain while on maternity leave. In order to make a longer maternity leave more viable, there would need to be an increase in compensation. A change in legislation should influence organisations to change their policies.

The findings of this study do highlight the fact that women do not just passively accept the constructed ideas of women's position and place in society and also how they are continually adapting the discourse available to be relevant to their local circumstances.

Future research could look into how the work environment influences the well-being of mothers; how men experience the transition to fatherhood in the South African organisational contexts (perhaps even as a comparison study); and looking at women with older children and how they balance employment and motherhood as they may have different perspectives and challenges. Furthermore, future research could elaborate on the working mothers' experiences from a more culturally diverse background, which will contribute to the field of Industrial and Organisational Psychology.

6.4 Limitations of the Study

The following are limitations identified in this study:

- The findings of this study are limited to women who are educated and in skilled job positions. These women comprised of middle management level, therefore the study does not capture the experiences of mothers who work at other levels, but is rather focused on the working-class.
- Although all the women were articulate in conveying their feelings and their subjective experiences, there is still the issue of knowing whether or not these verbal accounts actually provide an accurate and valid description into these women's' experiences, as the data is based on what the researcher was told.

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- With any qualitative study, a limited number of participants are used which prevents the findings of this study from being generalizable.

- The transcription of the interviews, as there were places in the recording where the speech was not always audible.

Nevertheless, despite these limitations, this study has produced useful information and can contribute to the understanding of how women balance motherhood with employment.

6.5 Researchers Reflection

The researcher chose this topic due to her own desire to have a career and be a mother one day. It must be kept in mind that the characteristics of the researcher could have influenced the type of data that was collected. The researcher's age, marital status, race, education level and type of qualification, being a student and not in full-time employment; and the fact that the researcher does not have children could have all influenced rapport with the participants and whether they felt understood by the researcher, intimidated, judged or comfortable enough to open up.

Not all the women in the sample were first-time mothers and some had been back for a few months. So, although they had returned recently they have had time to settle into work and motherhood and if it was their second time it would be a different experience to their first time, which could also potentially influence the results and their reflections on their experiences.

The researcher enjoyed undertaking this study and listening to the life experiences of these women, however, this study did not come without its frustrations. The researcher experienced frustration with the ethical clearance process; participants cancelling or not arriving for their interview; being unable to use some interviews either because during the interview it was discovered the participant actually did not meet the sample criteria or despite probing they were reserved and did not want to open up so not enough quality data could be collected. The one

organisation had an open plan office which made it hard to find a private area that was free from distractions and noise. There were a few times during these interviews their phone would ring, or someone would walk into the venue, but despite this, quality data was still collected.

Two aspects stood out to the researcher during the interview process. The first was one of the younger mothers who was interviewed first approached the researcher after the interviews and wanted to know if the other mothers were saying similar things to her. It was almost as if she was looking for reassurance that she is not alone in her experiences and to validate her self-worth that she is a "good enough" mother and "good enough" employee and the tensions or challenges she is experiencing is by no fault her own. The second was that many of the mothers approached the researcher after the interviews and stated that the enjoyed being interviewed and they would like to participate again if they could or if the researcher had to undertake another similar study. Perhaps this is because the women enjoyed having a safe space where they could open up about their struggles of being a working mother and have someone listen to them; "actually hear them"; and not expect them to be perfect.

6.6 Chapter Summary

The final chapter of this study has presented an overview of the study's aim; a conclusion of the study's main findings, limitations of the study, a researcher's reflection, as well as, recommendations for future research and practice into the experiences of women balancing both motherhood and employment in the South African context.

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Appendix One: Interview schedule (Semi-Structured Interview)

The interview will be approximately 45 minutes to an hour in length.

Topic: Women's experiences of balancing motherhood and employment.

 Interviewer: Nicole Ceriani MSSC Industrial Psychology 213516048.

Questions to be asked:

Perhaps we can start by you telling me a little bit about yourself?
> *Demographic characteristics e.g. age, race, job position, number of children, marital status etc.*

Very broadly speaking what does being a "good mother" mean to you?
> *Are there any contradictions?*
> *If so are you aware of the contradictions?*

Very broadly speaking what does being a "good employee" mean to you?
> *Are there any contradictions?*
> *If so are you aware of the contradictions?*

Can you tell me a bit about what your working life was like before you became a mother?

How did you feel about your work once you became a mother?
> *Did your attitude to work change?*
> *In what way?*
> *Can you give me any examples of this?*

Can you tell me what it was like for you to return-to-work?
> *What did you look forward to?*
> *What was difficult?*
> *Was there anything that made this transition easier or harder?*

Are there any strategies that you have adopted or changes in your lifestyle that you have had to make in order to help you balance being a mother and working?

Could you tell me about how you negotiated your return-to-work with your manager?
> *Was this a positive or negative experience?*
> *In what way?*

When you were returning to work did you feel as though you had enough information and support from your manager or colleagues?
> *Are there any particular reasons why you feel this way?*

Do you perceive your return-to-work as being successful?
> *Is there anything that you feel could have been done differently?*
> *Why?*

Is there anything else you think is important that you would like to discuss regarding motherhood and employment?

Appendix Two: Informed Consent

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

To whom it may concern

My name is Nicole Ceriani; I am currently registered for the Master's program in Industrial Psychology at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College Campus. As part of my course requirements I have to undertake a research study. The research study I am undertaking is aimed at uncovering women's experiences of readjusting their life to work and motherhood after maternity leave in the South African context.

I, _____ (Full Name) agree to participate in a study which aims to uncover how women experience their return to work from maternity leave; specifically focusing on how they readjust their life to balancing both their roles as mother and employee.

Should you require any additional information please do not hesitate to contact me or the project supervisors on the contact details that are provided below:

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.

Regards,   Project Supervisors:

Nicole Ceriani (student)   Shanya Reuben & Dean Isaacs

082 050 1232   Reuben@ukzn.ac.za

n.ceriani@sycn.co.za   Isaacsd1@ukzn.ac.za

Appendix Three: Information Sheet

Name of principal investigator: Nicole Ceriani

Project supervisors:
Shanya Reuben
Reuben@ukzn.ac.za
Dean Isaacs
Isaacsd1@ukzn.ac.za

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Nicole Ceriani; I am currently registered for the Master's program in Industrial Psychology at the University of KwaZulu- Natal, Howard College Campus. As part of my course requirements I have to undertake a research study. This informed consent form is for a qualitative research project I am conducting which aims to uncover how women experience their return to work from maternity leave; specifically focusing on how they readjust their life to balancing both their roles as mother and employee. We are interested in exploring your own perceptions as mothers and employees. The focus is on how you experienced, perceived, felt both positive and negative in this transformative experience.

In order to achieve this you are required to participate in a once off, one on one, approximately an hour long interview, which will be conducted at a time and venue convenient to you. This interview will be audio recorded, transcribed and analyzed during the research process.

 Your participation in the research process is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from it at any stage. The choice you make will have no negative consequences for you. All information provided will be kept confidential; no names of participants or the organizations will be included in the research outcome. However, if the need becomes necessary anonymity and confidentiality of the participants will still be protected by using fictitious names.

During the interview I will ask you a few questions, no preparation is required in advance. No one else but the interviewer (I) will be present during the interview (unless you would like someone else to be present). Additionally, it should be noted only the project supervisor and I will have access to the interview transcripts and recordings. The transcripts will be kept in a file along with the audio tapes from the interview. After a five year period all data collected will be incinerated.

There are no risks related with participating in the study as all information gathered will be kept confidential. Furthermore, there will be no direct benefit to you but your participation is likely to help us find meaningful information regarding the experiences of women readjusting their lives to work and motherhood and their return to work from maternity leave in South Africa.

Once again I want to emphasise that there is ultimate freedom of withdrawal from any stage of the research process. As indicated, your participation will be kept confidential and will not affect your job or job related evaluations in anyway.

If you have any further questions please feel free to contact me using the following details; email: n.ceriani@sycn.co.za, cell phone number: 082 050 1232. A proposal has been reviewed by the Ethics committee of University of KwaZulu-Natal (HSS/1062/017M) which is a committee to ensure that no participants are harmed during any research process.

Thanking you in advance for your consideration.
 Regards,
Nicole Ceriani

INFORMED CONSENT

I _____ (Full Name) have been invited to participate in a research study which aims to uncover women's experiences of readjusting their life to work and motherhood after maternity leave in the South African context. I have read the foregoing information and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. Any questions I may have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent voluntarily to participate in this study.

Print name (of participant):   _____

Signature (of participant):   _____

Date (Day/Month/Year):   _____

Appendix Four: Permission to Record

Social Sciences, College of Humanities, School of Psychology
University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Howard College Campus,

Dear Participant

PERMISSION TO RECORD

My name is Nicole Ceriani. I am an Industrial Psychology Masters student studying at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus, South Africa.

I am interested in learning about women's experiences of readjusting their life to work and motherhood after maternity leave in the South African context. To gather the information, I am interested in asking you some questions.

Please note that:

- Your confidentiality is guaranteed as your inputs will not be attributed to you in person, but reported only as a population member opinion.
- The interview will last for about an hour.
- Any information given by you cannot be used against you, and the collected data will be used for purposes of this research only.
- Data will be stored in secure storage and destroyed after 5 years.
- You have a choice to participate, not participate or stop participating in the research. You will not be penalized for taking such an action.
- The research aims at knowing your experiences of being a mother and employee.
- Your involvement is purely for academic purposes only, and there are no financial benefits involved.
- If you are willing to be interviewed, please indicate whether or not you are willing to allow the interview to be recorded by the following equipment:

	Willing	Not willing
Audio equipment		

I can be contacted at: Email: n.ceriani@sycn.co.za; Cell: 082 050 1232.

My supervisor is Shanya Reuben (PhD. Psychology) who is located at the School of Psychology, Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details: email: reuben@ukzn.ac.za; Phone number: (031) 260 2861.

My Co-supervisor is Dean Isaacs (MA Industrial Psychology) who is located at the School of Psychology, Howard College campus of the University of KwaZulu-Natal.
Contact details: email: Isaacsd1@ukzn.ac.za; Phone number: (031) 260 1546.

You may also contact the Research Office through: P. Mohun who is located in the HSSREC Research Office.
Contact details: phone number: (031) 260 4557; E-mail: mohunp@ukzn.ac.za.

Thank you for your contribution to this research.

DECLARATION

I……………………………………………………………… (Full Name) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire.

SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT   **DATE**

…………………………………   …………………………………

Appendix 5: Permission Letter from Organisation

04 April 2017
Ms Nicole Ceriani

Dear Nicole

RE: Research at BBF Safety Group Pty Ltd

With reference to our discussions on the above issue, I can inform you as follows:

This letter serves to confirm that the Human Resource Department at BBF Safety group hereby agrees to assist you with conducting research at our company.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require any additional information.

Kind Regards,

Rajen Reddy
H.R. Executive

Appendix 6: Permission Email from Organisation

Dear Nicole

You are welcome to do your research at Pentravel Central Services.

Thanks

Sally Roberts
Human Resources Officer

![Pentravel logo]

t 031 275 2010 **f** 031 275 2099
Central Services
20 The Boulevard, West Way Office Park Westville

Interested in a career at Pentravel?

Pentravel are renowned as South Africa's favourite leisure travel experts. Our business is built upon repeat and referral recommendations. The best compliment you could give me, is to refer me to your family and friends.

Disclaimer

Appendix 7: Ethical Clearance Letter

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI
YAKWAZULU-NATALI

4 September 2017

Miss Nicole Cody Ceriani 213526048
School of Applied Human Sciences
Howard College Campus

Dear Miss Ceriani

Protocol reference number: HSS/1062/017M
Project title: Women's experiences of balancing motherhood and employment

Full Approval – Expedited Application

In response to your application received on 11 July 2017, the Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee has considered the abovementioned application and FULL APPROVAL for the protocol has been granted.

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

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

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

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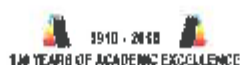
Yours faithfully

Dr Shamila (Deputy Chair)

/pm

Cc Supervisor: Dr S Shanya Reuben
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