WOMEN IN SENIOR MANAGEMENT POSITIONS: AN EXPLORATION OF HOW THEY BALANCE THEIR ROLES.

BY

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Howard College Campus

December 2009

DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Social Science (Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

I declare that this treatise is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters of Social Science (Psychology) in the Faculty of Humanities, Development, and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

_____
Lianne Ruth Geddes

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Date

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly I would like to dedicate this research to **God**, for without Him none of this would have been possible. I would like to thank God for blessing me so richly.

My sincere thanks goes to my supervisor, **Dr. Thandi Magojo** who has been such an inspiration and motivation as her patience, support and encouragement has helped me to achieve all that I can.

I would like to thank my parents, **Colin and Jill Geddes** for their unconditional love and support and for all the sacrifices that they have endured in order to get me to where I am now.

I would like to thank my brother, **Kevin Geddes** for being the amazing brother that he is and for always encouraging me.

I would also like to thank my most awesome fiancé, **Dane Hopkins** for his love and support during this process.

A big thank you goes to all of the **participants** for giving up their time to participate and for all of their valuable information.

In addition I would like to thank **Praveen Rajbansi** for all his administrative related assistance.

Finally, thank you to my family and friends for being the people that they are and for all of their encouragement.

ABSTRACT

The research explored how women from the University of KwaZulu-Natal balanced both their personal and professional roles in order to advance into senior management positions. The study used a qualitative research methodology in which semi-structured interviews were conducted on nine participants. The data were then analysed using Qualitative Thematic Analysis. The findings of this study revealed that although the participants faced various challenges, which were related to their gender they did manage to advance into senior management positions. What facilitated their advancement was that these women learned how to balance their dual roles through observing and imitating positive role models, which is supported by Bandura's Social Learning Theory. The findings of the study were both confirmed and disconfirmed by the literature. However what this study does show is that women are managing to advance into positions of senior management despite challenges that they may face and thus indicting that the glass ceiling is cracking. Management should therefore be prepared to manage this new breed of managers in their echelons.

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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Women in South Africa and abroad have fought many barriers to advance to positions of authority, such as senior management (Mathur-Helm, 2005). These barriers have been put in place by society, and range from the traditional roles into which women are socialised, to exclusion from male-only clubs, discrimination and the glass ceiling which affects women and minorities, preventing them from advancing to senior positions (Fenn, 1976; Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Giddens, 2004; Jones & George, 2003; Roodt & Odendaal, 2003; Sarch, 1997; Smith, 1975; White, Cox & Cooper, 1992).

Studies have revealed that it is difficult for women to advance to senior positions within an organisation; a reason for this may be that promotions generally go to men, thus revealing the gender inequalities that are still prevalent within organisations (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007; Wilson, 2005; Wood, 2006). In South Africa, research indicates that it is still uncommon for women to reach the very top corporate positions, as they are still not recognised as being equal to their male colleagues (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

In the past (i.e. prior to 1994), government legislation worked against women rising to top management positions; however, with the inauguration of the new government, new legislation has changed in favour of women and minority groups (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005). This is evident in the new Employment Equity Act 75 of 1997 and the implementation of affirmative action, which requires companies to take certain steps to ensure that previously disadvantaged groups are represented (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005). Thus women are slowly advancing into these top corporate positions (Taylor & Conradie, 1997; Werner & DeSimone, 2006). Another relevant piece of legislation is the Labour Relations Act 66 of 1995. However, for the purposes of this research the Employment Equity Act 75 of 1997 is of more relevance.

The advancement of women into senior management positions which were traditionally thought of as male only positions has meant that they have had to balance their private and professional lives to advance in a male dominated business world (Durkin, 1971; Giddens, 2004; Lilly, Duffy & Virick, 2006; Mathur-Helm, 2005).

1.2. Statement of the Problem

There are many challenges and barriers that women around the world face in order to reach senior management positions (Marthur-Helm, 2005). Studies have shown that women have enormous difficulty advancing into senior positions (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007; Wilson, 2005; Wood, 2006). This is mostly because there is a great deal of gender inequality in the workplace (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007; Wilson, 2005; Wood, 2006). Research shows that to date the situation has not changed much as many women in South Africa are still not seen as equal to their male colleagues and hence it is uncommon for them to reach senior management positions (Marthur-Helm, 2005). However, with changes in legislation (which ensures that companies comply with equity and that there are fair opportunities in employment for previously disadvantaged groups), women are slowly advancing into management positions and positions of authority, and hence have had to learn how to balance their private and professional lives in the process (Durkin, 1971; Giddens, 2004; Lilly et al., 2006; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Taylor & Conradie, 1997; Werner & DeSimone, 2006).

This research explores how women in senior management positions have fought the barriers of society (if there were any) and balanced their private and professional roles in order to move up the managerial echelons, as well as the challenges that they had faced, while advancing into senior management positions. These barriers include the glass ceiling, their traditional roles and exclusion from male-only corporate clubs. The target of this research will be women in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN).

1.3. Rationale for the Study

Women have had many challenges from an early age when they were socialised into ‘female’ roles and were prevented within their families, in society, at school and even in the workplace from realising their potential and rising to top positions in a traditionally ‘male’ world (Durkin, 1971; Fenn, 1976; White et al., 1992). Yet many women have fought obstacles such as the glass ceiling (Werner & DeSimone, 2006) and have risen above these barriers into senior management positions (Schreuder & Theron, 2004). Much of the available literature focuses on the oppression of women in lower level occupations but as far as can be ascertained there is little information on women who have become successful in top management positions, especially in South Africa. It is therefore important that their success stories are shared with other women. This study aims to explore how these women fought the

challenges that they faced, with the dual role of being a mother and/or wife and having a high-powered career in a senior management position at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

1.4. Research Objective

This research explores how women in senior management positions learnt how to balance both their private and professional roles in the process of advancing to senior management positions at UKZN.

Research Question:

How do female managers learn to balance their private and professional roles and advance to senior management positions at UKZN?

1.5. Chapter Outline

Chapter One: Introduction

This chapter will give an overview of the research problem and its background as well as the context in which the research took place. The aims and intended outcomes of the study as well as the rationale for conducting the study will be explained.

Chapter Two: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

This chapter will discuss the current and past literature on women in the workplace, including aspects such as the barriers to success, balancing their dual roles, and previous studies on women who have moved up the management echelons. The strengths and limitations of past research will be highlighted. In addition, this review of literature will explain why research in this particular topic is necessary. The theoretical framework within which the above-mentioned factors are embedded will be discussed, as well as how the proposed theory is applicable to the current research problem.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

This chapter will describe in detail the operations performed by the researcher. It will discuss the qualitative methodology used in this research project. In addition, it will cover the research design, participants, equipment and measures, as well as the procedures followed. Furthermore this chapter will discuss the limitations of this research project. Finally, the ethical considerations that must be taken into account will be discussed.

Chapter Four: Results

The results of the project will be presented. The objective is to understand how women in management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal balance their roles.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The results mentioned in chapter four will be interpreted and evaluated with reference to the literature review and past research on the topic.

Chapter Six: Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

The final chapter summarises the project in terms of the aims, desired outcomes of the study, and the findings. Furthermore, conclusion will be drawn from the results. Finally, the researcher will give recommendations for future research on this topic.

CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, women face many barriers and challenges to climb the managerial echelons (Mathur-Helm, 2005). In addition, past legislation has hindered women's advancement in a male dominated business world. However, with current legislation women are advancing into management positions in South Africa and around the world (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005). This chapter will provide an in-depth understanding of the barriers and challenges that women have faced, in terms of their traditional roles and the glass ceiling. In addition, it will discuss women in management positions, their career advancement, and how they have balanced their roles.

2.2. Barriers and Challenges Faced by Women

As discussed above, it is difficult for women in South Africa and around the world to reach top management positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Women have been faced with many challenges that prevent them from moving up the corporate ladder into high-powered and meaningful corporate positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Thus the rise of women into management positions has been very slow, with few women holding positions of authority (Taylor & Conradie, 1997; Werner & DeSimone, 2006). The challenge for women is not only in the corporate sphere but in the academic sphere as well, where numerous women have struggled to "… reach managerial positions in higher education and in the career stages leading up to a post in university or college of higher education" (Powney, 1997, p. 56).

Women both abroad and in South Africa who are searching for management positions within higher education are affected not only by the realities affecting other individuals, but have also had to fight certain barriers in order to advance in the managerial echelons to senior and executive managerial positions (Mathur-Helm, 2005; Sarch, 1997). These barriers include the glass ceiling, discrimination, their traditional roles and the effects of socialisation (Jones & George, 2003; Roodt & Odendaal, 2003; Werner & DeSimone, 2006; White et al., 1992).

2.2.1. Gender Discrimination

According to Lord (1975) even though international organisations are guided by more progressive legislation there are still many discriminatory practices and behaviours in the

corporate world. These discriminatory practices are often related to sex-role stereotypes and it is these behaviours which function to the disadvantage of women (Lord, 1975). Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) conducted a study in which they tried to identify the views of both male and female managers, their management style, and how they perceived the management style of other members in the organisation who had risen above them in the managerial hierarchy to more senior positions. The findings of this study showed that women felt that if they had a family it would mean that their careers would have to end. In addition, many women knew of other women who had been discriminated against in the workplace more so than their male counterparts. Male managers generally felt that there was equity in the workplace, while female managers stated that they still experienced a great deal of inequity, stereotyping and discrimination (Vinnicombe & Singh, 2002). Furthermore the study revealed that female managers did not see themselves as the "…successful manager who makes it to the top" (Vinnicombers & Singh, 2002, p. 129). According to Roodt and Odendaal (2003) women are still experiencing discrimination in most parts of the corporate industry in South Africa.

2.2.2. The Glass Ceiling and the Price of Exclusion

An additional barrier that women have to fight is the glass ceiling, which can be defined as an invisible barrier preventing them from advancing to the top of the corporate ladder (Jones & George, 2003; Werner & DeSimone, 2006). In a study focussing on the academic profession, Bain and Cummings (2000) investigated ten university systems and found that women in the United Stated of America comprised of one-third of all academics. However, what was noted was that only one out of every ten women was a professor. Bain and Cummings (2000) suggested that a glass ceiling of warped expectations hampered women from reaching the top of the management echelons of academia. They speculated that although some barriers are found in more traditional parts of the labour market, people might expect them to be less extensive in the academic field. Bain and Cummings (2000) noted that this is because women have been given their academic qualifications (which have helped them to become more competitive in the business world and in the labour market) from schools and tertiary institutions such as universities. Within the university sub-sector, the flexible working hours enable the setting up of certain tasks such as researching and teaching, and thus the university is able to accommodate the many different and unique needs of employees. This set up, according to Bain and Cummings (2000), seems to be favourable for women and their achievements. However, women are still notably under represented within the academic line

of work (Bain & Cummings, 2000). Bain and Cummings (2000) discovered further that; "Within any academic system, the higher the prestige of an institution, the lower the proportion of professors who are women" (p. 512). Nevertheless what was discovered from this study was that societies vary in their openness to hiring women in the academic profession, but these variations do not prevail as women have still moved up the academic ladder into senior positions (Bain & Cummings, 2000).

Women also face the challenge of fighting the traditional roles into which they have been socialised from birth, and thus in the corporate world they face the challenge of exclusion from the traditionally male-only areas such as male-only clubs and sports (Fenn, 1976; Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Smith, 1975; White et al. 1992). Smith (1975) noted that mixing female with male executives could pose a problem for women, as wives may get jealous. In addition, females may be refused entry to some corporate clubs (Smith, 1975). According to Smith (1975) this can be problematic because this is how senior executives in the organisation promote junior executives. If women cannot be present at these clubs then they miss out on many important issues discussed as well as promotion opportunities (Smith, 1975).

2.2.3. Traditional Roles

The concept of gender in most societies is a form of social stratification and plays a role in structuring the opportunities of each group as well as strongly influencing the roles that men and women play within society (Giddens, 2004). According to Durkin (1971), society determines the traditional roles for both men and women, and children are socialised to fulfil these roles from early childhood. When children are young, girls and boys are given different toys to play with in order to socialise them into their predetermined roles (Durkin, 1971). In the past it was not acceptable for women to hold jobs, let alone be in positions of senior management (White et al., 1992). Women had the specific role of being a housekeeper and a mother and any employment outside of that was seen as menial and received little if any recognition (Giddens, 2004; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Taylor & Conradie, 1997; White et al., 1992). Management was deemed to be a man's job even though women possessed the aptitudes that are said to be necessary for successful management (Durkin, 1971). As noted by Durkin (1971) even the shallowest examination of most companies will reveal that very few women hold management positions. That is because women and children traditionally relied on men and their occupational position for support (Schwartz, 1974).

Giddens (2004) stated that there has been a shift from women fulfilling their traditional roles of being a housewife and discharging their domestic responsibilities. Since World War 2, when women started to enter the industrial and working world, their participation has risen greatly in the paid labour force (Giddens, 2004). There are economic reasons attached to the increase of women in the workplace in recent times, as many households require two incomes in order to sustain a desired lifestyle (Giddens, 2004; Straub, 2007). Thus the traditional roles of women being housewives are falling away as women have seized the opportunities to enter the labour force (Giddens, 2004). This has meant that women have to balance their roles at home and at work (Giddens, 2004). As noted by Straub (2007), economic and financial pressures force women to balance and juggle their private lives at home and their professional working lives.

2.3. Women in Employment

Women are in a difficult position as they face a "no win" situation (Wilson, 2005, p. 234). Wilson (2005) suggested that women have the task of matching the standard and norm of their male counterparts. Bain and Cummings (2000) stated that although women are as competent as men when it comes to conforming to the requirements of the organisation, there are a large number of women who have vital family responsibilities. These women are therefore unable to show the same participation within the organisation as most men who do not have the same family roles (Bain & Cummings, 2000). Therefore, these women may find that they do not get awarded many promotions as the policy for career advancement and promotion may not be so flexible (Bain & Cummings, 2000). Bain and Cummings (2000) stated that in most universities men continue to hold the senior positions; in addition, policies of career advancement are rigid and not likely to be modified. This is due to the fact that these policies were decided in the days when universities and other institutions were run by men only and the woman's place was in the home (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Giddens, 2004).

In addition, women may not always be able to perform to the best of their ability because of their dual role and thus they may receive lower salaries (Lilly et al., 2006). As argued by Sümer (2006), the gender gap becomes wider as women receive lower wages than men in a similar job. Furthermore, Marcus (2007) stated that women within the academic profession often choose to be in less prestigious and lower paying jobs. According to Dreyer (2003), evidence shows that women in South Africa are better represented in lower-level occupations as opposed to managerial and more senior positions. Sümer (2006) noted that the most

"…direct evidence concerning the differential treatment of women in the world of work is the disproportionate number of women in managerial jobs, especially in higher level managerial positions" (p. 64). According to Wilson (2005), in an organisation the relationships between men and women are clearly unequal. Adding to this, Jones and George (2003) argued that only 6.2 percent of women are in high paying managerial positions in the United States alone. In South Africa, 78.6 percent of men are in high paying professions whereas women who are in high paying jobs only account for 21.4 percent of the total (Statistics South Africa, 2006). This shows that there are clear inequalities, which still exist between men and women within the workplace and especially with regard to the amount of money that they receive (Statistics South Africa, 2006).

Wilson (2005) conducted a study in two British universities, which examined the perceptions women had of the assumption that they were receiving unequal treatment compared to their male counterparts. According to Wilson (2005), literature argues that both men and women have learned that they are not equal within the organisation. The findings of this study revealed that although women did not view themselves as different or unequal, their male counterparts saw them as being inferior (Wilson, 2005). The findings of a study conducted by Mathur-Helm (2005) revealed that it is still uncommon for women, regardless of race to reach top corporate positions in South Africa. This is because the corporate world does not yet recognise men and women as equals; rather, men are seen as superior to women (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

2.3.1. Legislation

Past legislation has favoured men and saw the role of the women as a traditional one; women were not meant for working in high powered professions in the corporate world (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2005; White et al., 1992). In the past government policies have worked against women and their advancement (Mathur-Helm, 2005). However, there has been a more noticeable trend towards more equal employment opportunities and the traditional gender roles are slowly starting to disappear, while both men and women share the household tasks which were traditionally regarded as being women's tasks (Schreuder & Theron, 2004).

2.4. Career Advancement

A study by Wood (2006) on the career advancement of middle managers in Australia revealed that male middle managers received promotions to senior managers much quicker than female middle managers. This study showed the gender inequalities that persist in the workplace and the barriers preventing women from advancing into senior management positions (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007; Wood, 2006).

Tharenou, Latimer and Conroy (1994) mentioned that women's advancement is hindered by their home roles, which impacts on their work experience. However Schreuder and Theron (2004) noted that in both the United States of America and in South Africa there has been a shift in the traditional responsibilities of men and women and thus more women are moving into positions of management. According to Noble and Moore (2006) an important economic and social change that has taken place in the twentieth century has been the movement of women into the paid labour force. As stated by Dreyer (2003), there has been an increase in the number of women entering into the South African workforce in the last 30 years. This increase of women into the paid labour force in both South Africa and abroad is due to the implementation of equal employment opportunities and affirmative action, as well as other policies such as provisions for childcare, and maternity leave (Noble & Moore, 2006). Bain and Cummings (2000) predicted that the implementation of affirmative action would help to improve and redress imbalances within the business world. For instance, mentoring programmes have been put into place to address these barriers within the workplace, which in the past hindered the success and the movement of women into senior positions (Noble & Moore, 2006). According to Headlam-Wells (2004) "mentoring is frequently cited as playing an important role in the career development of successful women managers" (p. 212).

In South Africa the advancement of women and minorities into senior positions has largely been due to the inauguration of the new government in the post-apartheid period (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2002; Schreuder & Theron, 2004). "Post-apartheid SA is undergoing a dramatic transformation in its political, social and economic policies" (Mathur-Helm, 2002, p. 18). Post 1994, the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998, has been implemented (Finnemore, 2002). The purpose of this act is to attain equity within the workplace (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2002). This is being done by: firstly, promoting both fair treatment and equal opportunities in employment through the elimination of any form of unfair discrimination; and secondly, by addressing inequities experienced by disadvantaged

groups in the past through the implementation of affirmative action (Finnemore, 2002). This has been achieved partly through the hiring of more women (Mathur-Helm, 2002). In addition, Finnemore (2002) stated that all employers must apply affirmative action measures for people from designated groups. These designated groups include women, people with disabilities, and black people (Finnemore, 2002). According to Elliott and Smith (2004), in comparison with white men all groups encounter lower levels of power. However black women are mostly affected by this and thus are not only fighting the barrier of gender but of race as well (Elliott & Smith, 2004). Thus these legislative measures (such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998) help to eliminate the barriers, which these previously disadvantaged groups faced (Finnemore, 2002).

Tharenou et al. (1994) offered further reasons for women's career advancement. According to Tharenou et al. (1994) training and development are two things, which are responsible for directly increasing women's managerial advancement. They also believe that the advancement of women is due to the indirect impact of receiving career encouragement, which can be done through training and development.

2.5. Balancing Work and Family Roles

According to Burchielli, Bartram and Thanacoody (2008) work-family balance has been a question that has been especially significant in the last two decades. Jick and Mitz (1985) noted that as women were becoming more equal partners having greater responsibilities, influence and opportunities for movement within organisations, and as men had more responsibilities within the family, the external circumstances for both women and men would change. Jick and Mitz (1985) argued that men and women were battling with their changing roles and responsibilities. At the same time, organisations were trying to accommodate the demands for the equity of females when it came to female opportunities (Jick & Mitz, 1985). Schwartz (1974) stated that many women today prefer a career-and-family path. As more and more women join the management ranks in the corporate and public worlds, work-family balance has become a key concern. This is because women have to deal with the conflicting demands of their careers, caring for their children, as well as caring for their elders and other personal life issues such as marriage (Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry & Gordon, 2007).

2.5.1. Coping Mechanisms

Straub (2007) conducted a study, which aimed to identify the level of involvement that companies within Europe have in the work-life balance of their employees, and then to measure the extent to which these policies have increased the career advancement of women into senior management positions. The findings revealed that companies in Europe have work-family practices such as flexitime, child care services and shorter working hours which are in place to help to eliminate the structural barriers on women's career advancement (Straub, 2007). As noted by Dreyer (2003), women's preferences in terms of work differ from men when it comes to their work schedules. Mothers who work are likely to prefer working part-time, telecommuting and having flexible work schedules in order to help them to accommodate their various family responsibilities (Dreyer, 2003). O'Connor (2005) recommends that organisations need to focus on work-family issues and how inadequate childcare arrangements have a negative impact on the work and family lives of their employees.

Burchielli et al. (2008) re-examined the notion of the work-family balance within the Australian context, specifically looking at female senior staff members and managers. These staff members and managers worked in a large local bank and a major municipal hospital. The study also aimed at uncovering whether these people were able to balance their work and family roles. Finally, the study aimed to discover what the organisation did to support the employees with balancing their work and family roles. The findings revealed that women from both the hospital and the bank, needed childcare and a great deal of support from their families; for example, their parents and spouses, as well as from their friends if they wanted to balance their dual roles of being senior managers and mothers (Burchielli et al., 2008). In order to balance their work and family roles some of the women from the bank stated that they adopted strategies such as taking work home, and planning ahead of time. At the hospital, on the other hand, the findings revealed that to cope with their work and family roles the women had to stay at work to finish any additional work that had not been done before going home. All the female respondents in this study declared that they had to sacrifice a great deal in order to meet both work and family commitments (Burchielli et al., 2008).

Burchielli et al. (2008) noted from the findings of their study that even though women who are in senior staff and management positions had flexible hours, it was clear that they still felt as though they had no work-family balance and therefore battled to balance their roles. The

authors stated that the women in this study felt that the best they could say about balancing their roles was that they were "…juggling the tensions of competing demands" (p. 124). According to Burchielli et al. (2008), there is a huge personal cost attached to having to 'do it all' but the most important cost is the emotional cost of feeling guilty especially because these women are unable to give and do more in each of their roles (p. 124). Furthermore, Burchielli et al. (2008) discovered that organisations were fully aware of the challenges female employees have when they have to balance their work and family roles. It was evident from this study that work-family conflict was still present and the participants managed both work and family domains at great personal sacrifices (Burchielli et al., 2008).

According to O'Connor (2005), in general, women have to sacrifice a great deal more than men in order to become successful in the workplace. Some of these sacrifices include lack of personal, social and 'free' time, dedicating all their free time to their children, an inability to stop thinking of work when they are at home, as well as not taking any lunch breaks and battling with exhaustion (Burchielli et al., 2008; O'Connor, 2005).

White et al., (1992) suggested that there are a number of ways in which women balance their professional and private family lives. One of these ways is through part-time work. However, there are disadvantages associated with part time work such as low pay, earning less than men in the same occupation, and requiring a low level of skill (Giddens, 2004; Howell & Day, 2000; White et al., 1992). In addition to part-time work, self-motivation and social and personal support structures help women balance their personal and private lives (Marcinkus et al., 2007; Powney, 1997) "Social support is a critical resource for working women to enable their continued success in both work and family domains" (Marcinkus et al., 2007, p. 87). Furthermore, social support helps women learn how to cope effectively with both personal and institutional discrimination that they encounter in their careers (Powney, 1997).

As part of a larger project, Moorosi (2007) examined female principals and their path to becoming a principal within the South African context. Moorosi (2007) focussed on the observations and experiences of women who had reached and attained a managerial post, and the reason for the continued under representation of women within the education system. Moorosi (2007) found that female principals have difficulty in finding a balance between their work and family roles. "The relationship between family and career was seen as a difficult one for woman principals who had families" (Moorosi, 2007, p. 513). They tended to

neglect their family life for their work, and even if working women employed domestic helpers to help them at home, they were still expected to perform their household duties (Moorosi, 2007). Balancing work and family roles and responsibilities (especially when these women were in high powered positions) was even more difficult for women whose husbands did not help around the house with the domestic tasks and thus these women found it more difficult to manage their personal and professional roles (Moorosi, 2007).

Moorosi (2007) noted that this balance was more difficult for younger women who were still trying to demonstrate that they were good wives and mothers. In addition Moorosi (2007) found that the job of school principal, like many other professions is associated with the traditional stereotype that it is a man's job; thus women struggle to progress in the educational field. An important point raised by Moorosi (2007) is that women should not have to choose between their family and their careers just because they are women. In concluding, Moorosi (2007) stated that "It is evident that factors affecting women's participation in management are not only structural or personal" but of equal importance are the "…social barriers in the form of broader cultural expectations in terms of the sex-role stereotypes, and political, traditional, and historical influences" (p. 519). Moorosi (2007) goes on to mention that these factors are deeply entrenched in schools as well as in society in general. Thus they are seen as normal because they are so deeply rooted that they are hard to eliminate (Moorosi, 2007).

2.6. Women in Management

A study by Wood (2006) found that the promotion of women from middle management positions to senior management positions was slower than for their male counterparts, thus showing that there are still barriers present. In the male dominated business world, there has been a slow move to recognise women as having another role, which is not a supportive role (Singh, 2005). Part of the reason for this, according to Singh (2005), is that those in power (predominantly men) tend to appoint people like themselves. Therefore leadership roles have been typically stereotyped as masculine roles (Singh, 2005). Thus women who seek to be in positions of power and authority have to break down these obstacles and barriers, and this has not been an easy thing to do in a male dominated business world (Singh, 2005). According to Singh (2005), if these women manage to break through these barriers and hold senior positions, they are likely to be marginalized and seen to be in those positions as merely

making up the female quota and not for any other reason. Furthermore Singh (2005) noted that these women are often disconnected from any social support systems.

Singh (2005) argued that it has been shown that the presence of female directors can have a positive impact on both the recruitment and the retention of female employees. This is important because it demonstrates the prospect of career advancement for women (Singh, 2005). Career Advancement refers to the upward movement of an individual's career within the organisation (Schreuder & Theron, 2004). Sarch (1997) maintained that women who hope to reach the higher managerial echelons within the higher education sphere must develop the ability to recognise and "…take advantage of the opportunities that are offered" (p. 34). However, in spite of the various barriers, women are still advancing to more senior managerial echelons in various occupations (Levinson & Lurie, 2004; Palley, 2001; Williams, 1976). Thus, as argued by Simpson and Altman (2000), the glass ceiling has been destroyed, as young women are receiving the benefits of equal employment opportunities. Evidence suggests that the rise of women in the hierarchy has destroyed the glass ceiling and thus women are being seen as more equal to men (Simpson & Altman, 2000). This evidence suggests that the barriers, which prevented young women from moving up the management echelons, have been overcome (Simpson & Altman, 2000). Werner and DeSimone (2006) stated that it is apparent that there are some cracks in the glass ceiling allowing women to enter into traditionally male management positions.

To unravel how large-scale social change has taken place, this research will take an in-depth look into the individual women's lives to determine how they have faced the challenges to becoming successful in moving up the management echelons and holding senior management positions.

2.7. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework upon which this research is based is Bandura's (1977) Social Learning Theory.

2.7.1. The Social Learning Theory

Coon (2004) described learning as a moderately lasting change in behaviour owing to experience. It has been suggested that children learn their roles through self-reinforcement, social reinforcement and socialisation (Coon, 2004). For example, Giddens (2004) noted that

boys can be positively reinforced by being told that they are brave when they do not cry and negatively reinforced by being told that boys do not cry. From the day children are born, throughout adulthood, they are labelled as either 'boys' or 'girls', 'men' or 'women' and are encouraged and expected to learn gender-appropriate behaviour (Coon, 2004).
The Social Learning Theory was proposed by Bandura and states that behaviours are learned through imitating and observing others, and are upheld through either positive or negative reinforcement (Papalia & Olds, 1988). Coon (2004) stated that, "Social learning theories attribute differences in personality to socialization, expectations, and mental processes" (p. 512). According to Bandura (1977, pp. 11-12) "…psychological functioning is explained in terms of a continuous reciprocal interaction of personal and environmental determinants". According to the Social Learning Theory "…identification and intimidation contribute greatly to personality development and to sex training" (Coon, 2004, p. 527). Sex training involves "…learning socially defined 'male' and 'female' gender roles-which also affect personality" (Coon, 2004, p. 527). Thus children learn their gendered roles from observing the same sex parents (Coon, 2004; Giddens, 2004), and are encouraged to play with gender specific toys. For example, girls are taught the nurturing, caring mother role, and are socialised into the future care-giving role by being given dolls and tea sets to play with (Coon, 2004; Gerson & Horowitz, 2002). As a result of this socialisation, children grow up to accept their gendered role and the roles of the opposite gender; "Gender relations and hierarchies thus appear natural and inherent when hegemonic family structures marked by women's homemaking and men's breadwinning predominate" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 201).

Giddens (2004) argued that gender inequalities are produced because of the different roles into which boys and girls are socialised. Thus the Social Learning Theory explains why there is gender discrimination and the presence of the glass ceiling, as society considers a woman's role to be a housewife and mother, and a man's role to be that of the breadwinner (Taylor & Conradie, 1997; White et al., 1992). Therefore the Social Learning Theory is applicable in this study as it explains why there are such challenges blocking the advancement of women into higher management positions and why there are so few women in these positions (Taylor & Conradie, 1997).

As mentioned earlier human beings learn by imitating others both like and unlike themselves (Papalia & Olds, 1988). Observational learning is defined as learning which is based on the

imitation and the observation of role models (Papalia & Olds, 1988). Thus children learn by observing the people around them and those people become their role models. For example, if a child's parent who is his or her role model reacts to anger by becoming aggressive, the child will learn that that is an appropriate reaction to anger (Papalia & Olds, 1988). What children learn from a young age remains with them through adulthood. "As adults many of the things we do and say and the way we relate to other people stem from the kinds of behaviors we observed our parents doing when we were younger" (Papalia & Olds, 1988, p. 181). From this theory we can deduce that women learn from an early age how to cope with balancing their personal and professional lives. Women learn how to become successful or submissive from the role models that they had when they were growing up and they imitate this in the workplace. This behaviour is imitated if it is positively reinforced and is responsible for shaping how they behave and how they deal with everyday challenges.

The concept of an adult is something that is socially constructed and thus is understood differently in different societies (Gravett, 2001). The status of an adult is generally ascribed to the individual based on "…first, the extent to which they fulfil the social role that is typically assigned to an adult in a society, and secondly, on the extent to which they assume responsibility for their own lives and livelihoods" (Gravett, 2001, p. 6). The adult learner is a person who can be categorised as an adult on the above grounds and who takes part in educational activities. In addition, an adult learner's main life task is not related to activities that are educational; instead adult learners have life tasks or responsibilities (Gravett, 2001). The adult's various roles, such as mother, define adult life, which they bring with them into the educational setting (Gravett, 2001).

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLGY

3.1. Introduction

The methods used in this study will be discussed below. They include the type of research design, instruments utilised, the size and composition of the sample, and the procedure that was followed.

3.2. Objectives of the Study

This research aimed to gain a deeper understanding into the lives of women who are in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and how these women have balanced their private and professional roles in order to advance to these management positions.

3.3. Research Design

This study followed a qualitative research design, as qualitative designs offer more descriptive and rich data about people's lived experiences (King, 1998; Patton, 1990). In addition, a qualitative design was most suited because the aim of the researcher was to understand how women in management positions have balanced their roles, and thus the researcher was interested in gaining an in-depth understanding of the challenges women have faced and their individual stories. No pilot study was conducted due to limited time.

3.4. Research Participants

The participants in the study had to fit certain predetermined criteria. All the participants were women, from any age group, who had been or were currently married, divorced and/or had children. Furthermore the women had to be in senior management or higher up in the management hierarchy and be employed by the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

3.5. Type of Sampling

The sample consisted of 9 women who were in senior management positions, fitting the above-mentioned criteria. For the purposes of this study, non-probability convenience sampling was utilised. A non-probability sampling method "…refers to any kind of sampling where the selection of elements is not determined by the statistical principle of randomness" (Terre Blanche, Durrheim & Painter, 2006, p. 139). Convenience sampling is useful as it

saves money, effort and time, but this is at the cost of information and it is less reliable (Marshall and Rossman, 2006). However, the sample in this particular study was representative of the population the researcher wanted to study as it consisted of the women at the University of KwaZulu-Natal and thus was a relatively reliable sample (Sánchez-Jankowiski, 2002).

3.6. Data Collection Techniques

A self-developed, semi-structured interview schedule (Appendix A) with open-ended questions was used to obtain an understanding of the women's experiences. The interviewer used the questions as a framework to guide the interview process with the interviewee. As noted by Patton (1990), the purpose of using semi-structured interviews is so that the researcher can "…access the perspective of the person being interviewed" (p. 278). A semi-structured interview involves asking the participant a number of predetermined questions (Berg, 2001). These questions were all asked in a systematic way to each participant but, because this method also minimises the flexibility allowed to the participant by structuring their responses according to the categories and questions (Patton, 1990), the interviewer is allowed to gain further understanding of the participant's experiences through the use of unscheduled probing (Berg, 2001; Huysamen, 2001). As defined by Gorden (1980), "Probing is a way to motivate the respondent and steer him towards giving relevant, complete and clear responses to meet the objectives of the interview" (p. 368). In-depth interviews are the best method if the researcher wishes to obtain a deep understanding of the individuals' experiences in their own words and from their own perspective (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and are useful because they allow the "…researchers to formulate their research problems in a variety of different ways" (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002, p. 201). Although open-ended questions may present a difficulty when it comes to scoring them, they allow the respondents to tell their story as they desire (Huysamen, 2001).

Each participant was told that the research was completely confidential and anonymous so that they could give an honest account of their individual experiences (Neuman, 2006). Validity was achieved in this study by asking the participants to give an honest and authentic account of their experiences as they have lived through them (Neuman, 2006). Member checks were used in order to validate the information received (Creswell, 1998). Member checks involved taking the analyses and conclusions back to the participants and allowing them to check whether the researcher's account was accurate and true (Creswell, 1998). It is a

form of double checking the researcher's own understanding, thus ensuring that the researcher's account of the events is what the participant intended and is valid (Creswell, 1998). Unfortunately due to time constraints follow up interviews could not take place.

According to Neuman (2006), the use of an interview schedule helps to increase the reliability of research as all of the participants are asked the same questions in the same order, thus showing consistency in how they make their observations.

Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes to an hour depending on the life experiences of the participants. Some participants answered the questions more quickly than others because they did not have a problem with either discrimination or balancing their roles, and had nothing extra to add.

3.7. Instruments Used

The interviews were recorded using an audiotape. The disadvantage with recording the interview on an audiotape is that it may make participants feel anxious, especially about giving confidential information in the interview (Blaxter, Hughs & Tight, 1998). Furthermore it takes a long time to transcribe and analyse using an audiotape (Blaxter et al., 1998). However, using an audiotape made it easier for the researcher to pay full attention to the process of the interview (Blaxter et al., 1998). In addition, audio recording was advantageous as the interviewer was able to concentrate on non-verbal communication and maintain eye contact. Audio recording also ensured that the researcher did not miss out any important information (Blaxter et al., 1998).

3.8. Procedure Followed

The first step was to gain ethical clearance and to have the proposal approved by the Faculty Research Committee of the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct the research. Once ethical clearance and approval was obtained, the next step was to contact the Human Resource Department at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to get the names and numbers of possible participants fitting the criteria for the research. Potential participants were selected, called telephonically and asked verbally if they would be willing to participate in the research. They were then asked when they would be able to find time for an interview in their busy schedules. A time period of three to four weeks was set aside to conduct the interviews. Interviews were conducted in the offices of the participants for their convenience. The

participants were briefed on what the research was about and given a letter with an informed consent form to sign (Appendix B). In addition the participants were told that their identities would be protected so that they could be completely honest when describing their experiences. They were told that would be informed of the outcome of the research, and were given the contact details of the researcher and her supervisor should they have any queries regarding the research. In addition, the participants were asked if they would agree to be tape-recorded using a non-visual, audiotape.

The collected data were transcribed and the participants were each given the opportunity to check the data themselves. This is called member checking and is a form of validation (Creswell, 1998). The data were then analysed.

3.9. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained from the Ethics Committee from the Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences. Permission was also obtained from the participants at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to conduct the research.

In order to ensure the ethical requirement of informed consent, the participants were informed that this was a confidential research project and that pseudonyms would be used to ensure anonymity. They were also informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time with no negative consequences for themselves. In addition, participants were asked for their permission for audio taping the interview. The participants were told that they could contact the researcher should they have any queries with regard to the research, and that the results of the research would be forwarded to them once it had been completed should they wish to know the outcome.

The interview data will also be stored in a safe place when not in use and for the required number of years after the study, after which it will be destroyed.

3.10. Data Analysis

The data were analysed using Thematic Qualitative Analysis (Hayes, 1997). First, the themes that had to be analysed were established. The interviews were then transcribed word for word. The researcher then read over all of the transcripts and identified causal attributions

that were made in each transcript. Next, these attributions were written on a separate piece of paper and were sorted under the main themes, for example ‘Advancement’. In the next step, the researcher examined all of the attributions under each main theme and identified the general orientations of each participant. These attributions were then compared among the participants. Finally, the general attributions were identified and conclusions were drawn from the comparisons between the participants (Hayes, 1997). Thus the researcher could get an understanding of the general consensus among participants regarding the main themes, for example, advancing through studying further.

3.11. Limitations

This study was limited by time constraints, which did not permit follow up interviews to explore any questions that might have emerged during data analysis. In addition the time constraints also did not allow the researcher enough time to conduct a pilot study.

3.12. Conclusion

The aim of this research was to gain an in-depth understanding of how women in management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal balanced their private and professional roles in the process of advancing into senior management positions. This study was based on a qualitative research design with semi-structured interviews using open-ended questions. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to select the participants.
Nine female participants in senior management positions within the University of KwaZulu-Natal were interviewed. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes to an hour each. Once the interviews were completed they were analysed using Thematic Qualitative Analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR
RESULTS

4.1. Introduction

The aim of this research was to gain an understanding into the lives of women who are in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and more specifically, to understand how these women have balanced their private and professional roles in order to advance to these senior management positions. The sample of this study consisted of nine women senior management positions. In the presentation of the results, the author will quote the participants' verbal responses verbatim where necessary. These responses are organised under main headings and subheadings and are presented below.

4.2. Advancement

The majority (eight) of the participants in this study did not have many difficulties in advancing into senior management positions. These participants did face some difficulties, which will be discussed later. Some of the reasons that they provided regarding their advancement to their current positions were further study, hard work and promotions.

The following reasons were offered:

4.2.1. Studying Further and Hard Work

Five of the nine participants said that they advanced through hard work and through their outputs such as their publications and the number of students whose research they had supervised.

> *P 9: …through working hard you know like ah you know…to be a professor you need to write and publish so um I'm passionate about writing and publishing and I've met the requirements and that's why I'm where I am, yes.*

> *P 5: …all based on…one's research outputs and um how many students you supervise and research grants that you get.*

Six participants stated that they advanced by studying further and improving their qualifications. Three of the above mentioned six participants came to the University with

their master's degree. One of these participants came from a corporate environment where she was an attorney and the other participant came from the University of South Africa (UNISA), another tertiary institution. All three of these participants did their PhDs when they were already working at the University. According to them, this enabled them to become full professors.

> *P 3: …and the moment I realised that I had to do my PhD and for my PhD I did a lot of writing and that is actually…what got me to being a full Professor.*

> *P 7: …by the time I got into academia, I already had a master's degree so then…I did a higher diploma in company law 'cause that's my field, and then I did…LLD in…that field as well so…. That's the way I advanced my…career.*

> *P 5: I came with a master's degree and did my PhD here.*

There was a general consensus in this study that to advance at the University of KwaZulu-Natal an individual had to have the necessary qualifications. This meant that to become a professor the individual had to have her PhD.

> *P 7: …here there's a big emphasis now on PhD's or LLD's and they won't promote people into senior positions…unless you got either an LLD or a PhD.*

4.2.2. Promotion

In this study five participants felt that they advanced through getting promotions within the University. Most of these participants started in positions such as junior lecturer and then worked their way up. One participant started as a tutor at the University. Through applying for promotions and having the necessary qualifications these participants were then promoted to more senior positions such as full professor.

> *P 1: I started off as a tutor in '99...*

P 2: Well I started here as a lecturer…and basically I've been here 21 years so I've just, as promotions have come available, I just applied…and eventually the person who was the chair of business law um retired and his position became available and I applied for it….

P 5: …then I was promoted to a senior lecturer and associate professor and then um then a full professor after that.

This disconfirms the study conducted by Wood (2006), which concluded that male middle managers were promoted to senior management positions much more quickly than female middle managers were. In this study all of the nine participants received promotions into senior management positions.

One participant shared her experience of gender inequality and unfair practices when it came to promotion. The participant stated that she applied for a promotion to become a professor, (which was a role that she already had although she did not have the formal title) and was turned down. She then took the University to the Council for Conciliation Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA) and won the case, receiving the promotion.

P 8: Then I applied for promotion and I was turned down to the great shock of everybody and I took the university to the CCMA and won the case….

This confirms literature, which states that there are still gender barriers and inequalities in place preventing women from advancing into senior management positions (Meyerson & Tompkins, 2007; Wood, 2006).

4.3. Balancing Roles as Mother, Wife, Employee and Manager

All (nine) participants felt that they balanced their roles by adopting various coping mechanisms such as prioritising, using support mechanisms, being organised, using flexible time at the university and by taking time to exercise and relax. One participant mentioned that she adopted a negative and unhelpful coping mechanism to balance her roles and manage her challenges (to be discussed later).

The following are the various coping mechanisms used by the participants:

4.3.1. Prioritising

Most (six) of the participants felt that they balanced their roles through having clear goals and priorities with regards to their work and their families.

> *P 3: …I decided certain things were my priorities, and my priority was my studies, the publications and my kids, and the rest can go to pot. So if you come to my house it's not necessarily the neatest place; if you look at my garden it is not (giggle)…because I have only so much time…and you can't do everything.*

> *P 4: When I'm away from Varsity I try and just be a mom [giggle] and a wife…on the weekends spend family time, I go to church and do fun things you know, to try just get that balance.*

> *P 5: I think um that if I didn't have children I would have perhaps uh made myself available for…even more management positions in the University but my first priorities are with my children and being able to manage that plus my research plus my students…I really try and prioritise um and um work out how much time I need to spend on each task because you can't do everything like a hundred percent…and…the earlier you learn that certain things by doing it 80 percent you can at least do all five tasks….*

> *P 7: …it's a question of what comes first and…what your priorities are. Initially when my children were younger I mean that's why it takes you a while …to get as far as you do because you have to… it depends on where your priorities are if your priorities are your children then and going away for Christmas with them then…and if your priorities are your husband…but I mean I I've got a long suffering husband….*

> *P 8: …before it was very different but after I had the kids, the kids come first. Um not to the extent that you know I drop everything but it's a very high priority, they must be happy…. I'm running a business I mean it's…being very focussed on prioritising what I want to do. Prioritising both in terms of work, home and*

prioritising in terms of.. where can I either make a difference or what counts in my favour.

4.3.2. Support Systems and Mechanisms

The majority (eight) of participants used support mechanisms as a way to help them cope with, and balance their roles as mothers, wives, employees and managers.

> *P 3: The one thing that I always…had was a very good support system. So I always made sure that there was somebody* (for example friends or family members) *if I can't be there to assist with the kids...and but that's basically it.*

> *P 2: I think it's the setting up of a proper support structure, which is what I did right from the beginning, I have live-in help…I don't know how you could do without that.*

Literature confirms the use of support mechanisms in order to help women balance their private and personal lives (Marcinkus et al., 2007; White et al., 1992). In addition Moorosi (2007) stated that it was more difficult for women in high powered professions to balance their roles if they did not receive any help from their husbands, this was confirmed in this study as two of the participants had husbands who were also academics and this helped them to balance their roles.

> *P 5: …I'm quite lucky in that my husband is in the same field as me…we can always help one another out with time because our lectures um don't conflict so um when I've got a quarter to eight lecture my husband takes the kids to school…we both have one another's careers at heart we…give and take there and then um because our life is quite busy and pressurised at work we make sure that we take good breaks….*

4.3.3. Being Organised

Most (seven) of the participants agreed that they balanced their roles by being organised both at home and at work. This included having a diary, setting deadlines, compartmentalising time and using a schedule.

P 4: ...I also have to write everything down in my diary [laugh] and ya I set myself deadlines, things to achieve and try to get a balance.... Then I think I'm a fairly organised person in terms of lecturing, and delegating stuff to our technical staff and to my colleagues teaching with me.

P 5: ...you have to try and be organised and...know what meetings you have and... prepare for them and...also be realistic about what you can achieve um personally I should learn to say "no" more often because I get um asked to be external examiner for other universities...if I said "no" more times I probably would have more time for my things but it is difficult....

P 6: Um I just tried to be very well organised...

P 7: ...I'm an organised person....

P 7: ...to try and compartmentalise you've got to...like when I was doing my... LLD I...said ok these times I'm working on that and I don't care what happens... you've actually got to be quite strict with yourself and say this is the time that I'm doing my research...and I'm doing it on this day and bad luck.

According to Burchielli et al., (2008), one coping strategy adopted by some of the women was planning ahead of time, thus organisation and planning were important and helpful. This was confirmed in the current study.

One participant said that she structured her home life so that each of her family members had his or her own role to play.

P 9: ...everybody has a responsibility...we have...a schedule so we know who's cooking breakfast and who's cooking lunch and who's doing dinner and who is cleaning up you know who...everybody has their role.

4.3.4. Flexible Time

A high proportion (five) of the participants felt that given how the University operates they have been fortunate enough to have flexible time available within the organisation and they have used this to help with the balance of their work and family lives and to cope with all of

the challenges associated with these. Flexitime has also meant that these women can take work home. Five of the participants in this study stated that they took work home. This confirms Bain and Cummings (2000) opinion that within universities flexible working hours are favourable for women and their achievements.

> *P 6: I think um one had …to work sort of quite strange hours you know and the…flexibility here helped a lot because I could go and fetch children from school and then work at home you know take marking and research etc. etc…..*

> *P 2: …till about 3o'clock in the afternoon I'm at work and if I need to do lifts and things like that I do it afterwards. But if…something's urgent I can zap into town but I'm I'm quite rigid about my…working hours and…also…I do a lot of work at home…which I find works very well uh with an academic career because I've set myself up completely at home….*

> *P 3: …in an attorney's firm where you've got to be at work from 8 to 5 and there's no flexibility the one wonderful thing about academia is as long as you don't have classes you can go and nip out and go and fetch your children and so on so it makes it easier….*

> *P 6: …would do a lot over weekends etc….*

However in this study two of the nine participants did not use their flexitime to do work at home and seldom took work home with them. Instead they adopted strategies like planning their time effectively and delegating their workloads. However none of these participants mentioned working over-time. This is consistent with Burchielli et al.'s (2008) study which found that in order to balance their roles, women stayed late at work to complete outstanding work and avoided taking work home.

> *P 4: Another way I try and fit things in is to work flexitime- I come into work at seven and then I usually leave at four if I don't have a prac.*

> *P 8: Um I seldom work at home, I know a lot of people do, I will be very nasty and say I try to avoid it.*

One participant stated that she felt that there was no flexitime at the University.

P1: ...you choose to be an academic you choose to earn less…because you've got that flexitime uh that's not the case anymore at all um and again um you know…if you don't come into the office from 8 till 5 you get snide remarks if you write up on you door 'I'm marking at home' which is quite frankly the only place you can sensibly mark without interruptions, um snide comments get passed like "oh she's 'marking' at home'… you're just goofing off….

P 1: ...I can sit here until 5 and I can play solitaire in the last few hours for my work when I've got nothing left to do because I've done everything or I can go home at two, take home marking, do reading I can prepare lectures in the evening I do all of these things…. I make sure I'm up to scratch with my work I mean my work does not suffer as a result but um I have in a sense forced this flexitime uh because I've had to because there is no other option as a single mum….

4.3.5. Exercise and Relaxation

Six of the participants felt that they coped with balancing their roles by doing exercise, sport and relaxing. This was something that was important when it came to balancing their private and professional roles.

P 3: ...I am a firm believer in relaxation and regular exercise, (giggle) because that somehow keeps my head open and it keeps me going….

P 4: ...I have to do sport so I try do a bit of gym or running three or four times a week….

P 8: So one of the coping mechanisms is also to put in pockets even if it's just 20 minutes for me to do something, lock the door to the bathroom for 10 minutes in the bath, makes such a difference.

P 9: Exercise, yes I exercise a lot and I try as much as possible to exercise either

every morning or if if I maybe worked late the previous night…then I exercise as we watch news you know then I'll be exercising….

However relaxing was not an option for all of the participants, especially for those participants who were single mothers.

P 1: …um I found the only way I could relax…I think…one of the big problems for women is finding time for themselves um generally but when you're, when you're coupled with quite a stressful working environment and you've got a stressful home life and you've got a demanding child or you're a single mother…it's impossible to find time to yourself even more.

4.3.6. Unhelpful Mechanisms

Although all nine of the participants spoke of coping mechanisms, which helped them, one of these participants mentioned both the helpful and the unhelpful coping mechanisms that she utilised. This participant was a single mother and to cope she had to adopt many coping mechanisms some of which she perceived as destructive and not very helpful to her.

P 1: …one unhelpful…coping strategy where I could find time to myself to sink into myself was to get drunk and I would do that all to frequently um and cigarettes….

4.4. Challenges

All nine of the participants experienced managerial and/or personal challenges. Personal and managerial challenges included their gender and gender-related barriers. Many of the managerial challenges were to do with managing other people especially within the diverse context of the University. Personal challenges included personal sacrifices, as well as other family matters, for example divorce.

The managerial and personal challenges mentioned by the participants in this study were as follows:

4.4.1. Gender Challenges both Personal and Managerial

Five of the participants in this study felt that their gender made them feel disadvantaged and discriminated against. However in spite of feeling discriminated against, all nine of the participants in this study agreed that their gender and discrimination did not prevent them from advancing into senior management positions, and thus they saw it as a barrier that they were able to overcome. Two of the participants in this study provided insight into how they fought the gender-related barriers that they had faced. What follows are how they fought their gender-related barriers.

4.4.1.1. Discrimination Related Challenges

The majority of the participants (five) found their gender challenging and had experienced discrimination during their advancement to managerial positions.

> *P 1: ...I think a lot of...the stress between my colleague and I has more to do with gender than it does with race.*
>
> *P 1: ...being a manager as a woman is difficult...there's often like these little comments that are not meant to be derogatory um but just are so offensive....If I'm wearing a short skirt you know "Ally McBeal today are we"....*
>
> *P 2: I have never...you get the odd comment, um sometimes I feel for example Like... if...my children are sick, or if I have a problem where I've got to go and watch a hockey match or something like that, uh its sometimes difficult for women to say I'm...not available at two o'clock this afternoon 'cause I've got a school lift....*
>
> *P 4: ...I knew through my publication record that I was worthy of promotion and colleagues of mine that were males had been promoted and when I went to the head of school he was against it and he said why do I want to be like the males cause I'll never have balls and I said well I still want the promotion and so although he was against promotion um I applied and I got promotion....*
>
> *P 9: ...when I was Head of School there were moments when I felt that you know my decisions were being challenged and not because what I said was not the right thing but because of who I am and the good thing is you know the other*

women in the school would support me and… deal with that issue and the other men would identify…where…things have gone wrong based on gender issues and they'd also confront their…male colleague who has said something that is sexist or have done something that is sexist so there is a general support for each other in the school….

One of the abovementioned participants stated that she felt as though women had to prove themselves more than men when they did something. She perceived this as a challenge.

P 9: …when you are a woman you tend to work harder right because um because you know there's this perception that…these jobs are for men ah when you're a woman you have to prove yourself three times as much so you tend to to over prepare you know you spend a lot of time you know to make sure that…what you are going to present, it is the right thing….

In addition, one participant reported that not only did she experience gender-related discrimination from males but she also had difficulty with her female administrative assistants once she had moved into a managerial position.

P 1: …I also have a real difficulty with the administrative assistants. There's this… sort of um women's group, women's social group…and we…do girly things um but the moment you start to rise a bit too high up the ladder um the moment you start making demands on me as an admin assistant to actually do administrative stuff [laugh]. In other words the moment you're no longer one of us you know you're one of them you're one of…the people in a position of power. The moment you reach that then you are no longer in our group.

Although five of the participants stated that they had experienced discrimination at some point, based on their gender, there was a general consensus from all nine participants in this study that gender had never really prevented them from advancing into managerial positions.

P 2: …I have actually never…really felt…in my career here that I have been disadvantage…as a woman or disadvantaged…as a mother. I've never felt

that. Because I don't think I've actively sort those positions. I think other women who've actively wanted those positions may feel differently.

P 2: So I can't actually argue that I ever felt faced any barriers.

P 3: ...I can't say that I've been held back um because I am a female or whatever the case may be….

P 4: ...I think in general most of my colleagues have been male and they've been very supportive and helpful to me over the years….

P 5: ...I've never felt that um you know, " Oh, she's just a woman" and all that, that I had to fight harder, um it was more I had to drive, be self driven more because perhaps a… supervisor wasn't all that interested in what I was doing and I had to prove myself…but the same held for other people of different genders. So um and I've always been…voted onto committees etc. so um I never got the impression oh I'm just the token female….

P 6: ...I don't know that it ever held me back you know; um I think I'm the sort of person who… sees something like that as a sort of challenge rather than an obstacle….

P 7: [Giggle] I don't know that I was ever discriminated against really…as a female I mean maybe… certainly not…obviously…. Cause I mean I was promoted to an associate professor when I was in hospital having …my second baby so I don't know if that [giggle] … so I don't know that and [sigh] you know maybe there's a glass ceiling I don't know….

P 8: I don't think I've ever had a situation where I could say outright gender discrimination.

One of the nine participants mentioned that the current legislation in South Africa such as the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 had helped women get into higher positions and that they are not really discriminated against anymore.

P 6: But um I think actually you know since um 94 and employment equity it…could have worked in my favour, I mean…had you…been invited for example to apply to be a dean, deputy dean and they were specifically wanting a black person or a woman you know…. I think that it more recently it…can actually work in your favour rather than against you.

This sentiment supports Noble and Moore (2006) who believe that one of the reasons for the increase of women into the paid labour force in South Africa and abroad could be due to the implementation of equal employment opportunities and affirmative action.

4.4.1.2. Overcoming Discrimination

Two of the participants stated that discrimination; gender and the glass ceiling had not gone away.

P 1: …I don't know if I have overcome them….

P 9: But generally there's that atmosphere of wanting to support each other and we overcome it by…mentioning it if it comes up; you deal with it there and then….

4.4.2. Management Role

The following are managerial challenges the participants (seven) in this study faced.

4.4.2.1. Managing People

Four of the participants felt that a major managerial challenge for them was managing other people. This included mentoring younger staff and helping others to do well. In addition, from a managerial perspective, diversity has been a challenge for many of the participants. The challenges the participants in this study mentioned are presented below:

P 4: I think trying to convince people of new ideas, and to change…managing postgraduate students, trying to develop them….

P 5: I think um one is not really very well equipped to to work with people and …there's quite a range of people that you have to work with….

P 5: ...I find that the biggest challenge and the biggest headache is to try and juggle all that and…to just have enough time to to read all the postgrad students' thesis drafts you know. I sit with a, with a pile of them to just get through all that, and I, you know, I know their frustrations as well…. Time is probably just the biggest challenge.

P 5: ...I try and take it a little bit at a time rather ah say for instance just set myself smaller tasks and…just get get started on something…but ya it remains a continuous challenge.

P 6: ...the most difficult um problems are always to do with managing people…trying to you know ...be aware of them and what they needed and…trying to give them opportunities…that would assist them and support them.

P 6: I think the teaching becomes much more difficult just because of people who've come in from backgrounds you know, people of all colours that come in from backgrounds….

P 7: ...I think the biggest challenge is that people don't do…things the way you want them to do, [giggle] and I mean not that they wrong necessarily but because you've got…a particular approach and you want people to follow your, follow your approach.

P 7: ...you have to in a way mentor the…younger staff members and especially younger staff members who don't have, for example who don't have the same writing skills….

P 7: ...you dealing with different personalities so personality issues always come into it I think.

4.4.2.2. Managerial Duties

Managerial duties included making decisions, being fair to one's colleagues and subordinates as well as time pressures. Three of the nine participants stated that their duties were managerial challenges for them.

P 8: ...I'm chair of higher degrees as well which is kind of a managerial role in that sense and sometimes decisions have to be made very quickly so there's time pressure versus trying to be democratic and go through all the

correct processes and sometimes you have to make executive decisions and then they might be like "Hey you forgot to ask us first" kind of thing.

4.4.2.3. No Challenges

Two participants stated that they did not really have many challenges when it came to the managerial aspects of their work.

One of these two participants stated that she did not experience challenges like other women while she was advancing because she did not actively seek out those higher positions.

> *P 2: ...I've done them because it has been expected of me because…of me being promoted to the Senior Lecturer or Associate Professor or Professor that you know its gone along with the position. I haven't actually sought out those positions….*

> *P 8: ...I don't know if I ever had real managerial challenges….*

4.4.3. Personal Challenges

Although only some (seven) participants experienced managerial challenges, all of the participants in this study experienced challenges that were personal in nature. These included personal sacrifices, guilt as well as other personal challenges associated with their managerial roles.

The following were some of the personal challenges, the participants in this study faced:

4.4.3.1. Sacrifices

Four participants made personal sacrifices while becoming managers. These participants are still making sacrifices by holding senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

> *P 2: Um so I think from a salary point of view ya, I think we have sacrificed a lot working here.*

> *P 7: ...I think this kind of job…you don't earn that kind of income that you could…if*

you went into practice.

This corroborates Marcus's (2007) opinion that many female academics choose lower paying jobs. O'Connor (2005) noted that in general, women have to sacrifice a great deal more than men in order to become successful in the workplace.

However, one of the participants did not perceive having to work as a sacrifice. Instead she enjoyed her work.

P 2: ...I'm one of those very few people that actually gets up on a Monday morning and say "Yay, I'm glad I am going to work". I love working I love what I do so I don't see the working as a sacrifice.

P 2: ...I think that I've benefited from being able to work....

4.4.3.2. Guilt

Many of the participants (four) said that they felt guilty because they had to work so hard and had so little time for their family.

P 1: It's a lot of balancing...it's a lot of very very difficult balancing and always always...feeling guilty. Feeling guilty I'm... not at work for longer. Feeling guilty I'm not with my son for longer uh feeling guilty I'm so tired all the time um my son saying to me things like..."...mommy but you're always tired you're always sleeping and you can't wake up in the morning and what's wrong with you?"...

P1: ...and as much as I try and rationalise it, it breaks my heart and I feel so guilty and I drive off to the lecture guilty and resentful...I come back shattered and exhausted and still have to make the lunch box for the next day and feed the dogs...it has actually made me quite hard....

P 8: Um I feel very bad now that I've had to put the kids in...school so young but I mean that's all over the world working mothers do that....

P 9: No, you'll always feel guilty that you are not giving your family a hundred

percent, ya so um sometimes you want to compensate by things, you know buying things you know…because you're…there's that guilty conscience at the back of your mind you know all the time that …you're short-changing your family….

These findings confirm those of Burchielli et al. (2008) who also found a great deal of guilt attached to women when they try to balance their private and personal lives.

4.4.3.3. Studying Further

One participant was studying towards her LLD while she was working. This participant spoke of the difficulties that she had while trying to balance her personal and professional roles and studying at the same time.

> *P 7: Oh – you…get quite despondent cause…I mean the hardest for me was the was my LLD cause it went on forever and you just think is this ever going to end and you just think is it actually worth it?…But I mean it's challenging as you go along but I think the biggest challenge for me was doing my LLD cause… you know doing any kind of research is like and it's lonely.*

According to participant 7 this challenge was managed by having a supportive husband who was willing to take the children on holiday while the participant worked on her LLD.

> *P 7: Yes, and you got family, you got a poor husband who [giggle] thinks you might pay him attention some time or other but…the times that you can do it are really when…its holiday you know when in theory you're on holiday and then of course your children are on holiday at the same time so they must go off to the playschool, or they must go on holiday with your husband [giggle].*

4.4.3.4. Being a Woman

Two participants mentioned that they felt that being female was a challenge in itself because of how emotional women tended to be, and that as women there was a need to prove themselves, and thus a need to put more effort into their work.

P 4: I think as women we often don't have confidence in ourselves and something I really regret about us in general is that we always need affirmation that we're doing something right, whereas blokes don't seem to need that. Then at least once a month we have a wobbly so where our confidence is low. So in that way… frustration of being a woman and having all those hormonal things that we have which guys I don't think have.…I find I get quite affected by students who are having huge personal problems at home and they come and share it with you, and there's nothing you can really do to help them except listen and advise them….

P9: …when you are a woman you tend to work harder…because…you know there's this perception that…these jobs are for men…when you're a woman you have to prove yourself three times as much so you tend to…over prepare….

4.4.3.4. Family/Personal Challenges

Other challenges the participants (five) faced were personal in nature. These included getting divorced, alcoholism, juggling their roles, financial pressures, motherhood challenges, cultural challenges, as well as the loss of a husband. Their comments were as follows:

P 4: Within 2 years when I first started teaching here my first husband died of brain cancer, and in a way I used work as an escape to cope. I know I did but at the same time I was grateful for the people here that supported me during that time.

P 6: …balancing you know of…work and home, um and then also trying to um balance teaching and research.

P 1: …when I was married I went overseas, I went to conferences at least once a year, um the first conference I went to after giving birth was when my son was 4 months old, um very humorous stories I can tell you there about taking breast pumps with me and locking myself in the toilet for an hour during lunch literally. I couldn't eat lunch because I had to um [whisper] relieve my milk [laugh] …um so when I went away uh I was still breastfeeding and my breasts would get very…this is the reality of being a woman, being a mother, trying to

juggle these things; you're expected to go to conferences. What the hell do you do when you're, when you're breastfeeding and going to a conference? Well you take a pump. Do pumps work that well? Damn! No they don't It's…sore you sit there aching; you sit there with pads in your breasts leaking milk you know um smelling of sour milk uh. It's…hard for people to take you seriously as a professional when you're smelling of milk.

P 1: With the stress of my husband leaving, well with the stress of… three years of an incredibly bad, very unhappy marriage um with the stress of job insecurity and not knowing when my next contract will be renewed. Sometimes waiting till like the month before my next contract was renewed to know…I drank a lot… to cope with the stress and when my husband left I drank even more and every night the one thing that I could look forward to the one way in which I could relax while also trying to meet my maternal obligations and cook dinner and so on was at least have something to drink.

P 1: My son has suffered from um the amount of stress that has been generated by… work for me um my son has suffered from that stress…. Um he's certainly suffered by my coping with the stress by resorting to alcohol….

P 1: …that's a challenge, that's a major challenge and I think were my time not so precious as a single mother I wouldn't feel those challenges as strongly as I do uh but I do, you know, I do every…minute counts you know every like until I see my child you know every minute has got to be spent very wisely and the time with my child…and make sure he gets his homework done, eats properly you know that we do spend time playing together.

4.5. Support Structures

All nine participants used support structures to help them manage their challenges and to balance their roles. These support structures included family support, paid support, friends and colleague support.

P 6: …hiring someone to be at home um and then my…friends and family and colleagues. I had some really supportive colleagues and we've always we've always had a… programme where people really care about each other.

What follows are the support structures used by the participants:

4.5.1. Hired Help/Housekeeper

Most of the participants (five) relied on paid help as support structures, which helped them to manage their challenges.

> *P 2: …as far as ah children and household and all that are concerned, I've always surrounded myself with the support mechanisms, I have a housekeeper who runs my home…*

> *P 4: So I think if you have a good support structure. I have a very supportive husband and we've got a brilliant nanny: these make my life much much easier. This also means that you cope better and are supported to do your work.*

> *P 7: …it was all paid support. I didn't have much family support but I had um you know first of all I had someone at home helping in the house, and then I had someone helping with the children, someone who fetched and carried because that's what takes a lot of your time, and then taking them to swimming lessons and taking them to all these silly little lessons that they have to go to after school and wherever.*

> *P 8: …hired a full time nanny – [Laughing]…I didn't have family around so I had to count on paid help.*

4.5.2. Supportive Husband

Most of the married participants (five) managed their challenges and coped with their personal and managerial demands by getting support from their spouses.

> *P 2: …I have a very supportive husband….*

> *P 4: I've got a terrific husband and he helps me a lot….*

> *P 5: …support from…home from my own husband that gives me a lot of support….*

P 7: …then um also the other support structure was really my husband who really when I was doing my LLD, he took he used to take them away for like two or three weeks and you sit at home, you stay at home and you do nothing other than work on your on your on your doctorate so those were the support structures really….

4.5.3. University Support Structures

Although the University has some support structures in place, some participants (two) did not find these to be very helpful. One participant stated that such support structures were unhelpful. Another participant felt that they could be improved.

P1: I haven't found any formal support structures in the university helpful; if anything, I've found them obstructive and unhelpful….

P 5: Um other support structures…the university has…several you know…but um many times they not…very efficient…. But um there's still a lot…of improvement that can be done.

4.5.4. Family Members and Friends

The majority of the participants (five) stated that they received support from their friends and/or family members. One participant who was a single mother reported that she found family support structures most helpful to her. She stated that she had family members who had worked at the University so they understood how it felt to be employed by such institutions. This participant found that the only helpful support mechanisms in the University were her colleagues.

P 1: My parents being so close by is a big one for me.

P 2: …I have my mother who's very supportive…so I've been very fortunate in having that.

P 3: Most of the support structures were personal in the sense that um I have other arrangements for my children um which is family or friends….

4.5.5. Colleague and Administrative Support

The only support within the university that most of the participants (seven) felt was helpful was support from their colleagues. According to them, support from colleagues was much more useful than support from the University.

> *P 1: …my 2 female colleagues that I mentioned earlier they've also been quite a nice network of support for me, both emotional support and practical support um ya. I haven't found any formal support structures in the university helpful….*

> *P 2: Also in this particular faculty when we were Business law we had a number of women or there are still a number of them still around. And we were very supportive of each other; it worked very very well…. We would have one person say well I need to do this, can you step in and do that?…especially when our children were small.*

> *P 4: I think one's got to know when to ask for advice from colleagues and to get them to help you read proposals, lecture notes etc…to give you feedback and advice.*

> *P 5: …in this our discipline um I find that I have the support of the administrative staff and most… of the colleagues.*

> *P 8: And then um this is a very very good corridor very good little school so we support each other.*
>
> *P 8: Emotionally I couldn't cope without the women here.*

4.6. Conclusion

The results of the findings from this study reveal that although the participants faced certain challenges, both personal and managerial, these challenges did not prevent them from advancing to senior management positions. What helped them in the process of advancement was studying further, working hard and receiving promotions. In addition the findings showed that the participants balanced their roles as mothers, wives, employees and managers through adopting various coping mechanisms such as prioritising, having support systems in

place, being organised, using the flexitime afforded by the University, as well as by exercising and relaxing when they were able to. Finally the participants mentioned that they utilised various support structures, which helped them to manage their challenges. These included hired help such as a housekeeper, having a supportive husband or partner, using the University support structures, receiving support from family members, friends as well as colleagues and administrative staff.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION

5.1. Introduction

This research study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding into the lives of women currently in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The study intended to uncover how these women balanced their personal and professional roles in the process of advancing to senior management positions. Nine female participants, who are in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, were interviewed. This chapter will discuss the findings presented in the previous chapter. The chapter has the following main themes: advancement, challenges, balancing roles as mother, wife, employee and manager, as well as support structures.

5.2. Advancement

The findings of this study revealed that the majority of the participants did not experience many difficulties in advancing to senior management positions; they had managed to overcome the few barriers that they did face, such as gender discrimination. However, the literature confirms that, in general there are still barriers that prevent women from advancing to senior management positions (Jones & George, 2003; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Roodt & Odendaal, 2003; Sarch, 1997; Werner & DeSimone, 2006; White et al., 1992), and men are more likely to receive promotions than their female counterparts (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Wood, 2006). The situation may have changed for the better now, but not much.

This can be seen from the findings of this study that participants were all promoted to full professorships (or senior management positions) regardless of the challenges that they had to overcome as stated in the previous chapter. In the current study all the participants managed to advance despite gender and other related challenges such as balancing roles and studying further. The majority of participants did not seem to feel that their gender was a barrier that held them back. This finding is confirmed by Simpson and Altman (2000) but not supported by Mathur-Helm (2005) and Wood (2006) who state that it is unusual for women in South Africa to advance and that women are not seen as equal to their male counterparts. The positive results of this study may be due to the fact that only women who had managed to advance to senior management positions were targeted.

The women in this study advanced through hard work and studying further to obtain the necessary qualifications, equal to their male counterparts, to hold senior managerial positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. This finding is supported by Bain and Cummings (2000). It suggests that women who are still planning to advance to the senior management echelons should serious consider improving their academic qualifications.

5.3. Challenges

All of the participants faced challenges that were of a personal nature, such as discrimination, studying further, making sacrifices, and feeling guilty while they were advancing to senior management positions, this is supported by the literature (Fenn, 1976; Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Jones & George, 2003; Smith, 1975; Werner & DeSimone, 2006; White et al., 1992). For this reason Durkin (1971), argued that management roles were traditionally believed to be positions for men, as men were assumed to possess the right aptitudes to be successful managers. Thus very few women were in positions of management, let alone senior management, because the role of the woman was considered to be that of a housekeeper (Giddens, 2004; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Taylor & Conradie, 1997; White et al., 1992). This is further supported by the Social Learning Theory proposed by Bandura which states that individuals learn new behaviours through observing and imitating others and are reinforced for these behaviours (Papilia & Olds, 1988).

Even though most participants of the study reported being disadvantaged and discriminated against, they did not feel that they were discriminated against to the point that it stopped them from achieving their promotions; hence these participants did not have a difficulty breaking through the gender related barriers. This confirms that there are some cracks in the glass ceiling as women are entering into traditionally male management positions (Werner & DeSimone, 2006). This is due to the fact that the participants in this study have learnt how to become successful or submissive from the role models they have interacted with. This is supported by the Social Learning theory, which suggests that people learn new behaviours and how to conduct themselves through reinforcement (Coon, 2004; Giddens, 2004). The women in this study managed to advance despite the barriers that they faced and thus have learnt how to climb the managerial ladder and become senior managers. It seems, important therefore for the sample of this study to share with the up and coming female managers the strategies that worked for them.

The participants agreed that one of their personal challenges was feeling guilty. They felt guilty about being at work and not with their families. Such a feeling could make them less committed to their jobs, which could also affect their productivity levels (Roodt & Odendaal, 2003). The feelings of guilt as experienced by women in general is confirmed by literature that states that women make sacrifices such as battling with exhaustion and feeling guilty because they cannot do more than they wish in each of their roles (personal and professional) (Burchielli et al., 2008). In order to cope with such guilt, one participant stated that she compensated for not spending much time with her family by buying them things, although she did not specify what things.

In addition, the participants had to make many personal sacrifices while they were advancing. As noted by O'Connor (2005), women generally have to sacrifice a great deal more than men in order to become successful in the workplace. The same observation was confirmed by Burchielli et al. (2008) and Marcus (2007).

Other personal challenges the participants faced were furthering their studies, financial problems, returning to work when their children were still too small (4 months old) and getting divorced. One participant went to an extent of adopting an unhealthy coping mechanism and indulged in alcohol abuse. However this did not apply to most of the participants.

As mentioned previously, one participant was promoted when she was having her second baby; thus she did not appear to have been discriminated against and did not lose the opportunity to become a professor. This example confirms Bain and Cummings's (2000) opinion that women have moved up the ladder into senior management positions in academia. In addition there has been an increase of women into the paid labour force and more senior positions in the corporate world, which is also evident in the present study (Noble & Moore, 2006; Schreuder & Theron, 2004). Furthermore there is more equality in employment opportunities and the gender related traditional roles appear to be falling away. In South Africa, a reason for the advancement of women into senior positions in general has to a large degree been due to the implementation of the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and affirmative action after the inauguration of the post-apartheid government in 1994 (Finnemore, 2002; Mathur-Helm, 2002; Schreuder & Theron, 2004). This was confirmed by

one of the participants in the current study who stated that women have benefited since 1994 when employment equity was introduced.

5.4. Balancing Roles as Mother, Wife, Employee and Manager

There are a number of ways in which the women in the current study achieved their work-family balance. The participants adopted certain coping mechanisms and support structures in order to enable them to balance their private and professional roles while they advanced into senior management positions.

Overall the participants adopted healthy coping mechanisms that made a huge difference in helping them to balance their roles. These included taking work home and using the University's flexitime in order to balance their roles. Bain and Cummings (2000) stated that within the University sub sector, the flexible working hours are favourable for women and their achievements; this is confirmed by the findings of the current study, as the flexibility did not only allow these participants to do work at home, but also gave them the opportunity to fetch their children, and watch their children's sporting events. One participant, a single mother, explained that she has had to enforce the flexitime as she felt that there was no flexitime at the University. By enforcing flexitime she was able to take work home and spend time with her son. This has helped her to be more productive both professionally and personally, thus balancing her roles more effectively. Burchielli et al. (2008) also found that women adopted strategies such as taking work home.

In this study some of the participants disagreed with taking work home and felt strongly that they balanced their roles by not taking work home, but rather ensuring that they completed their work before they went home. In this way they 'separated' their private and professional lives completely. This corroborates Burchielli et al's. (2008) finding. However, in the current study although some of the participants did not take any work home, they did not mention staying late to finish work. Instead they suggested that they used other ways to get the work done so that it did not have to be taken home such as being organised with their time, delegating their work and working faster. In addition, many of the participants stated that they were very organised and that helped them to balance their roles, again confirming Burchielli, et al's (2008) study.

In addition, literature shows that women adopt various other coping mechanisms in order to help them to balance their roles. These included doing part-time work, self-motivation, as well as social and support structures (Marcinkus et al., 2007; Powney, 1997; White et al., 1992). All the participants in this study relied on support structures to help them to balance their private and professional roles. These support structures helped them advance to senior management positions.

5.5. Support Structures

Support structures were used by all of the participants in this study. None of the participants used the University structures as support mechanisms. The participants who spoke about the University support structures felt that they were not at all helpful. These participants felt that the University systems were inefficient and needed improvement. The participants mentioned taking their children to work with them when they lectured at night or when their children were sick and there was no one to look after them. This is different from European studies where companies have work-family practices such as flexitime, childcare services and shorter working hours to help to eliminate the structural barriers on women's career advancement (Straub, 2007).

Since the University support structures (such as child care services) were perceived to be inadequate, none of the participants used any of them. The only University structures that most participants used were support from working colleagues and flexitime (which, as mentioned earlier, was not a luxury available to all the participants). In addition, in order to cope, the participants had to rely on other support structures such as family members, friends, their husbands or hired help. In support of this O'Connor (2005) suggests that organisations need to focus on work-family issues and how inadequate childcare arrangements have a negative impact on the work and family lives of their employees.

Participants who used the administrative staff as a support structures found that their colleagues were a strong network of support for them. One of the participants who was a single mother said that her colleagues (who also had young children) would get together on the weekend and do work at a place where their children could play thus helping her to balance her roles better. This support from colleagues was perceived to be both emotional and practical by the participants.

The participants also utilised other support structures such as hired help, having a supportive husband and help from friends. According to Marcinkus et al. (2007, p. 87), "social support is a critical resource for working women to enable their continued success in both work and family domains". Many of the participants had housekeepers to help them with the household demands. Thus much of the support that these participants used was paid support. One participant (a single mother) asserted that for her**,** it took an adjustment to get used to having someone help out with housework, as it was not something that she had grown up with. This observation suggests that the participants had to make adjustments, both at work and at home, which is a huge challenge.

Social and personal support structures are very helpful in helping women to achieve the balance in their private and professional lives (Marcinkus et al., 2007; Powney, 1997; White et al., 1992). This is evident in the current study where all of the participants used social and personal support structures (as discussed above) in order to help them balance their roles and advance into senior management positions. Although working at the University afforded them flexitime, they also needed further support from friends, family members and paid help to help them to cope with their roles.

The married women in this study relied on their husbands' support and help with their children. Moorosi (2007) was of the opinion that balancing work and family roles and responsibilities as a woman in a high powered position was even more difficult for women whose husbands did not help around the house with the domestic tasks and thus these women found it more difficult to manage in their professions.

Helping, supporting and learning from one another are supported by the Social Learning theory, which states that behaviours are learned through observation (Papalia & Olds, 1988). Thus this theory explains how women learn how to balance their personal and professional roles from an early age. The theory, therefore, explains how the women in this study managed to cope and balance their personal and professional roles in order to climb the managerial echelons and advance to senior positions within the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

5.6. Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the results of this study. The participants in this study all advanced to senior positions despite facing challenges and making sacrifices (such as spending time

with their children and family members), being discriminated against, and dealing with feelings of guilt. The participants balanced their personal and professional roles by adopting certain coping mechanisms. Some participants felt that taking work home and using the flexible time afforded by the University helped them, while others stated that they balanced their roles better by completing their work before going home, clearly dividing their personal and professional lives. Of great importance was that the participants balanced their roles through prioritising and using support structures. Support structures were perceived to be important in helping most of the participants to manage their challenges as well as to cope with their dual roles. However two of the participants stated that they did not think that the University support structures were very helpful. Overall the participants stated that their support structures included hired help such as a housekeeper, having a supportive husband, friends and family members as well as receiving support from colleagues and administrative staff at the University. The primacy of social support for this sample of managers is very evident in the findings.

CHAPTER SIX
SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1. Introduction

This chapter aims to summarise and conclude the research project and its findings. Recommendations for future research are also presented.

6.2. Summary

This study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the lives of women who are currently in senior management positions within the University of KwaZulu-Natal. More specifically the aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of how these women balanced their private and professional roles in order to reach the upper echelons of management.

This research was based on a qualitative research design. The sample consisted of nine participants in senior management positions at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and used a non-probability, convenience sampling method. The participants were interviewed using semi structured interviews, using an interview schedule with open-ended questions. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. The interviews were tape recorded and then transcribed verbatim by the researcher. The interviews were then analysed using Thematic Qualitative Analysis.

The results of this research indicated that although the participants did face certain barriers (such as gender discrimination) while advancing to senior management positions, they were able to break through these barriers. What helped them in their advancement was that they utilised various coping mechanisms such as being organised, prioritising, using flexitime, as well as various support structures (such as support from family and friends). The participants also worked hard and improved their studies, which was difficult and challenging for them as they had to make many sacrifices. These sacrifices included feeling guilty about not spending enough time with their family members, missing out on holidays to study further, struggling with exhaustion, and marital problems leading to alcohol abuse. This research disconfirms literature that states that women are still not advancing because they are blocked by certain barriers such as being discriminated against and held back by their traditional roles (Bain & Cummings, 2000; Giddens, 2004; Mathur-Helm, 2005; Roodt & Odendaal, 2003; Wilson, 2005).

6.3. Recommendations

It is recommended that a further study be conducted which looks at women at the various levels at the University of KwaZulu-Natal who are hoping to advance to senior management positions. This would be beneficial because at different levels there are different barriers and challenges and some women have not been able to advance as quickly as others have, and faced many more challenges. In addition, it would be helpful to compare women in senior management positions who are single mothers with those who are not because they appear to face different challenges. It can be seen from the findings of this study that women who were single mothers had more challenges in balancing their roles, whereas those with partners were better able to cope as they had extra support, with their husbands helping them financially as well as with their children.

6.4. Conclusion

This study concludes that although the participants did experience challenges and discrimination in one form or another, they have managed to climb the managerial echelons. This was evident in the findings of this study where all of the participants advanced into senior management positions and thus showed that the traditional ‘glass ceiling’ was cracking and the participants were advancing. This is also confirmed by literature, which reveals that although women have had challenges and may still be experiencing these, they are managing to advance into senior managerial positions (Gerson & Horowitz, 2002; Levinson & Lurie, 2004; Palley, 2001; Simpson & Altman, 2000; Werner & DeSimone, 2006; Williams, 1976).

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APPENDIX A

Interview Schedule

1) How did you advance to your present position?

2) How do you balance your roles as a mother, wife, employee and manager?

2.1) What coping strategies do you use?

3) What challenges have you faced as a manager?

3.1) What work-related challenges did you face?

3.2) What personal challenges did you face?

3.3) What barriers did you face?

3.4) If you faced the glass ceiling, gender and discrimination, how did this affect you and how did you manage to overcome these challenges and barriers?

4) What support structures did you utilise in managing your challenges?

Biographical information

1.) Age: …….

2.) Marriage status: …….

3.) Number of children: ……

4.) Your position in the organisation: ……

APPENDIX B

CONFIDENTIAL

Letter to participant

My name is Lianne Geddes. I am currently doing my masters in Industrial Psychology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. I would greatly appreciate your participation in my research study, which forms part of my research treatise. My research involves looking at women in senior management positions and understanding how they have balanced their roles in order to reach the senior management positions they are currently in. In addition this research will look at the barriers and challenges these women faced in their advancement. I am hoping to make a valuable contribution to the field of Industrial psychology.

You are not at all obliged to take part in this research it is entirely voluntary. If you choose not to participate there will be nothing held against you. You are also free to withdraw at any time during the interview and there will be no negative consequences associated with this withdrawal. Please note that you will be given pseudonyms in order to protect your identity. Therefore you are able to be completely honest when answering the questions. All information given by you will be dealt with in a confidential manner. Only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to the information you provide. The interview data will be stored away safely by me until the required time has passed and then it will be destroyed.

If you have any queries about the research or wish to know the results of this research please can you contact me on 084 50 60 477. You can also contact my supervisor Dr Thandi Magojo on (031) 2601034 at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Howard College campus if further information is needed regarding this research.

By agreeing to take part in this interview you are indicating your consent to be a participant in this study. Thank you for your participation.

Lianne Geddes

Informed consent form

I ……. consent to participate in the research entitled Women in Senior Management Positions: An Exploration of How they Balance their Roles, which is being conducted in partial fulfillment of an Industrial Psychology masters degree.

I am aware that participation in this interview is entirely anonymous and voluntary and that I am able to withdraw at any time during the interview. I consent to having this interview recorded on an audiotape and am fully award that my name will not be used in any part of this research thus this research is completely confidential. I am aware that the researcher will use pseudonyms in order to protect my identity. Should I wish to know the findings of this study I have the name of the researcher and her supervisor and am able to contact them at any time during this research study.

…… …….

Signature of participant Date

…….. ……...

Signature of researcher Date