A CASE STUDY OF THE
RESEARCH CAREERS OF WOMEN ACADEMICS: CONSTRAINTS AND ENABLEMENTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate constraints that women academics experience in their research careers and how enablements, particularly in the form of mentoring relationships and support structures, can impact on their research career development in the context of the new knowledge economy of Higher Education.

The research was a case study of one South African Institution and used a mixed method approach. Social realism underpinned the research. Data was collected and analysed within the spheres of structure, culture and agency, using critical discourse analysis, interpretation and abstraction strategies.

I investigated how women researchers understand and experience career success and what they perceive and experience as enablements and constraints to their research careers. Institutional support structures and cultures were examined with a focus on the role of the Head of Department. I explored mentoring and questioned whether the agency of women academics is empowered by mentoring and supportive structures to overcome constraints to their research productivity and the development of their careers.

Gender-based issues of inequity, low self-esteem and accrual of social capital appear to be the underlying factors affecting how women perform in the research arena and advance within the institution. It was found that mentoring is a generative mechanism that has a favourable impact on women academics as it enables them to overcome obstacles to research productivity and career advancement.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DHET   Department of Higher Education and Training

DoE   Department of Education

HE   Higher Education

HEI   Higher Education Institution

HESA   Higher Education South Africa

HoD   Head of Department

NRF   National Research Foundation

PG   Postgraduate

PhD   Doctorate degree

NS   Natural Science

RU   Rhodes University

SARChI   South African Research Chair Initiative

SS   Social Science

VC   Vice-Chancellor

WASA   Women's Academic Solidarity Association

CHAPTER ONE

Contextual framework and overview of the study

1.1.   Introduction

The purpose of this research is to investigate the constraints and enablements to women's research career development in the context of Rhodes University (henceforth referred to as RU).

In this chapter, I discuss the context of the research. Thereafter I discuss the research goals and state the research questions. The chapter ends with a synopsis of the structure of the thesis.

1.2.   Context of the research

This research is situated in the field of higher education (henceforth referred to as HE). The case study consists of women researchers at RU. In this section I discuss changes in higher education globally and how they affect national higher education systems. I then discuss some key challenges in South African HE in general and in relation to research career development. Thereafter I mention some national and institutional programmes that address these challenges. Lastly I discuss an initiative designed specifically for women.

1.2.1. Global changes in higher education

In the last quarter of the century, HE worldwide has been affected by changes due to globalisation, massification, neo-liberalism and new managerialism. This has led to what is called 'the new knowledge economy' (Thornton, 2009). Knowledge has become a currency that surpasses that of land, labour and materials, and universities are expected to play a key role in the national economy (Brew & Lucas, 2009). This change has led to 'major shifts in how universities have sought to define, govern, fund and shape their own field of social activity' (Bundy, 2006, p. 1).

Globalisation has promoted a free-market conversion in HE which has led to competition between universities. Governments see universities in terms of a knowledge economy and look to universities as a means toward securing economic advantage, which in turn leads to universities having to compete against other universities for students, staff and funding (Scott, 2009). This neo-liberal ideology emphasises 'research production, as well as skills formation, as the primary purposes of the modern university to the exclusion of other social, intellectual and cultural agendas' (Scott, 2009, p. xiv). Universities are seen as knowledge 'businesses'. Such a view has the potential to affect the academic freedom and autonomy of HE institutions, as corporate priorities may take precedence over individual research interests (Scott, 2009).

Spearheaded by the government in the United Kingdom in the 1980s and 1990s, massification – the move from education for the elite to mass education (Bundy, 2006) – subsequently became an international trend. Student enrolment in HE in the UK almost doubled between 1987 and 1992 (Bundy, 2006). At the same time, there was a reduction in state funding, and the state view of universities changed. 'The socio-economic benefits of higher education were expressed in terms of national economic competitiveness; universities were a toll, a resource, for human capital development and the production of relevant skills' (Bundy, 2006, p. 2). This led to a power shift 'in terms of who defines what counts as useful knowledge and whose discourse achieves dominance' (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 6).

The new knowledge economy of HE led to international changes in 'the production, consumption, circulation and conservation of knowledge' (Bundy, 2006, p. 7). This manifested in several ways, for example, the growth of information technology, the shift to more applied transdisciplinary knowledge, and the 'simultaneous globalisation and fragmentation of academic disciplines' (Bundy, 2006, p. 7). Both teaching and research have been affected by these changes. Curriculum decisions are influenced by fiscal constraints rather than the nature of the discipline or the needs of the students. This threatens certain disciplines, particularly those that are less commercial such as certain humanities and social science disciplines (Bundy, 2006).

These changes in the HE landscape have also affected research. According to Brew and Lucas, 'the link between academic research and economic interests has intensified over recent years, leading to a greater investment in university research particularly in the

highly developed nations who have been keen to maintain their competitive edge' (2009, p. 2). As a result, research is often directed to those areas where funding is available. The pressures of commercialisation and neo-liberal policies lead to less autonomous, blue-sky research (Brew & Lucas, 2009). This erosion of autonomy has also 'strengthened the imperative to privatise the fruits of research and eviscerate the public good associated with the *idea* of the university' (Thornton, 2009, p. 31). Research may be directed to serve the interests of the investor rather than to serve the interests of the public.

One of the consequences of HE competition for public funds is a trend towards new forms of management style in universities, referred to as new public management or new managerialism. This management style is a move away from the previous collegial and professorial ways of management and decision making to a more corporate style. The state demands more efficient spending of funds and more accountability. Some researchers such as Bundy (2006, p. 6) and Scott (2009) argue that this has resulted in tighter management of research and has created an 'audit culture' by which research can be measured and performance evaluated through peer reviews, submission of outputs, and citation indices. Some performance indicators used to 'measure' academics' research productivity are income generated from research and the number of publications and postgraduate degrees resulting from research (Thornton, 2009).

1.2.2. Higher education in South Africa

Changes that affected HE globally in the 1980s and 1990s only had an impact in South Africa after the democratic elections of 1994 (Bundy, 2006). This was due to the insular nature of the country in the apartheid era, and the continuation of state funding which facilitated the autonomy of the so-called white universities (Bundy, 2006). While the global changes began in the 1980s and continue today, South African institutions' entry into the new style of HE has occurred relatively quickly. Bundy argues that SA institutions are following international trends in a frenetic manner without much reflection on the direction and reasons for the change, focusing instead on 'issues such as transformation, redress, the crisis in some HDIs,[1] "size and shape", and mergers' (2006, p. 10). In less than ten years South African institutions have changed the way they operate. They now receive funding linked to outcomes, submit strategic plans and

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[1] Historically Disadvantaged Institutions.

reviews to government, undertake quality assurance, and monitor staff and student demographics against targets (Bundy, 2006).

This is reflected in one such change in the Department of Education's (2003) (DoE) policy for measuring and rewarding the research outputs of SA HE Institutions (henceforth referred to as HEI) which came into effect in 2004. In the policy a research output is defined as 'textual output where research is understood as original, systematic investigation undertaken in order to gain new knowledge and understanding' (DoE, 2003, p. 3). Research outputs comprised journal articles, books and conference proceedings. Publications in peer reviewed accredited journals are subsidised as one unit,[2] peer reviewed conference proceedings are subsidised as half a unit and peer reviewed books are subsidised at one unit per 60 pages (to a maximum of 300 pages). This method of national funding for HEIs, based on research productivity, tends to favour the Natural Sciences where journal articles are easier and faster to produce (see argument in 2.2). Currently there is debate within SA HEIs and the National Research Foundation (NRF) about re-evaluating the way the subsidy is allocated in order to make it more inclusive of creative outputs.

Internationally, academics have experienced a decline in salaries, more contract employment, less regard and less autonomy (Bundy, 2006). Studies in Australia show that over 70% of academics perceive that the status of academics is declining (Pienaar & Bester, 2006). Bundy refers to two SA studies which suggest that the same trend is occurring in SA. Webster and Mosoetsa's (2002) study found 'deteriorating relations with "management", an intensification of workloads, loss of shared identity and feelings of impotence' (Bundy, 2006, p. 18). Koen's (2003) study identifies continued inequality, a move to contract or temporary employment, declining salaries and increasing workloads (Bundy, 2006, p. 18). These factors have resulted in an ageing professoriate with fewer young people entering the profession (Bundy, 2006; HESA, 2011). Bundy raises concerns about South Africa's ability to 'produce, develop and retain a new and demographically representative generation of scholars' (Bundy, 2006, p. 19). This concern is echoed in the National Programme to Develop the Next Generation of Academics for South African Higher Education (HESA, 2011) which I discuss further in 1.1.5.1.

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[2] One unit carries a monetary value determined annually by the DoE.

In South Africa there are 23 public universities. These are differentiated as traditional universities, comprehensive universities, and universities of technology (CHE, 2009). Universities of technology offer vocational education through degrees or diplomas. Comprehensive universities offer various programmes from career-orientated diplomas to postgraduate research degrees (CHE, 2009). RU is one of the 11 traditional universities that offer 'a mix of programmes, including career-orientated degree and professional programmes, general formative programmes and research masters and doctoral programmes' (DoE, 2001, p. 49). The traditional universities produce the majority of the country's research papers as well as the majority of masters and doctoral graduates in South Africa (CHE, 2009).

The majority of South African research is produced by white male senior academics (CHE, 2009). Between 2004 and 2007 women at traditional universities nationally produced between 14% and 37% of all research papers (CHE, 2009). There has been a decline in the research contribution of academics under 40 years of age. In 1990, 14%-42% of research was produced by academics over the age of 50 years. By 2006 this figure had risen to 38%-65%. There is a national concern that 'as the over 50 largely white and male cohort moves closer to retirement there is little evidence of a commensurate black and female cohort waiting in the wings and ready to emerge' (HESA, 2011, p. 9). This concern has resulted in more concerted efforts on the part of HEIs to increase the research contribution of, in particular, younger, black and female researchers.

Higher Education South Africa (HESA) organised a national workshop in 2009 which resulted in a document outlining the challenges facing HE in South Africa, particularly in relation to academic staff. The document acknowledges that 'South African universities face a multi-dimensional crisis in attracting, appointing and retaining academic staff' (HESA, 2011, p. 1). It contains a proposal to develop the next generation of South African academics (HESA, 2011). Among the challenges facing HEIs in attracting academics to universities is the fact that salaries are not competitive with the private sector, student numbers and workloads are increasing, and in some cases, the institutional culture is experienced as alienating, particularly by black academics.

1.2.3. Rhodes University

Established in 1904, RU is the smallest of the 23 SA HEIs with 7166 students in 2010, of whom approximately 26% were postgraduate students. There were on average 340

permanent academic staff and 1000 support staff. The Institution has 35 Departments in six faculties, namely, Commerce, Education, Humanities, Law, Pharmacy and Science. The faculty of Humanities is the largest with approximately 137 permanent academic staff members, followed by the Faculty of Science with 97 permanent academic staff members (Digest of Statistics, 2011).

RU is considered a research-intensive university (Boughey, 2009). In terms of research, the Institution performs well on national performance indicators with one of the highest per capita research outputs (Badat, 2008). In 2009, RU produced 3.9% of the national research output in the form of publications in accredited journals (Clayton, 2011, p. 2). In 2009, RU exceeded the Department of Higher Education and Training's[3] (DHET) average expectation ('norm') of 1.25 accredited research outputs per academic staff member, achieving an average of 1.74 accredited research outputs per academic staff member, rating third of all SA HEIs. This average was achieved by the exceptionally high number of accredited research outputs produced by a small number of academics[4] at the institution, with 33.6% of academics meeting the DHET 'norm' of 1.25 accredited research outputs annually.

National trends indicate that the natural sciences produce the most research (CHE, 2009). The statistics of research productivity at RU are commensurate with national trends. The RU academics producing above the DHET 'norm' were mainly from the Faculty of Science (51%, n=57) followed by the Faculty of Humanities (31%, n=35)[5] (Clayton, 2011). Overall in 2009, the Science Faculty produced 54% of the per capita accredited research outputs with an average of 3.29 accredited research outputs per researcher. This was followed by the Faculty of Humanities which produced 26% of the per capita accredited research outputs with an average of 1.2 accredited research outputs per researcher (Clayton, 2011).

1.2.4. Women researchers nationally and at RU

My study was prompted by national concern about the relatively low research productivity rate for women academics (HESA, 2011). I was interested in investigating

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[3] In 2010 the Department of Education split and formed the Department of Basic Education and the Department of Higher Education and Training.
[4] The top research produced 6.2% of accredited research outputs; and the top 20 researcher produced 31.3% of accredited research outputs (Clayton, 2011).
[5] The balance is produced as follows; Faculty of Education (7%, n=8); Faculty of Commerce (4%, n=4); faculty of Pharmacy (5%, n=6); Faculty of Law (2%, n=2).

and understanding the underlying reasons for this. The trend in HE both nationally and internationally is that 'the most productive male authors far exceed the most productive women in terms of quantity of peer-reviewed article output' (Prozesky, 2008, p. 47). This is relevant to my research because at RU, men appear to publish more on average than women do. During the 3 year period 2008 - 2010, the ratio of men to women academics at RU was approximately 2:1 (Digest of Statistics, 2009-2011). The ratio of publications published by men and women was approximately 2:1 (on average 69% of publications were by men and 31% of publications by women). These figures are in line with the gender ratio of academics at RU and dispute Prozesky's findings. However, these figures include the *exceptional* productivity of the one female "research star" who produced 8% of *all* publications for this period (Research Report, 2008, 2009, 2010). This anomaly affects the statistics of productive women researchers at RU. If the number of publications by this "research star" are removed from the equation, then the ratio of men to women's publications drops to 3:1 (or 75%:25%) and the productivity of women researchers falls to 21% of the total accredited publications. I discuss "research stars" in more depth in 2.3.2.

Research by Vasil (1993, cited by Brooks, 1997) revealed that internationally, more men had doctoral degrees than women. This trend is evident at RU, where 62% of men academics have doctoral degrees as opposed to only 37% of women academics (HR Academic Staff Spread sheet, 2011). Prozesky (2008) notes that SA women achieve their doctorates at a later stage than men do and often complete their doctoral studies when their children are still young and they have heavy teaching commitments, factors which inhibit their research momentum post-PhD. Vasil (1993) claims that 'the greater prevalence of female academic staff not possessing a doctoral degree is likely to have contributed to observed gender differences in both productivity and research self-efficacy,' and notes that perceptions of confidence correlate with productivity (cited in Brooks, 2007, p. 151). It is issues such as these that my research aims to investigate.

In recent years two research projects of interest to my research have been undertaken at RU by Poulos (2011) and Knowles (2010). Poulos's (2011) research explored the experiences of women academics at RU, focusing on how these women balance their demanding professional careers with mothering. Knowles's research looked at how a women's organisation at the Institution contributed to change within individuals and within the Institution. She explored how the woman's organisation was able to use 'its

legitimized platform for renegotiating subjectivities, norms and performances' in order for change to occur (2010, front page).

Among the issues raised by Poulos and Knowles of relevance to my research are:

- the challenges women academics experience due to family responsibilities and hegemonic power relations in the institution; and
- how supportive structures may or may not facilitate change for women.

My research further explores how these challenges affect women as researchers in the context of new managerialism, neoliberalism and the new knowledge economy of HE, and how mentoring and supportive structures may help women to overcome these challenges and facilitate their development as researchers.

Another study undertaken at RU examined a mentoring programme of first year students (Oltmann, 2009). This study was of interest to me as critical realism was used as the theoretical framework and gave me insight into the application of this theory[6].

1.2.5. Some key challenges in South African HEIs

I have already alluded to some the key challenges for HE in SA as being transformation of the gender and racial profile of staff composition, particularly in senior positions and in the research arena; the retention of black and women academics; and institutional culture, which may be experienced as alienating by those in the minority, such as black and women academics. I now examine these challenges in more depth.

There is a national concern to change the current status quo and to 'produce and retain a new generation of academics and simultaneously transform the historical and social composition of the academic work force' (Badat, 2010, p. 25). The reason for concern and the proposed national intervention is that there is a shortage of existing academics and postgraduates to replace those academics who will be retiring in the next decade, as discussed in 1.2.2. Almost half of the professoriate and 20% of the current higher education workforce will be retiring in the next ten years (HESA, 2011). This problem is

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[6] A further study which helped me understand the theory of critical realism and social realism was that of Quinn (2006).

evident at RU, where in 2010 49% of full professors were over the age of 50. In addition, 73% of all professors were white and male.

Transformation of the gender and racial profile of those who produce research is clearly needed. Transformation generally appears to occur at a slow pace in HEIs. Shackleton, Riordan and Simonis (2006) argue that in terms of transformation, HEIs are contradictory environments. They claim that 'on the one hand universities are the incubators of new ideas and the nurseries of future savants. On the other, they are amongst the most conservative and patriarchal of organizations' (p. 572). Morley concurs and suggests that HE is a 'major site of cultural practice, identity formation and symbolic control', where transformation policies may exist but do not appear to be readily implemented (2006, p. 543).

To address the need for gender and racial staff composition transformation, particularly in relation to research, attention must be focussed on attracting black and female postgraduates to academia, and on increasing the qualifications of those black and female academics already in the system. Although the number of women academics in SA HE has increased since 1994 from 31% of the workforce to 44.2% in 2009, they are still underrepresented, particularly in the more senior positions in institutions (HESA, 2011). Similarly, although there has been an increase in the proportion of black academics – from 34.3% in 2003 to 43.5% in 2009 (HESA, 2011) – this is still far from being representative of South African demographics, where whites comprise approximately 10% of the population.

In order for South Africa to compete in the new knowledge economy globally, the number and quality of doctorates needs to dramatically improve (ASSAf, 2010). The number of masters and doctoral graduates is low in relation to South Africa's needs (HESA, 2011). This exacerbates the challenges of attracting a new generation of academics because the majority of those graduating are white (52% in 2005) and male (55% in 2005) (HESA, 2011). The HESA document notes that 'while the proportions of women and black graduates have increased significantly, they remain low relative to men and white graduates' (2011, p. 6). In addition, women graduates are unevenly distributed among the various disciplines and 'continue to be concentrated in the humanities and social science fields' (CHE, 2008, p. 32, cited in HESA, 2011, p. 4). Attracting black and female academics is further hindered by low remuneration in the

HE sector, which is not competitive with the private or public sector. This is even more profound in smaller institutions, and particularly institutions based in small towns, such as RU. Lower salaries make employment and retention less attractive, particularly to black and women graduates who are sought after by the private and public sectors.

Institutional culture is also considered a constraining factor in relation to retaining black and women academics (HESA, 2011). As the HESA report points out, 'aspirant and new black and women academics may find institutional environments and cultures alienating and difficult to traverse and have to be prepared and supported if they are to remain for extended periods at universities' (2011, p. 12).

John Higgins (2007) suggests that the term 'institutional culture'[7] is utilised in two ways. The first way refers to the 'overwhelming "whiteness" of higher education in South Africa' (p. 97) where *whiteness* is understood as 'the blindness of white culture to its own assumptions' (p. 97), assumptions that may be alienating for new and aspiring black and women academics (HESA, 2011). In order to overcome such assumptions and 'decolonise, deracialise, demasculanise and degender' the 'inherited intellectual spaces', Badat recommends that spaces need to be created for the 'flowering of other epistemologies, ontologies, methodologies, issues and questions other than those that have dominated intellectual scholarly thought and writing' (2010, p. 44).

The second way Higgins (2007) believes 'institutional culture' is used is to refer to the 'contested terrain of power and authority between administrators and academics as South Africa adopts and adapts global initiatives in the neo-liberal reform of universities' (Higgins, 2007, p. 106), a trend also referred to as new managerialism, discussed in 1.2.1. This terrain could be particularly difficult for black academics, who might well feel marginalised by the prevalence of white administrators and white academics in positions of power (HESA, 2011). In addition, according to HESA (2011) sexism and insufficient women role models are problems for young female scholars. This would be a more profound problem for black women scholars. Potgieter and Moleko (2004) suggest that due to the lack of black senior academic role models, black women have even more difficulty in finding supportive communities of practice to help them assimilate as newcomers. In addition, black academic women in leadership and senior

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[7] Here culture is used differently to the way social realist Archer uses culture (see Chapter 3).

positions are 'either over extended in their commitments or have yet to reach a status where they impact policy decisions and changes' (Mobokela & Mina, 2004, p. 111).

Higgins (2007) argues that institutional culture can facilitate or hinder attempts at institutional transformation. HESA (2011) acknowledges that while mentoring could facilitate overcoming alienating climates, most institutions do not have programmes in place to provide the necessary support and training for the new generation of academics. Mabokela (2004) claims that gender redress in HE has not been applied with the same vigour as has been applied to addressing racial inequities. Institutional programmes and 'affirmative action initiatives in South African higher education tend to redress race under-representation rather than gender' (Mobokela & Mina, 2004, p. 111). There are however a few national and institutional programmes which address the need to develop the number of younger, black and women researchers, and to build the research capacity of emerging and low productivity academics.

1.2.5.1. National programmes to address challenges

Thuthuka is a National Research Foundation (NRF) programme that 'aims to develop human capital and to improve the research capacities of designated researchers (black, female or disabled) with the ultimate aim of redressing historical imbalances' (NRF, 2010, p. 5). This programme provides funding for mentors and stipulates the mentorship of postgraduate students by supervisors funded through this programme (NRF, 2010). The NRF South African PhD project (2007) is another programme intended to increase the number of doctoral students. The Department of Science and Technology (DST) also intends to increase support for doctoral graduates over the next few years (HESA, 2011).

As mentioned earlier, in 2011 a national programme to develop the next generation of academics in South Africa was proposed to address this problem. One of the rationales for this programme is the need to ensure that the next generation academic is adequately prepared to respond to 'the responsibility of conducting research and publishing, so that the knowledge needs of South Africa are effectively met' (HESA, 2011, p. 11). It is argued that structured programmes such as the one proposed by HESA can facilitate a research trajectory and help new academics balance teaching responsibilities with those of a research career.

1.2.5.2.   Institutional programmes to address challenges

Institutional programmes that address the need to increase research capacity exist in some universities such as the Universities of Witwatersrand (WITS)[8] and Cape Town (UCT),[9] amongst others. The main aim of the programmes appears to be to increase the research productivity of emerging researchers by making use of senior scholars as mentors or coaches. The programme structure also focuses on hard skills such as proposal and research writing, presentations skills and time management (Geber, 2009; De Gruchy & Holness, 2007). The need for such programmes is supported by Dison's research on the capacity development of individuals at three South African university research centres. Dison (2007) argues that 'there is a need for bridging the gap between current knowledge and abilities and the realisation of potential to develop the capacities that are required to be a competent researcher' (p. 346).

While it is understood that the needs in higher education are to develop the research capacity of younger, black and women researchers, the scope of this study deals primarily with the research capacity development of women researchers.

1.2.5.3.   RU programmes to address challenges

The Senior Scholar's Emerging Researcher Programme launched by the RU Research Office in 2011 employs senior scholars to mentor, share knowledge with and develop emerging researchers. This is a new programme so none of the research participants in my study had participated in it. The programme is noteworthy as it is one of the ways in which the Institution is attempting to deal with research productivity challenges in the changing HEI climate. RU programmes that have a longer history and are therefore more likely to have had an impact on my research participants are the Accelerated Development Programme[10] and the Academic Staff Development Programmes. Both these programmes are aimed at fast tracking and developing the research capacities of young academics, and preference is given to women and black academics.

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[7] Various department-specific programmes developed from the pilot programme entitled 'Research Success and Structured Support' which was launched in 2007 by the Centre for Learning, Teaching and Development at WITS. In addition, the WITS Research Office administers the Mellon Retiree Mentorship programme.

[9] The Emerging Researcher Programme was developed in 2004 and still exists.

[10] There are two Accelerated Development Programmes generously funded by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Kresge Foundation. The programmes operate in the same way with the same protocols. For the purposes of this research I have conflated the two different programmes into one programme which I call the Accelerated Development Programme.

1.2.5.3.1.   Accelerated Development Programme

The purpose of the Accelerated Development programme is described in the following way:

> To accelerate the academic careers of individuals from designated groups thereby facilitating their entry into or better equipping them to compete for permanent positions at Rhodes University. This is done through providing opportunities to acquire within a mentoring system, teaching experience, research skills and further disciplinary and/or teaching qualifications. (RU Accelerated Development Programme Employment Protocol, 2009, p. 1)

The Accelerated Development programme is a structure aimed at addressing gender (and racial) inequity at the Institution. The lectureship posts comprise part research (generally completion of a postgraduate qualification) and part teaching (50% of a normal teaching load) with a reduced administrative load. Each lecturer is allocated a mentor in the department. With the help of the mentor each lecturer, in collaboration with his/her mentor, is required to design a development plan for their three year term. The Accelerated Development Lectureship Programme started in 2001 and has been operational for ten years. By 2011, the programme had employed 27 Accelerated Development lecturers[11]. At the time of my research 8 had been permanently employed by RU after the completion of their three-year contract, and 6 of these were women. The reasons for Accelerated Development lecturers leaving before or after the conclusion of their contracts range from accepting higher positions in other HEIs, or positions in government or research centres.   While not all are Accelerated Development lecturers stay on at the Institution after their three year contract, the Programme co-ordinators believe the programme contributes to the development of young South Africans.

The success of this programme has led the Institution to fund its own Accelerated Development Programme, which operates according to the same principles by providing development posts to accelerate the academic growth of junior staff of minority groups. The Institution acknowledges that 'significant aspects of the programme that have contributed to success of these staff include a mentor within the department, the setting of a development plan and regular mentor reports on progress made as well as support from [Centre for HE Research, Teaching & Learning] CHERTL' (RU website, 2011, p. 3).

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11 Of the 27 Accelerated Development lecturers employed since the programs inception, 19 were women. Of the 27, 9 were currently employed as Accelerated Development lecturers and of these, 6 were women.

1.2.5.3.2.   The Academic Staff Development Programme

The Academic Staff Development Programme assists academics to complete their PhDs by providing funding for a leave replacement so that the academic has dedicated time to complete his/ her PhD or produce a scholarly output. There are two such programmes. One programme supports academics in the Faculty of Humanities and one programme supports academics in the Faculty of Science. The programmes support an average of 4-6 applications per year. The Humanities Academic Staff Development Programme commenced in 2009 and has supported 22 academics, of which 20 were women. The Science Academic Staff Development Programme commenced in 2011 and has supported 7 academics, one of whom was a woman. This woman was specifically identified as deserving support. The lack of women applying for support from the Science Academic Staff Development Programme could be because there are fewer women in the Natural Sciences, or because HoDs are not encouraging staff to access this opportunity. Alternatively it could be because there is an absence of information about the programmes, or even that women lack the confidence to apply for such support. Further research is required to understand this better.

1.2.5.4.   Initiatives for women

There are two initiatives that I identified as being aimed at women in particular: the national HERS-SA[12] initiative; and that of the Women's Academic Solidarity Association (WASA), which is situated within RU.

HERS-SA is a non-profit organisation which is committed to the advancement of women within Higher Education (HERS-SA website, 2011). Each year the Institution funds two women, usually one academic and one administrator at manager level, to attend the HERS-SA week-long workshop. The small organisation has been running since 2002. Its purpose is to advocate for women in HE using workshops and networking strategies to improve the status of women in higher education. One of my interview participants had attended a HERS-SA workshop (see 5.6.4).

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[12] Higher Education Resource Services South Africa. 'HERS-SA is a self-sustaining non-profit organisation, dedicated to the advancement of women in the Higher Education sector' (HERS-SA website, 2011, unpaged).

WASA is an independent association affiliated to RU and was established as a response to the perceived need for change in race and gender equity, and the need for the empowerment of women at the institution:

> One of the core tenets of WASA is the sharing of key information so that larger groups of women are able to learn how to unlock the various puzzles of academic life. Another is the active development of an academic environment that celebrates diversity, making sure that no one working in the academic community faces prejudice based on gender, race, sexual orientation, age or anything else. (WASA Report, 2009, p. 26)

WASA emerged in 2004 as an initiative of a few RU women academics. Through reading groups, seminar presentations, formal and informal mentoring, discussions and publication collaboration WASA aims to facilitate women's academic development. WASA participates in a number of Institutional committees and provides a network of support to women academics and postgraduate students at the Institution who may experience the environment as hostile or alienating.

Having sketched the context for the research I now turn to a discussion of the goals of the research and the research questions.

1.3. Goals of the research

As discussed in 1.2.5, amongst many of the key challenges for HE in SA are: the transformation of the gender and racial profile of staff composition, particularly in senior positions and in the research arena; the retention of black and women academics; and, changing institutional culture to be inclusive of minorities such as black and women academics. Women have a relatively low research productivity rate that I believe places them at a disadvantage in terms of academic promotion and career success. As an administrator in the Research Office and as a woman, I have an interest in how the situation might be improved. The purpose of my research is to investigate the constraints women experience and the impact enablements, with a focus on mentoring and support structures, might have on women's research career development in the context of RU.

To achieve this, my intention was to uncover structures and cultures[13] that enable or constrain women's career development, and to provide insights into a holistic view of how women within RU are either enabled or constrained by the values and beliefs of the

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[13] 'Culture' is used here in a specific way which is explained in 3.2.2.

Institution. In addition, I explored how women researchers understand and experience career success and what they perceive and experience as enablements and constraints to the success of their research careers. I examined mentoring experiences and whether the agency of women academics is empowered by mentoring and supportive structures to overcome constraints on the development of their careers.

1.4. Research questions

- How do the women participants understand and experience research career success?
- In what ways do the women participants experience the existing structures and cultures in the development of their research careers?
- What mentoring and support structures are experienced by women in their research careers?
- How has mentoring enabled or constrained the development of appropriate personal properties required in order to advance professionally?

1.5. Structure of the thesis

Chapter two explains the conceptual framework which underpins the research project. I look at disciplinary differences in research productivity and how academic identities can be affected by discipline. I then discuss the concept of career and career success and focus on research careers. I describe how research careers influence women's career advancement. I then outline peer reviews and the role they play in establishing and advancing an academic's research profile. Thereafter I look at what encourages or hinders research career development for women in particular. Gender issues and social capital are the predominant factors that appear to affect women's research careers. I elaborate on some related theories that help to substantiate my research.

Chapter three presents the methodology employed in the research. I give an account of the critical and social realism that form the metatheoretical framework. These theories deal with the relationship between theory, what one observes and how one understands phenomena. I then move on to describe the research design before elaborating on the methods used to carry out the research, the data source, collection and analysis. Thereafter I argue for the validity of my research.

Chapter four is the first section of the data analysis and deals with career success and the enabling factors and constraints that women experience in their academic careers. I

look at career development and advancement and how this is affected by gender equity issues and institutional culture. I examine the process of promotion. Constraints and enablements to career advancement are discussed under the gender issues of family responsibilities, traditional gender roles and gender bias, and gender-based choices. I also outline balancing different academic roles, self-esteem issues and research expertise.

Chapter five is the second section on the data analysis and looks at support structures and mentoring as enablements. Support structures are namely institutional and departmental structures and initiatives for women. Departmental leadership was one support structure that featured prominently in my data. I look at the structure and culture of the role of the HoD, and how this impacts on the agency of women academics to advance in their research careers. I also briefly examine initiatives for women as well as personal support structures.

Thereafter I explore the parameters of mentoring, describing how the data revealed the benefits of mentoring to research and career development. I discuss mentor programmes in terms of structure and culture. I describe in greater depth the agency of mentors, mainly in terms of how the social capital of mentors and the personal powers and properties of mentors affect the agency of women academics in advancing their research and their academic careers. Finally I examine gender issues pertaining to mentors and mentoring.

Chapter six is the concluding chapter where the main findings are discussed. I deliberate on the way forward and the strengths and limitations of this study. I also suggest areas for future research.

CHAPTER TWO

Conceptual framework

2.1. Introduction

In the context of a HE environment that focuses strongly on research productivity, the first purpose of my research was to investigate how women academics understand career success and in what ways they experience the existing institutional structures and culture in the development of their careers. Concepts that I found helpful in making sense of my data for this research included disciplinary differences and academic identity, career success, and research careers. I also reviewed conditions that could inhibit or facilitate the research career development of women academics as identified by research conducted in this field. These conditions pertained mainly to gender: namely, women's positions within HE and the HE organisational structure, and conflicting gender roles and family responsibility. I use Judith Butler's theory of performativity as a substantive theory (1999; 2004). The second purpose of my research was to establish if and how mentoring and supportive structures and relationships can assist women researchers to develop the personal properties requisite for them to advance as researchers. In order to understand the data from my research I explored concepts of social capital, supportive relationships and mentoring. Sociocultural theories of learning helped me to make sense of my data.

I begin by examining differences between academic disciplines and how these might affect the academic identities of women.

2.2. Disciplinary differences and academic identities

At RU from 2007 – 2009, the Natural Sciences produced three times more research outputs per capita than the Social Sciences (Clayton, 2011).[14] In addition, in 2010, 75% of Natural Science academics had PhD qualifications whereas only 44% of Social Science academics had doctorates. The difference in levels of academic qualification and

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[14] The Natural Sciences (Faculties of Science and Pharmacy) produced 1.93 research outputs per capita while the Social Sciences (Faculties of Humanities, Education, Commerce and Law) produced .67 research outputs per capita (Clayton, 2011).

research productivity between the Social Sciences and the Natural Sciences led me to examine the concept of disciplinary differences and associated academic identities in the two disciplines.

Studies focusing on differences in intellectual enquiry pertaining to cognitive and cultural styles have generated theories which try to explain the differences between disciplines. Theorists have drawn a distinction between the hard pure disciplines of Natural Science, the hard applied disciplines of Science-based professions, such as Pharmacy, the soft pure disciplines of Social Science and the soft applied disciplines of social professions, such as Education (for example, Biglan, 1973 cited in Muller, 2008). Muller (2008) claims that knowledge in the soft disciplines is segmentally connected and the sequence of knowledge production matters less than it does in the hard disciplines. In the hard disciplines, he claims, there is more agreement about what counts as knowledge, and therefore more teachers are more easily equipped to transfer that knowledge.

A consequence of the difference in knowledge structure, Muller (2008) contends, is that there tends to be more research collaboration in the hard sciences: it is easier to prepare lessons, easier to teach and easier to find teaching substitutes, and therefore there is more time for research. Academics in the soft sciences spend more time on teaching preparation and teaching undergraduates than supervising postgraduates and they often supervise in areas outside of their own research focus (Muller, 2008). On the other hand, supervisors in the hard sciences spend up to a quarter less time supervising than supervisors in the soft sciences, with the result that hard science academics have more time to research and publish than academics in the soft sciences (Muller, 2008). Additionally Becher and Trowler (2001) found that in general, research articles in disciplines such as physics are published more quickly than those in disciplines such as history or sociology, which can take years to be published. The result is that the hard disciplines are likely to produce more research than the soft disciplines, and therefore the research outputs of those in the different disciplines will differ accordingly.

Because the nature of knowledge and knowledge production in the disciplines differs, the academic identity of individuals in the different disciplines is likely to differ too. Muller (2008) argues that academic identity involves two aspects: firstly, identifying with others of similar academic strengths and values; and secondly, making one's own

mark and being recognised for one's achievements in one's field. A strong academic identity results from 'both a strong, stable intellectual or professional community and a robust means for generating innovation within it' (Muller, 2008, p. 18).

In the hard disciplines, there is conceptual coherence and knowledge builds on knowledge, with the result that researchers tend to work more collaboratively and within research groups; innovative work is more easily recognised and induction and socialisation for the young researcher happens relatively quickly (Becher & Trowler, 2001; Muller, 2008). In the soft sciences, on the other hand, 'the choice of theme is virtually unlimited, [and] a theme once chosen may be addressed in a diversity of ways' (Becher & Trowler, 2001, p. 135) – and by an individual rather than by a research team. Young scholars in soft disciplines may therefore experience lower levels of social connectedness. Dison (2007) concurs with this and claims that research in the Social Sciences is experienced as a lonely journey by some scholars. Researchers within the Social Sciences may therefore have weaker academic identities and, arguably, lower levels of professional self-esteem than their colleagues in the Natural Sciences. This is borne out by research conducted by de la Rey (1999). She quotes one of her research participants as saying:

> You make your own career as a social scientist whereas in these more traditional professions, professional careers, the path is laid out for you and you simply go along it. As a social scientist, you are not nurtured. You have to fight your own battles and make you own way. (p. 131)

In their book on successful research careers, Delamont and Atkinson focus specifically on the Humanities and Social Science disciplines, arguing that laboratory (hard) sciences 'have cultures and mechanisms that treat research funding and research management as normal, unremarkable features of disciplinary culture and organisation' (2004, p. 6); moreover, the supervision of postgraduate students happens within research groups. Becher and Trowler (2001) agree and note that research groups in the Natural Sciences generally form close knit groups, meeting with the group leader frequently and receiving regular guidance and oversight of their work. By contrast, a lone doctoral student working on a less restrictive topic usually experiences more distant and infrequent contact. On the other hand, they point out, burn out is a recognised phenomenon in some hard sciences such as mathematics. In the soft sciences burn out is uncommon and 'there is no discernible early peak in research productivity; an increasing age betokens a parallel increase in expertise' (Becher & Trowler, p. 145).

The differences that emerge through research productivity in different disciplines are not reflected in the government funding framework, the primary method of government funding to HEIs in SA (DoE, 2003). A research output (either publication or postgraduate [PG] graduation) in the Social Sciences brings in the same amount of subsidy as a research output in the Natural Sciences, even though it may be more onerous to produce. This apparent imbalance was evident in my research data and bears upon the concepts of career success and research career, and how academic careers may be affected by research productivity.

2.3. Research and research careers

Since the new government funding framework came into effect in 2004 as discussed in 1.2.2, there has been increasing pressure on universities and academic staff to produce and disseminate knowledge. Sachs and Blackmore argue that 'universities are presently operating in a globally competitive environment based on a principle of performativity which makes efficiency the bottom line' (1998, cited in De la Rey, 1999, p. 45). This view is further entrenched by ideas associated with new managerialism (see 1.2.1), and universities are being forced to prioritise research (Scott, 2009). Government subsidy, and university promotion policies and reward systems are underpinned by the principles of performativity and new managerialism.

The fact that RU has been described as a 'research intensive' university (Boughey, 2009) and a 'research-led' university (Institutional Imbizo Record, 2011) suggests that research is perceived to be very much a part of how RU defines success, and research outputs are important criteria for measuring such success. Of interest to my study were women's perceptions of career success and of how the Institution defines career success in the context of RU.

2.3.1. The concept of career and career success

Taylor (1999) sees 'career' as a modern concept. He argues that the concept of career implies that there are structures which indicate the path to advancement. In HE, academic careers are 'referenced both to employment-related advancement and to research-related recognition' (Taylor, 1999, p. 106). Referring to Tierney's research (1997), he claims that the structures for career advancement in HEIs are unclear, providing a limited set of options that do not guarantee advancement (Taylor, 1999). He

argues that these structures may fall away over time due to the changing nature of HE and the move towards less secure employment positions and more contract work.

Taylor (1999) claims that the concept of career has a gendered history and male and female academics seem to have different understandings of the concept of career. Career success can be understood in an objective way or a subjective way. Objective career success relates to tangible variables such as compensation, promotion, performance, and evaluations, while subjective career success is more intrinsically related to an academic's level of satisfaction and feeling of accomplishment (Sturges, 1999; Allen, Eby, Poteet, Lentz & Lima, 2004). Of particular interest for my study is that Sturges (1999) found that women measured career success according to internal criteria of feelings of accomplishment, personal achievement and receiving personal recognition rather than material rewards, whereas for men career success was described as a competitive game where increased status and material gain was the goal. Also pertinent to my research, Allen, et al., in their review of empirical research on mentoring, found that 'mentoring is more strongly related to subjective indicators of career success, such as career and job satisfaction, than it is to objective career success indicators' such as compensation (2004, p. 133).

Empirical research by Bilimoria, Perry, Liang, Stoller, Higgins and Taylor (2006) focused on subjective career success, particularly job satisfaction, amongst men and women. They found that both men and women's levels of job satisfaction were influenced by 'internal academic resources' (e.g. workloads that support time to do research) and 'internal relational supports' (such as mentorship and leadership). While 'research-supportive workloads' that supported research agendas were important for women, more important were the perceptions of 'internal relational supports' in terms of their job satisfaction; and they were significantly more important for women than they were for men. Bilimoria, et al. (2006) argue that mentorship and leadership are important for women as they enhance 'internal relational supports' which are related to women's job satisfaction. They propose that 'department chairs and senior faculty members should pay particular attention to the importance of establishing strong mentoring relationships as well as collegial and respectful interactions with women faculty' (Bilimoria, et al., p. 364), and they suggest that women academics should actively seek out such support. This indicates that the HoD appears to play a crucial role in the

advancement of women's careers. This was borne out by the data that emerged from my research (see 5.3).

Raddon (2002, p. 390), citing many other researchers, lists the following characteristics of a successful academic:

- devotes all of their time and energy to the university;
- networks both in and out of work hours;
- is guided into and through their career by a mentor;
- builds a reputation through research;
- is 'career-oriented', 'productive', 'hardworking' and 'enthusiastic', and publishes in the right publications;
- has a linear career path;
- gains the majority of their experience within the university environment, particularly within a 'prestigious' faculty or field;
- focuses on research rather than teaching, administration or the caring, pastoral role;
- has a particularly high research output in the early years of their career.

These characteristics appear to potentially favour men (Raddon, 2002; Devos, 2004). Women have traditionally been regarded as the primary care-givers in the domestic environment and their academic career paths are often interrupted by child bearing and rearing. Women often experience conflicts between their roles as mothers and as academics, unable to commit fully to either role.

In the following section I explore how research has become the key to status and success within academia, and note the emergence of the concept of a "research career".

2.3.2. Research careers

Brew and Lucas (2009) believe that research success equates to status, prestige and funding for individuals and institutions. They claim that 'success in research has become key to the symbolic and economic survival of many universities and academics across the globe' (Brew & Lucas, 2009, p. 9). According to Bundy (2006) HEI managers and strategic planners strive for, promote and reward continuous improvement in terms of research productivity. This has led to a profound change in academic identities (Scott,

2009) with the emergence of the concept of the "research career" (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004). Becher and Trowler (2001) describe the current situation as follows:

> The audit of research output, the intensification of academic work, the accelerating growth in knowledge and the competitive pressure to achieve research status among institutions, departments and individuals in many countries have collectively built up the pressure to accelerate research 'output' and have imposed demands on academics' time. (p. 113)

"Research cultures" are encouraged by institutional and national agendas. Delamont and Atkinson (2004) describe a research culture as 'a constellation of values, expectations, organizational arrangements and everyday practices that foster the pursuit of research as a collective commitment' (p. 6). Institutions promote a culture of research by rewarding research produced. At RU certain funding grants, such as funding to attend conferences, are allocated depending on the research track record of the individual applying. Funding is also directed to specific areas of research – at RU these are called research focus areas – where additional Masters and Doctoral bursaries are made available in order to foster research.

The research culture is further encouraged when senior researchers become "research stars". Junior researchers are often encouraged to emulate the "research stars" rather than following more comprehensive academic careers. Research indicates that the number of highly productive academics now comprises only a small portion of all academics (Becher & Trowler, 2001). This is true of RU where 31.3% of the accredited research outputs in 2009 were produced by 5.6% of the academic staff, with the top researcher producing 6.2% of accredited research outputs, as mentioned in 1.2.3 (Clayton, 2011). The notion of the "research star" is compounded by the South African Research Chair Initiative (SARChI) funded by the NRF. The prestigious and relatively lucrative SARChI research chairs are awarded on a competitive basis and the number of research chairs has multiplied over the past few years. From 2006 – 2011, 90 SARChI chairs were awarded with an additional 62 chairs being awarded in 2012. The intention of the SARChI programme is twofold: to increase 'scientific research capacity through the development of human capacity and [to] stimulat[e] the generation of new knowledge' in particular in particular research areas (SARCHI initiative 2011, p. 1). In this way the programme encourages international research competitiveness and as well as addressing the needs of the country.

Academics who do not conform to the research culture may experience being side-lined.

Brew and Boud (2009) found that there was a 'culture of silence about low research productive academics' in research-intensive universities (p. 201). They also found that many academics who considered themselves 'research active' actually had low research productivity and prioritised teaching over research (Brew & Boud, 2009). According to them, low research-productive academics had different priorities to highly productive researchers, worked differently with research teams and worked approximately seven hours less per teaching week. The seven hours less per week that they worked was seven hours not spent on research, as they contributed more to teaching at their institutions than to research (Brew & Boud, 2009). These findings resonate with the data presented in Chapter 4, which indicates that when there are time and workload conflicts, research suffers above other academic roles.

Although I have thus far pointed to some of the gendered differences in academic career success and research, in the following section I focus on these issues specifically in relation to women.

2.3.3. Career, research and women

Parson and Priola (2010, cited in White, Carvalho & Riordan, 2011) argue that new managerialism in universities reinforces gender inequalities. Morley claims that 'women are too busy teaching or administrating, too junior, too precariously employed to gain major research grants', and this lack of research grants renders them ineligible for promotion (2003, p. 155). Munn-Giddings (1998) argues that the new knowledge economy requires academics to be constantly reading, researching and writing, a practice which spills over into home life. Home life, on the other hand, is not allowed to spill over into the workplace; nevertheless, the value of women's pastoral care is tapped into, unrecognised or unrewarded (Munn- Giddings, 1998). Maurtin-Cairncross (2003) suggests that women may actively choose the role of teacher and nurturer over the role of researcher because they have been socialised as carers and nurturers. Research, a solitary activity, is also a less familiar role and one that takes them away from their families.

Slaughter (2012) claims that women do not feel as comfortable with being away from their children as men do. She adds that if men have to choose between their work and their family, their work generally takes precedence, while the opposite is true of women. It was apparent in my data that many women chose their families over their careers.

Some women acknowledged that this choice was to the detriment of their research productivity. Added to this is the fact that 'the majority of women have discontinuous careers as a result of shaping their professional lives in relation to the lives of their partners and/or children' (Prozesky, 2008, p. 59). Slaughter (2012) argues that for many women, their careers only become fully established once their children leave home.

In discussing the gendered nature of higher education institutions, Heward (1996) claims that 'the processes of being identified as intellectually able, making a reputation, mentoring and networking tend to provide cumulative advantages to men' (p. 21). The continued advantaging of men and undervaluing of women has cumulative effects on their respective careers and results in disparities in the different genders, particularly amongst older academics (Heward, 1996).

Brooks (1997) argues that women carry greater teaching and pastoral responsibilities than men. In addition, there are fewer women who are in positions to serve on committees and in order to meet committee gender equity requirements they are called on more often than men in similar positions would be. This places an extra burden on women who may already have heavy workloads. The result is less time and energy for research and a low research record may ultimately affect their eligibility for promotion. Brooks (1997) found that 'discrimination is frequently implicit and results from the application of masculine standards, priorities and practices' (p. 60).

The literature reflects that the research productivity of men internationally is higher than that of women (Brooks, 1997; Xie & Shauman, 1998; Valian, 1999; Stack, 2004; Fox, 2005 cited in Brew & Lucas, 2009). Prozesky (2006) suggests that the relatively low journal article productivity of women could be due to the fact that women from the start of their academic careers are not aware of what is rewarded by the institution and what is necessary in order to be promoted. Low levels of productivity, lack of a doctorate and the possible resultant low self-confidence may affect a researcher's visibility within the research arena. Related to visibility within the research arena is the process of peer review and evaluation.

2.3.4. Peer review

Peer review plays a central role in academic life as a means of obtaining credibility for academic work. Peer reviews of grant applications and publications affect research

careers. Academics are involved in peer reviews on two levels: as peers reviewing the work of their colleagues, and by submitting their own work for review. While the process can become exclusionary or subjective, the relationship is interdependent between performer and spectator – those being reviewed and those doing the reviewing (Morley, 2003). Once academics have established a research record, involvement in peer reviewing facilitates exposure in the field, provides insight into specific journals and their requirements, and helps develop writing skills (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004). Peer reviewing also places the researcher at the forefront of the field by providing access to work that has not yet been published (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004). Government subsidy for research depends on peer reviews and views the process as 'a fundamental prerequisite of all recognised output and [...] the mechanism of ensuring and thus enhancing quality' (DoE Policy, 2003, p. 3).

Peer review processes are intended to be objective. However an investigation by Swedish researchers Wenneras and Wold (1997) found that there was a significant bias against women researchers in the peer review system of Swedish Medical Research Council applications. The investigation found that women applicants scored lower than men, particularly in the field of science because the peer reviewers gave the male applicants higher scores than the female applicants with the same level of scientific research productivity (Wenneras & Wold, 1997). The study also found that in order for a woman applicant to receive the same competence score as a male applicant, she had to be 2.5 times more productive.

The above study casts doubt on the validity, objectivity and fairness of the peer review process and suggests that the process of peer review may disadvantage women researchers through silent discrimination. Women may also be disadvantaged by the fact that there are fewer women in the Natural Sciences, which may have a cumulative effect: women are less likely to be known by male scientists in their field and hence will be cited less often. For this reason, Delamont and Atkinson (2004) argue that it is important for women to seek out patrons, role models and mentors and 'to become participants in the circuits of esteem, recognition and influence' (p. 16).

In the next section I elaborate on further enablements and constraints to research career development which emerged from the literature as relevant to my research.

2.4. Research career development: enablements and constraints

Part of my research entailed identifying structural and agential factors which either encouraged or restricted the women researchers in my case study. The structural factors include institutional and departmental structures that may support or constrain emerging researchers, such as mentoring and other supportive structures. Agential factors that affect women's career success appear to be gender and social capital. Individual personalities are another agential factor and traits such as maturity, enthusiasm, self-awareness, flexibility, interpersonal communication, stress management, strong self-esteem, and good time management have all been found to play a part in research success (Badenhorst, 2007; Gray, 1999, both cited in Geber, 2009).

My starting point is an in-depth discussion of gender issues, as these appear to be a major factor in the career development of women academics.

2.4.1. Gender issues

Women are marginalised in HE. This is evident from the fact that there are fewer women and even fewer black women, than men in senior positions in South African HEIs and at RU. Mabokela and Mawila (2004), citing David Johnson (no date), believe that the emphasis should be on gender rather than 'women' and that in order to understand women, gender, race and class need to be examined concurrently as they all intersect to create unique inequities for women. They maintain that 'women scholars continue to have both positive and negative experiences as a result of several confounding factors, including their continued sense of isolation, the ambiguity of their standing, the complexity within their institution, their marginalisation and the exclusionary tactics that exist within South African institutions' (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004, p. 398). The main focus of my research however was on women[15].

Butler's theory of performativity is a substantive theory that helped me to understand why women are marginalised in HE. I explain the theory of performativity and then

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[15] In retrospect it may have been better to focus more on gender *and* race but at the time I decided that due to the complexity of this topic, I would return to the issue of race in future studies.

discuss critical mass[16] and organisational structures in HE that tend to favour men. Thereafter I elaborate on other constraining factors such as gender-role conflict and family responsibilities.

2.4.1.1.   The theory of performativity

Judith Butler, a feminist theorist, is interested in how gender is constructed and how the structure of gender can both identify and alienate the subject. Moreover, she is interested in what conditions cause a subject (such as "women") to come into existence and the contradictory and opposing subjectivities that this causes. Butler (1999) argues that people are born into a world which is gendered and establish their subjectivities by conforming to its juridical and other practices. Essentially people live out a gendered "script" or performance. According to Salih (2004), Butler maintains that the self is both constructed and performed, and both aspects are subject to or vulnerable to conditions mediating between the subject and the world.

Butler (1999) claims that identifying "women" as a unified category is limiting in terms of identity politics. By attempting to make "women" representational of one common identity, feminism is in fact misrepresenting women who are different and diverse and do not identify with the notion of feminism. "Feminism", she claims, is fragmented. Some of the women that feminism asserts to represent in fact oppose feminism (Butler, 1999). She acknowledges that gender is politicised and therefore there is a need to formulate, within contemporary structures, categories of identity that are broader than the current gender identities. This conflict involving feminist principles and gender stereotyping was noted as a concern by some of my participants (see 5.6.6).

Butler argues that an individual is born into existing social norms and that 'the viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms' (2004, p. 2). Individual agency, she argues, emerges from the fact that although an individual is born into a gendered world with pre-existing social norms, he or she has the power to change these norms. This is in line with the social realist notion that individual agency or personal powers and properties of individuals can be constrained or enabled by structures and cultures (see 3.2.2). Butler (2004) suggests that one can either live life according to the script (the social norms) or one can reject the script and live an

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[16] Critical mass is a term used to describe the proportional representation of a particular group in leadership positions.

unfamiliar or unrecognised life, maybe even break new ground. In social realist terms, one can either reproduce or transform the existing structures and cultures (see 3.2.2, Figure 1).

Social and cultural norms create normative contexts, with which individuals must interact (Butler, 2004). To these contexts individuals bring their own subjectivities, from various other normative contexts which impinge on the normative. An individual in a specific situation will tend to behave in a way that complies with the norms of that situation, and thereby perpetuate those norms. This is what Butler (1999) calls performativity. Performativity refers to the many roles people play in order to conform to the norms, or exist outside them. It explains the driving force between people and norms. Performativity may limit how individuals live their lives or may transform the way individuals live (Knowles, 2010). Norms are reinforced by performances (Butler, 2004).

In other words, according to Butler's performativity theory, social and cultural norms determine who we are and how we act, and these norms are then reinforced by our performances or behaviour (Butler, 2004). When norms and powers are aligned, they form what Butler calls regulatory powers. These powers cause women to continue to perform according to gender norms that come to be seen as natural and necessary. In her study on why women academics continue to conform to gender norms, such as carers and nurturers, Lester (2011) argues that regulatory powers limit their individual agency. In the context of academia, regulatory powers such as those productive of marginalisation may serve to determine women's positions within their departments in order to maintain the status quo at the institution. Another example of regulatory powers would be institutional cultures that, Mabokela and Mina (2004) maintain, require that 'black women, to be successful academics, mask their racial and ethnic selves and assume a role imposed by white academics' (2004, p. 112).

A recent Master's study by Knowles (2010) examined the transformation of women's situations at a small South African HEI using Butler's lens of performativity. Knowles claims that:

> transformation happens when conditions in a specific context provide a platform for people to change how they think about themselves, how they articulate

themselves and how the university adjusts to accommodate a more inclusive range of individuals. (p. 3)

She suggests that supportive environments for academic women provide opportunities to develop strengths that can lead to a change in norms, and ultimately transformation. Such transformation, Knowles (2010) argues, is necessary to achieve gender equity within an institution. This is relevant to my research because I examine how gender issues present challenges to women academics' career development, and how mentoring and supportive structures can help to them meet these challenges.

Having outlined the substantive theory of performativity which helps explain gender issues and inequities, I proceed to discuss gender issues in the context of HE organisational structure.

2.4.1.2. Critical mass and HE organisational structure

Shackleton, et al. (2006) note that the issue of gender inequity in HE is well articulated in national policy.[17] However, they argue that the national drive to address equity indicates intent rather than effective policy implementation as there are no consequences for institutions when they do not comply with the policies. Furthermore, as with Mabokela (2004), they found that that gender awareness programmes were not a priority in South Africa, and that concern for transformation in terms of race rather than gender predominates. In addition, they found that the policies reflect good intentions and use sensitive language but are not effectively implemented. Women are largely left to fend for themselves, and do not receive adequate support (Shackleton, et al., 2006). Heward (1996) believes that gender equity policies based on a deficit model of women academics' careers have not been effective.

White, Riordan, Özkanli and Neale (2010) maintain that gate-keeping prevents women from moving into senior management positions as women are not equally valued in these positions. They argue that where there is greater gender balance in management, gate-keeping is less likely to occur. Their research showed that women bring management skills that strengthen teams and improve outcomes. The McKinsey and

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[17] SA Constitution, Act 108/1996 (Bill of Rights); Employment Equity act 55/1998; Skills Development Act 97/1998; Education White Paper 3: A Programme for Higher Education Transformation 1997; Higher Education Act 101/1997; National Plan for Higher Education 2001' (Shackleton, et al., 2006, p. 573).

Company (2010) study on the correlation between the proportion of women executives and company performance found that 'companies with a higher proportion of women in their executive committees are also the companies that have the best performance' (cited in Desvaux, Devillard & Sancier-Sultan, 2010, p. 7).

Sader, Odendaal and Searle (2005) believe that critical mass is necessary in order for women to be in positions within the institution to empower other women, and to create an environment where women will be heard and be taken seriously. They argue that institutions need to be proactive in changing policies to address gender inequalities, so as to 'facilitate the enrolment, recruitment, professional development and progress to senior positions of women' (Sader, et al., 2005, p. 72). Slaughter (2012) claims that it is not the level of ambition or capability of women that keeps them out of leadership positions, but rather social and business policies that do not cater for women's needs as primary caregivers, such as school schedules that do not match work schedules. She says that 'only when women wield power in sufficient numbers will we create a society that genuinely works for women' (Slaughter, 2012, unpaged).

Researching HEIs in five African countries, one of which was South Africa, Morley (2006) confirms that gender impacted negatively on women's academic and professional identities. She argues that a lack of opportunities to develop academic capital, and the fact that 'women's professional and academic capital are devalued and misrecognised in the knowledge economy', affect women academics (Morley, 2006, p. 550). She notes that while South African 'women were not targeted negatively […] they were not actively promoted either' (p. 545). Her South African participants reported experiences of covert sexism and discrimination in their daily lives. This finding is supported by Walker's (1998) research into the academic identities of South African women. Walker suggests that women face covert discrimination through 'everyday practices of exclusion which are more subtle, more deeply embedded, and more difficult to contest and resist, despite the rhetorical claims to egalitarianism which permeate higher education' (p. 336).

Walker (1998) argues that identity is shaped by external forces such as societal, political and historical forces, and by the internal forces of the individual. However, she postulates that women's identities are constrained by conditions 'where male and masculinity carry greater cultural prestige, and women or feminine are incomplete' (p. 336). In a similar vein, Lester (2011) using Butler's (2004) theory of performativity

argues that gender norms are present in policies, practices and silent assumptions about gender, and set the behavioural tone in accordance with which women feel obligated to perform.

Morley (2006) found that in HE, the underrepresentation of women in decision making roles is a 'form of status injury' and is 'both [a] cultural misrecognition and a material and intellectual oppression' (p. 547). Tight's (2005, cited in Morley, 2006) research shows that articles in the field of HE written by women are not published as often as those by men, even though there are many active women researchers producing research in the field. Morley (2006) claims that 'in higher education studies, tribe, intellectual and policy authority is relentlessly ascribed to men' (p. 547). Morley (2006) is unwilling to attribute the lack of representation on the part of women to issues such as self-confidence, as this suggests 'a theory of disadvantage, rather than a theory of power and privilege. It overlooks the power relations that create structures and barriers, and indeed that undermine women's confidence in their abilities' (p. 545). Mobokela and Mina (2004) suggest that black academics, especially women, do not receive the institutional support they require to succeed, making the underrepresentation of black and women academics an institutional problem rather than an individual one.

Research (for example, Shackleton, et al., 2006; Poulos, 2011) indicates the powerful role that women academic role models can play, especially if they are able to share their experience of gender role conflicts with other women. In her study conducted at RU on women professionals who are mothers, Poulos (2011) noted that the women had few roles models due to the paucity of women in HoD and other leadership positions. It seems too that the low proportion of women in senior academic roles as role models for younger women has a circular effect in that young women may have difficulty in getting started with research, which in turn means a slower rate of production, a poor track record, difficulty in applying for research grants and a slow rate of promotion (Girves, Zepeda & Gwathmey, 2005). The absence of women role models in senior positions and the negative consequence this has on women's research careers is consistent with my research findings.

Cole's (1987) accumulation advantage hypothesis proposes that building a reputation is crucial in order to develop a career (cited in de la Rey, 1999). However, women do not generally follow the uninterrupted linear career trajectory that facilitates the building of

a reputation. In de la Rey's (1999) study of twenty-five women professors in South Africa, only six of them had followed a linear career path. In most cases, the career trajectory of the participants had been interrupted by family responsibilities. Prozesky (2008) attributes the fact that women tend to attain their doctoral status at a later age than men to family responsibilities. This relative lateness also influences women's professional experience and publication productivity.

Sonnert's (1999, cited in Prozesky, 2008) difference model explains that as a result of differential gender-role socialisation, men and women approach their early academic and family lives differently. De la Rey (1999) suggests that marriage and family responsibilities are part of the reason for this. She argues that women's family responsibilities do not diminish in proportion to an increase in career goals and the other demands that these present. Gibson's (2006) research supports this and claims that 'women faculty frequently view themselves as "outsiders", feeling both isolated and constrained by the existing structures of academia or because of outside responsibilities' (2006, p. 63). Such feelings of isolation and constraint were apparent in my research findings (see 4.4.1.2).

Other structural deficits within organisations may exclude women from male-dominated networks (Sonnert, 1999, cited in Prozesky, 2008). According to Prozesky (2006), in 2001/2002 women in South Africa received 20% of the research budget. More women than men were employed in contract positions, cutting them off from academic leave and other funding opportunities. Prozesky suggests that 'these structural inequalities invariably mediate between gender and journal publication productivity' and ultimately have an impact on a woman's career progression (p. 104). In addition, men were found to have 'exposure to a publication-enhancing environment that socialised them to value research in their careers to a greater extent than women do' (Prozesky, 2008, p. 54). This could be due to the greater mobility experienced by men in the early stages of their career. Prozesky (2008) also found that men had more opportunities for international travel to conferences or international postdoctoral studies, while women's mobility was limited by child bearing and rearing. International conference attendance or international postdoctoral studies early in one's career are regarded as enabling factors for career success. Women who choose to have children are therefore disadvantaged in this regard.

That the mobility of women was restricted by their family responsibilities was evident in my research data, and again points to the significance of gender roles and family responsibilities in the careers of women academics.

2.4.1.3.   Conflicting gender roles and family responsibilities

It appears that women find conflicting gender roles constraining to their career development. Lester (2011) proposes that 'within performativity, individuals have the agency to choose to perform gender in any way that they desire, but they must navigate gender norms that are contextually and culturally defined' (p. 161). Traditionally women's roles have been as wives and mothers. With the emergence of feminism, equal opportunity has been stressed and many women find themselves torn between traditional demands and growing career expectations to perform and achieve (Riordan, 2007). Challenging regulatory powers, Lester (2011) argues, may jeopardise promotion and job satisfaction. Tactics that Lester (2011) identifies as used by individuals to resist gender norms are 'flying under the radar, creating internal and external networks, developing coalitions, recognising and naming power, pursuing modest change, reframing issues, working within the system/role, and appealing to like-minded administrators' (p. 164). Some of these tactics were identified in my research and are discussed in the analysis chapters.

Slaughter (2012) describes top professional women who are also mothers as being either superhuman, rich enough to employ full-time nannies, or self-employed to allow flexible schedules and work places. By this she is suggesting that under normal conditions the average working mother will be unable to succeed and compete with men in the workplace, because of demands on them as mothers that conflict with the expectations and norms of the workplace. Poulos's (2011) research found that women use strategies of reducing work hours to cope with role conflict. She found that academic productivity, and in particular research output, suffered in the case of those women academics who experienced the demands of motherhood. Many of her participants, especially the more junior academics, emphasised their prioritising of teaching over research. Cotterill and Waterhouse (1998) maintain that teaching and pastoral care are feminised and count less than masculine practices such as managerial tasks and research. They say 'viewed as rational, unemotional enterprises, [research and managerial tasks] are allied with a masculine model of task accomplishment and completion, the quality of which can be

scrutinised, policed and quantified. Care […] remains qualitative, process orientated, on-going and unmeasureable' (p. 13).

Karp found that 'the stories of women academics, unlike men academics, tend to be tied to the stories of others, typically their husbands and children' (1985, cited in de la Rey, 1999, p. 126). This was supported by Dison's (2007) findings. Gergen's (1997, in de la Rey, 1999) research concurred and showed that the academic careers of men are often central to their lives while their personal lives are more peripheral. Gender role conflict also emerged in Aisenberg and Harrington's study (1988, cited in de la Rey, 1999), where the participants experienced conflict between their traditional role as women (wives and mothers) and the demands and expectations of equal opportunity in the workplace.

It is generally agreed that more often than not women carry heavier family responsibility loads. Prozesky (2008) claims that this is so particularly in South Africa, where a conservative ideology and the apartheid system stereotyped women as having strong traditional family values and giving priority to homes, families and husbands. Often women sacrifice their academic careers to follow the paths of their spouses' careers. The interviews conducted by de la Rey (1999) point to the profound 'difference [between] being a wife and having a wife' (p. 208). She says that 'having a wife was portrayed as a circumstance that enabled performance in the academic realm as well as the availability of "free time". In contrast, depictions of being a wife were filled with ambivalence and contradictions' (de la Rey, 1999, p. 208). Mabokela and Mawila (2004) maintain that the issue of race further compounds black academic women's conflicts with balancing their different roles. Slaughter (2012) notes that usually men who reach the top of their fields have families and supportive spouses while women who succeed in their fields generally do not have families. Evidence of conflict with gender roles and constraints due to family responsibilities emerged also in my data (see 4.4.1).

Thus far, I have discussed the constraints that women experience in their careers due to their gender. I now discuss what emerged from the literature as potential facilitators to careers, in particular to women's research careers, namely social capital, mentoring and supportive structures and relationships. This discussion is preceded by an explanation of sociocultural theories of learning that I used to make sense of my data.

2.4.2. Social capital, supportive relationships and mentorship

2.4.2.1.   Sociocultural theories of learning

Substantive theories of sociocultural learning and participation learning can be applied to the context of my research. Within these theories, mentoring and team work appear as a form of learning whereby the novice or newcomer acquires the language of a specialist discourse through a supportive process.

Conventional explanations of learning see learning 'as a process by which a learner internalises knowledge, whether "discovered", "transmitted" from others, or "experienced" in interaction with others' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 47). Such explanations suggest that acquiring knowledge is an individual, cerebral act. From a socio-cultural perspective learning is viewed as being acquired through social and cultural participation. Teaching is viewed as an enabling process that allows for the participation of the learner. Wenger (1998) believes that knowledge comes from participating in social communities. Knowledge, according to Northedge (2003) is:

> the flow of meaning produced between knowledgeable people when they communicate together. Any grouping that regularly communicates about particular issues for particular purposes develops shared ways of talking about and understanding those issues. (p. 19)

This shared way of communicating is referred to as a discourse and the group becomes part of a knowledge or discourse community (Northedge, 2003).

The sociocultural theorist Vygotsky (1978) believed that we learn through social interactions, usually with someone who is more knowledgeable than ourselves, and that learning is an active process. The more knowledgeable person supports the newcomer in the process of actively forming their own knowledge from the knowledge around them. He describes this as the "zone of proximal development", which he sees as

> the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (Vygotsky,1978, p. 86)

Vygotsky's theory has been subjected to different interpretations, one of which – that formulated by Engström – has led to a more "collectivist" perspective. Engström interprets the "zone of proximal development" as the

distance between the everyday actions of individuals and the historically new form of the societal activity that can be collectively generated as a solution to the double bind potentially embedded in […] everyday actions. (Engström, 1987, p. 174, cited in Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49)

In other words, individuals working together can solve problems that lead to change in social activity. This is similar to Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital which I discuss in section 2.4.2.2. Coleman (1988) describes social capital as existing in the relations between people and occurring through change in those relations that lead to productive activity.

Engström's interpretation led researchers to concentrate on 'processes of social transformation' (Lave & Wenger, 1991, p. 49). Lave and Wenger (1991) connect 'issues of sociocultural transformation with the changing relations between newcomers and old-timers in the context of a changing shared practice' (p. 49). Participation in social practice develops cognitive abilities and functions but an individual needs to be supported with those social practices. Through collaboration, individuals develop the means to manage tasks on their own.

Lave and Wenger (1991) formulate a theory of communities of practice, claiming that working in a community of practice allows newcomers to see the complete overview, and not just a narrow vision of their own task. Gradually individuals work their way from being on the outside of the community of practice inwards, as they learn and gain knowledge and skills that enable them to participate competently within the community of practice.

> A community of practice is an intrinsic condition for the existence of knowledge, not least because it provides the interpretive support necessary for making sense of its heritage. Thus, participation in the cultural practice in which any knowledge exists is an epistemological principle of learning. The social structure of this practice, its power relations, and its conditions for legitimacy define possibilities for learning. (p. 98)

Northedge (2003) defines learning as 'a process of becoming increasingly competent as both a user of various specialist discourses [and] a participant within the relevant knowledge communities' (p. 22). He believes that, ultimately, learning allows for participation within a 'knowledge community' using the discourse or language of that particular knowledge community. To be knowledgeable according to Northedge is to

have acquired competent use of a discourse pertaining to a particular knowledge community.

Northedge (2003) identifies three levels of participation in knowledge communities. The first level of participation occurs at central and peripheral forums where the central forums are the platforms that established members use to dispense their knowledge. The central forums set up more informal forums on the periphery which become a space for less established, experienced and knowledgeable newcomers to participate in the discourse. This is based on Lave and Wenger's (1991) community of practice theory. Northedge (2003) claims that 'a knowledge community tends to have a status structure such that the stakes of participation are higher the more central the forum' (p. 20).

The second level of participation occurs through vicarious participation in a discursive forum such as reading an article written by someone proficient in the knowledge community. The third level of participation is what Northedge calls 'convergent versus variant understanding', indicating a meaning or discourse that can be shared although the understanding of the meaning or discourse differs according to the sophistication of individuals' prior knowledge. An established participant in a discourse may have a more sophisticated understanding of a discourse than a newcomer to the discourse.

Mentoring and team work can be seen as supporting processes while the mentee acquires knowledge of the specialist discourse. Northedge (2003) claims that 'a key function of discourse is to share knowledge between people who understand differently' (p. 21). Established members of an academic discourse are positioned in central forums, where they have convergent understanding and are generative participants. A learner or mentee on the other hand will start off participating in a vicarious manner on the periphery with a variant understanding of the discourse. The idea is for the mentee 'to become an effective participant in an unfamiliar knowledge community' (p. 21). This happens as the mentee moves from the vicarious periphery where he/she has a variant understanding of the discourse to developing a more convergent understanding of the discourse. The mentee can then participate more generatively and gradually move from the periphery to a more central position. This kind of learning/developing within academic discourse was noted by my participants as an enablement (see 5.6.2).

A concept that is aligned with sociocultural theories of learning and mentoring relationships is the concept of social capital.

2.4.2.2. Social capital

Social capital is a term that was used by Pierre Bourdieu in 1972, and later popularised by Coleman (1988). Coleman's (1988) concept of social capital is an extension of the concept of human capital which occurs when humans evolve and develop skills and capabilities that improve or change their performance. He describes social capital as existing in the relations between people and occurring through change in those relations that lead to productive activity. Siebert, Kraimer and Liden's (2001) social capital theory of success emerged from the integration of theories regarding social capital and career success. It examines the way in which an individual's network structure 'influence[s] the level of social resources embedded in a network' (p. 232). Siebert, et al. suggest that an individual's success is determined firstly by his/her network structure (such as the support of fellow scholars and readers, strong mentors and the ability to develop contacts at the same level as or at higher levels than oneself), and secondly by his/her social resources (such as access to information, sponsorship, moderate teaching commitments, and attendance at international conferences early in his/her career).

Siebert, et al.'s (2001) research findings suggest that 'information, resource access and sponsorship play a mediating role in the relation between social network variables and career outcomes' (p. 234). They found that senior level contacts or mentors yielded more career sponsorship for a junior staff member than junior level contacts or mentors, and that an individual's career success benefitted mostly from career sponsorship. Their study shows that junior academics who had more than one mentor at a time benefitted more in terms of career success than those who only had one mentor at a time. Siebert, et al. (2001) attributed this to the fact that different mentors may provide different kinds of advice and support.

Social capital in the form of mentorship can be seen as an enabling factor to career development and success. According to Quinlan (1999) women academics have less access to senior contacts or mentors, especially ones who are 'like' themselves. For this reason, women may be at a disadvantage in terms of acquiring social capital. It was apparent from my data that the social capital of the mentor played a role in the kind of mentoring received (see 5.6.4.1). Gibson (2006) notes that 'although there is recognition

of the need to provide support to women in higher education, the culture of academia and the proportionately fewer women in positions of power makes this a difficult agenda to fulfil' (p. 65). This is indeed the case at RU, where there are few women in senior positions, particularly in some academic departments.

One such senior position or position of power is the Head of Department (HoD). Few women occupy this crucial role and a shortage of women leaders at this level has an effect on women academics and continues the gendered division of leadership and academic capital in HE (Carroll & Wolverton, 2005). The following section looks at the important and multifaceted role of the HoD.

2.4.2.3.   Head of Department

The HoD as department leader sets the tone and influences the 'cultures and discourses of a department [which] are highly significant in induction, socialisation and professional learning' (Knight & Trowler, 1999, p. 32). Leaming (1998) notes 'the department chair is the glue, serving as the link between faculty and administration, between discipline and institution' (cited in Aziz, Mullins, Balzer, Grauer, Burnfield, Lodato & Cohen-Powless, 2005, p. 1). Carroll and Wolverton (2005) agree that HoDs play a crucial role in the governance and productiveness of higher institutions. Bilimoria, et al. (2006) suggest that the HoD is influential when it comes to 'job satisfaction, academic resources and workload allocation, as well as the provision of relational support through a collegial work environment' (p. 358).

Research acknowledges the multifaceted roles that HoDs perform while still trying to remain academically productive (for example, Carroll & Wolverton, 2005; Gmelch, 2005). This is necessary as many HoDs return to academic positions when their term as HoD ends. Despite the important HoD role, Aziz, et al. (2005) note that very few institutions provide any kind of leadership training and many HoDs do not have a clear understanding of their role when they start out. Wolverton, Ackerman and Holt found in 2005 that 'department chairs seem to deal with a lack of role clarity and complain about stymied professional growth' (p. 5). Most academics are experts in their field and have not been trained as leaders. Gmelch (2005) suggests that institutions do not encourage leadership in junior staff, exalting instead in the 'prestige and prowess of the professional expert' (p. 70). As a result new HoDs face a leadership dilemma: they have

grown to value their autonomy and 'are not willing to give up their professional and personal lives for one of servant leadership' (Gmelch, 2005, p. 70).

Carroll and Wolverton's (2005) research indicates that men dominate HoD positions. Figures at RU would support this. Of the 33 HoD positions, only 6 (18%) were held by women at the time of this research. Women HoDs are generally younger than men HoDs when they start their position, and women HoDs may not start out as professors, which could impact on the amount of authority they carry and the respect they receive (Carroll & Wolverton, 2005). White, et al. (2010) suggest that the reasons for the under-representation of women in senior management positions are gendered academic careers, organisational cultures and gate keeping. Based on a review of the literature, White, et al. (2010) suggest that 'career mobility, experience outside academia, the process of appointment to senior management, and gender stereotyping may slow down career progression for female academics and in turn impact on their chances of becoming senior university managers' (p. 648). Their research also suggests that women receive less mentoring and grooming than men for senior management positions from top level administrators, such as VCs, and instead receive support from less senior persons and from their family. By implication it would seem that women benefit less from social capital than men do.

The lack of women HoDs as role models may have an adverse effect on women academics. Sader, et al. (2005) argue that a critical mass of women is necessary in order for women to be positioned to empower other women. As mentioned previously, other research (Poulos, 2011; Shackleton, et al., 2006) indicates the powerful function that women academic role models have. Research also suggests that an ineffective or poor academic department leader negatively affects women academics' career development (Gibson, 2006). I provide examples of how the effectiveness of HoD leadership affected two of my participants in 5.3.2.1. Gibson (2006) argues that mentoring should be a key responsibility for HoDs and that a mentoring culture, both in the department and institution as a whole, can potentially transform an institution, and promote the success of women and minority academics.

This concept is important for my research and requires an in-depth look at mentoring and mentoring relationships.

2.4.2.4.   Mentoring

My review of the literature on mentoring has confirmed that there is no one definition for mentoring and mentoring relationships. However the literature on mentoring generally agrees with Kram's (1985) mentor role theory that mentoring has two functions: firstly, to provide support at a career or vocation level, in the way of sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and challenging assignments; and secondly, to provide support at a psycho-social level by providing acceptance, confidence, counselling, friendship, and role modelling (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The role of mentor has traditionally been seen as dyadic, as 'the developmental assistance provided by a more senior individual within a protégé's organisation' (Higgins & Kram, 2001, p. 264). In more recent years this view of mentorship has being reviewed and "relationship constellations" (Kram, 1985, cited in Higgins & Kram, 2001) – in terms of which individuals rely on multiple mentors to assist their career development – are being considered.

Roberts (2000) defines mentoring as having 'the *essential* attributes of: a process; a supportive relationship; a helping process; a teaching-learning process; a reflective process; a career development process; a formalised process and a role constructed by or for a mentor. The *contingent* attributes of a mentoring phenomenon appear as: coaching, sponsoring, role modelling, assessing and an informal process' (p. 162). Girves, et al. (2005) define mentoring as 'an intentional process that is supportive, nurturing, and protective, providing orchestrated or structured experiences to facilitate growth' (p. 453).

Mentoring relationships can develop informally outside of a formal structure, or within formal programmes where there is a structured format and mentors/mentees are earmarked and matched by the organisers of the programme. Structures that support or enable mentoring, such as formal mentoring programmes or departmental cultures that encourage mentoring, address issues of social connectedness (Kram & Isabella, 1985; Knight & Trowler, 1999). Mentees exhibit better socialisation than those non-mentored colleagues (Chao, Walz & Gardner, 1992, cited in Ragins & Cottons, 1999).

In traditional or dyadic mentoring relationships mentors are generally older, more experienced and in more senior positions in the organization than their mentees (Quinlan, 1999). This kind of mentoring relationship is also called the grooming model and the understanding is that the mentee wishes to emulate the mentor (Wasburn,

2007; Quinlan, 1999). These relationships can be successful in cases where there is a good match. However dyadic relationships can also reinforce the power imbalance especially in institutions that are not overtly open to changing the existing hierarchical structure (Driscoll, Parkes, Tilley-Lubbs, Brill & Pitts Bannister, 2009). Driscoll, et al. (2009) suggest that when mentoring is seen as a learning process that tries to fit the mentee into the existing institutional culture, an unhealthy hierarchical power relationship can develop. In such a relationship the mentor is in a more dominant, powerful position and the mentee is seen as lesser or deficient in some way, particularly if they belong to a less dominant group, such as a woman or a black academic. If these relationships are unsuccessful they can lead to feelings of inferiority, being devalued and self-doubt (Driscoll, et al., 2009). Issues of the mentor-mentee match in formal mentoring programmes that emerged from my data are discussed in 5.3.3.1 and 5.6.4.1.

Another recognised form of mentoring relationship is that of the peer relationship. Peer mentoring as defined by Mullen (2005, cited in Driscoll, et al., 2009) is a relationship where individuals in the group are both mentors and mentees with mutual inter-dependence and an equal power balance in which both the professional and personal aspects of life are addressed. Kram and Isabella (1985) suggest that mentoring and peer relationships have commonalities as they support the career development of an individual and 'provide a range of career-enhancing and psychosocial functions' (p. 129). Supportive peer relationships occur between individuals of similar age and status. The structure is less hierarchical than the dyadic/ grooming mentoring model and is more flexible, less intense, and less dependent on the compatibility of individual personalities. Driscoll, et al. (2009) maintain that an equality or balance of power in the form of peer mentoring is healthier for women and more helpful in enabling them to forge their own identities. Peer mentoring removes the threat of an unbalanced power relationship, which has the potential to cause self-doubt and feelings of isolation, and creates a relationship which promotes understanding of the environment, their colleagues and themselves. In my case study there is evidence of peer mentoring (see 5.6.4.3).

2.4.2.4.1. Mentoring and gender

Girves, et al. (2005) suggest that mentoring is particularly important for those in the minority or in unfamiliar environments, who may be disadvantaged in forming relationships in those environments. Quinlan (1999) asserts that mentoring by influential mentors has been more available to men given the greater number of male

academics in senior positions, and that 'mentors are more likely to identify with and take under their wing young people who are similar to themselves' (p. 32). In addition, she suggests that the lack of male mentors for women may be due to sexual politics – the potential 'gossip' factor that may arise from male mentors with female mentees; and gender discrimination – the perception by mentors that male mentees perform better (Quinlan, 1999).

Women have different career development needs that may not be understood by senior male mentors. Women may need to spend time away from their careers, resulting in interrupted and/or staggered career paths while men's careers are seldom disrupted by child bearing and family responsibilities (Quinlan, 1999). Research also indicates that women face other challenges, such as 'greater isolation, higher levels of stress, a lower sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence' (Vasil, 1996, cited in Quinlan, 1999, p. 32). Driscoll, et al. (2009) maintain that women benefit more from peer mentoring than from dyadic mentoring in an institutional environment. Through peer mentoring women develop a social identity which helps them move from novice, inexperienced scholars to more confident, experienced scholars understanding themselves, their peers and their environment. Quinlan (1999) agrees and suggests that 'women's peer relationships with other women play an important role in providing the emotional, psychological and social support that is so vital to survival in male-dominated workplaces' (p. 36). However, because women have less access to critical organisational networks (as asserted by Ibarra and Andrews (1993) in their social network theory), having a male mentor may be beneficial to women in terms of the vocational functions of mentoring. Homophilous ties – ties with those of the same gender – are according to Quinlan (1999) more beneficial for men as they serve both vocational and psychosocial functions, whereas homophilous ties for women primarily serve psychosocial functions.

Mentoring strategies and programmes are often directed at women to enhance their career levels and research productivity. De la Rey's (1999) research suggests that mentoring is seen as one of the 'facilitative factors in getting to know the system and then ensuring success for the academic self'' (p. 164). Mentoring is seen by some as a means to address the constraints that women face in establishing a career and can be a mechanism for 'fast tracking' or assisting women to 'catch up' with their male counterparts, as well as providing a return on investment in the form of greater productivity (Gibson, 2006; Gardiner, Tiggermann, Kearns & Marshall, 2007).

Research findings suggest that mentorship may be more important for women than it is for men, as women tend to operate in a more collegial and collaborative manner than their competitive male counterparts (Kyvik & Teigen, 1996, cited in Prozesky, 2008). Maürtin-Cairncross's (2003) research on challenges women academics face at a historically black South African University found that where women work in more solitary disciplines and in male-dominated environments, mentoring may be of great value in addressing their need for collegiality. On a similar note Gibson (2006) claims that as well as feeling isolated and constrained by the hegemonic structures within institutions, women feel like outsiders in academia due to the pull of their home-life responsibilities. Mentoring may help overcome this and assimilate women into the institution.

Research (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Quinlan, 1999; Allen, et al., 2004) has shown that different gender mentorship relationships may affect outcomes. However, Scandura and Ragins suggest that 'gender-related traits may play a larger role in predicting mentorship than biological sex' (1993, cited in Phillips & Imhoff, 1997, p. 47). This was noted in my research findings. More young men are mentored in the grooming model than women (Quinlan, 1999). This could be attributed to the fact that there are more men in senior academic positions than women and therefore more male mentors are available who choose mentees similar to themselves. Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that mentees who had a history of male mentors received significantly better compensation than mentees who had a history of female mentors, regardless of the gender of the mentee. They attribute this to men having more power in the organisation. They also found that mentees with same gender mentors received more challenging assignments aimed at developing job performance.

Gender was also found by Ragins and Cotton (1999) to have an impact on the benefits of formal and informal mentoring. Their research, which compares formal and informal mentoring relationships, argues that informal mentoring provides more mentoring functions and is more effective than formal mentoring. They found that mentees with informal mentors received more career development and psychosocial support, earned more and received more promotion than mentees with formal mentors. They attribute this difference to the possibilities that mentees who are selected informally by a mentor (or who select a mentor themselves) may be better performers, more career-driven, and

more responsive to career development support than mentees who are assigned mentors in a formal mentoring programme.

Ragins and Cottons (1999) found that male mentees stand to benefit the most in terms of counselling from a formal mentor and that formal mentoring programmes are least beneficial for women mentees. In contrast, Girves, et al. (2005) suggest that structured mentoring programmes work better for women and minorities who, if left to rely on spontaneous mentoring, may otherwise be left out of the mentoring process. They argue that formal institutional mentoring programmes also provide a means to 'recognize and reward the efforts of those who participate in mentoring activities' (Girves, et al., 2005, p. 475). Informal mentoring relationships are difficult to evaluate and therefore difficult to recognise and reward officially. The issue of recognising and rewarding mentoring emerged in my research data (see 5.6.3).

2.4.2.4.2.   Mentoring and career

Research suggests that successful mentoring relationships may improve job satisfaction and can be helpful both to women's careers and to the institution (Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Allen, et al., 2004; Gibson, 2006; Gardiner, et al., 2007). Allen, et al. (2004) found that mentoring was positively related to job satisfaction, compensation and promotion, and commitment of the mentees to their jobs. They argue that the psychosocial functions of mentoring have more of an impact on career satisfaction than the functions associated with vocation or career mentoring. However the two components of mentoring are interrelated. Allen, et al. (2004) suggest that the informational and instrumental social support that career-related mentoring provides, may enhance the individual's confidence regarding career decisions and job performance, which in turn enables the individual to feel more self-confident and experience greater career satisfaction.

Gardiner, et al. (2007) found that mentoring relationships had a positive impact on the research careers of the mentees *and* benefitted the institution through increased staff retention, greater profits and an enhanced research profile. They found that those academics who received mentoring were more productive than those not mentored, producing one and a half times more peer-reviewed publications and receiving four times more research grants. Gardiner, et al.'s research (2007) did not support the findings of Allen, et al. (2004) that mentoring had a positive effect on job satisfaction, but they did find that mentoring may have a 'protective effect on career satisfaction'

(Gardiner, et al., 2007. p. 439). Their findings suggest that long term 'mentoring seems mostly to affect mentees' global sense of confidence as an academic, and in the short-term it reduces worries about research' (p. 439).

2.5. Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed concepts that I found helpful in analysing my data, including disciplinary differences and academic identities, career success, and research careers. I looked at factors emerging from the literature that serve either to enable or to constrain the career development of women, namely, gender issues, social capital and mentoring.

In the next chapter I discuss the theoretical framework that underpinned this research, the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and research design

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter I begin by discussing critical realism, the metatheory that underpins my research and explains my understanding of the nature of reality. Since, according to Sayer (1992), 'any serious consideration of method in social science quickly runs into basic issues such as the relation between theory and empirical observation and how we conceptualise phenomena' (p. 45), I go on to describe social realism, the theoretical and explanatory framework that helped me to understand why things are the way they are. Social realism is also the methodology for this research in that as a theoretical principle, it entails a set of methods (Harrington, 2005, p. 5).

Following on from this is a discussion of the design of the research. This comprises an explanation of case study research and the mixed method approach. I then move onto the details of how I carried out this research, i.e. the research method. I first discuss my data sources and methods of collection before moving on to describe how I analysed the data. Finally I consider issues of validity and whether the research did what it set out to do in a reliable and ethical manner.

3.2. Metatheoretical framework

> Metatheories deal with ontological and epistemological issues, that is, questions about the nature of reality and how we gain knowledge about it. (Danermark, Ekström, Jakobsen & Karlsson, 2002, p. 3)

A metatheory is an overarching theory that encompasses other theories. It embraces the nature of reality and how we come to understand that reality and incorporates the methodology and the substantive theories of the study (Quinn, 2006). The metatheory for this research is critical realism. Margaret Archer's social realism is based on critical realism and is the framework for this research. Social realism is an explanatory framework for research about the social world.

3.2.1. Critical realism

Critical realism helps us understand the 'relation between the real world and the concepts we form of it' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 15). The ontological claim of critical realism is that an external reality exists. The epistemological claim is that this reality exists independent of our conception of it. This claim implies that our knowledge of reality can shift, and is independent of the actual reality. Therefore our knowledge of reality is concept dependent. It is transitive as it is socially determined; it is changeable, and it is also fallible.

From the critical realist perspective, research is about investigating the relationships 'between what we experience, what actually happens and the underlying mechanisms that produce the events in the world' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 3). The claim made by critical realism is that we do not have our own reality but we have our own knowledge of reality (Brown, 2009). Critical realists believe that reality is stratified. Bhaskar (1998) has distinguished three strata that he terms the 'real', the 'actual' and the 'empirical'. These are theoretical layers which co-exist. The 'real' encompasses everything that exists whether we have knowledge of it or not. It is intransitive and relatively enduring. The layer of the 'actual' is transitive and relates to events or things that happen. The layer of the 'empirical' is that which is experienced or understood by people.

When applying Bhaskar's depth ontology to my own research, at the layer of the empirical I explore how research career journeys, constraints to professional development and mentoring are experienced and understood by a sample of women researchers at RU. The layer of the actual in my research relates to events that define and affect success. For instance, international conference attendance early on in a researcher's career is a phenomenon that appears to affect his or her research trajectory. At the level of the real I investigated the 'structures, powers, mechanisms and tendencies' that define and affect the research career development and success of women researchers. The purpose of critical realist research involves uncovering what produces or causes events – what Bhaskar terms the 'mechanisms' – rather than focusing only on the events themselves (Danermark, et al., 2002).

To reiterate, critical realism assumes 'that an external reality exists beyond our conception of it, and that this reality is therefore subject to analysis' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 199). Danermark, et al. (2002) call this the 'intransitive object of science'. The

intransitive object of science is that which can be analysed. Researchers in the social sciences aim to come as close as possible to the intransitive object of science. The reality that social scientists study is both socially produced (the study of beings that are thinking and reflecting and therefore changeable) and socially defined (the study of the interpretations by these beings of the social world), and it has been termed the double hermeneutics of social science.

> In order to understand and explain the social world, as scientists we try to understand and explain what meaning actions and events have to people, but we also endeavour to produce concepts which make it possible to transcend common sense and attain a deeper understanding and explanation of a more abstract character. (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 200)

My research has revealed that what the world looks like to academics at the level of the empirical is different from what the world really is, at the level of the real. Critical realism requires that as a researcher I should find out what structures and mechanisms are behind what is observable at the level of the empirical. In this way I should be able to identify the causal powers, that is, the properties or powers that 'objects' have that can cause events or make things happen, even if they do not actually happen. Danermark, et al. (2002) explain this as follows:

> Objects have the powers they have by virtue of their structures, and mechanisms exist and are what they are because of this structure; this is the nature of the object. There is an internal and necessary relation between the nature of an object and its causal powers and tendencies. (p. 55)

Critical realism involves seeking to identify these underlying powers, structures and mechanisms that make things happen.

Having briefly introduced critical realism as the metatheory for my research, I now discuss social realism, the theoretical framework of my research.

3.2.2. Social realism

Archer's theory of social realism has its roots in Bhaskar's critical realism. Social realism maintains that human agency and social structures are ontologically distinct from one another. This differs from the elisionist approaches, such as Giddens's structuration theory, which collapse structure and agency into one (Benton & Craib, 2001). Under the umbrella ontology of critical realism, Archer analyses the social world

in terms of the theoretical strata of structure, culture and agency. These strata are separated for analytical purposes but are in reality intertwined. Each stratum has certain properties and powers to effect change, and needs to be looked at independently in order to 'understand social life as the interplay between interests and ideas' (Archer, 1996, p. xiii). Archer (1998) calls the powers to effect change 'emergent properties'. She defines emergent properties as 'entities which come into being through social combination. They exist by virtue of interrelations [...] and not all social relations give rise to them' (Archer, 1998, p. 192).

Structure relates to the material world. Culture relates to the ideas, values, beliefs and ideologies of social groups and the 'ideational influences operating between people' (Archer, 1996, p. xiii). Agency refers to the people that experience, act and have the power to effect change. Agents have properties which enable them to set up goals and achieve them. The most important difference between agents and structures is that only humans can set up goals and act, social structures cannot. According to Danermark, et al. (2002) 'agents are the only effective causes of society' (p. 178).

Social realist research is about investigating each stratum to understand the interplay between them, including the ways that each stratum can exert change on another over time. Therefore my role as researcher is to uncover the roles that structure, culture and agency have played in the research careers of women academics in the social sciences; to investigate what the prevailing structures and cultures are; and to determine how women have or have not been able to exercise their agency in relation to inherited structural and cultural conditions.

To recap, social realists claim that the parts and the people should be separated for analytical purposes. According to Archer it is important not to conflate structure, culture and agency because:

> separability is the predicate for examining the interface between structure and agency and upon which practical social theorising depends. Only on that basis is it possible to talk about the stringency of structural constraints versus degrees of agential freedom. (Archer, 1998, p. 203)

It is through analysing the strata separately that the separate powers and properties of each stratum can be seen. In this way the interplay between the different strata can be understood, and it can be seen that 'structures constrain and enable the actions of the

agents and that agents reproduce and transform structures' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 181). Bhaskar (1993) calls this connection between social structure and agency the Transformational Model (see Figure 1). Archer's term for the connection between social structure and agency is Structural Elaboration.
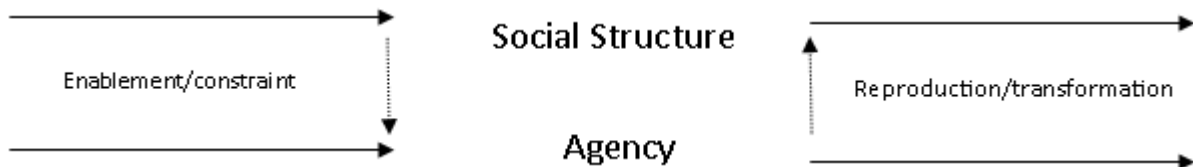
Figure 1: The transformational model of the connection between social structure and agency (Bhaskar,1993, cited in Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 180).

Having discussed the broad theories that underpin my research, I now turn to the design of my research project.

3.3. Research design

This research is a case study underpinned by critical realism using a mixed method approach. In this section I elaborate on the methods used in the research before explaining how I analysed the data and what theoretical lenses I used to do so. Finally I look at issues of validity, reliability and ethics pertaining to this research.

3.3.1. Case study

> A case study design is employed to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcome, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation. (Merriam, 2001, p. 27)

Case studies can be used to describe the *process* of conducting the study and/or the *product* of the study (Merriam, 2001). The process of a case study is the study of a single entity within clearly defined boundaries (Henning, 2009). The product is the intensive explanation, description and analysis of the single case (Merriam, 2001). Case studies are commonly used in educational research as they enable particular problems within education to be identified and explained. Rich descriptive information about individuals and/or particular situations emerges from case studies as a result of intense and focussed observation of the case (Lindegger, 1999).

My research is a case study of women academics in one small HEI. By concentrating in depth on this single case study, I aimed to uncover some of the mechanisms which explain why things are the way they are. The Institution used for the case study is the Institution where I am employed. This could therefore be described as 'insider' research or endogenous research (Trowler, 2011). According to Trowler (2011), the benefits of endogenous research are that the researcher has access both to naturalistic data and to the participants. In my case this meant that I was 'culturally literate' (p. 2) and able to produce accounts meaningful to the participants through rich and relevant description. As an insider there is a chance that my research may have an impact on future policies and practices. Practically, endogenous research for me was convenient and affordable.

There are limitations to case studies. Case studies can oversimplify problems or exaggerate them (Merriam, 2001). They are also limited by the subjectivity and integrity of the researcher and so researcher bias, and issues of generalisability, validity and ethics are a concern (Merriam, 2001). This is even more of a concern for insider research. I discuss this in more detail in 3.4.3.

3.3.2. Mixed method approach

A mixed method approach draws on both quantitative and qualitative questions and assumptions. It involves collecting all kinds of data (both numeric and textual) to help understand the problem and answer the research questions. Data can be collected sequentially or simultaneously (Creswell, 2003). My purpose in using a mixed method approach was 'to use quantitative and qualitative methods side by side in order to empirically elucidate a phenomenon in as much detail and as thoroughly as possible' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 153).

Danermark, et al. (2002) use the term 'critical methodological pluralism' to describe a mixed method research approach that is both intensive and extensive. The intensive approach, where fewer cases are studied intensely, focuses on generative mechanisms by examining how something works in a fixed situation. This approach 'involves tracing the causal power and describing the interaction between powers that produce a social phenomenon' (Danermark, et al., 2002. p. 166). The extensive approach helps provide answers to how common the phenomena are and how often they occur; that is, the more quantifiable aspects.

In my research I used both quantitative/extensive approaches and qualitative/intensive approaches as I found they complemented each other and enriched my research (Danermark, et al., 2002). Most of my data were gathered using qualitative methods, with the findings then supported by quantitative data. I collected qualitative data in the form of text from documents and policies, interviews and open-ended questionnaire questions. Closed questionnaire questions and statistical institutional data generated quantitative data to support assumptions and findings. I elaborate on my data sources and collection methods in the next section.

3.4. Method

In this section I discuss the practicalities of my research: my data sources, how the data were collected, and how I analysed the data. Thereafter I discuss issues of the validity of the research.

3.4.1. Data source and collection

The collection of data was influenced by the social realist contention that in any social context structure, culture and agency are implicated. Institutional documents and policies provided data related to institutional structures relevant to the research. Data about the cultural milieu of the Institution were inferred from analyses of a range of institutional documents and policies, from agents' responses to and perceptions of the official beliefs, ideas and values, and from the agents' experiences as expressed in questionnaires and interviews. At the stratum of agency, the personal powers and properties of agents and their experiences were interpreted from the questionnaire responses and from the interviews.

3.4.1.1. Documents and policies

Documents constitute stable sources of data. They are frozen in time and are not affected by the research agenda or researcher bias (Merriam, 2001). Documents can 'furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, [and] track change and development' (Merriam, 2001, p. 126). However documents are not without bias. Documents reflect the voices, positions and descriptions of the individuals who wrote them and the culture within which they reside. Each document is written for a specific purpose. It is the researcher's role to be the observer, to identify the objectives of the document-writer, and critically to interpret the contents of the document (Yin, 2003).

At RU, institutional policies and procedures are stored on the Institution's webpage (http://www.ru.ac.za/rhodes/governance/policies). This was the starting point for sourcing documents for analysis. Documents that dealt with leadership (such as the HoD Guide), equity issues (e.g. the Equity Policy, the Employment Equity Policy), promotion and reward (e.g. the Personal Promotions Policy and Procedures) and staff development (the Staff Development Policy) were selected as being relevant to my research. Other documentation such as the protocols for specific programmes (e.g. the Accelerated Development Programme, the Academic Staff Development Programmes), minutes of meetings (e.g. Institutional Imbizo, HoD Forum) and reports (e.g. WASA report) had to be sourced from relevant departments. My position within the Research Office afforded me a good overview of what material was available and would be relevant. A complete list of documents analysed is found in Appendix A.

3.4.1.2.   Research participants

> Social structures are reproduced or transformed by agents – and people act intentionally. In explaining social phenomena we must always consider what people think and believe – consider their ideas. (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 194)

In accordance with the above quotation, my research participants – their thoughts and beliefs – were crucial to my research. My data were collected from the research participants in two ways: from a questionnaire and from interviews. Before elaborating on these methods, I discuss the sampling of the research participants.

A typical sample as defined by Merriam (2001) is one which 'reflects the average person, situation or instance of the phenomenon of interest' (p. 62). There are three levels of sampling in my research. The first is the case study, RU. The second are the women who responded to the questionnaire, and the third, the women who participated in the interviews. The participants in the questionnaire were obtained by random sampling. Women academics employed by the Institution (156 in total), both permanent and contract employees, were invited via email to participate in the research. Approximately half (51%, n=80) of all the women who were approached participated in the questionnaire. The sample represented women academics across a range of posts from teaching assistants (contract employment) to full professors.

I chose to send the questionnaire only to women because my preliminary reading indicated a need to interrogate why women are less visible in places of power in HE and why they appear to produce less research than men (section 1.2.4 discusses this in detail). Gender differences between South African men and women academics' publication productivity has been researched by Prozesky (2006, 2008). While further comparative research between men and women academics and the way they approach their academic careers would have been interesting, the scope of such research would have been too wide for this Master's research project.

I also chose to separate the responses of women from the social sciences from the responses of women from the natural sciences. Again this was as a result of reading literature in the field which indicated that academics in the social sciences produced less research than academics in the natural sciences. My reasoning by deduction was that women in the social sciences would produce the least amount of research. I was also interested in discovering whether the level of support in terms of mentoring differed in the different disciplines due to the different knowledge structures (see 2.2).

At the time of my research, there were 156 women academics at the Institution. The same questionnaire was sent to the two different groups but the responses were analysed separately. The first group consisted of 107 women in the Social Sciences (the faculties of Humanities, Education, Law and Commerce). The second group consisted of 49 women in the Natural Sciences (the faculties of Science and Pharmacy). Almost the same proportion of responses was received from both groups: 51% (n=54) from the Social Science (SS) group and 53% (n=26) from the Natural Science (NS) group. Responses to this questionnaire provided quantitative and qualitative data, as well as a means of selecting candidates for interviewing.

The six interview participants were purposively selected from the questionnaire data. According to Babbie & Mouton (1998) between five and twenty-five respondents is a suitable number for South African masters studies. As my questionnaire participants (n=80) comprised 51% of the group of study, I decided that six interviews would provide sufficient data for my purposes. Only questionnaire respondents who indicated that they were willing to be interviewed were considered. Half of the interviewees were chosen

from those who fell into the category of "planning stage"[18] or "emerging"[19] researchers (henceforth all called "emerging"). The other half were chosen from the participants who defined themselves as "mid-career and research active"[20] or "established"[21] researchers (henceforth all called "established"). I believed that the contrast between emerging and established researchers would provide the most informative results for my study.

Twenty-four of the questionnaire respondents who were willing to be interviewed identified themselves as emerging researchers. The three women in this category who were selected for interviewing had all been Accelerated Development Lecturers for three years prior to their permanent employment at the Institution (see section 1.2.5.3.1). My reasoning behind choosing previous Accelerated Development Lecturers was that these women had (recently) been part of a structured programme that involved mentoring. The nature of the mentoring they received and their experiences, I believed, would provide the best kind of data to help answer my research question. Two of these emerging researchers were from the Social Science group and one was from the Natural Science group.

Nineteen of the questionnaire respondents who were prepared to be interviewed fell into the category of established researchers. Five of these women were from the Natural Science group and fourteen from the Social Science group. In selecting the women to be interviewed at this level I took into consideration their mentoring experiences, as mentors and/or as mentees, as well as their broader contribution to my research. This included insight into the personal promotions procedure, understanding the development of lecturers, being HoD or Acting HoD, and having a range of career paths. The three women in this group selected for interviewing were all professors in the social sciences.

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[18] Planning stage researchers were defined in the questionnaire as those academics who had yet to produce outputs at or beyond the Masters level, or supervise postgraduate students.

[19] Emerging researchers were defined in the questionnaire as those academics who had begun or completed their PhD within the last 5 years, started supervision of PG students or begun to produce creative outputs in the last 5 years.

[20] Mid-career and research active were defined as those academics who were active and produced outputs regularly.

[21] Established researchers were defined as those academics that have regularly produced at least one research output per year for the last ten years.

3.4.1.3.   Questionnaire

The questions were arrived at from the review of the literature. Various iterations led to the final version of the questionnaire. According to Mouton (2001) well-constructed questionnaires receive better responses than questionnaires that are too long, confusing or poorly laid out. Piloting a questionnaire is beneficial as it highlights potential problem areas. Such problem areas can include question ambiguity or vagueness, double-barrelled questions that ask two different things, the order of questions, and the layout of the questionnaire (Mouton, 2001). To avoid such problems, a pilot questionnaire about academic women's career development was initially sent to five women academics at the Institution. Although the questionnaire ended up being fairly lengthy, this did not appear to be problematic for the pilotees or the participants who, on the whole, engaged with it quite deeply.

A written statement accompanied the pilot questionnaire. Included in this statement were the purpose of the questionnaire, the respondents' rights and the researcher's responsibilities, what could be guaranteed in terms of anonymity and confidentiality, and the return date for responding. The pilotees were asked to comment, paying particular attention to how long the questionnaire took to complete, whether the instructions and questions were clear and unambiguous, whether they objected to answering any of the questions, whether any major topic was omitted, whether the layout was clear, and if they encountered any technical difficulties when completing it. Any other pertinent comments were also requested.

The comments received in response to the pilot questionnaire indicated areas where confusion could arise, where definitions were not broad enough (for example, the definition of career stages as partially defined in 3.4.1.2), where questions were too emotive or leading, and where the range of possible answers was limiting and a new style of question was required. Some comments suggested that open-ended questions following closed questions would allow respondents to provide more descriptive responses. As a result, in the final questionnaire twelve of the thirty-eight questions were open-ended questions or closed questions that included free text comment space. From these free text responses, I received rich and valuable qualitative data. The closed questions were in list, category, ranking or grid form. The closed questions provided quantitative data. Both the closed and open-ended questions provided the basis for my interview questions.

The final questionnaire was sent to the 156 women academics at the Institution via the University's Moodle[22] site. This method was chosen for its convenience for the academics and the researcher as it allowed for electronic completion and submission of the questionnaire and electronic collation of the data. The software is familiar to academics as it is commonly used at the Institution. Respondents were given the option of printing out the questionnaire and submitting it anonymously in hard copy form, and two participants made use of this method, one for technical reasons and one who wanted to remain anonymous.

There were two main sections to the questionnaire (attached as appendix C). Broadly speaking, section 1 (questions 1-19) dealt with the concept of career success and career development. Section 2 (questions 20 – 36) dealt with mentoring. The final section discussed the selection of candidates for interview purposes and allowed for any additional comments relevant to the research.

Section one of the questionnaire addressed issues of career success and whether the participant believed she was successful in her own view, in the institution's view and in the view of her colleagues. The first question was an open-ended question which served to entice the respondent to answer the questionnaire. The questions progressed to enquire about aspects of promotion, factors which may have supported or enabled her career development and whether she felt at an advantage as a woman academic. Questions thereafter focussed on her research career specifically and factors that had an impact on her research productivity.

Section two, which focussed on mentoring, began with a description of how mentoring has traditionally been viewed. Participants were then asked to identify characteristics which described their understanding of mentorship and to weigh up the importance of these characteristics. This was in order to gauge whether the academics understood 'mentoring' in the same way as was defined by the literature. The respondents were asked about their participation in mentoring (as mentor, mentee or both), about their mentors, and whether they felt that a mentor's gender made a difference to the mentoring they received, if indeed they did receive mentoring.

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[22] Moodle is a web application that facilitates online learning sites.

The initial deadline of two weeks was extended by a further two weeks. A personalised reminder email was sent to those respondents who had not submitted by the first deadline. The response rate was above 50%, which according to Babbie (2007) is adequate for analysis and reporting purposes.

3.4.1.4.   Interviews

Interviews are an essential source of data for social science research, especially if one's respondents are well informed (Yin, 2003). The purpose of interviewing is to gain insight into how the interviewee understands the topic and why he/she has come to the understanding (King, 2004). In addition, the qualitative interview provides an understanding of the interviewee's lived world, and helps reveal the meaning of his/her experiences (Kvale, 2007). The interviewer must be both sensitive to and knowledgeable about the topic, but should also possess a 'qualified naïveté' and be open to new perspectives on the topic (Kvale, 2007, p. 12).

As discussed in 3.4.1.2, six participants were selected from the questionnaire data. They were interviewed in a semi-structured manner. A semi-structured interview allows more flexibility and questions can be added or amended depending of the interviewee responses. A structured interview on the other hand is more rigid and follows a formalised set of questions. The interviews began with an introduction which informed the interviewee about the project, their voluntary participation, and their right to withdraw at any time. It also made it clear that their anonymity would be safe-guarded as far as possible. Permission was requested to record the interview and participants were given an opportunity to ask questions before the interview commenced. I undertook to send the transcription to the interviewee for verification within a week of the interview. They were informed that they were free to add to or remove their responses following the interview. However, only a few minor, mostly grammatical changes were made to the transcripts by the interviewees.

Kvale (2007) states that 'a good interview question should contribute thematically, to knowledge production; and dynamically, to promoting good interview interaction' (p. 57). Guided by this and by the data from the questionnaire, the interview questions were arranged thematically around the theoretical concepts of the research topic, namely structure, culture and agency. There were three or four dynamic interview questions for

each research question. The interview questions were modified to be appropriate to each interviewee (see Appendix B for interview questions used to guide the interviews).

Once the interviews were under way, apart from probing initial answers and seeking to clarify ambiguous or unclear responses, there was little intervention from me, the interviewer. I allowed the interviewee to dictate the pace of the interview. The questions were often answered spontaneously (non-sequentially) before the question was asked; however, the questions were asked regardless, to allow the interviewee an opportunity for further reflection and possible embellishment on their answers. Once the recorder was switched off there was a short period of debriefing in which I related my interpretations for confirmation or clarity. The overall impressions from each interview were noted post-interview and provided a starting point for coding and themes.

Kvale (2007) notes that the interview process can be a positive experience for the interviewee. A focussed interview provides interviewees with the opportunity to talk about their work and themselves to someone who is intensely interested. The opportunity to focus on a specific topic may be a positive reflective experience for the interviewee (Kvale, 2007). This was evident in my research as two of my interviewees mentioned that they had enjoyed the opportunity for reflection that the interview process had provided.

3.4.2. Data analysis

A mixed methods or critical methodological pluralist approach (see section 3.3.2) requires different types of analysis for quantitative and qualitative data. A statistical method of analysis was applied to the quantitative data in order to produce a descriptive analysis. The qualitative data from the open-ended questionnaire questions, the interviews and the documents and policies were analysed using a contextualising strategy which involves the three methods of categorising, memoing and contextualising (Maxwell, 1996).

My initial stage of analysis was the questionnaire. I started analysing these data manually but this proved to be a cumbersome process. Thereafter I acquired the software programme NVivo which enables electronic data storage. The programme facilitates analysis by enabling data to be sorted in nodes (codes), annotated and

reported. NVivo assists the researcher to code and sub-code, organise and re-arrange data in various ways. This allows for an iterative process that helps develop conceptualisation. All the documents and interview transcripts as well as my initial questionnaire analysis were imported into the programme. Once I had coded all data within the programme, it was able to assemble the data within each code. This provided an overview of emerging patterns. Annotations were made that could be linked to different nodes to show threads running through the data. Reports generated by the programme helped contextualise the data, uncover trends and show how data related to other data. I then exported the coded data along with annotations into a text document. I used critical discourse analysis (CDA) to help make sense of my data, to understand why things are the way they are, and to arrive at findings and conclusions. In the following sections, I discuss the process of analysing the questionnaire, documents and interviews in greater detail. Thereafter I discuss CDA and the process of interpretation and abstraction that it enables.

3.4.2.1. Questionnaire

Initial superficial analysis of the questionnaire was done through the Institution's electronic Moodle site. The system was able to analyse simple closed questions but was unable to analyse Likert-scale questions or open-ended questions. I therefore exported the data to an Excel spreadsheet.

The closed questions were analysed using basic mathematics and formula within the Excel programme to arrive at percentages and averages. According to Sayer (1992) statistical analysis that offers descriptions may supplement and support qualitative descriptions. The closed questions provided information about conditions, occurrence, and connections. For example, from the quantitative data I was able to measure how many women had applied for promotion prior to the study, whether they had been encouraged to apply or had applied by their own volition, and if they had been encouraged to apply, who had encouraged them. The quantitative data were limited to this level of description and could not identify mechanisms or power relations that caused things to happen. Qualitative data, because produced by an intensive method, may provide more information about causal relations and interactions between powers. The open-ended questions furnished information about why conditions existed, what the forces behind occurrences were, and whether any patterns were emerging.

The open-ended questions were analysed using contextualising strategies. Contextualising strategies allow the researcher 'to understand the data in context using various methods to identify the relationships among the different elements of the text' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 79). The various methods involve coding and categorising, memoing and contextualisation. Categorising is the process of coding the data and thematically analysing it by 'relating our data to our ideas about those data' (Coffey & Atkinson, 1998, p. 27). Memoing allows the researcher to capture ideas and facilitate thinking through the process of writing. Contextualisation facilitates seeing the data as a whole, which allows for the formation of concepts, findings and conclusions.

Initially I analysed the qualitative responses using open coding – the first stage of classifying and naming concepts (Babbie, 2007). Thereafter, I sorted the various codes into categories using axial coding, which involves regrouping the data from the open coding and looking for analytical concepts (Babbie, 2007). Then I identified the following primary themes: leadership, disciplinary differences, career advancement, self-esteem, social capital and gender.

As discussed in section 3.4.1.2, the data were analysed for the two separate groups – the Social Science group (SS) and the Natural Science group (NS) – and then the results were compared. Once I had analysed the quantitative and qualitative questionnaire data separately, the data were then analysed and discussed together to provide as much depth as possible. Percentages in the analysis report were conflated when the response of both groups was similar (within 8%) and an average was stated. Where the responses of each group were notably different, separate statistics were provided. This allowed for a comparison of data between the two groups of NS and SS. According to Babbie, 'subgroup comparisons can be used to describe similarities and differences among subgroups with respect to some variable' (2007, p. 427).

My first draft analysis of the questionnaire data was presented to my Masters group.[23] The feedback from the presentation provided further insight into emergent patterns, my own assumptions and possible causal powers. Further themes were generated once the data from the documents and interview texts were analysed.

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[23] The Master's group consisted of Masters' students and their supervisors from the same department in the Faculty of Education. The group met once a month to share progress, concerns, ideas and offer critical feedback.

3.4.2.2. Documents

The initial coding of the documents was done via NVivo. Coding helped to fragment the material so that I could then 'rearrange it into categories that facilitate[d] the comparison of data within and between these categories and that aid[ed] in the development of theoretical concepts' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 78). In other words, the data from the documents were broken up and reorganised into codes and arranged with other data of the same code from other documents, the questionnaire and the interview data. All related information, for example, information relating to the role of the HoD, could then be viewed and categorised together. These categories included academic identity, career success, promotion, the role of HoD, research aspects of career, staff development and mentoring.

I also used CDA (discussed below in section 3.4.2.4.1) to analyse the principle discourses in each document.

3.4.2.3. Interviews

Transcriptions of the interviews were done as soon as possible after each interview, usually within a week, while the nuances of the interview were still fresh in my mind. Memos made while transcribing provided preliminary codes and highlighted threads running through individual interviews and across interviews. Once the transcripts were approved by the interviewees they were imported into NVivo. As with the document data and the data from the open-ended questionnaire questions, both contextualising strategies and CDA were used to analyse the transcribed text. Throughout the analysis of the interviews, I was cognisant of the fact that 'actors' accounts are both corrigible and limited by the existence of unacknowledged conditions, unintended consequences, tacit skills and unconscious motivations' (Bhaskar, 1998, p. xvi). In other words, the responses of the interviewees were context-specific, fallible and subjective.

In addition to the codes that emerged from the questionnaire data and the documents, the main codes from the interviews were: academic game, complexity of research, choice-strategic decisions, department culture, family responsibilities, gender, time issues, altruism, voice and mentoring. Some of the mentoring sub-codes were negative mentoring experiences, supportive relationships, seniority and personality.

3.4.2.4. The final analysis

Although the next step of contextualising the coded data could have been done within NVivo, the cost in time of learning the intricacies of a new programme outweighed its benefits. I therefore chose to export the coded data and the memos from NVivo into a text document.

With the research questions in the foreground I reorganised and contextualised the data. The primary emerging themes that I identified were the role of the HoD, mentoring, career advancement (enablements and constraints), gender inequity, self-esteem and social capital. Many of the themes overlapped and the challenge was to find a way to link the threads but at the same time not be repetitive. The iterative process of writing and rewriting after receiving supervisor reviews of draft chapters helped refine the process considerably. Reviews from supervisors and critical readers also provided other perspectives on what the data were saying and alerted me to my assumptions or researcher bias. Different perspectives also provided additional insight into possible powers relations and mechanisms that could be causative of the situations revealed.

Critical discourse analysis, interpretation and abstraction are the analytical methods that helped me identify possible powers at play and generative mechanisms that might have caused events to happen. I briefly discuss these methods.

3.4.2.4.1. Critical discourse analysis

> Realism insists that none of the properties and powers of subjects are understandable in isolation from reality. (Archer, 2000, p.154)

> [Realism] is implied by our deeds, whatever our words, and then of course by our words, once we understand them as deeds. (Bhaskar, 1997, p. 33, cited in Archer, 2000, p. 155)

The above two statements propose that both text and context need to be taken into account during analysis of data. CDA is consistent with a critical realist epistemology in that it is a way to make known the different strata of reality and our knowledge of that reality. By looking *critically* at both the powers and the procedures within organisations and the tensions that may arise between organisational structures, CDA is a means to analyse both social behaviours and events and the ideas and concepts about those behaviours and events (Fairclough, 2005; Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). The ideas and concepts about social life are both the properties of social life – by virtue of their

existence – and the products of social life – new ideas and concepts are formed based on existing ones (Fairclough & Fairclough, 2012). Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) contend that it is through discourse that ideas are manifested and for this reason, discourse needs to be explained both through social behaviour and the effect of ideas. They claim that 'the types and forms of discourse which exist need to be socially explained and social life needs to be explained in part in terms of the effects of discourse (2012, p. 79). It is the power relations that CDA explores, using not only texts but the social processes that produce texts, and how individuals interact with texts (Wodak, 2001).

CDA looks at the ways in which language and discourse work to make things happen in the social world and the power relations involved in this process (Bloor & Bloor, 2007). Given that discourse can be defined as 'symbolic human interaction in its many forms' Bloor & Bloor, 2007, p. 1), language, gestures, pictures, symbols, promotional material, and institutional documentation can all be critically analysed in order to highlight subconscious or unstated attitudes. A CDA approach enables the researcher to uncover hidden power relations (Meyer, 2001). In the context of my research, I used CDA to uncover the power relations related to and resulting from gender inequity in HE leadership and to see how these power relations affect the careers of women academics.

CDA is 'concerned with *the truth, truthfulness and appropriateness* of texts, their production and their interpretation' (Fairclough, Jessop & Sayer, 2001, p. 6). In other words, CDA is concerned with the making of meaning and the social world, with how texts are produced and interpreted, how the social causes and effects of texts are explained, and how texts are judged for their truthfulness and appropriateness. I used CDA in a broad way, by identifying the main discourses in the literature and my data. Patterns in language within the literature in the field, in South African HE documents, and in RU's documents and policies, formed sets of ideas that I used to help identify my initial codes and categories. I made further use of CDA when reviewing questionnaire data and interview transcripts. Power relations are revealed through discourse. How we think, talk and write influences the world around us and the discourses around us influence how we think, talk and write. So for instance, certain words or ideas repeated in texts we read will become part of how we think about things and in this way will inform the cultural domain.

One of the dominant discourses that emerged from the literature was the *emphasis on research* over teaching or other academic roles. In the 20th century, research and teaching coexisted but towards the late 20th century and into this century, research has become favoured over teaching (Brew & Lucas, 2009). In the literature of this century it is common for the emphasis on research to be a dominant discourse. A further dominant discourse related to research is the *quantifiable value attached to research*. Thornton argues that it is 'no longer curiosity but the income-generating capacity of the research and its value to end-users that is the main incentive for conducting research' (2009, p. 23). This discourse pervades the Institutional policies and documents and is also adopted by academics within the Institution, as I elaborate on in 4.3. The discourse affects the promotion process, the way academics are recognised and rewarded and the way academics perceive their own value within academia.

The phrase 'institutional culture' has become a discourse, or as Higgins terms it, a keyword, used by educationalists and policy makers (Higgins, 2007). Higgins argues that keywords represent political and social changes occurring in society. When the term 'institutional culture' was adopted by HEIs, no attempt was made to define the term or to explain the external pressures on HE that led to the term being adopted (Higgins, 2007). Higgins argues that 'hegemonic thinking is at its most visible when it seeks to make invisible its own enabling or directive presuppositions' (Higgins, 2007, p. 104). 'Institutional culture' is now part of HE and RU discourse and integral to discussions concerning gender (and racial) inequity and male hegemony within HE institutions. I discuss institutional culture in 4.3.1.

3.4.2.4.2.   Interpretation

In research on the social world, the interpretative process is an open fluid process that involves enquiry with an open mind and entails in practice the gathering of data, coding the data, categorising them into themes and finally, interpreting the data and forming theories (Kelly, 1999). The researcher's interpretation is dependent on previous experience and frames of reference and is context- and concept-specific (Danermark, et al., 2002). Interpretation is an iterative process that involves looking at one piece of data in relation to other data (Sayer, 1992). Danermark, et al. (2002) state that in critical realist epistemology, interpretation involves a constant interplay between the fact and the larger context. For instance in my research, a participant's response relating to promotion needed to be interpreted in the context of all the available information about

promotion (the policy and the statistics) as well as my own understanding and interpretation of promotion.

Social science researchers have to move between their own interpretation and the understanding and interpretation of their participants. They interpret the interpretations of others and assign meaning to these interpretations. This is known as the 'double hermeneutics of social science' (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 200). Sayer (1992) likens the evaluation of interpretations to a kind of triangulation process, whereby there is constant checking of the researcher's interpretation with that of another.

3.4.2.4.3. Abstraction and causal analysis

> An abstract concept or an abstraction is something which is formed when we – albeit in thought – separate or isolate one particular aspect of a concrete object of phenomenon; and what we abstract from is all the other aspects possessed by concrete phenomena. (Danermark, et al., 2002, p. 42)

Abstraction involves the making of conceptual distinctions among the various things that happen in the world. It is a necessary process because the domain of events is so diversified. Complex and diversified phenomenon can be simplified by means of abstraction. According to Danermark, et al. (2002) social science abstractions are aimed at identifying the generative mechanism of a structure or object. Through abstraction, data can be interpreted by focusing on patterns and themes that emerge, regularities and irregularities, and differences and similarities. From the abstractions, findings and conclusions can be made.

Abstractions are frozen in time and isolated and because of this, they cannot explain the reasons for change and processes. Causal analysis is a means of analysis that can explain why something happens. Causal powers are the powers an object has due to its nature, regardless of whether the powers are used or not (Danermark, et al., 2002). Mechanisms are what make something happen. For example, wood has the causal power or tendency to burn. The mechanism to make that event happen would be the provision of a spark or a flame. A more context-specific example would be that a woman academic has the causal power or tendency to be promoted. The mechanism to make that event happen would be for her to apply for promotion or to be encouraged to apply for promotion. As a social science researcher I aimed to find the mechanisms that caused certain events to happen.

3.4.3. Validity, reliability and ethical issues

According to Maxwell (1996), 'validity in qualitative research is not the result of indifference but of integrity' (p. 91). In order for research results to be trustworthy, the researcher needs to ensure and show that the research was undertaken in an ethical manner and that the results are valid and reliable. The data need to make sense and the results need to reflect what the research set out to do, whether it is to provide understanding of an issue or prove empirical facts (Merriam, 2001). According to Merriam (2001),

> it is important to understand the perspectives of those involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behaviour in a contextual framework and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. (p. 203)

In keeping with Maxwell's views (1996), validity is something to strive for and is relative to the research undertaken. Validity refers to 'the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, interpretation, or other sort of account' (p. 87). Internal validity can be evaluated by asking if the research measures what it set out to measure and how close the findings are to reality (Merriam, 2001). Merriam (2001) goes on to say that external validity relates to how the research findings can be applied to another case. Internal validity is essential in order for the research to have external validity. External validity can be achieved by using rich description, indicating how typical the case (event or individual) is, or using multisite designs (cases or situations) that are usually achieved through purposeful or random sampling.

Throughout the research, my research questions were foregrounded. In this way I was constantly aware of the purpose of the research. The knowledge claims from this study are particular to the context of RU. However, given that statistics on gender research productivity and the concerns about research capacity development are similar in the other traditional universities in South Africa (CHE, 2009) and possibly internationally, the outcome of this study on women's research careers could be applied to other traditional universities in South Africa and possibly globally.

Maxwell (1996) believes that the key concern for validity is the threat to validity – how could the researcher be wrong – and the researcher's aim should be to identify the threats and minimise them as much as possible. He identifies three main threats to

validity: description, interpretation and theory. A descriptive threat to validity would be the inaccuracy of what is described. This is probably the easiest validity threat to overcome. For example, in an interview the best way to overcome this threat is to record or video the interview, accurately transcribe it and have it checked by the participant for factual accuracy. Validity of interpretation and of theory present greater challenges for social scientists, particularly for those working with a clear theoretical framework as I was. To meet these challenges and overcome the threats to validity they entail, I engaged critical readers of both sexes to provide different perspectives on my interpretations.

Bias and reactivity are also threats to the validity of interpretation and theory. Researcher bias refers to selecting 'data that fit the researcher's existing theory or preconceptions' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90). Reactivity is the 'effect of the research on the setting or individuals studied' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 90). In order to obviate reactivity, the researcher should avoid leading questions or influencing the interviewee in any way. The way to overcome these threats is for the interviewer to be clear about his/her own position to the interviewee, and for the researcher to make his/her position clear when reporting on the research.

As mentioned in section 3.3.1, a possible threat to the validity of this research could stem from the fact that I hold both outsider and insider status. I conducted the research while employed as an administrator in the Research Office of the case study, i.e. I was part of the structure and culture of the Institution. In order to be as objective as possible, and to be aware of the possibility of being too sympathetic or gender biased, I kept a reflective journal. The journal allowed me to highlight my own assumptions, my subjectivities and instances where I might be too sympathetic and in danger of gender bias. Foregrounding these issues helped me maintain a measure of objectivity in order to provide credible interpretation and analysis. An objective critical perspective from my supervisors and critical readers also helped highlight and reduce possible bias-driven threats to validity.

Reliability relates to whether the findings can be replicated. This issue is more complicated in the social sciences where the subject is not static. Lincoln and Guba (1985, cited in Merriam, 2001) argue that in social science research it is better to assess dependability and consistency than reliability. Dependability and consistency deal with

whether the results reflect the data collected. Merriam (2001) lists two techniques that help ensure the dependability of results: triangulation and audit trail.

Triangulation of data helps reduce 'the risk of chance associations and of systematic biases due to a specific method and allows a better assessment of the generality of the explanations that you develop' (Maxwell, 1996, p. 94). Collecting data from different individuals and sources at the strata of structure, culture and agency, using a variety of methods, allowed for the triangulation of data in my study.

An audit trail authenticates the research by enabling the reader/reviewer to follow the trail of the research and explain how the results were achieved. A good audit trail is one where the researcher describes the research process and decisions involved in detail, from the collection of data through to the findings and conclusions. I trust that the detailed description of my research method in section 3.4 has provided a good audit trail. In addition, the raw data, in the form of the NVivo coding, interview transcripts and questionnaire data have been safely stored.

In social science research, ethical issues often arise within the context and process of the research and cannot be foreseen (Merriam, 2001). Therefore the issue of ethics comes down to the integrity of the researcher. Ethical approval for this research was obtained from the Faculty of Education Higher Degrees Committee. Permission to use staff members as research participants was obtained from the Registrar and the Director of Human Resources at RU. Questionnaire participants were informed in the introduction to the questionnaire that by participating in the questionnaire they were indicating their consent to do so. They were also informed that their participation was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any point in the process.

Before each interview I explicitly stated that I was undertaking the research in my personal capacity and not on behalf of the Research Office. However, I also mentioned that the knowledge produced might be disseminated to the Institution and the larger community of HE. This was to ensure that the interview participants were fully informed before they gave their consent. According to Flick (2006) informed consent should be willingly given by an adequately informed participant who is competent to give consent.

It was important that my position as interviewer be clearly differentiated from my position as Administrator in the Research Office. If it were not, the interviewees' responses might have been biased. They might have responded, albeit subconsciously, in a way they believed was expected of them (Trowler, 2011). In Butler's terms they may have performed in ways regarded as acceptable by the social norm. I informed the participants that the data would be evaluated by myself although there would be guidance from my supervisors. I undertook to safeguard the identity of the interviewees as far as possible. The anonymity of the research participants was secured by changing names and certain details. But even though every attempt was made to keep names and the contents of interviews confidential, the fact that RU was a small Institution meant that there was still the possibility that some of the participants might be identifiable. The risk of this happening was mentioned to the interviewees when I sought their informed consent prior to the interviews.

Permission for recording the interviews was obtained. The interviews were transcribed solely by me, the researcher. Transcriptions of interviews were sent to the interview participants for verification and to enable them to remove or change any information that they may have had second thoughts about. They were notified that they were free to withdraw their participation at any point prior to submission of the thesis.

The critical realist perspective of this research is that the researcher is a knowledge producer or social co-constructor of knowledge rather than a knowledge collector (Kvale, 2007). In an interview situation, the knowledge produced is dependent on the reciprocal relationship between interviewer and interviewee. According to Kvale (2007), 'the research situation is an inter-view where knowledge is constructed in the inter-action between two people' (p. 13). During the interview, I attempted to maintain a 'qualified naivety' (Kvale (2007) so that my interpretation of the data was not biased by insider information and that I was not desensitised to certain issues. I was cognisant of my insider position throughout the interviews and the analysis. I hope that this provided the necessary objectivity for me to be as unbiased as possible as a researcher.

Consent was obtained from the Registrar of the Institution to use the Institution as a case study. Consent was also obtained from the Registrar, the primary "owner" of all institutional documents, to use RU policies and documentation. Once the documents had been analysed, a list of documents was sent to the Registrar to confirm permission for

use of the documents. Organisations as subjects of research are, as much as individuals, entitled to anonymity, privacy and confidentiality. According to Oliver (2003) anonymity in research allows for and encourages objectivity. Anonymity also helps the researcher explore more sensitive issues. However in the case of this study I believed that there was no information that was sensitive or that would jeopardise, embarrass or be harmful to the Institution. RU as an Institution values and promotes critique and is open to examining its own assumptions and powers. Providing a pseudonym for the Institution seemed contrived and unnecessary, not least because it would be identifiable to most readers anyway. For this reason I decided against using pseudonyms both for the Institution and for the bodies within it.

3.5. Conclusion

In line with a critical realist approach, the purpose of this research was to establish whether supportive structures and mentoring relationships enabled women academics to overcome obstacles that might have a negative impact on their research productivity. As this was a case study that provided rich descriptive data, it is possible that it will be of relevance to other HEIs, particularly those where women are in the minority in leadership positions, and where women's research productivity is lower than that of their male counterparts.

In Chapters four and five, I analyse my data to establish the constraints and enablements to women's research careers and the impact of support structures and mentoring relationships on the research careers of women academics. Chapter four analyses how women understand career success and the ways that they experience institutional structures and cultures in developing their research careers. Chapter five analyses the support structures that women experience at the Institution and whether these support structures, including mentoring, help them or inhibit them from developing the capacity to be research productive.

<p style="text-align: center;">CHAPTER FOUR</p>

Analysis of career success: enablements and constraints

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of my research was to investigate the constraints and enablements to women's research career development, using RU as a case study. To achieve this, in the first section of the analysis, I attempt to answer the first two research questions:

- How do women academics understand career success?
- How do these women experience the existing Institutional structures and cultures in the development of their research careers?

I explore how women researchers understand and experience career success in the context of the new knowledge economy of HE. I analyse what they perceive they experience as encouragement and restrictions to their research careers. By doing so, I seek to uncover causal powers that potentially enable or constrain women's career development.

In Chapter 5, I discuss my research findings in relation to my final two research questions:

- What support structures and mentoring do women experience in their research careers?
- Have mentoring and supportive structures enabled or constrained the development of the appropriate personal properties required in order for women academics to advance professionally?

In order to do this, I examine institutional support and individual experiences of mentoring as well as how the impact of mentoring and support on career development is experienced by the women. I also examine whether mentoring and supportive structures and relationships empower women to overcome constraints to the development of their careers.

4.2. Social realism as an analytical tool: The theory revisited

As explained in 3.2, for analytical purposes Archer (1996) suggests that researchers examine the social world in terms of three aspects: structure, culture and agency. She believes we need to see structure and culture as separate in order to 'understand social life as the interplay between interests and ideas' (Archer, 1996, p. xiii). Archer sees each aspect as having certain properties and powers to effect change which she calls 'emergent properties' (Archer, 1998, p. 192). She defines emergent properties as 'entities which come into being through social combination'. Although it is important to analyse culture, structure and agency separately, in reality they are intertwined and it is not always easy to discuss them separately. The main Institutional structures relating to my research that I identified are: the promotion process, and mentoring and support structures, including academic leadership (HoD). These structures are intertwined with, influence and are influenced by, culture and agency.

4.3. Career development within the Institution

In the first section of this chapter, I discuss the results of my data analysis in terms of career advancement for women academics. The data used were Institutional documents, namely the Equity Policy, the Institutional Imbizo record and the Personal Promotions Policy as well as data from the questionnaires which included responses, to both open and closed questions and data from the interviews conducted with the participants (see 3.4.1). While many of the findings may apply to men and women academics, the focus of my research is on women academics and the advancement of their careers.

Research suggests that women academics may be more adversely affected by some of the changes in HE than their male counterparts (Morley, 2003; White et al., 2011). Changes in HE, as discussed in Chapter one, have resulted in a greater emphasis on quantifiable research particularly in terms of subsidy earning publications. Studies have found that women generally produce less research than men do and this therefore places them at a disadvantage in terms of their career (see 2.3.3).

Bearing these findings in mind, I begin my analysis by looking at the structures and culture that relate to career development for women academics namely, advancement and promotion, and equity and institutional culture. Thereafter I analyse factors that

are perceived to hinder or advance women's career development, and their research careers in particular.

4.3.1. Career advancement and success

The process of promotion is an institutional structure which has an impact on career advancement for women. In order to understand the 'official rules' and processes related to promotion in the Institution I examined the Institutional Personal Promotions Policy. At RU academics are required to exercise individual agency and apply for promotion rather be nominated. I explore the reasons why fewer women than men apply for promotion.

It would seem that research has become the primary measure for promotion in HE due to global changes in HE as previously discussed (2.3). As women produce less research than men (2.3.3), promotion criteria that place more value on research than other academic areas may have a negative effect on women's career advancement. The national subsidisation system, discussed in 1.2.2, suggests that the way promotion is assessed at RU may be affected by the reliance on national funding, and research productivity, particularly in the form of accredited outputs, is the most strongly rewarded. Evidence for this is present in my data as well as in the literature. For example, Hartley and Dobele (2009) found research productivity had more impact on advancement in academia than excellence in teaching. While HEIs may not openly acknowledge being influenced by these changes, there is a perception that research productivity in the form of accredited outputs which attract subsidy counts the most when assessing academic achievement.

As universities are hierarchically structured, career advancement and success can be primarily determined through academics' status and position in the Institution. The Personal Promotions procedures require that academics apply for promotion independently although HoDs and Deans are expected to guide and encourage staff to apply (HoD Guide, 2008).

Over the past 6 years (2005-2010) the statistics of successful promotion applications indicate 2 successful applications from men to 1 successful application from women (RU Promotion Spread sheet, 2012). This is more or less in proportion to the gender ratio of academics (2 men: 1 woman) at RU over the same period (Digest of Statistics, 2006 –

2011). On the surface this appears to reflect that the same proportion of women as men is being promoted. On closer investigation however, when looking at the number of academic staff who were eligible to apply for promotion, i.e. academics *below* professorial level, the results were slightly different. Over the same period 17% of all academic staff were male professors and 3% were women professors[24] (Digest of Statistics, 2006-2011).   When the numbers of professors (ineligible for further promotion) were removed from the equation, women comprised 41% of the academics who could apply for promotion. The ratio of applicants who were *eligible* to apply was therefore 3 men: 2 women. However, the average ratio of applicants for promotion was 2 men: 1 woman. On average 10% of men who were eligible to apply for promotion applied, whereas only 7% of women in the same category applied. This seems to suggest that women are more reticent when it comes to applying for promotion and proportionately fewer eligible women are putting themselves forward for promotion. One Promotion's Committee member interviewed suggested that women apply for promotion only once they are sure that they meet the promotion criteria whereas men tend to take more of a risk. She said:

> *It's the men who are taking a chance … but often you don't see that with women. The applications you get are pretty solid. You can see that this is not a person who thought they would be turned down.* (Carol[25])

This could suggest that women are more uneasy about having their applications turned down than men. With regard to promotion, marginally more women (87%) than men (82%) who applied for promotion were promoted for the period 2005 to 2010.

My data from the questionnaire indicate one of the main reasons that women do not put themselves forward for promotion is that they perceive their research record to be inadequate to meet the promotion criteria. Half (n=40) of the women questionnaire respondents had not applied for promotion and of those, 46% (n=18) listed as one of the reasons for not applying for promotion that their "research record was not strong enough". This would suggest that a women's research record is perceived as a restraining factor when applying for promotion and constraining for her career advancement. Another reason most commonly given for not applying for promotion was not having the required qualification (40%, n=16) which would link to research record

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[24] 85% of all professors were men and 15% were women (Digest of Statistics, 2006-2011).
[25] All interviewees were given pseudonyms.

and research experience as studying towards a PhD is often the start of a research trajectory.

The Personal Promotion Policy (2009) is the official institutional guide to promotion processes and criteria. From the policy individuals can assess their eligibility for promotion. The 2005 Personal Promotions Policy[26] was revised in 2009. The 2005 Personal Promotions Policy was a nine page document while the current 2009 Personal Promotions document is forty-five pages long. This change in the length of the Personal Promotions policy from 2005 to 2009 appears to be an attempt to make more explicit the criteria used to judge applicants. I argue that the change could also be indicative of the increased demand for quality assurance and evaluation that is the trademark of the new knowledge economy. The increased complexity of evaluating all aspects of an academics' role, especially research, is also reflected in the increased length of the policy. In addition the revised policy acknowledges that academics' achievements need to be assessed differently because of the differences in the disciplines.

The Personal Promotions Policy provides a template which gives an indication of 'the range and scope of academic achievements' and 'consists of the five major areas in an academic's life: Teaching & Learning; Research; Community Engagement; Professional Involvement; and, Leadership Management & Administration. Each category in turn is made up of a number of sub-categories, and each sub-category is differentiated into four levels of achievement: Outstanding, Very Good, Satisfactory, and Unsatisfactory' (Personal Promotion Policy, 2009, p. 3). The revised Personal Promotions Policy allows applicants to choose their own weightings in the different categories and gives examples of appropriate evidence for the different rating levels in the different categories. The intention is to enable academics to argue for their achievements within their unique contexts.

The 2009 Personal Promotions Policy indicates a change in thinking about what qualifies as research from the 2005 Policy. The extended criteria incorporate a broader conception of what 'counts' as research across all the disciplines. There is an increased focus on research particularly for promotion from the level of lecturer to associate professor which suggests that substantial engagement with disciplinary research is essential for career success. Further evidence of this is provided by data from my

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[26] The 2005 PP Policy had been unchanged for 'as long as can be remembered' (email correspondence, Director: HR, 2010).

questionnaire, in which 14 of the 80 participants when asked how they perceived the Institution defined a successful academic, wrote that that they felt the Institution valued research over teaching and other academic areas. This perception was echoed by five of the six interviewees. I explore this in more detail further on in this section.

The broader criteria of the 2009 Personal Promotions Policy indicates a change in thinking about what qualifies as research and acknowledges disciplinary differences in scholarly output. However, data from the questionnaire and the interviews revealed the perception that disciplinary differences are not acknowledged in the actual promotion process. Some participants (questionnaire respondents and interviewees) believed that the Natural Sciences are favoured because generally applicants from those disciplines produce more accredited research outputs than applicants from other disciplines. As discussed in 2.2, at RU it is common for a Natural Science academic to produce 3.29 research outputs per year, whereas a Social Science researcher may only produce 1.2 research outputs annually (Clayton, 2011). According to Boughey 'the sciences are always likely to be able to produce more research and research more quickly than the humanities' due to the different ways knowledge is produced in the two disciplines (2010, p. 6). Additionally, in the hard sciences postgraduate students generally work in research groups, and supervision may be less onerous, and therefore graduating postgraduate students may be less demanding than in the soft sciences, allowing both the graduation of more students and more time to commit to producing research articles (Becher & Trowler, 2001).

The analysis of the data from the open-ended question in the questionnaire which asked respondents for their perceptions of how the Institution determines success, indicates a perception that there are inequities in how the Institution determines success across disciplines and departments (mentioned by 6 respondents); and that the Institution's definition of success is narrow (mentioned by 5 respondents). One questionnaire respondent wrote:

> *I believe that one's peers' and the university's expectations with respect to research productivity vary hugely between faculties and departments. I think the pressure on us in the life sciences is very high, with several publications per year being considered the norm, as well as having a number of postgraduate students at any one time.* (Participant N15[27])

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[27] 'N+number' identifies participants from the Natural Sciences group, 'S+number' identifies participants from the Social Sciences group.

The SS participants used terms such as 'publishing cash cow' and 'money machine', when describing their perceptions of the institution's view of success. The negative connotations of this discourse suggest that some SS women felt dissatisfied with how they perceive the Institution determines career success and the expectation to research and publish. This is illustrated by one SS interviewee who said:

> *What I do see from a lot of university conversations is that even though the Institution starts thinking more seriously around the range of people it has working here and what their different research and publication and skills and teaching trajectories might be, you still get a reversion in many spaces to: if you don't have a track record in research and publication, you're not a proper academic. And that comes up again and again and again. I think it is a very hard thing to lay to rest.* (Jean)

Another change in the Personal Promotion Policy is that the 2009 Personal Promotion Policy differentiates between required qualifications for different faculties for promotion to different academic levels. For example, while a doctoral degree is the requirement for the level of Lecturer in the Science Faculty, in the Commerce and Humanities faculties it is only at the level of Associate Professor that a doctoral degree is required (Personal Promotion Policy, 2009). This seems to be an international trend. Becher and Trowler claim that 'in most well-established "pure" subject areas it is now more or less obligatory to begin by acquiring a doctorate' while in professional disciplines such as Law and Pharmacy, experience in professional fields often precedes academic employment and PhD qualification (2001, p. 134). The differentiating of qualifications for different faculties reflects the institutional intention to be fairer by taking into account the differences between disciplines.

The analysis of my data reflects that 20% (n=16%) of the women respondents listed not having the required qualification as the reason they did not apply for promotion. Mostly these women were from the Social Science (SS) group (n=11), while five were from the Natural Science (NS) group[28]. This could indicate that not having a PhD is a constraint for those women who wish to apply for promotion. In some cases academics who do not have a PhD will have less research experience and subsequently will not have a very comprehensive research record. Most women in the Natural Sciences (some departments excluded) will have commenced employment having achieved doctorates and will

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[28] The five women from Natural Sciences were from hard applied sciences (3 from Pharmacy, 1 from Computer Science, 1 from Statistics).

already be active researchers whereas in the Social Sciences it is not uncommon to start employment with an Honours or a Masters qualification (Personal Promotion Policy, 2009).

As a structure, the Personal Promotion Policy indicates the University's official intention for the promotion process to be equitable and fair across disciplines and academic areas. However some of my participants perceive inconsistencies in the way promotion decisions are made by the Promotions Committee suggesting a contradiction at the level of culture. One Professor interviewed, who has served on the Personal Promotion committee for a few years said: '*Now if you look at the Promotions criteria, it looks as though they are all given equal weighting but they're not*' (Carol). The application process requires that individuals applying for promotion select a combination of the five academic areas and assign a weighting to their level of competence in that area. Given that, as I argue, research seemingly counts the most when assessing promotion, applicants who select a combination that focuses more on teaching (or the other academic areas) and less on research may be at a disadvantage. Women in the Social Sciences without a PhD and by implication, may not have begun a research trajectory, may therefore perceive themselves to be at a disadvantage when promotion is assessed. Likewise academics in the Social Sciences, due to the nature of knowledge production in this discipline, will produce less research and at a slower rate than those academics in the Natural Sciences. Women in the Social Sciences may perceive themselves to be doubly disadvantaged by the combined factors of their gender and their discipline.

Further evidence of the contradiction between the official Institutional intention to give equal importance to research and teaching and the other academic areas as per the Promotion Policy, and the greater importance placed on research at the cultural level is found in the HoD Guide (2008). The HoD Guide acknowledges that the need for academics 'to obtain master's and doctoral degrees and establish themselves as researchers can create a tension between teaching and research' (2008, p.43). In addition, the following comments recorded at the Institutional Imbizo (2011) during the discussion on research echo the view that despite what the Institutional documents say, in reality research is valued more than teaching:

> *Research is essential for promotion. Teachers need to accept the limitations of not participating in research*

Finding a balance [between teaching and research] must be a collective decision. Recognition for good teachers is important

There is a tension between teachers and researchers. There is a danger in that the current focus on research is marginalising others. Teachers free up researchers and this needs to be acknowledged

Leaving the teaching/research balance to a personal choice may be problematic, as subtle social pressures may be brought to bear. (Imbizo record, 2011, p. 25)

The perception that the Institution places more importance on research than teaching and other academic areas was also evident in my research data. Responses to the questionnaire question: 'how do you perceive a "successful academic" to be defined from the Institution's point of view' indicate the main perception was that the Institution placed importance on research above other areas. 35 of the 80 participants noted that the research profile of academics was important to the Institution. In particular, the Institution is perceived to value tangible evidence of research such as research outputs in the form of publications (noted by 56 out of 80 participants), graduation of PG students (17/80); bringing in funds (16/80) and obtaining a PhD qualification (6/80). Quality of research (noted by 17 out of 80 participants) was also perceived to be important to the Institution.

Teaching was only mentioned by a quarter of the respondents (20/80) suggesting that most of the participants did not perceive teaching to be a strong factor in the Institution's definition of a successful academic. This is further supported by responses that indicate that some lecturers believe the Institution values research above teaching (14/80) or other academic areas as illustrated by the following comment:

The Institution appears to be supportive of all aspects of an academic's life - but at the end of the day only one thing counts and that is research. (Participant N19)

As previously discussed in 2.3.3, it is generally acknowledged that women tend to gravitate towards teaching, especially when they have difficulty balancing work and home-life demands (de la Rey, 1999; Poulos, 2011). My analysis of the questionnaire responses indicates that more of the respondents considered themselves as 'primarily teachers' (31%, n=25) than those who considered themselves 'primarily researchers' (16%, n=13), while 45% (n=36) saw themselves as 'both teachers and researchers'. Research suggests that teaching and pastoral care are feminised and count less than

more masculine practices such as managerial tasks and research (Cotterill & Waterhouse, 1998). The analysis of my data reflects that this is the case at RU where it would seem that an academic's research record counts more towards promotion than a teaching record. As more of the women viewed themselves as 'primarily teachers' as opposed to 'primarily researchers', this suggests that in terms of what counts towards career advancement, this could be a drawback for women due to their career focus and choices.

Literature around career success distinguishes between subjective and objective indicators of career success. The former is related to an academic's level of satisfaction and feelings of accomplishment and the latter relates to variables such as compensation, promotion, performance, and evaluations (Sturges, 1999; Allen, et al., 2004). In the responses to the open-ended questionnaire question 'what does career success mean to you personally?' discourses were of both of an objective and a subjective nature. Subjective indicators of career success were often described in intangible ways. A sense of purpose or the feeling of making a difference was a dominant theme mentioned by 51 of the 80 respondents. Job satisfaction was mentioned by half of the questionnaire participants and included feelings of satisfaction and fulfilment, being stimulated and challenged, feeling happy and enjoying their current positions and job. A personal sense of achievement, which included achieving personal goals, was mentioned by fifteen respondents. Balancing all spheres of academic life and balancing career and family life was also listed as important by ten respondents. This is similar to research which found that for women, life-work balance was important, and career success was only one factor for success in their lives (Sturges, 1999; Poulos, 2011). One respondent wrote *'my success, to me, is measured by the fact that I have 2 wonderful, successful children and a very good family life'* (Participant N5).

Objective indicators of career success were noted by the respondents in the form of acknowledgement (noted by 33 out of 80 participants), achievements (44/80) and respect (24/80). Reputation, reaching a position of standing, achieving esteem and respect of peers and colleagues were common themes. To be seen as an expert in one's field by being invited to participate in conferences, exhibitions or peer reviews suggested acknowledgement and recognition by one's peers. Acknowledgement by one's department or Institution in the form of remuneration and job security was valued by only 9 out of 80 respondents. Advancement, mentioned by six respondents, included

being on track for the next level of promotion, achieving promotion and progressing up the academic ladder.

Sturges (1999) claims that when material career success is valued it is usually as a means towards involvement in more interesting work or in terms of financial practicality rather than valuing the improved status. The analysis of my data supports this research. Remuneration as a measure of career success was mentioned by 9 out of 80 respondents and of these, seven respondents qualified this in terms of a practical purpose such as: *'Earns you enough to afford a comfortable life-style'* (Participant S31) and *'Success also means to be able to survive on my salary and support my family'* (Participant S19) and *'Attaining a high enough salary to be able to contribute to the security of your family'* (Participant S27). Ten of the respondents measured career success in terms of their academic position/status or in terms of awards received. Sturges (1999) also found that men perceive advancement as a competitive game while women saw advancement as a means of keeping up or meeting challenges. One of my respondents echoed this when she wrote: *'For me success is less about financial climbing than personal fulfilment and stimulation and growth in my discipline'* (Participant S40).

These findings are supported by research which found that women measured career success more on internal (subjective) criteria such as satisfaction, accomplishment, achievement and personal recognition; rather than on external (objective) criteria such as material career success (awards, job grade and remuneration) (Sturges, 1999). However, the respondents' perceptions of how the Institution determines career success foregrounded objective measures of career success. In terms of the Institution's official view of career success, only 32% of the respondents felt successful, while the majority of the participants (72%) felt successful in terms of their own view of career success. The mismatch in how the individuals perceive the way that the Institution measures career success and how they themselves measure career success could lead them to feel dissatisfied. This could explain why fewer than half (43%) of the women participants feel satisfied with where they are at this stage of their careers. Women who valued subjective indicators of career success over objective indicators may not place as much value or emphasis on tangible outcomes like research outputs. As the promotion criteria favour tangible outcomes, women may therefore perceive themselves to be disadvantaged in terms of their career advancement.

4.3.2. Equity and institutional culture

Equity and institutional culture both impact on women academics and their integration into and advancement within the Institution. I analysed Institutional structures in the form of documents such as the Equity Policy (2004), the Employment Equity Plan (2010), the Quality Improvement Plan (2009) and Institutional Imbizo record (2011) as well as data from the questionnaire and the participant interviews. It is from the structures that the official Institutional culture regarding equity can be ascertained. One of the Institutional aims stated in the Equity Policy is to achieve a "culture of inclusivity" (2004, p. 3). It is envisaged that this can be achieved by changing the culture, values and institutional practices many of which evolved during the apartheid era and are perceived as alienating by some staff and students (Equity Policy, 2004).

As part of achieving the "culture of inclusivity" (Equity Policy, 2004), the Institution held a series of Institutional Imbizos[29] in 2011. The record of the first Imbizo, which was attended by a selected body of senior administrators and academics, identified several key challenges namely: transformation of institutional culture and social equity; support for PG programmes and research; and, staff planning. Staff planning included: moving towards more equity in the gender and racial staff composition; providing support for new academics; and, reconsidering the current academic staff norms (Institutional Imbizo record, 2011). Another issue raised at the Institutional Imbizo (2011) was an urgent need to grow the next generation of academics and in particular to ensure that the next generation of academics consists of more black and women academics. Currently the bulk of the academics in HEIs, particularly at the professorial level are made up of aging white males as previously discussed in 1.2.2.

There is an acknowledgement that past practices and values have favoured certain groups and alienated others (Equity Policy, 2004; Institutional Imbizo Record, 2011). Some participants at the Imbizo felt and acknowledged that certain Institutional spaces such as faculty board meetings and Senate meetings are not comfortable spaces for many academics who are not privileged by fitting into the norm (such as women or black academics). This is a problem that permeates SA HEIs and is attributed to the apartheid legacy. Similar concerns are noted in a Higher Education South Africa (HESA) document which states: 'Young female scholars have expressed concern about institutional cultures and with the sexism that continues to pervade male-dominated

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[29] Imbizo is a Zulu word, meaning gathering or convocation, commonly used to describe a forum for enhancing dialogue and interaction between institutional leadership and the people.

academic institutions' (HESA, 2011, p. 8). The current academic staff norms impact on women in terms of their status in and integration into the Institution which in turn affects their career advancement. One questionnaire respondent wrote:

> *I feel that male, specifically white males, at an institutional and departmental level are still at an advantage as academics. At an institutional level, we just need to look at the demographics of heads of department and those in the higher levels of employment at Rhodes. At a departmental level, it is mainly the males who are more assertive in staff meetings. There is still a lot of gender and racial inequality here at Rhodes.* (Participant S20)

Currently the central discourses of power and decision making within the Institution are male dominated as noted in 2.4.1.2. This is problematic if one takes into account Sader, et al.'s (2005) claim that a critical mass of women is necessary in order that women are positioned to empower other women and to act as role models, mentors and sponsors. Women who are in the minority at RU in terms of critical mass would potentially benefit from an institutional culture that is more inclusive in terms of gender.

The move towards the new knowledge economy and new managerialism in HE, with a focus on competition and evaluation, is perceived by some academics to have impacted on collegiality, and reduced the ethos of voluntary mentoring of junior staff by more senior academics. As part of a research project on HoDs at RU, one HoD interviewed made the following comment:

> The old collegiality has kind of been lost, and people are always asking not so much what can I give to the Department as what can I take from it. (Interviewee quoted in Euvrard & Irwin, 2007, p. 8)

Collegiality and the notion of an old "boys' club" is perceived by some to be a practice that has been alienating for those who are not part of that group, such as women and black academics, and favours white male academics. One of the interviewees in my study expressed mixed feelings about the changing norms around the ethos of collegiality. She noted that the positive aspect of the old "boys' club" was that senior academics worked with junior academics rather than in competition with them. The negative aspect was that the "boys' club" benefitted "insiders" (and by implication, white male academics) and excluded outsiders.

There is evidence in Institutional documents of a belief that there is a need to nurture and support emerging researchers through mentoring, for example the Quality Improvement Plan (2009) and the Head of Department Guide (2008). The acknowledgement of the need for mentoring of emerging academics is further illustrated in the Institutional Imbizo Record which states:

> *Mentoring works well, and senior white professors should be used as mentors. With regard to "growing our own timber", we should select from our graduates and create a pool of potential employees. These students should be mentored.* (2011, p. 16)

While the reality is that most professors are white males, the mention of 'senior white professors' in this document could suggest and perpetuate the belief that excellence is embodied in whiteness, particularly male whiteness. However, there are some women and black academics at RU who have managed to overcome gender/race biases or underrepresentation to achieve professor status. While the official intention is to 'chang[e] the culture, values and institutional practices', the way some academics respond to the changing culture suggests that there may be a contradiction of cultural items. John Higgins (2007) argues that institutional culture contributes to the success or failure of institutional transformation. Assumptions such as the one that it is 'senior white professors' who are in positions to mentor may be alienating for new and aspiring black and women academics (HESA, 2011) and may impede the overall transformation agenda of the Institution.

In section 4.4.1, I discuss issues around gender where it is apparent that there are certain constraints in relation to gender that are perceived to disadvantage women at the Institution. Shackleton, et al. (2006) found that gender awareness programmes at SA HEIs were not a priority and that in terms of transformation; the issue of race appears to be more dominant than the issue of gender. RU appears to be aware of the need to change both the Institutional culture and the gender and racial composition of academic staff (Employment Equity Plan, 2010). Strategies such as a Gender Policy and a Mentoring Programme for all new academic staff are to be devised and implemented in the coming years and these have the potential to address some of the past imbalances. Research has shown that such policies may reflect good intentions but the reality is often that such policies are not always effectively implemented (Shackleton, et al., 2006). It remains to be seen whether these policies will impact on the culture and practices at RU in the future.

Despite the fact that there are Institutional structures in place intended to create an ethos of inclusivity, and that this is the official intention, the perception at the level of the individuals is that gender inequity persists. This is indicated by the following questionnaire respondent's comment:

> *I really don't think that many of the structures explicitly value male academics over female ones, but rather it is the most subtle engendered practices and expectations within and outside of the institutional context that have effect.* (Participant S11)

This suggests a contradiction between the official culture of the Institution which indicates a desire to change to a more inclusive environment and the way people respond to that culture. I would therefore argue that without structures that explicitly focus on issues of equity fairness and without a culture of inclusivity where institutional beliefs are aligned with the beliefs of those within the institution, women's agency within the institution and women's career advancement will continue to be constrained.

4.3.3. Summary: career development

While the official intention is to move towards a more gender inclusive and equitable environment, the environment is still experienced as alienating for those in the minority, particularly at the level of decision making and this is perceived to affect their career advancement within the Institution.

In terms of promotion, at the structural level the Institutional intention is to give equal weighting to different areas of academics' work. However, at the cultural level there is a strong belief that research counts more than other areas of academic work. This could mean that men, who are more research productive, are perceived to be in a more favourable position in terms of promotion. The agency of women academics to apply for promotion is possibly curtailed by their career focus and choices. Fewer eligible women put themselves forward for promotion perceiving their research record to be the primary constraint.

In addition, my data suggest that while the official criteria for promotion accommodate disciplinary differences, academics in the Natural Science disciplines are at a perceived advantage as they generally achieve more accredited research outputs and are research active when they are first employed. As the Natural Sciences are dominated by men

(2:1), it can be inferred that men are perceived by some to be at more of an advantage in terms of what counts towards promotion. Women in the Social Sciences on the other hand, may perceive themselves to be at a dual disadvantage by their gender and their discipline when it comes to what counts for promotion.

In the next section, I analyse constraints and enablements that women may experience in their careers and how these may impact specifically on their research careers.

4.4.   Constraints and enablements: career advancement

In the previous section I noted that half of the women participants had not applied for promotion. For many of these women, their research record was perceived to be a constraining factor possibly due to the perception that the Institution predominantly values research when it comes to measuring career success and advancement. The promotion statistics suggest that while fewer women who are eligible for promotion apply for promotion than men who are eligible, marginally more women are in fact promoted than men. This suggests that other factors may play a part in women being reticent in putting themselves forward for promotion.

Figure 2 below illustrates factors which the women participants perceive as constraining and/or supportive of their career development that emerged from the questionnaire data. The constraining factors are predominantly perceived to be gender-related (traditional gender roles and family responsibilities) and factors related to teaching commitments and self-esteem. Further constraining factors mentioned in both the open-ended questionnaire question responses and the interviews related to gender-based choice and work-life balance.

The constraining factors will be discussed as 'gender issues', (which include family responsibilities, traditional gender roles and gender-based choices) and 'the balancing act' (which includes teaching commitments and work-life balance). Self-esteem was seen as both a constraint and an enablement and will be discussed as such. The enabling factors emerged as access to professional network structures, access to information, advisory participation and personal capabilities and these will be discussed under 'research expertise'. Other enabling factors such as personal support, support of institution and department, access to role models and mentors will be discussed under 'support structures'.
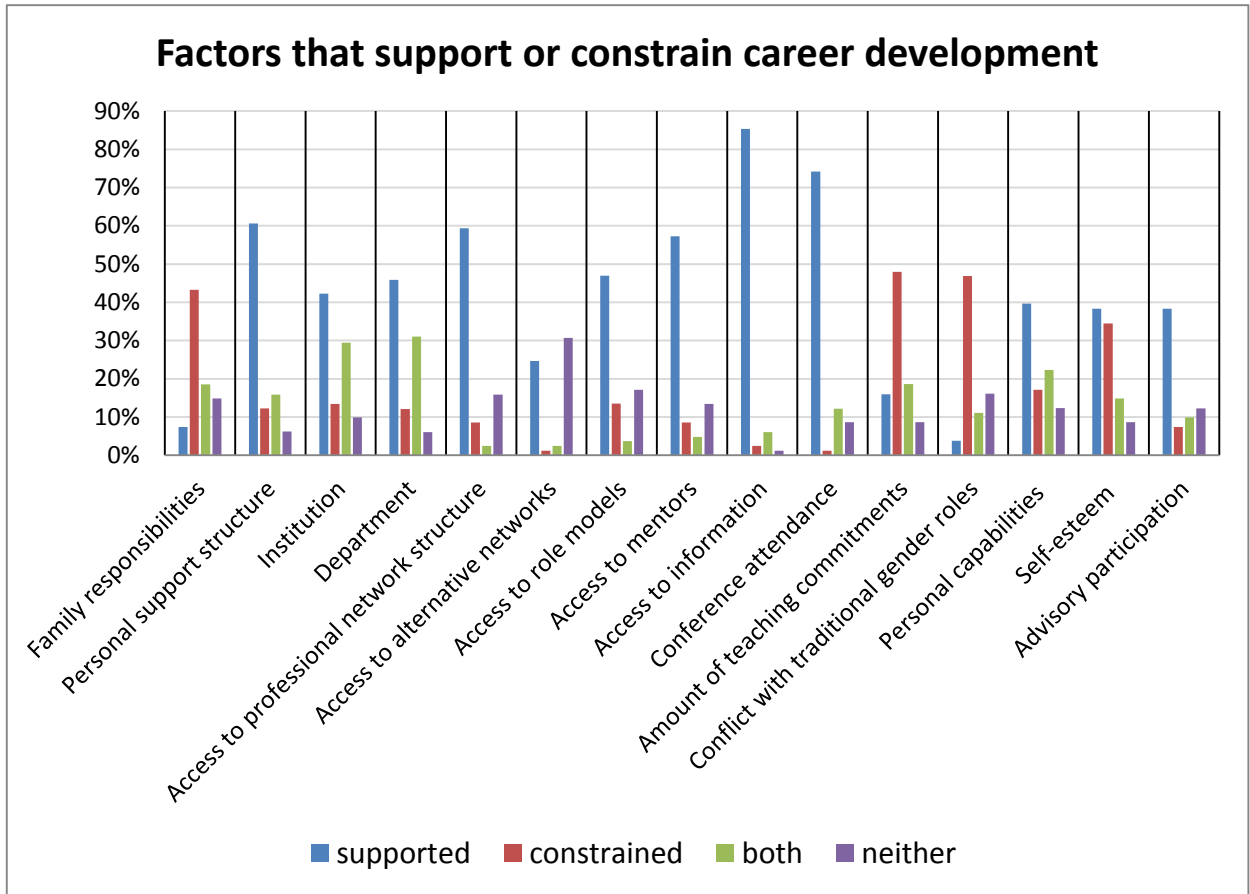
Factors that support or constrain career development

Figure 2: Factors that support or constrain career development

4.4.1. Gender issues

Gender issues were perceived as constraints to career development in terms of conflict with traditional gender roles (by 47% of the participants) and family responsibilities by 43% of the questionnaire respondents' responses to the closed-questions (see Figure 2 above). In addition, gender- based choice and work-life balance were constraints that emerged from the responses to open- ended questions in the questionnaire and from the interviews. Figure 3 below represents the analysis of the questionnaire closed question responses and illustrates the ways in which the women respondents felt advantaged and/or disadvantaged by their gender particularly in terms of family responsibilities (52%), conflict with traditional gender roles (51%), and self-esteem (44%). This is supported by the McKinsey and Company study which found that women experience the "double burden" syndrome of having to balance work and domestic responsibilities as an

obstacle, and that women are constrained by their self-esteem (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010). I shall elaborate on these perceived gender-related constraints.
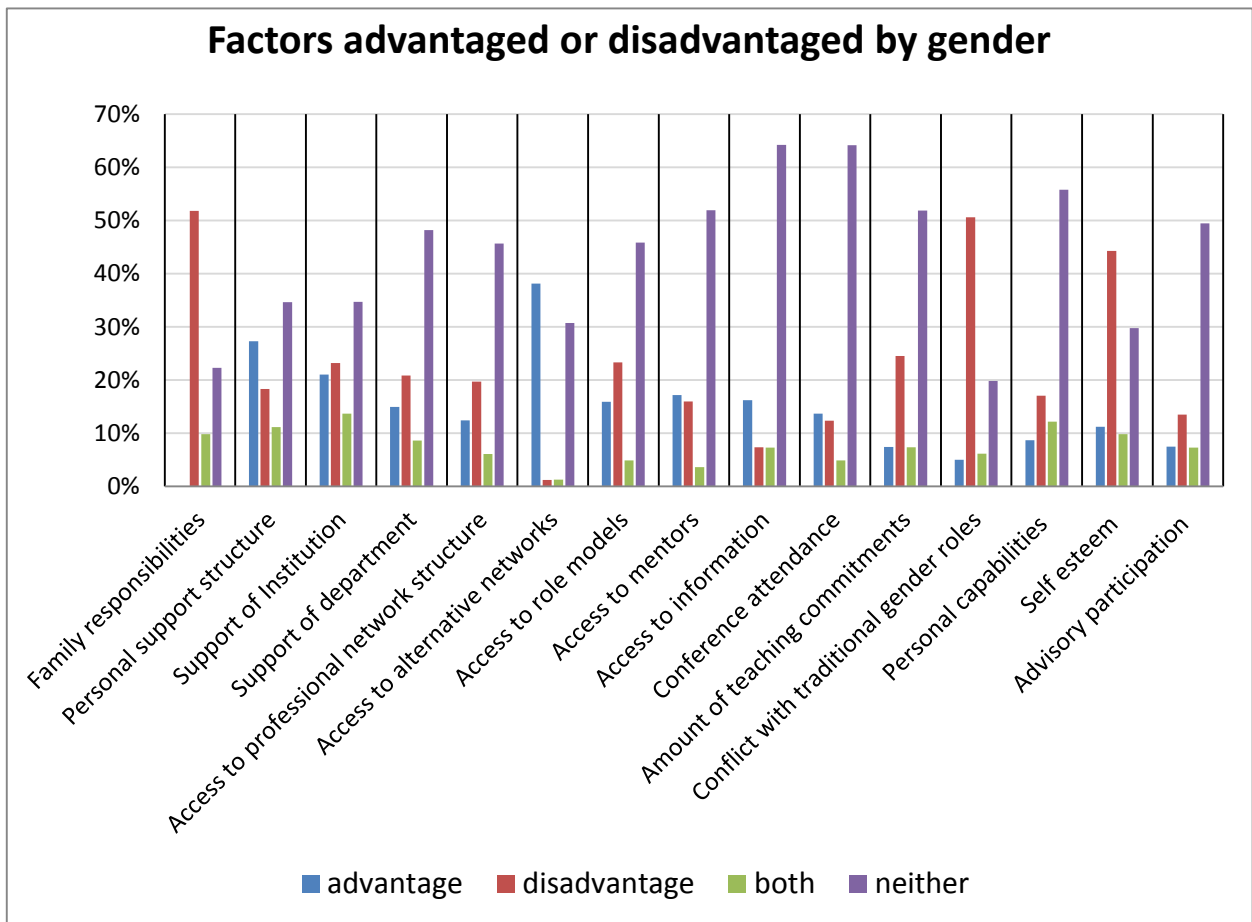

Figure 3: Factors advantaged or disadvantaged by gender

4.4.1.1. Family responsibilities

The McKinsey and Company study identified one of the obstacles for women in management positions as being their inability to be available "anytime, anywhere" due to family responsibilities (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010). While their research was conducted in the business world, my analysis indicates that women academics too perceive themselves as being constrained by their relative lack of mobility and availability due to family responsibilities.

In response to the questionnaire closed question on factors that support or constrain career development, 43% rated family responsibilities as a constraining factor. When questioned on factors that advantaged or disadvantaged them due to their gender, 52% of the questionnaire respondents rated feeling disadvantaged by family responsibilities due to the fact that they were women. When asked to elaborate on their earlier choices

some respondents said they had deliberately chosen family above career, and sometimes this was done in order to allow their partners to pursue their careers. These are some illustrative comments related to family responsibilities as constraints to career development:

> *My family responsibilities have constrained my career development. That is completely self-imposed. I have had all the support I have needed from my family, but have chosen to be completely involved in my children's lives and schools and to support my husband. Someone needs to play the support role and I CHOSE to do that.* (Participant N5)

> *I do feel that family commitments (especially having very young children) hinder my career development. Having said that, I wouldn't change the fact that I had kids, just wish I didn't feel so guilty with not spending more time with them or extra time at work.* (Participant N9)

> *Being a parent of 2 small children, with a husband who has only just finished his PhD means that I have tried to allow him to succeed more, attend more, have more time for research, while I have had to work with the children, and all free time is for running the house.* (Participant N21)

One interviewee noted that as a single mother she had made a deliberate choice to focus on her family responsibilities rather than pursue career advancement. She said:

> *I know that promotion will mean taking on more responsibility. I know that I can't take on more expectations so I'm going to stay where I am until he [her child] finishes high school.* (Sandra)

Poulos (2011) found that with RU women who were mothers, academic productivity, and in particular research productivity, suffered. Some comments from my data that illustrate family responsibilities as a constraint to research productivity are:

> *The reality is family responsibilities are a major disadvantage as it is very difficult to remain competitive and cutting edge if you have to prioritise your family.* (Participant N2)

> *The main thing that has affected my research productivity (read lack of!) are my family commitments. This is by my own choice.* (Participant N13)

> *It was my choice not to go further (e.g. not do a PhD) because of quality of family life and my own time.* (Participant N1)

> *Being a mother and a wife takes up a lot of time, energy and commitment and it is difficult to balance the competing demands with work and unfortunately research seems to be the thing most neglected.* (Participant S1)

Having two children shortly after being employed as a full-time lecturer left little time to pursue my own research to the extent that I would have been able to had I not had children. (Participant S6)

I've found family commitments the hardest to juggle in terms of career and that certain single-mindedness and determination and unbroken periods of time in which to develop focus and continuity. (Participant S48)

It is difficult to start a family not too long after you have started working as an academic. It interrupts the flow of things, and limits the time you have outside of work hours. It also makes it very difficult to think about starting a PhD yet. (Participant S37)

Family responsibilities that impact on research activity may not be unique to women. Some men, particularly single men with children probably experience similar constraints, as noted by a male professor who felt his family responsibilities impacted more on his research than on the teaching or administration aspects of his career. Remarking that this may not be the norm with other male academics, he said:

Being a single parent has undoubtedly impacted on other aspects of my professional life as I have on several occasions turned down invitations to participate in specialist workshops, conferences and research [trips] *as these events clash with key events in the children's lives. No doubt this has impacted on my standing within my field of research. I suspect that some of my male colleagues also find this approach difficult to comprehend.* (Pers.comm., 15/4/12)

One of my interviewees felt that childbearing for most women equated to a reduction in research activity. Her personal support structure enabled her to continue working when her child was young. She said:

I can imagine if I was trying to deal with that by myself, it would have been a hammer blow because you need to be so energetic mentally to turn out good research and you can't do it when you are tired. (Carol)

Another interviewee described how at RU, her perception is that the women researchers are those who are single and childless while the married women with families tended to gravitate towards teaching. She said:

It seems to me when you are in academics and you are a woman, you need to make the choice whether you are going to do teaching and research or teaching and your family. In [my] *faculty, there is no woman who has got the balance.* (Ann)

Maurtin-Cairncross (2003) suggests that women may choose the role of teacher and nurturer over the role of researcher. Data from my research confirms this, for example, one of my questionnaire respondents wrote:

> *The amount of teaching commitments constrained my career, but I am happy for it to be that way at the moment - I love my teaching and since I don't have time for research I am happy to take on extra teaching to allow the active researchers in the department to have more research time.* (Participant N13)

Prozesky (2008) claims that attendance at international conferences early in an academic's career is an enabling factor to career success, and women who have young children are constrained both by the difficulties of travelling to international conferences and by not being free to take up postdoctoral studies internationally. Women in my case study appear to be dealing with similar issues. Some participants reported that family responsibilities meant limited mobility which resulted in not being able to travel to conferences thus curtailing their access to supportive disciplinary networks which could contribute positively to their research productivity. Conference attendance was perceived by 74% of the respondents as contributing to enabling conditions for career development. One participant noted that mothering her young children has been '*detrimental in participating in conferences or establishing a network of support in my field'* (Participant S6). Another participant mentioned that *'men find it easier to get away and travel to conferences, which I can't do since I am breastfeeding, and probably wouldn't want to leave my children while they are so young anyway*!' (Participant N14).

The perception that lack of mobility is constraining for some women academics is at odds with the international conference attendance statistics of the Institution. The Travel and Subsistence (T & S) Committee is an Institutional structure at RU that supports conference attendance. Academics may apply for one international conference per year but approval of applications is based on the research productivity of applicants (T & S Guidelines, 2011). Over the past three years, on average the same percentage of women (31%) attended international conferences as men (32%) supported by the T & S Committee. Possible reasons for the perception that women are constrained by lack of mobility are:

- The lack of mobility is not a real constraint, only a perceived constraint.
- Men may be funded through other channels that women do not have access to and the number of international conference attendance for men may be higher than the statistics from the T & S Committee.

- In recent years, the mobility of women has changed perhaps due to changing attitudes and shared parental responsibilities but the perceptions that women have remain that they are constrained by their family responsibilities.
- Women who could not attend conferences during their childbearing and rearing years may make up for it later on in their careers. It is possible that men may have reduced their conference attendance in the later stage of their careers.

While the above reasons are suppositions, it is possible that the overall perceptions of immobility due to family responsibilities constraining women academics may not apply to all women over the duration of their careers but only to some women at a particular stage of their careers. Research has indicated that international conference attendance is particularly beneficial to academics in the early stages of their careers, and has less impact on more established academics (Prozesky, 2008). It is possible that if some women are only able to attend international conferences later on in their careers, they may be constrained by not having the head start that perhaps their male colleagues at the same stage of their careers may have benefitted from. Further research is required to acquire a better understand of this phenomenon.

In addition to the perception that family responsibilities limit mobility, it seems that family responsibilities, such as childbearing and rearing may lead to interrupted career paths that can affect women academics' self-confidence. One participant wrote:

> *After the time at home it took a long time to build up my self-esteem. In fact, it is only now when I am in the later stages of my career (I am now 52 years) that I feel confident that I have something to contribute.* (Participant S23)

I discuss self-esteem in more depth in section 4.4.3.

4.4.1.2.   Traditional gender roles and gender bias

> *Being a woman academic at Rhodes is not all roses. There have been situations where I've been horribly embarrassed or felt this would not be happening to me if I was a man. But they have been few and far between and I think not motivated by genuine anti-woman stance but just by stunning insensitivity.* (Carol)

Linked to gender related issues of family responsibilities are the issues of conflict with traditional gender roles and gender bias. One of the Likert Scale questions in my questionnaire was to rate whether career development was supported or constrained by

'conflict with traditional gender roles'. Half (51%) of the respondents reported that they felt disadvantaged by conflict with traditional gender roles because they are women and this affected their career development. In the open-ended questions that invited respondents to elaborate on their answers, gender stereotypes and gender bias were regarded by many participants (n=20/80) as a constraint to career development.

According to Butler's (2004) performativity theory (discussed in 2.4.1.1), social and cultural norms determine who we are and how we act. Individuals behave in ways that comply with the norms of a specific situation, and thereby perpetuate those norms. Due to Regulatory Powers which strengthen and disguise the assumption that gender norms are natural, Butler (2004) believes that women continue to conform to gender norms which frame them as nurturers and carers. Research on the identity of women academics postulates that because women's identities are 'constructed within social life, the patterning is constrained in conditions where male and masculinity carry greater cultural prestige' (Walker, 1998, p. 336). This places women in a position where 'it is dangerous for women to construct transgressive identities which step over the gender divide or challenge acceptable ways of being' (Walker, 1998, p. 337). This theory could explain why some women choose to conform to traditional gender roles and choose to give precedence to their partners' career needs over their own, or choose to let family responsibilities to take priority over their own careers.

Lester (2011), using Butler's (2004) theory of performativity, argues that gender norms are present in structures and practices in covert ways. While women have agency to perform in any desired way, they are constricted by gender norms and by the consequences that may result from deviating from the gender norms (Lester, 2011, p. 161). This was the experience of one respondent who noted:

> *I have had support from some members of my department but often have to 'drive' things and have also had clear examples of gender not being taken seriously which has undermined me as a member of the department - and I've then had to sort this out with the people concerned* [which] *becomes a balance between learning to negotiate a masculinist space in a specific way while simultaneously trying to create a less-masculinist, more progressive space.* (Participant S28)

Analysis of my data suggests that conditions at RU are sometimes perceived to favour men. One participant expressed the following opinion '*male colleagues are often given more support especially by administrative support staff. Students also expect more*

nurturing from female academics' (Participant S8). Another participant felt that '*an assertive woman is viewed differently to an assertive man and certainly a female voice in the department is viewed quite differently to a male voice, which is more likely to be heard*' (Participant S2). One participant noted the way gender roles or stereotypes can be used. She believed that some women conform to gender norms that emphasise femininity by being nurturing, compliant and stroking men's egos, in order to get ahead (Walker, 1998). She said:

> *The Institution is thoroughly unsupportive of women who defy gender stereotypes* [but is] *extremely supportive of conventional pretty women who flutter their eyelashes and toss their hair suggestively, giving them far more rewards than are their due and then congratulating themselves that they are gender-sensitive.* (Participant S34)

This quote suggests that resisting gender norms may result in 'academic women struggle[ing] against attitudes held by other women, their families, and by partners and male colleagues in their struggle to become and be scholars' (Walker, 1998, p. 342).

Academic departments have different norms and cultures. Environments that are female-dominated may be experienced by women as protective, safe spaces in contrast to other areas of the Institution which some experience as male-dominated and difficult to negotiate. One interviewee referred to the Institution as a "war zone". This interviewee felt fortunate to be in a female-dominated department and said:

> *The difficulties and the tensions for us are mainly outside the boundaries of [her department], […] where I have [to wear] my battle gear. There is a healthy amount of tension in our department, but not the type where you feel like you're in a war zone. The war isn't here.* (Lisa)

In this instance the department was experienced as a supportive structure, one which enabled the women members to use their agency to act as a collective and challenge the traditional status quo of the institution. In departments that are male-dominated, women may experience marginalisation which may limit individual agency by isolating and regulating their position within the department and thus maintaining the gender norms of the institution (Lester, 2011). Mobokela and Mina (2004) maintain that black women experience marginalisation even more profoundly as they are forced to deal with both the 'subjugations that surface from being black in a society that has historically viewed them as inferior and from being female in a culture that is male-dominated'

(p.112). However, the data did not present evidence of this probably due to the fact that gender rather than race was the focus of my research and, as such, issues of race were not probed.

Ibarra and Andrews (1993), using social network theory, suggest that women have less access to critical organisational networks and therefore are disadvantaged by not being able to use networks to gain power in the institution. This idea was confirmed by some of my participants:

> *I believe that women have less of a voice in the everyday running of departments; in basic decisions like the outcomes of staff meetings or the appointment of new staff.* (Participant S47)

> *I maintained research productivity despite the most unbelievably onerous teaching and administrative duties - matters which this university refused to address. Yet when a male took over my duties as HOD - an individual whose teaching and research productivity was (and remains) way below mine - the university was only too happy to give him the support they had refused me. This differential treatment is in my opinion a complete disgrace.* (Participant S34)

Gender bias was also experienced in the broader context of HE beyond the Institution as these two participants' comments illustrate:

> *The 'boy's network' still operates within the higher echelons of academia and, in particular, informal networks are exclusionary.* (Participant S12)

> *I have experienced resistance to establishing collaborations and being taken seriously as an academic by male scientists I have not met before. This does not happen routinely with my male colleagues but there is definitely a barrier over which you have to first pass before you can be included.* (Participant N2)

Such an exclusion is a regulatory power which maintains the existing social norms (Lester, 2011). Such social norms impact on women academics making the establishment of networks and research collaborations difficult and thereby inhibiting the social capital of women academics. Siebert, et al.'s (2001) social capital theory of success aligns social capital with career success. In terms of this theory, women who are obstructed from gaining social capital will be at a disadvantage in terms of career advancement.

One participant noted that as a middle class white female academic she has not experienced gender bias but she acknowledged that *'race and class do play a big role in*

putting some women at a greater disadvantage' (Participant S8). The notion of white privilege was discussed at the Institutional Imbizo (2011) by Matthews (2011, p. 1) who described privilege as having the 'wind at your back'. She noted the staff composition of RU was predominantly white male which creates a welcome space for the majority, while those in the minority experience feelings of unease. While the discussion of race and class are beyond the scope of this research, all women at the Institution by being in the minority, can be considered as marginalised and will experience privilege to a lesser extent than their male counterparts. Women may not be walking with the wind at their backs to the same extent as their male colleagues. However, the Institution using the platform of the Institutional Imbizo has signalled the intention to change the current norms that privilege some more than others.

4.4.1.3.   Gender- based choice

I have discussed traditional gender role conflict and gender bias experienced by my research participants and how regulatory powers maintain gender and social norms. Following on from this, I shall now analyse the concept of gender -based choices. Some of my participants indicated that they believe women themselves are responsible for their positions within the University due to the choices they make. This is reflected in the following comments:

> *Quite often when people say they don't have time what they mean is they didn't prioritise it. Sometimes I think maybe women are a bit tempted to do that and say well, "family obligations …". But maybe they weren't strategic in their choices.* (Carol)

> *Women must be very careful to blame the Institution when they have made personal choices, or choices have been imposed on them by society rather than the Institution. There are rules to the game, and if you don't play by those rules, don't blame the Institution (and especially men) if you don't get further in your career path.* (Participant N5)

> *Some of the disadvantage is self-generated through things like lack of confidence or lack of interest in spaces that engage the play of power (not wanting to be in those spaces), some of it is institutional and social - the culture of patriarchy which is still embedded.* (Participant S40)

Many participant responses indicated that the choices women are inclined to make, favour family responsibilities, nurturing or teaching and these then disadvantage them in terms of what counts for career success in the Institution and more broadly. This is supported by the research of Cotterill and Waterhouse (1998) who propose that teaching

and pastoral care are feminised and count less than more masculine practices such as managerial tasks and research which are measureable.

Lester (2011), using Butler's (2004) theory of performativity, (discussed in 2.4.1.1) maintains that gender norms are present in policies, practices and the silent assumptions of gender that hide and reinforce gender and gender roles and they set the behavioural tone under which women feel obligated to perform. When social and cultural norms are aligned, they form regulatory powers that govern performances of gender (Butler, 2004). The participants' cited comments above suggest that the norms are that there are rules for the game and powers that regulate career advancement. The norms and powers are aligned and hidden. They are accepted by the participants as the way things are and must be. Lester (2011) argues that regulatory powers, such as the rules of the game, isolate and regulate the position of the participant in order to maintain the status quo. By accepting the status quo, the participant is navigating and conforming to contextually and culturally defined gender norms, because challenging these powers may jeopardise promotion or have other negative outcomes.

One respondent appeared to have accepted the social norms of the Institution to an extent that gender bias became invisible to her. She was sceptical about the need for my research into women academics career development and asked whether gender was really an issue. When asked to respond to this comment, one of my interviewee's suggested that '*some people have taken on more male ways of being and then they stop seeing it because they're operating like their male colleagues*' (Lindi). Another respondent expressed a similar view when she said: '*there are as many "women" as "men" reinforcing particular ways of being on the campus - including holding up the patriarchy!*' (Participant S28). It is perhaps in this way that the social norms are being upheld by regulatory powers.

4.4.2. The balancing act

It is widely acknowledged that academics, both men and women, struggle to achieve a balance between the different demands of being an academic: teaching, research, administration and community engagement. While achieving a balance of the different academic demands is a challenge for all academics, it is possible that women may experience the difficulties of achieving a balance more profoundly than their male colleagues because, in addition to balancing work demands, it is women who bear the

children. Traditionally the bulk of the domestic responsibility has rested with women (Devos & McLean, 2000; Desvaux, et al., 2010) although this does appear to be changing with the younger generation of academics. The McKinsey and Company study termed the challenge that women face of having to balance work and domestic responsibilities as the "double burden syndrome" (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010).

The findings of my data suggests that the "double burden syndrome" - i.e. time management, balancing the different demands of work responsibilities and achieving a balance between family responsibilities and work demands - are some of the major constraints experienced by the women academics at RU[30]. One respondent confirmed this when she wrote '*I am continuously faced with contradictory requirements and getting the balance right is a tough job*' (Participant S13). Multiple pressures result in the need to balance family or domestic demands with work demands. One respondent said '*women find it difficult at times - at least I do - to assert their rights to more research hours etc. if this is to the displeasure of partner/ children/ friends*' (Participant S47).

For many academics the "balancing act" is exacerbated by the amount of teaching they are expected to do. In response to a Likert scale question about career development, 49% (n=39) of the participants responded that they felt constrained by the amount of teaching commitments. More of the SS group (53%) felt constrained than the NS group (38%) indicating that teaching commitments may be more demanding in the Social Sciences. Where teaching loads were high, as discussed previously, it was noted that it was research that suffered more than any other aspects of their work. One participant mentioned that due to her heavy teaching load, research could not happen and '*without research, career development is out of the question*' (Participant N5). This comment reinforces the perception that women's career advancement is constrained by their research productivity.

In addition, the open-ended questions in the questionnaire relating to career development elicited a response from 14% of participants that they perceived teaching commitments and/or teaching load as negatively impacting on their research

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[30] One male academic, a single father of two young children, when asked to respond to this section of my thesis expressed similar challenges. It is possible that had my research extended to male academics, some would have expressed the same difficulties of achieving a balance between family and work demands.

productivity. One respondent said '*I believe I have a heavy teaching load which hinders my research progress*' (Participant N10) and another said:

> *I want to reinvent and reinvigorate my research productivity, but don't have resources or the leave to do this...with a full teaching and administrative load, I simply do not have any time to write or read or do new research to improve my productivity.* (Participant S16)

The HoD Guide (2008) acknowledges that new academics require time to adjust and develop their research and suggests a reduced work load for new academics. However, my data indicates that this seldom happens and sometimes junior lecturers have the heaviest teaching load. One interviewee said of her early teaching experiences: '*in terms of achieving life balance or research, forget it; I was just completely snowed under by this huge job of taking on this big class*' (Carol).

Balancing the demands of academia is a challenge for all academics. Programmes such as the Accelerated Development Programme are designed to help lecturers balance the different demands of academia through reduced teaching loads and mentoring support. The analysis of my data suggests that the Accelerated Development Programme helped lecturers in the Programme address the challenge of achieving a balance between teaching requirements and research requirements. The Accelerated Development Programme Co-ordinator said:

> *A big* [challenge] *would be the research, or generally meeting the requirements of the programme. So it's balancing the teaching requirements and the research requirements and just being part of a university, sort of organisational requirements. That's the biggest challenge for the lecturers and I think that is where, if they've got someone who has been in the game for a long time, just to give them a little advice and a bit of mentoring, it can really help a lot.*

An Accelerated Development lecturer confirmed that balancing different demands was challenging when she said '*you're given a little bit of everything, which turns out to be a lot which kind of overwhelms you if you don't manage it*' (Ann). This Accelerated Development lecturer indicated that being part of a programme that helped her manage such demands facilitated her career development. When facilitating structures exist such as the Accelerated Development Programme, my analysis indicates there is an improved ability to manage the different academic and domestic demands. This is supported by the McKinsey and Company study that claims that development

programmes for women help women overcome barriers to career advancement, such as balancing different demands (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010). The ability to balance the various demands on a young academic can be facilitated with the guidance of a more experienced person or a facilitative programme that allows the young academic to acclimatise to a gradual increase in responsibilities. I discuss mentoring programmes in more detail in chapter five.

4.4.3. Self-esteem

As discussed earlier, the findings of the McKinsey and Company study identified two main career obstacles to greater representation of women in top management positions: the "double burden syndrome" and "the anytime, anywhere" performance model. A third obstacle was identified – women's inability to promote themselves (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010). This obstacle was also mentioned by participants in my research. One participant noted how her inability to self-promote had affected her visibility in the Institution. She said:

> *My relative lack of self-promotion compared to male colleagues with less experience has probably lead to the situation now where one or two "high ups" in the university can't remember my name but greet these new colleagues with a "hail fellow, well met" kind of familiarity.* (Participant S38)

Another respondent suggested that her low self-esteem affected her ability to promote herself:

> *I do struggle with confidence and assertiveness when it comes to things related to me personally - I find it much easier to take up a fight for others and always think long and hard about taking up issues that directly affect me.* (Participant S28)

It emerged from my data analysis that 44% (n=35) of the participants believed that self-esteem issues are linked to gender and that women generally seem to suffer from low self-esteem compared with their male counterparts. The following comments demonstrate this: '*Women tend to have a lower sense of importance of themselves*' (Participant S19), '*self-esteem issues seem to be more prevalent with women*' (Participant N7) and women are less assertive and show a '*lack of interest in spaces that engage the play of power*' (Participant S40).

Lack of self-esteem and an inability to self-promote seem to affect the visibility and participation of women in meetings in making their voices heard. One participant believed that lack of self-esteem in women resulted from the majority of top positions being occupied by men. She noted that '*women have less of a voice in the everyday running of departments'* (Participant S47).

Self-esteem is necessary for academics to put themselves forward for promotion at RU as discussed in 4.3.1. 21% of the respondents in my questionnaire who had not applied for promotion listed lack of confidence as one of the reasons. Low self-esteem would make it more difficult for the women to promote themselves. The need to be self-promoting when applying for promotion is supported by the following interviewee's comment:

> *It was proactive on my part in that I didn't wait for them to come to me, which I think some women do too often. When people say they haven't been promoted, they've been overlooked; my question is "have you applied?" That's how it works in academia. You have to put yourself out there. You can't just wait for people to notice you.* (Carol)

This interviewee had been involved in the Personal Promotions Committee for several years. She believed that women are generally more 'risk-averse' than men. As a result women's promotion applications are stronger than men's as they want to reduce the risk of not being promoted. She said: *It's the men who are taking a chance … but often you don't see that with women* (Carol).

The promotion statistics show that 10% of men who are eligible to apply for promotion (i.e. below level of professor) apply on average each year, while only 7% of women who are eligible to apply do so. While applying for promotion at RU is noted in the HoD Guide (2008) as being a personal pursuit, the HoD Guide also strongly recommends that HoDs and Deans are consulted for feedback and assistance. One member of the Personal Promotions Committee I interviewed commented that applications for promotion that did not have the support of HoD or Dean stood little chance of approval. The lack of women putting themselves forward for promotion could, in some cases, be due to barriers and structures created by those in positions of power and privilege as Morley's (2006) research suggests (see 2.4.1.2). For instance, the need to seek the assistance and approval of an HoD or Dean when applying for personal promotion, the majority of whom are men, could inhibit some women particularly those with low self-esteem.

Feeling undervalued is a theme that comes across in the responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaire, illustrated by this comment: '*No space has been created for me to develop research competency. I don't feel trusted (even though I now have a PhD) to teach postgraduate courses, and my research area is not welcomed and incorporated*' (Participant S17). However another respondent said: '*Having completed my PhD has given my personal confidence a considerable boost. I am finding that certain colleagues now treat me as an equal*' (Participant N14). This participant went on to say that earlier completion of her PhD would have been beneficial to her career.

One interviewee believed that feeling that one's opinion is valued enables growth of self-esteem and with that, growth of one's voice. She said:

> *In terms of being able to speak out, I think that was something I learnt you had to do if you want people to hear. I think it is something that you automatically grow into if people value your opinions. If you notice that your colleagues are listening to what you say and taking it seriously then this encourages you to join in conversations and make decisions. If you feel you are being side-lined and not listened to then I think it can make it worse and you never learn to speak out or to be confident.* (Carol)

This is echoed by another interviewee who had similar experiences:

> *In terms of being confident, now and again we would have to do seminars, just amongst us. One of the first ones I did, someone said… "You know you've got a really easy manner; you teach really well, you engage with people very well". So it wasn't about the content, it was just boosting my confidence and after a few moments I forgot that they knew a hell of a lot more than I did and we just had a conversation about what we thought. So that helped when I had to formally do it. Giving feedback like that or getting feedback about written stuff – that's been my biggest growing point.* (Lisa)

The experiences described above suggest that a supportive community of practice allowed development and learning to occur. As the theory of socially mediated learning (discussed in 2.4.2.1) claims, a supportive community, such as one where colleagues listen and value individual opinions, allows learning to occur through social and cultural participation and this in turn develops self-confidence (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Northedge says: 'the primary target of learning is the ability to participate in what is said within a chosen knowledge community' (2003, p. 20). In the cases cited above it appears that the development of self-confidence enabled the women to be more vocal and participatory. As their confidence grew they moved from being on the outskirts of the

academic discourse to being more central to the discourse. Northedge defines learning as 'a process of becoming increasingly competent as both a user of various specialist discourses [and] a participant within the relevant knowledge communities' (2003, p. 22).

I argue that if there is no supportive community of practice, learning may be stunted and self-confidence may be affected. My data analysis indicates that lack of self-confidence has the potential to have an adverse effect women's career and research development, particularly as self-confidence is essential when applying for promotion. It is argued that a supportive community of practice could contribute significantly to the development of women's research careers.

4.4.4. Research Expertise

According to research undertaken on prolific researchers, men are more productive researchers than women (Prozesky, 2008; Geber, 2009). This would suggest that women are less able to access the facilitating conditions that enable research productivity. Geber (2009) and others have identified certain personal characteristics and situational conditions as facilitating research productivity. Prolific researchers are described as having the following traits: a robust self-esteem; good time and workload management; consistency in their levels of productivity (produce research continuously regardless of sabbatical leave); form stable relationships; and have the ability to develop a good network of fellow scholars and strong mentors (Bland, et al., 2005; Badenhorst, 2007; Gray, 1999, all cited in Geber, 2009). Conditions that facilitate research productivity are: workloads that allow time for research, a network of fellow scholars and mentors, and international conference attendance (Bland, et al., 2005; Badenhorst, 2007; Gray, 1999, all cited in Geber, 2009; Prozesky, 2008).

Based on the above research, the questionnaire participants were asked to rate how certain factors[31] affected their research productivity. The questionnaire results are

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[31] To provide more detail I briefly elaborate on the different aspects that were stated. Professional capabilities was defined as academic writing, presentation skills and editing. Access to information referred to ability to access information about publications, conferences and the like. Professional network structure alluded to fellow scholars, role models, mentors, critical readers and collaborators. Professional self-esteem referred to confidence, assertiveness, making one's voice heard and self-promotion. Career advancement refers to promotion within the Institution, respect of one's colleagues and prestige. Advisory capacity meant sitting on advisory boards, peer reviewing and editing journals. Personal administrative capabilities referred to one's IT skills, ability to manage one's time and conflict management skills.

presented in Figure 4 and are discussed in the following paragraphs along with the interview responses.

On the whole, professional capabilities (rated by 61%, n=49) and access to information (rated by 60%, n=48) were perceived to have the strongest influence on research productivity. In the instance of one interviewee who did not know how to go about publishing or how to start research, conditions were not conducive for her to access information or develop her professional capabilities. She said:

> *I still see people coming into this department as practitioners who can't figure out how you make the transition into an academic career; how you move into what is a very complex weird terrain of academic publication, what constitutes research., how you develop research and how you make your way into it.* (Jean)

This interviewee described feeling '*incredibly stupid if you opened your mouth and said "well I don't really know how to send something to a journal"*' (Jean).
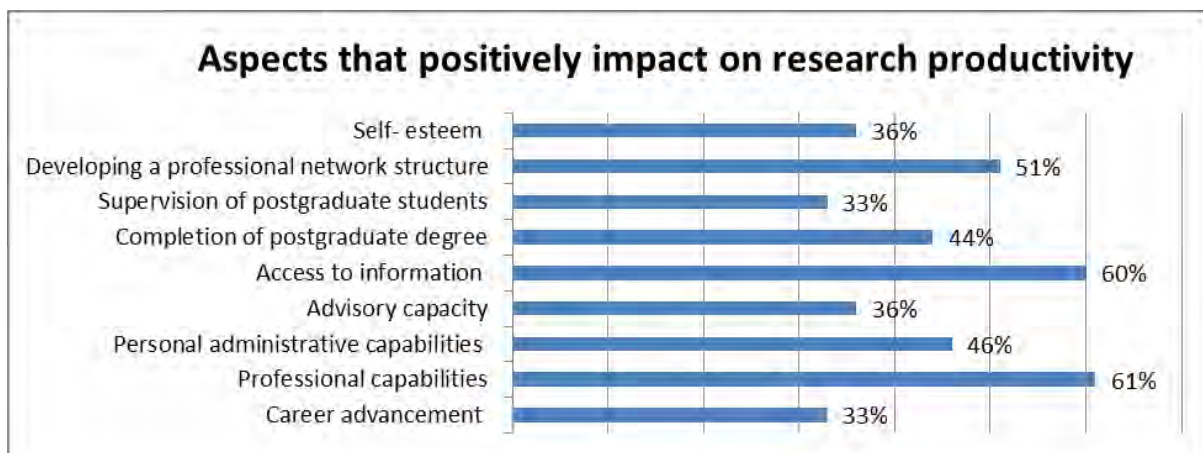
Figure 4: Aspects that positively impact on research productivity

It should be noted that the personal properties and powers of individuals may enable or constrain individual access to those factors that have an impact on research productivity. For instance, professional self-esteem was rated by only one third of the participants as positively impacting on their research productivity and personal administrative capabilities was rated by almost half of the respondents as aiding their research productivity (46%, n=37). In other words, some women may have the advantage of possessing certain characteristics that enable research productivity.

Developing a professional network structure was another factor rated by half the questionnaire participants (n=41) as enabling their research productivity. Conference attendance was noted by some of the questionnaire respondents as spaces which offer networking and opportunities for collaborating with disciplinary colleagues. As mentioned earlier, studies suggests that international conference attendance directly correlates with increased research output for early career academics (Bland, et al., 2005; Badenhorst, 2007; Gray, 1999, all cited in Geber, 2009; Prozesky, 2008). The following comments made by two questionnaire participants suggest that conference attendance enabled the development of a professional network structure which in turn facilitated their research productivity:

> *Opportunities to travel and collaborate with leaders in my field while doing my PhD greatly strengthened my research as well as provided opportunity for a whole range of invitations to serve as reviewer, contribute to a journal, write a chapter, editor of a book, head a discussion group and so forth.* (Participant S25)

> *Conferences have been amazing spaces to meet role models and the comments and engagements with my work and my research have made significant difference to my development.* (Participant S28)

Another factor that was rated as having a positive effect on research productivity was the completion of a postgraduate degree (rated by 44%, n=35), particularly a PhD. Achieving a doctorate was considered to improve personal capabilities, advisory capacity, access to information and access to professional network structures.

A greater percentage of the SS group responded that the completion of their postgraduate degree had a positive impact on their research careers (SS – 49%, n= 26; NS – 31%, n=5). This could support earlier comments that most Natural Science academics usually start their academic careers with their PhD completed and therefore have already initiated their research career trajectory, with many having already published in journals and presented at conferences. In contrast, many Social Science academics only commence or complete their PhD studies once they are in full time employment. Studying towards a PhD degree may be the start of their research careers.

One questionnaire respondent mentioned that completion of her PhD had a positive impact on her research productivity as the process provided invaluable research experience and initiated her research trajectory. She said: '*completion of my PhD had a*

positive impact [on my research career] *because without that I would be lost as to knowing where to start* [research]" (Participant N13). Delamont and Atkinson (2004) note that people who have completed PhDs have had project management experience as they have seen a major project through from conception to completion. They note that in some cases the doctorate is the biggest research project that will be undertaken.

Apart from initiating a research trajectory, obtaining a PhD has other positive spin offs such as improving self-confidence, providing job security, or being a motivator for career advancement and possibly resulting in improved remuneration. This is reflected in one participant's comment:

> *Having completed my PhD has given my personal confidence a considerable boost* [and] *I am hoping that once it is awarded promotion opportunities will be more accessible.* (Participant N14)

In addition, the academic becomes an expert in their field thereby enhancing their advisory capacity. Advisory capacity was rated by 36% (n=29) as aiding research productivity. Advisory capacity is linked to supervision of postgraduate students. Supervision was rated by 33% (n=26) of the questionnaire participants as having a positive impact on their research careers. It is significant that more of the NS group (54%) than the SS group (22%) rated supervision as having a positive impact. There are a number of possible reasons for this. Firstly, supervision of postgraduate students is usually done by someone with the same level or a higher level qualification than the degree being supervised. If fewer Social Science women have PhDs, the SS group would be supervising fewer PhD students, which would have an impact on the group's research outputs (see 2.2). Secondly, it is common practice that in the Natural Sciences, supervisors publish with their students which happens less often in the Social Sciences. This indicates that the NS group tend to produce more research articles as co-authors, which adds to their research track record while the SS group publish far fewer articles, as sole authors over a longer period of time.

4.4.5. Support

From the questionnaire data personal support structures, access to mentors and access to role models are cited by the women academics as factors which have supported their career development (see Figure 2). Support of the department and the Institution and access to alternative network structures, such as WASA are also cited as enabling

factors. As women, 38% of the participants felt advantaged by access to alternative network structures such as WASA and 27% by their personal support structures. I shall elaborate on support and supportive relationships, particularly in terms of mentoring and the role of the Head of Department in the next chapter.

4.4.6. Summary: constraints and enablements

The questionnaire participant responses indicated that enabling factors for career development and research productivity are: access to information, conference attendance, access to professional network structures, and advisory participation. Other factors are professional capabilities, personal administrative capabilities, completion of postgraduate degree, advisory capacity, professional self-esteem, supervision of postgraduate students and career advancement. When these factors are present, career development and research productivity improve.

The agency of some women participants appears to be constrained in terms of their research productivity and academic advancement by their self-esteem; time and workload management; productivity levels; and ability to prioritise research over teaching responsibilities. Where supportive communities of practice were present, women's self-esteem was enhanced. Higher levels of self-esteem appear to be beneficial for factors that impact on research productivity such as advisory capacity and participation, accessing professional network structures and career advancement.

Women also appear to have difficulty in establishing networks of scholars and mentors within the masculine hegemony of the Institution and in their fields beyond the Institution. Women perceive themselves to be at a disadvantage by their lack of mobility and availability to attend international conferences at their early career stage due to the constraints of family responsibilities. Reduced access to networks through international conference attendance early on in their careers could affect their accumulation of social capital and this as an off shoot, could affect their research productivity and career advancement.

4.5.   Conclusion

In this chapter, I attempted to establish how women academics understand career success and how women experience the existing Institutional structures and cultures in the development of their research careers.

The process of promotion places a greater emphasis on research productivity than on teaching and other aspects of the academic's role. The perception of my interviewees particularly those in the Social Sciences, is that their career choices and career focus put them at a disadvantage. Women's perception that they may be disadvantaged in terms of what counts for promotion may constrain their agency to *put themselves forward* for promotion.

Old ways of thinking and behaving continue to pervade the Institution despite the Institutional intention to change. Women academics are still in the minority at the level of Professor, Dean and top management. Regulatory powers may create obstacles for women and affect how women see themselves and their abilities. Low self-esteem appears to perpetuate gender norms by constraining women's agency to challenge norms that are disadvantageous to them. This affects some women's agency to put themselves forward for promotion or promote themselves within the research arena.

Early career women academics may be constrained by family responsibilities and may be unable to attend international conferences. This constraint at a crucial time in their careers may limit the establishment and cumulative benefits of social capital and access to networks and may thus impede their research productivity and career advancement.

Supportive relationships, structures and communities of practice help develop the self-esteem of women. In the next chapter, I elaborate on and discuss support and supportive relationships, particularly in terms of mentoring and the Head of Department. I also focus on how mentoring can enable research productivity.

CHAPTER FIVE

Analysis of support structures and mentoring

5.1. Introduction

In Chapter four, using Archer's concepts of structure and culture, I explored how women academics understand and experience career success and what they perceive and experience as contributing to the success of their research careers.

In this chapter I discuss my findings in relation to the following two research questions:

- What support structures and mentoring are experienced by women in their research careers?
- Has mentoring enabled or constrained development of appropriate personal properties required in order for them to advance professionally?

In order to do this, I discuss institutional, departmental and other support structures and I analyse how these structures are experienced by the women academics in relation to their research career development.

I then explore mentoring using the concepts of structure, culture and agency to establish how formal mentoring programmes or other forms of mentoring contribute to women's career development.

5.2. Institutional support

There are a range of institutional structures which have the potential to have an impact on women academics; to enable or constrain the research productivity, career development and promotion of women academics. The effect of structure is always influenced by the interplay between structure, culture and agency. In this section I discuss institutional support structures available to women academics and how women academics experience these structures. This is followed by an in-depth discussion of the role of the Head of Department (HoD) as key agents in the Institution. I analyse

whether the official view of developing and supporting staff is aligned with individual perceptions and experiences of institutional development and support.

5.2.1. Institutional support structures

Institutional beliefs and values can be inferred from Institutional structures such as the Staff Development Policy (2010) and the HoD Guide (2008). The Staff Development Policy states that RU 'is striving to create an organisational culture where all staff strive for excellence and where development is seen as critical to the achievement thereof' (2010, p. 2). It continues to say 'staff must be supported through the provision of appropriate opportunities and resources, active removal of barriers to development and recognition for engaging in personal development' (2010, p. 2). Staff development is seen by the Institution as 'critical to … effective performance' (HoD guide, 2008, p. 59). The onus is on the individual and the HoD to identify and utilise the opportunities for staff development that the Institution offers. An ethos of counselling and mentoring others is also encouraged by the Institution (Staff Development Policy, 2010). The official Institutional position is therefore that the Institution believes in excellence and in developing and supporting its staff in order to achieve excellence.

Analysis of my data identifies three Institutional structures that provide support for academics. These are the Accelerated Development Programmes, the Academic Staff Development Programmes and the role of the Head of Department. Both the Accelerated Development Programmes and the Academic Staff Development Programmes, discussed in 1.2.5.3.1 and 1.2.5.3.2, are aimed at fast tracking and developing the research capacities of young academics. These programmes are externally funded in response to proposals initiated by the Institution. In the protocols governing these programmes it is stated that preference will be given to women and black academics. There is high level Institutional support for these Accelerated Development Programmes. The lecturers and the programme co-ordinators meet once a quarter with the Vice Chancellor and/or Deputy Vice Chancellors to discuss their progress and address their concerns.

Responses to a question probing institutional and departmental support in my questionnaire suggest that many of the respondents felt supported by the Institution (42%) and their department (46%) in terms of their career development. 21% (n=17) of the participants listed feeling advantaged by the Institution because they are women. Closer examination of these responses, revealed that some responses were from women

who were either on an Accelerated Development Lectureship programme (n=2), or who had received special sabbatical leave through the Academic Staff Development Programme (n=5). Two participants who had received support from the Academic Staff Development Programme said:

> *My experience has been that it is virtually impossible to combine teaching and study; the only times that I have made any progress with my doctorate has been during periods of leave. For this reason, the willingness of my Department and of RU to provide me with sabbatical time has been a marvellous support.* (Participant S27)

> *I feel I've been highly supported by Rhodes (and most directly* [my] *Department) to pursue things to advance my career. Doors have opened whenever I have needed or pursued institutional support e.g. conference attendance, extended sabbatical to complete the PhD.* (Participant S4)

Thus it would seem that those women who were on the receiving end of Institutional support programmes such as the Academic Staff Development Programmes experienced Institutional and/or Departmental support as enabling. This is supported by the McKinsey and Company study on gender diversity in the workplace which reported that development programmes for women were effective in the career advancement of women (cited in Desvaux, et al., 2010).

5.3. Departmental leadership

5.3.1. Head of Department - Structure and culture

One of the primary potentially supportive structures for an academic that has emerged from my data is that of the Head of Department (HoD). Research supports this, asserting that appropriate leadership and institutional support is crucial for a researcher to be productive (Geber, 2009). In this section I explore the impact of the HoD on the research careers of women academics. In particular I focus on the ways in which HoDs:

- Promote the career development and the research careers of academics within the department, particularly women
- Promote an ethos of research in the department
- Promote an ethos of mentoring in the department
- Mentor academics in their departments

I analyse the structure of the role of the HoD using the HoD Guide (2008). This Guide is the primary indicator of the Institution's expectations and value of the HoD. In addition to the HoD Guide, I analysed other Institutional structures, such as the HoD Task Team Recommendations (2009) and the HoD Forum Minutes (2011) and explore the cultural factors that emerge from these structures. Academic perceptions and experiences as extrapolated from my questionnaire and interview data provide further insights into the beliefs and ideas related to the role of the HoD in the Institution. I compare the cultural elements from the structure's and from the academic's perspective, to see whether they are complementary or contradictory. This will provide an understanding of the culture as an enabling or constraining environment for women academics.

5.3.1.1.   Head of Department Guide

The HoD Guide describes the HoD as playing a 'vital role in the University leadership' with the multiple roles of academic leader, people manager, change agent, resourcer, administrator and advocate (2008, p. 55). The traditional role of the HoD as defined by the HoD Guide (2008) has been one of academic leader with the responsibilities of academic planning, promoting excellence in teaching, supporting research, promoting professional activities, working with students, mentoring staff and being a role model.

The HoD Guide (2008) acknowledges that as a consequence of tertiary institutions having to adapt to global changes there is an increased demand to produce quantifiable research. It states that it is the role of the HoD to promote research in their department by overseeing research topics and encouraging all academic staff, including inexperienced researchers to undertake research. In addition, it states that the HoD is expected to stress the importance of knowledge dissemination and that it is his/her role to offer guidance in such matters (HoD Guide, 2008).

It appears that the role of HoD as described in the Guide is one that is highly valued by the Institution. It is a structure that is significant in terms of leadership, bringing about change, guiding staff and promoting research productivity within departments.

5.3.1.2.   HoD Task Team

An HoD Task Team was appointed at the 2007 HoD Imbizo. This Task Team made recommendations relating to: the appointment process for HoDs; ways in which to review and reward the contribution of HoDs; the various roles and workload of the HoD;

and, HoD networking (HoD Task Team Recommendations, 2009). Some of the recommendations included putting in place an HoD succession plan; three year terms of appointment; HoD administrative assistance and HoD rewards such as an HoD allowance, merit bonus, funds for research, and additional sabbatical leave.

These recommendations show that at the Institutional level HoDs are valued and should be recognised and rewarded.

5.3.1.3. HoD Forum

The next meeting for HoDs after the 2007 Imbizo was an HoD Forum in 2011. The purpose of the Forum was to 'strengthen the leadership of HoDs and to promote a stronger sense of collegiality amongst HoDs' (HoD Forum Minutes, 2011, p. 1). The Forum recommended that the outstanding recommendations of the 2009 Task Team be put into effect. Some of these were: the need for an updated HoD Guide; induction training for new HoDs; review of contributions by HoDs to the institution; and, a move to greater racial and gender equity of HoDs. It was recommended that 'HoDs specifically identify, encourage and support members of designated groups in pursuit of an HoD-ship' (HoD Forum Minutes, 2011, p. 5) and introduce them to leadership forums thus preparing them for a future HoD role.

Using CDA, the cultural items that emerged from my analysis of minutes of the HoD Forum (2011) are: the need for greater equity of the racial and gender profile of the HoD group; the importance of the leadership of HoDs and the need for increased recognition and status of HoDs in the Institution. However, from my data an underlying cultural item emerges which contradicts the official version of the value placed on the role of the HoD. For example, some of the HoD Task Team recommendations of 2009 had not been put into operation two years later. Induction training for HoDs had not been initialised, the HoD Guide (2008) had not been updated, and the HoD's contribution to the Institution had not been reviewed and appropriately rewarded in the light of a changing HE climate. The delay in attending to the recommendations could be seen to be contradictory to the official declarations of the value that the Institution places on the role of the HoD and to undermine the Institution's desire for racial and gender equity within the HoD group. I shall discuss these two issues in greater depth.

5.3.1.4. Institutional value of the role of HoD

The value and importance that the Institution places on the HoD as stated in the official Institutional documents is evidence of the Institutional culture. However the dominant belief amongst academic staff that emerged from my data indicates that the Institution undervalues the role of the HoD. The perception, from the two HoDs interviewed, and from personal correspondence with a male HoD is that HoD-ship has reduced in value over recent years.

Further evidence that there was a contradictory set of ideas about the culture of the role of the HoD emerged from a 2007 report on research undertaken by two professors from the Education Department into the role of the HoD. The purpose of the research was:

> To examine the role of the Heads of Academic Departments (HoDs) in a changing academic and administrative environment at [the] University. It arose out of a concern of senior management that there were signs of a reluctance on behalf of some academics to take on the increasingly demanding role of HoD. (Euvrard & Irwin, 2007, p. 2)

This research found that 'Past-HODs and former Acting-HODs lamented the lack of recognition, appreciation, support and power for themselves' (Euvrard & Irwin, 2007, p. 9) and were frustrated by the increasing administrative work load. Euvrard and Irwin reported that many HoDs, past and current, were 'feeling frustrated by a lack of autonomy, respect, trust and recognition from University management' (2007, p. 7).

My data analysis indicates that these concerns about the workload, status and recognition afforded the role of the HoD continue. It seems that while the administrative workload of the HoD has increased, probably due to new managerialism in HE (see 1.2.1) the status and recognition is perceived to have declined. Consequently, the position of HoD has lost its appeal for some. For example, one of my interviewees, herself an HoD, felt the role of the HoD has come to be perceived as an onerous job.

> *More of the quality assurance stuff, and people just don't want to do it. They rather want to do the research. It used to have some status, somehow it's lost its status. It's just become quite a bureaucratic, managerial job. That's my sense from talking to people. It doesn't seem to have much status.* (Lindi)

While the 2011 HoD Forum reaffirmed the value of HoDs, the perception of one of the interviewees in my research, an Acting HoD who attended the Forum, was that the position of HoD was not sufficiently valued by the Institution. She felt:

> *The Institution needs to signal how valuable* [the role of the HoD] *is and the Institution needs to do it in ways that make it feel like promotion and growth and progress to an individual otherwise why would you take on the extra work.* (Jean)

The lack of alignment between the value the Institution claims to place on the role of the HoD and the perceptions of academics suggests that there are contradictory beliefs related to the role. This contradiction may have contributed to the position of the HoD becoming less attractive to experienced and research-active academics. One professor interviewed however, believed the HoD in her faculty does have status and is valued which suggests that the value an HoD holds may be department specific or indeed HoD specific, i.e. the HoD status may be affected by HoD agency and more experienced HoDs may receive greater status.

Two questionnaire respondents who were or had been HoDs noted that being HoD detracted from their research time. This could suggest that active researchers may be disinclined to be HoDs preferring to dedicate their time to research as the following comment suggests:

> *Assuming the headship of my department has undoubtedly impacted on both my research output and my postgraduate supervision. Ultimately this is going to result in less academics wanting to become a HoD. This is especially true for the older academics and those younger academics who place a high emphasis on research. The end point of this is that you are going to find the mid-career weak or mediocre researchers taking up the position of HoD with little or limited academic leadership or postgraduate supervisory skills. Clearly this is going to impact on the quality of mentorship that young academics are likely to receive from their HoD's in the future.* (Male HoD, pers.comm., 06/04/12)

The consequence of an administratively burdensome HoD role is that the HoD has more demands on his/her time and this could lead to the HoD being less available to provide advice, mentoring and research support. In addition a perception that the role of the HoD is not adequately valued and rewarded may affect the agency of the HoD and the way the role is performed. This could affect women academics in particular who, given their comparatively low research productivity rate and the fact that they do not apply for promotion at the same rate as male academics, would benefit from HoD support.

5.3.1.5. Demographic profile of the HoD group

Currently the majority of middle and senior leadership roles in the Institution are filled by white males. There are a total of 6 Faculty Deans, 6 Deputy Deans, 33 HoDs and 2 Deputy HoDs (RU Calendar, 2011). At the start of 2011 there were only four female HoDs, one of whom was a black woman; one female Deputy HoD, two female Acting HoDs (6 month terms); one female Faculty Dean, and two female Faculty Deputy Deans, one of whom was black, and one black female Acting Deputy Dean. These statistics are influenced by existing capacity; there are fewer women in senior academic positions to fill these leadership roles (see 4.3.2). However, my data suggests that other factors could account for the demographics described above. For example, one interviewee said:

> *I have recently been overlooked as the new HoD in my Department (despite being the most senior and experienced eligible candidate, and the only woman) based on a collegial voting system. This is apparently due to perception by my colleagues that I am unsuitable based on lack of authority/presence, being too kind and soft, and too concerned with the details of bigger issues. It was devastatingly humiliating to be judged on personal features ('too feminine') rather than recognized for my academic leadership, and recognized for my contributions to the Department and University. I have found* [the institution] *to be extraordinarily petty-politicky and conservatively sexist in the way such processes are conducted.* (Participant S16)

While the HoD is expected to be a 'change agent' by the Institution (HoD Guide, 2008), the Institution is perceived by some as not doing enough to encourage and promote change in the racial and gender equity profile of the HoD group thereby facilitating/perpetuating the status quo. According to Archer (1996), a dominant group, e.g. male-dominated senior leadership, may through use of their power, structure things in ways that favour them, by using discrimination censorship. This could mean that 'the power is kept unperceived' (Archer, 1996, p. xxiii), or would form what Butler (2004) refers to as regulatory powers. So even if it is in the interests of the minority group to bring the discrimination into the open, they are not aware of the need to do so. In the case of the situation described by Participant S16, it is possible that the powers at play were not perceived and this allowed the social imbalance to continue and the status quo to remain.

Research claims that 'critical mass is a crucial factor both in creating an ethos in the institution where women's voices are heard and taken seriously, and in creating institutional capacity for women to empower other women' (Sader, et al., 2005, p. 66). A lack of women HoDs may be a constraining factor for women academics who may benefit

from a more even distribution of power in terms of gender at senior levels of leadership. I explore this further in 5.3.3.1. It must be noted that subsequent to my data analysis, the HoD appointment process was under review by the Institution with the intention to speed up the change in the demographic profile of the HoD group.

The HoD Guide (2008), HoD Task Team Recommendations (2009) and the HoD Forum Minutes (2011) all confirm the official Institutional expectation that the HoD would contribute to the research productivity, career development and mentoring of staff. In theory, this official belief should contribute towards enabling women academics' career development. However there are conflicting cultural items which may constrain the agency of HoDs to perform their roles. In addition the personal powers and properties of the HoD will affect his/her agency to fulfil his/her role. Similarly, the individual agency of academic staff will impact on whether an academic is able to make the most of opportunities presented. An effective HoD will not guarantee that all academics within that department will flourish.

5.3.2. HoD agency: personal powers and properties

Each HoD fulfills his/her role and performs associated responsibilities differently and will be conditioned differently by the structural and cultural circumstances, i.e. they will use powers and properties of their agency to act in different ways. This is highlighted in a comment from one of my interviewees, whose role in the Institution involves working with staff, including HoDs, across the institution:

> *It's what's between senior management and all the younger staff but if you've got a good HoD in a department, it makes all the difference to everything that goes on in that department. From all the years that I've worked in departments, that's the deciding factor in the department. It's not everything, but it makes a huge difference.* (Lindi)

HoD responsibilities that pertain specifically to the career development of academics are namely, being a role model and an advocate, mentoring staff, and supporting and encouraging research. The career development of academics primarily manifests itself through promotion and is determined by the research record of the academic. In this section I discuss the agency of HoDs in the promotion of women academics, as promoters of research, and developers of a research and mentoring ethos within the department. I also discuss the HoD as mentor and role model.

5.3.2.1.   Promotion of women academics

The role of the HoD in terms of academic promotion is to guide and encourage staff through the process (HoD Guide, 2008). Although applying for promotion is an individual endeavour, the HoD Guide states: 'successful management of personal promotion can go a long way to fostering a positive culture in a department' (2008, p. 62). This was confirmed by the comment of a professor whom I interviewed who had herself been through the promotion process several times and had also served on the Personal Promotions Committee for a few years. Her experience was that '*it is very difficult to succeed in promotion without having the HoD or Dean on your side. So much depends on whether the HoD thinks you are ready and whether the Dean is fighting in your corner or not*' (Carol). My data indicates that 15% (n=12) of the questionnaire participants were encouraged by their Dean or HoD to apply for promotion[32]. This statistic reflects that women would benefit from receiving more encouragement, advice or support from their HoDs to apply for promotion.

The interviewee quoted above also believed that the HoD can take a '*more active role*' in promoting the self-esteem of women academics. Self-esteem is critical to putting oneself forward for promotion and my research has indicated that women view their self-esteem as a constraining factor in their career development. Almost half of the women (n=38) interviewed have never applied for promotion. While only 13% (n=5) of those listed no support from their department as a reason for not applying, 21% listed not feeling confident enough. Carol, referred to above, highlights the potential power of the HoD in the career development of women academics and how this power may be acted on or not by the individual actors who occupy those roles.

The HoD Guide also states that 'whilst the University can provide opportunities for staff development [to improve their qualifications], it is up to individual staff members under the guidance of the HoD, to take advantage of the opportunities presented' (2008, p. 62). Being able to seek guidance from the HoD in order to take advantage of opportunities would therefore be contingent on a good relationship between the HoD and the academic, as well as the individual actor, in this case the woman academic, being enabled by personal powers and properties to seek such guidance, for example, by having a positive self-esteem.

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[32] 52% of the questionnaire respondents had applied for promotion (n= 42) at some point in their academic careers. Of these, 39% (n=15) were encouraged to apply for promotion. 80% (n=12) of those who were encouraged to apply for promotion felt that their HoD/Dean encouraged them.

By way of illustration I shall relate the experiences of staff development[33], career trajectory, and promotion of two professors interviewed. Their different stories illustrate how the agency of the HoD and the relationship between the academic and the HoD can affect an individual's career development.

Carol had a linear career path. She completed an Honours degree and was then employed in Department X, initially in a temporary capacity. Later she was appointed to a permanent post. During this time she completed her Masters and Doctoral studies. At various points along the way she applied for and was given promotion from Temporary Junior Lecturer to Associate Professor. Her rise in the academic hierarchy was unusually fast: she was made Associate Professor within ten years of full time employment. The department (and field) she worked in is male-dominated. She was fortunate to be assigned a good supervisor who also acted as a mentor. In addition she enjoyed a good relationship with her HoD and Dean (who was also her supervisor and mentor). She attributed her academic career development to the support and guidance she received in terms of mentoring, career and promotion advice from both her HoD, supervisor and mentor.

It is possible that Carol's own personal qualities and powers, in the form of a positive and easy-going personality, were enabling for her. She received a lot of other support as well, from her mother and from her partner who is a senior academic at the Institution. She noted:

> *I was very lucky in the private family support structures that I have […] but I can imagine if I was trying to deal with that by myself, that it would have been a hammer blow because you need to be so energetic mentally to turn out good research and you can't do it when you are tired.* (Carol)

Jean's experience of academic progression tells a different story. She came to academia mid-career from the business world with a Master's qualification and with practical workplace experience. Once in academia she began to study towards her PhD. She described feeling unsupported by her HoD when seeking advice about sabbatical leave to further her studies and also when applying for promotion. She said:

> *The very first sabbatical I had I didn't know what to do with it. So I got hold of*

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[33] Staff development: a term used to improve an individual's academic qualifications.

> HR and they said "the HoD is supposed to guide you in these matters", and I went to the HoD who said "why should I have anything to do with this? This is your thing". (Jean)

Once Jean received her PhD, it was the Human Resources Director who suggested that Jean apply for promotion. Jean's perception was that her HoD was not overtly supportive of her promotion application. She applied for promotion but her application was rejected. It was then that her HoD and Dean supported her appeal. Her HoD's initial lack of support for her sabbatical and her promotion application could relate to the HoD's own understanding of autonomy and academic freedom but it could also be that he did not see the need to fulfil the role of advocate. In Jean's case, the HoD's agency was initially a constraining factor to her career development. Of the role of HoDs at the Institution in general, she said:

> It's disappointing to me, but I would think an HoD is somebody who sets the intellectual tone, sets trajectories for research, encourages research, grows people, thinks about how they progress and what they do. But if you look around, you don't really see that. (Jean)

In reality not all HoDs perform their responsibilities in the same way, have the same individual strengths or enact their agency in a manner which benefits the career development of their staff and, in particular, women academics.

5.3.2.2.   HoDs as promoters of research

The expectation of the HoD is that HoDs will promote research by encouraging all academic staff, including inexperienced researchers to undertake research (HoD Guide, 2008). My analysis of the data suggests that an HoD's agency as a researcher, promoter of research and as a mentor is affected by changes in HE. Historically, the position of HoDs at RU was filled by more senior, research-established academics. With the move to managerialism, the age and level of experience of HoDs has changed. As one of the interviewees pointed out: *'there has been a trend in some of the sciences to make a more junior member the HoD, let them do the admin and let the top researchers carry on pumping out their articles'* (Carol). This trend could potentially lead to HoDs without sufficient research experience, time management skills and other necessary knowhow being placed in a position where they are expected to advise, mentor and demystify the path to career success for those who need it. As women academics have a relatively low research productivity rate when compared to men (see 1.2.4), women academics may derive more benefit than their male counterparts from HoD guidance and mentoring. As

less research-experienced academics take on the role of HoD, they may have less research expertise to share.

In addition, greater administration loads leave less time for HoDs to undertake their own research. This could detract from their status as researchers and successful academics and adversely affect their status as an academic leader. This could in turn affect the ethos of the research culture in the department. Lack of time could also influence the amount and nature of mentoring or guidance the HoD is able to provide to academics in the department.

5.3.2.3.   Setting the tone: Departmental mentoring ethos

Knight and Trowler (1999) claim that because most learning is subliminal and occurs in daily contexts, 'attention needs to be given to departmental cultures, discourses and practices, since they powerfully signal the learning that really matters' (p. 33). They suggest that the HoD plays an important role in 'setting the departmental tone', and helping new and established department members keep up with the new demands in higher education.

The overall sense from my data is that departmental support differs across disciplines, with Natural Science participants feeling more positive about support from their departments than Social Science[34] participants. One Social Science Professor interviewed, who had not received any mentoring, experienced her department as being a place where knowledge and experiences were jealously guarded rather than shared. Her perception of the Department was that:

> *This is a collection of atoms wandering around in this department, there isn't a sense of the whole, "we're all in this together" or "we've got particular areas or ideas that we are focusing on and we're working together". That characterises a lot of the Humanities strangely enough. That very kind of isolated individualised attitude. It's kind of crazy because it is possible not to work in solitary ways and lots of people do it.* (Jean)

Other comments from Social Science questionnaire respondents that illustrate the perception of not receiving departmental support are:

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[34] Natural Science: 58% rated feeling supported by the department, and 38% both supported and constrained by the department;
Social Science: 40% rated feeling supported by the department, 18% rated feeling constrained by the department, and 27% rated feeling both supported and constrained by the department.

> *The bottom line is that I have not felt encouraged to do research.* (Participant S44)

> *I have had little mentoring in my Department, and have had to discover how to publish etc. on my own. Now that I have begun to do so, as well as to advise and edit post-grad research, my own research is improving.* (Participant S47)

On the other hand there was a more positive perception of departmental support from Natural Science participants, as illustrated by this questionnaire respondent's comment:

> *I am in a very supportive department, which fully understands the life stage I am at!* (Participant N13)

Differing perceptions of departmental support in different disciplines could once again have to do with the way knowledge is constructed in the different disciplines, as discussed in 2.2. A consequence of the difference in knowledge structure is that there tends to be more collaboration in the hard sciences. According to Dison (2007), young scholars in soft disciplines, on the other hand, experience low levels of social connectedness. The departmental ethos around support and mentoring that HoDs themselves were socialised into upon their entry into academia may be perpetuated by them as HoDs. Dison also suggests that socialisation is dependent on the formation of the individual's own identity and the 'conditioning of powerful structural elements embedded in the contexts in which they take place' (2007, p. 110). This would imply that the agency of the HoD could also be constrained by the culture of the discipline, a Catch-22 situation, which in turn would affect the agency of the academics in the different disciplines.

To further illustrate how the departmental mentoring ethos is influenced by the HoD, I discuss the HoD's role in the Accelerated Development programmes.

5.3.3. HoD's role in Accelerated Development Programmes

The intention of the Accelerated Development programme is that the whole Department co-operate to ensure the successful development of the lecturer by providing a supportive environment (Accelerated Development Programme Employment Procedures, 2009). Once a lecturer has been appointed to an Accelerated Development Programme, the relevant HoD is required to select an appropriate mentor. The HoD therefore has a significant part to play in both selecting a mentor who will be a good

match for the Lecturer, and in ensuring the co-operation of all academic staff members for the success of the programme. I shall discuss both these roles.

5.3.3.1. Selecting a good match

Sader, et al. (2005) maintain that in order to facilitate the professional development and progression of women to senior positions, institutions need to be proactive in addressing gender inequalities. The HoD, by selecting mentors for the Accelerated Development lecturers, has a part to play in creating an environment where women are positioned to empower other women and develop their own positions of seniority. It could be argued that the structural deficits within RU may exclude women from male-dominated networks (Sonnert, 1999, cited in Prozesky, 2006), as the vast majority of those selecting the mentors have been male HoDs and the ratio of men to women mentors has been 2: 1.[35] In one instance where the Accelerated Development Programme Co-ordinator questioned an HoD's choice of a male mentor, suggesting that a certain woman might be a better mentor, the Co-ordinator reported: '*There were issues there, so even though I queried that, he said, '''Oh, no, she wouldn't be able to mentor''''* . Such lack of opportunities for women affects their ability to develop academic capital. This suggests that gender inequity at the level of HoD may have an impact on the selection of mentors and more generally play a role in the overall gender inequity at the Institution. In such cases, structure and culture would be experienced as constraining for women academics.

5.3.3.2. Success of Programme

The success of the Accelerated Development Programme, of which a central component is mentoring, is reported to relate to the ethos of mentoring within a department. Departments that exhibit a community of practice approach are reported to have had successful Accelerated Development Programme outcomes, where the individual had positive experiences. To illustrate this are two examples. One Department that successfully hosted an Accelerated Development lecturer decided to extend the process to other staff members. This seems to have had a positive effect on the ethos of the entire Department:

> *Within a year, they had decided that every new member of staff would need a mentor. And so the senior professors took on those roles. As new people came in they were mentored by senior professors so that they would learn the ropes and*

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[35] 64% of the Accelerated Development Mentors have been men; 18 male mentors out of a total of 28 mentors.

> *that they would have collaborators for their research to build capacity and it really worked. The Department was very nurturing and supportive.* (Sandra)

The HoD at the time was a senior professor with a well-established research record and noted feminine attributes of nurturing. This may have contributed to the mentoring ethos in the Department.

Another Department decided that the mentoring responsibility for an Accelerated Development lecturer would be shared by all in the Department. In this case the HoD attributed the success of the development lecturer to the collegial climate of the Department. This was confirmed by the Accelerated Development lecturer from this Department who said:

> *Right from the beginning it was very clear that the way this department would run it, it's everybody. So I'm not looking to one person only, it's everybody who is willing and wanting to mentor. It kind of didn't do the hierarchical boundaries.* (Lisa)

In this instance, the HoD, a woman in a female-dominated department, encouraged and promoted the community of practice ethos in the department, and this was experienced as enabling for the Accelerated Development lecturer.

In situations where the Accelerated Development Programme was not fully understood by the HoD or by the department members, the programme was reportedly less successful. On two occasions outgoing HoDs had not transferred information about the Accelerated Development Programmes to incoming HoDs. This could be attributed to the lack of guidance concerning expectations of the HoD, incomplete HoD handover, and absence of induction training. It could also be attributed to the value (or lack of value) the outgoing HoD had placed on the importance of mentoring and on the Accelerated Development Programme. In such cases the Institutional culture could be experienced as a constraining factor for both the incoming HoD and those in the department who would benefit from a mentoring ethos.

5.3.4. HoDs as mentors and role models

Apart from setting the tone for mentoring within their departments, HoDs are also expected to mentor staff and act as role models (HoD Guide, 2008). However only 39% of the questionnaire respondents viewed the mentoring that they receive from their HoD

or Dean in a positive light and 61% rated it negatively. This indicates that conditions, as previously discussed, may militate against an HoD's acting as mentor and role model.

Research recently undertaken at RU referred to above suggests that while some women found their HoDs to be understanding of the demands of the motherhood/work balance, 'this was qualified by the caveat that a large majority of HoDs at [RU] are white men, and the level to which they can actually understand mothers (even if they themselves are parents) was questioned' (Poulos, 2011, p. 202). The above perception that male HoDs are unable to fully empathise with mothers was shared by one of my interviewees who said:

> *If your mentor or your role model can be a man […] that will be fine as far as the professional side of your life goes, but when it comes to negotiating the relationship between work and home life what you really want is someone who has been in that sticky position before.* (Carol)

This would indicate that, given the paucity of women HoDs at the institution, HoDs at RU are unlikely to be role-models in terms of gender- role and work-life balance for women academics at RU. However, many participants believed it was not the specific gender of the role-model or mentor that was important, but rather the feminine or masculine attributes of the role-model or mentor.

5.3.5. Summary: Departmental leadership

The HoD Guide (2008), HoD Task Team Recommendations (2009) and the HoD Forum Minutes (2011) all clarify the official Institutional belief and value of the role of the HoD, particularly in terms of contributing to the research productivity, career development and mentoring of staff. Change in the racial and gender profile of the HoD group is also documented as an Institutional priority. In theory, this official belief should contribute towards enabling women academics' career development. However, the perception is that the HoD role is not valued to the extent officially claimed. This suggests that conditions are not conducive to HoDs fulfilling their supposed roles. The demographic profile of the HoD group continues to create gender inequity and power differentials to the disadvantage of women. Furthermore, the agency of the HoD may be constrained by changes in HE, the academic culture of the discipline, and by his/her own personal powers and properties. Constraints upon the agency of the HoD may have a negative impact on the career development of academics within the department.

Two other structures emerged from my data as supportive for women academics. These are an initiative that supports women academics, and personal support structures, both of which will be discussed in the next section.

5.4. Alternative support structures

5.4.1. Women's Academic Solidarity Association

The Women's Academic Solidarity Association (WASA), as mentioned in section 1.2.5.4, is an independent association affiliated to RU. It grew out of the need for the empowerment of women at the Institution. In addition to the informal network of support to women academics and postgraduate students at the Institution, WASA also ran a formal mentoring programme from 2007 – 2009 which is of relevance for this study.

My data indicate that 38% of the questionnaire respondents felt that they were advantaged in terms of access to alternative network structures such as WASA. Few respondents, however, referred explicitly to WASA in their responses to an open-ended question regarding career support and constraints. One questionnaire respondent was positive about the support she had received from WASA, stating:

> *WASA has been entirely instrumental to my research development and without it I would still be an undergraduate administrator.* (Participant S52)

Two participants commented on the importance of an association such as WASA, where the challenges that women face are key concerns. One interviewee said:

> *I think it is only really processes like WASA at this institution,* [that are] *about women. I think the thing about WASA is it shows that being an academic is not simple. It's not that that trajectory is going to just unfold for you. In fact in many cases it doesn't and for women it's particularly difficult. But I've only really seen that WASA takes that seriously.* (Jean)

However, one respondent from the NS group felt that WASA was aimed at women in the Social Sciences. She said:

> *I joined WASA at the end of last year but I don't know if I would say it helps at all – as far as I can tell it is focused on the arts / social sciences with little applicable support for the rest of us.* (Participant N3)

This perception could be the reason for the relative lack of mention of WASA by the NS group; only two other participants from the NS group mentioned WASA – one who did not know about WASA and the other who stated that she was not a member.

It seems that perceptions of WASA vary in the Institution. One respondent believes that women who belong to WASA are seen by some men as being deficient. She wrote:

> *I have been cautious about accessing formal mentoring structures because there are few womyn [sic] role-models but also because I have heard the snide comments made by some men in the Institution who consider those types of structures as evidence of 'inability'.* (Participant S28)

Another perception is that the organisation is radically feminist and one respondent commented:

> *I find that WASA was not a helpful organisation in that it imposed certain views of gender on others, committing the same thought crime as the chauvinist bunch.* (Participant S10)

Perceptions such as these could possibly be explained by Butler's (1999) claim that the assumption that women have a common identity and the notion of universal patriarchy can be limiting in terms of identity politics. She argues that "feminism" is fragmented, and using it as a unified identity may alienate women who are regard themselves as different and lead them to oppose the notion of feminism or feminist structures. I discussed this in 2.4.1.1.

A large portion of WASA membership is made up of postgraduate students who were not part of my research. Had postgraduate women been among my research participants, it is possible that WASA may have been mentioned more often.

5.4.2. Personal support structures

Personal support structures in the form of support from family (husbands, children and parents) and/or friends were perceived by many of the questionnaire respondents (61%, n=48) to have contributed towards enabling their career development. Experiences of positive personal support were also evident in response to the open-ended questionnaire questions on support and constraints to career development. There was a perception among some of the participants that in terms of personal support from friends, women

were advantaged. One questionnaire respondent said: *'this may have something to do with women's tendency to support each other, I would say it is an advantage that I have in relation to my gender'* (Participant S27). It was also noted by a number of participants that having a supportive partner facilitated career development. The idea that being in a stable relationship is an enabling condition for researchers is corroborated by research conducted by Geber (2009) and Prozesky (2008). Some comments from the questionnaires which relate to this are:

> *My husband and I design our personal lives around the need to balance parenting and study, and make as much space for each other in both respects as possible. Without this arrangement, I would not be able to get anywhere.* (Participant S27)
>
> *I have an extremely supportive husband who recognises my need for a career and who shares family responsibilities with me.* (Participant N12)
>
> *To have a successful career and a 'life' with family, you need a supportive partner no matter what gender you are.* (Participant N25)

In contrast, an unsupportive personal relationship was experienced as being a constraint to one academic's career development. This participant wrote:

> *Initially it was difficult to establish my career as my now ex-husband was threatened by my achievements, despite the need for my income to support our family. Also, he did not contribute much to parenting.* (Participant N14)

This participant went on to elaborate that she experienced living with her mother and her children, who were old enough to understand the demands of PhD study, as supportive to her career development in one way, but constraining in another way, as it was difficult to leave her aging mother and children in order to travel to conferences or on field trips.

Research suggests that women receive less support from leaders within academia than men do. For this reason, they find their support more from personal relationships (White, et al., 2010). While I am cognisant of the fact that personal support structures were highly rated by the questionnaire respondents as enabling to their career development, my research is primarily about institutional support structures and therefore I have not delved into personal support in great depth, but simply acknowledge that it is a factor in women's career development.

5.5. Summary: support structures

The programme that provided reduced teaching loads and mentoring, namely the Accelerated Development Programme, and the programme that provided special leave to allow for the completion of postgraduate degrees, namely the Academic Staff Development Programme, were experienced as enabling for women's research career development. Both these programmes provided the necessary time for women to dedicate to research.

The structure and culture of Institutional and Departmental leadership was mostly perceived as constraining. Many women felt excluded from places of power and the academic discourse. Leadership positions that are significantly dominated by men may suggest that masculine ways of being receive preference over feminine ways of being. Such an environment may therefore inhibit women's learning through social and cultural participation and may ultimately constrain the development and growth of their self-confidence.

Changes in the role of the HoD due to changes in HE have created an environment in which possibly fewer research-experienced academics take up the role of HoD. In addition, there is the perception that the role of the HoD is not adequately valued, making the position less enticing for experienced academics. The leadership and research experience of the HoD may affect his/her agency as a mentor/role model. Less expertise at this level might affect the quality of support and mentoring young academics, especially women, receive from their HoDs.

WASA was perceived as enabling by a few women as it addressed developing self-esteem, access to role models and conflict with traditional gender roles. However some women perceived that WASA alienated them from the dominant academic environment. Having discussed the impact of Institutional and Departmental support structures on women's research careers, in the next section I focus on mentoring and other support roles. As discussed in 2.4.2.4, research has indicated that mentoring has a potentially significant impact on career and research career development, particularly for women academics (Quinlan, 1999; Devos, 2004; Wasburn, 2007).

5.6. Mentoring

Having discussed institutional, departmental and alternative support structures, in this section I now focus specifically on mentoring. Firstly I explore the benefits of mentoring to research careers. I then analyse the structures and cultures of mentoring to determine whether these are enabling or constraining for women. I examine formal mentoring programmes and other mentoring-related structures. Information about the prevailing culture is inferred from these mentoring structures as well as from the perceptions of the research participants and their responses to the mentoring structures. Thereafter, I examine the agency of mentors and role models in terms of social capital, personal powers and properties, and how their agency impinges on the agency of women academics to develop their research careers. In this way I arrive at a conclusion concerning whether or not mentoring and support structures enable or constrain the development of personal properties capable of helping women to advance in their research careers.

5.6.1. Introduction

Mentoring has been defined as a process that is 'supportive, nurturing, and protective, providing orchestrated or structured experiences to facilitate growth' (Girves, et al., 2005, p. 453), a process that has both psycho-social support[36] and vocational support functions[37] (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The second part of the questionnaire that I administered to research participants was informed by the above definition of mentoring. Questions were aimed at identifying support at the vocational/career level and at the psycho-social level in order to establish how women experienced mentoring and whether mentoring was beneficial to their career development. The questionnaire participants were asked to select categories that corresponded with their understanding of mentoring and to weigh the importance of these characteristics. In the order of highest to lowest priority, coaching/ training the mentee in teaching and research areas, promoting self-confidence and professional identity, networking and increasing the mentee's exposure and visibility, role modelling, and providing challenging tasks and assignments that stretch the mentee, were identified. Mentoring was therefore understood by the questionnaire respondents as a process providing support at both the vocational and psycho-social level.

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[36] Psycho-social support: providing acceptance, confidence, counselling, friendship, and role modelling (Kram & Isabella, 1985).
[37] Vocational support: Sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and providing challenging assignments (Kram & Isabella, 1985).

In the following section I discuss the benefits of mentoring in terms of career advancement and developing a research track record.

5.6.2. Benefits of mentoring on research and career

The analysis of my data supports research which claims that mentoring can be an enabling factor in women's research career development (see 2.4.2.4.2). While 63% (n=50) of my questionnaire respondents indicated they had received some form of mentoring, due to the length of the questionnaire, the questions did not interrogate the nature or quality of the mentoring in great depth. The nature and quality of mentoring received was probed in the interviews. Most respondents (84%, n=42) recognised that the mentoring they had received had had an impact on them as researchers and to a lesser extent as supervisors of postgraduate students (rated by 54%, n=27).

To recap, factors that were rated by the questionnaire participants as positively affecting their research productivity (see 4.4, Figure 2) and rated by more than half of the participants are: professional capabilities (rated by 61%), access to information (rated by 60%), and developing a professional network structure (rated by 51%). Other factors were (listed in descending order of rating): personal administrative capabilities, completion of postgraduate degree, self-esteem, advisory capacity, supervision of postgraduate students and career advancement.

Questionnaire participants who received mentoring rated the following areas as benefitting positively from mentoring: professional capabilities (rated by 52%), self-esteem (rated by 49%), developing a professional network structure (rated by 46%), access to information (rated by 45%), completion of postgraduate degree (rated by 44%), career advancement (rated by 42%), supervision of postgraduate students (rated by 34%), advisory capacity (rated by 30%) and personal administrative capabilities (rated by 26%) [see Figure 5 below].

Impact of mentoring on facets of women's career development

Facet	Percentage
Self- esteem	49%
Developing a professional network structure	46%
Supervision of postgraduate students	34%
Completion of postgraduate degree	44%
Access to information	45%
Advisory capacity	30%
Personal administrative capabilities	26%
Professional capabilities	52%
Career advancement	42%

Figure 5: Impact of mentoring on facets of women's career development

It can be seen from the above graph that mentoring is an enabling factor in women's research careers to the extent that it fosters the development of areas important for women's research productivity. Such areas are self-esteem, professional capabilities, development of professional network structures, access to information, completion of a postgraduate degree and career advancement. These aspects of career development were rated by more than 40% of the participants as benefitting from mentoring.

I shall now look at these aspects in more detail.

5.6.2.1.   Career advancement

There is research claiming that mentoring can positively affect academic women's career advancement. Gardiner, et al.'s (2007) study found that mentees were four times more successful in receiving research grants than the control group, and mentees produced one-and-a-half times as many publications of a higher status than those in the control group who did not receive mentoring. Promotion applications accompanied by high research outputs would be highly rated given that research productivity has more impact on advancement in academia than excellence in teaching (Hartley & Dobele, 2009). In my study, mentoring was considered by 42% of the questionnaire respondents who received mentoring to have had a positive impact on their career advancement. Career advancement was rated by 33% of all participants as positively affecting the research productivity aspects of their careers.

All three Accelerated Development lecturers whom I interviewed believed that mentor support enabled their career advancement. In addition, one professor interviewed who received informal mentoring mentioned that the strategic advice about studying, conference attendance and committee participation that she received from her mentor at the start of her career, contributed to her speedy trajectory. She said:

> *The reason I was strategic was because right at the beginning when I was a junior lecturer, my mentor was saying "be strategic about this. Don't join the committees now, they take up a lot of time and energy and you are not earning that many brownie points. Write a paper instead".* (Carol)

The effect of having a formal mentor is illustrated by one questionnaire participant who wrote that she felt:

> *very lucky in the support that I have received which has helped me advance fairly quickly in my career. Having access to a mentor for guidance and advice has been invaluable!* (Participant S20)

Another participant in the same department who had not had the benefit of formal mentoring reported feeling unsupported by comparison and said:

> *I am in a department where there are junior lecturers* [on mentoring programmes]. *I arrived in the same year as one of them and feel that I am not given as much support as her because I was assumed to be able to know how to cope on my own.* (Participant S7)

The above experiences reflect how beneficial a mentor can be in terms of career advancement by providing career sponsorship, such as putting the mentee forward for opportunities; protection from constraining or adverse pressures; and guidance and advice.

5.6.2.2.   Self-esteem

Mentoring helps develop agential properties and powers. 49% of those respondents who received mentoring rated mentoring as affecting self-esteem. Self-esteem was rated by 36% of questionnaire participants as having a positive impact on the research productivity aspects of career development. This outcome is supported by research that suggests that the informational and instrumental social support that career-related mentoring provides may enhance the individual's confidence regarding career decisions and job performance (Allen, et al., 2004; Gardiner, et al., 2007). This in turn enables the

individual to feel more self-confident and to experience greater career satisfaction (Allen, et al., 2004). Gardiner, et al. (2007) found that mentoring helped allay concerns about research.

One interviewee described how the 'protection' she received from being mentored provided both encouragement and security. She said '*I really felt that I could fail and it would be fine, that there would be wisdom and advice on how to recover from disaster*' (Sandra). Mentoring provided her with self-confidence to develop skills as a lecturer and researcher. Other interview data showed that Institutional support afforded by the Accelerated Development Programme provided a sense of being valued for the mentees. Johnston and McCormack (1997) found that the benefits of formal institutional programmes demonstrate institutional support, which helps develop self-confidence. Ann said of the Accelerated Development Programme:

> *One thing that they drilled throughout is how important we are. And how valuable and that is very important. From day one you are told how much they care for you and how much they want this to work. Throughout there is lots of encouragement.* (Ann)

One interviewee, who had not received formal mentoring, described how difficult she found voicing her lack of publishing experience and how she felt unable to ask for help. It is possible that she would have been able to ask for help had she received mentoring: the participants in Driscoll, et al.'s (2009) research claimed that mentoring helped them overcome insecurity and provided a safe space for them to ask questions.

5.6.2.3.   Professional capabilities

Mentoring was rated by 52% of those who received mentoring as having an impact on their professional capabilities. Professional capabilities were rated by 61% of all participants as having positive implications for the research productivity aspects of their careers. Two Accelerated Development lecturers experienced the development of their professional capabilities by their mentors as beneficial to their research development. Their comments were:

> *Giving feedback like that or getting feedback about written stuff – that's been my biggest growing point.* (Lisa)

> *He has been really good as a mentor specifically in terms of research … so that is something that he has tried to promote in me as much as possible. But also*

everything related to research, like time management and balancing research with teaching and admin and everything else, he's also been very good at that. (Ann)

5.6.2.4.   Professional networks

Research has been conducted which indicates that women often have fewer networking opportunities and less access to critical organisational networks, and receive less support than their male colleagues (Ibarra & Andrews, 1993; White, et al., 2011). White, et al. (2011) found that under the model of new managerialism women benefit less from networking and support in terms of career advancement than men do. My data analysis indicates that women perceive themselves to be disadvantaged by their networking opportunities. If this is the case, then mentoring may be one way to address this imbalance. My data analysis showed that mentoring was rated by 46% of those who had received it as having a positive impact on their professional network structure. Developing a professional network structure was rated by 51% of all participants as enhancing the research productivity aspects of their careers.

One Accelerated Development lecturer felt that the mentoring she had received benefitted her as it had forced her out of her comfort zone by providing challenging assignments such as organising seminars, chairing sessions, organising lecturers, and being forced to network. She said:

> *Not only skills but networking* [...] *He didn't let me just hide in my office but pushed me out there to take on challenges, to do things so the co-supervising or teaching, the peer review of my lecturing* [...] *he did a lot of things to help me just keep pushing my level further.* (Sandra)

5.6.2.5.   Access to information

Gardiner, et al. (2007) suggest that the underrepresentation of women in HE leads to a lack of access to network opportunities. This places women at a disadvantage for receiving information about, for instance, funding opportunities, which in turn can affect the advancement of their careers. Access to information was rated by 60% of my questionnaire participants as promoting the research productivity aspects of their careers. 45% of the questionnaire respondents who received mentoring believed that mentoring had a positive impact on access to information about publications, conferences and the like.

One interviewee highlighted the issue of access to information, implying that her career development might have been easier if she had had a mentor or role model. She noted her struggle with initiating a research profile after receiving her PhD. She said:

> *My experience in my department at RU has been a very lonely individual journey to acquire research competence. Information has not been shared. There have been no mentors and no role models for me.* (Participant S17)

5.6.2.6.   Completion of postgraduate degree

Delamont and Atkinson (2004) claim that achieving a doctorate is often experienced as the hardest hurdle in an academic career, one that prepares academics for future academic challenges. The analysis of my data indicates that achieving a doctorate was considered to improve personal capabilities, advisory capacity, access to information and access to professional network structures, all factors regarded as enhancing research productivity. Completion of a postgraduate degree was rated by 44% of all participants as having a positive impact on their research productivity. My data suggests that mentoring is beneficial to the completion of a postgraduate degree, with 44% of the questionnaire respondents who received mentoring rating it as contributing towards the completion of their postgraduate degree.

5.6.2.7.   Summary: mentoring benefits

My analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire and from the interviews indicates that mentoring is potentially beneficial in a range of ways to the development of women's careers. The data indicate that mentoring aids career advancement and improves levels of self-esteem, which in turn enable women to realise their personal powers and properties in order to develop their professional capabilities, their professional network structure and their access to information. These aspects potentially enable research activity and lead to career development.

Having discussed the benefits of mentoring, I now look at mentoring structures and cultures.

5.6.3. Mentoring programmes: structures and cultures

There are few formal mentoring programmes at RU and generally in HEIs in SA, and a noted concern is the 'lack of mentorship programmes to guide the potential next and new generations in their academic careers' (HESA, 2011, p. 8). The literature regarding

mentoring suggests that mentoring programmes that have a co-ordinator/ administrator and reporting obligations are more successful than programmes that do not (Girves, et al., 2005). The Co-ordinator of the Accelerated Development Programme concurred that mentoring programmes that have reporting requirements are more likely to succeed than a mentoring system without such structures. She believed that it is these structures that '*help those relationships stay glued together*'. While there are Institutional structures which advocate mentoring such as the HoD Guide (2008), which stipulates mentoring as one of the responsibilities of the HoD, and the Staff Development Policy (2010), which encourages the mentoring of colleagues, mentoring does not appear to feature consistently in the Institution. Where formal mentoring is a component of a specific programme with reporting deliverables, mentoring appears in most cases to be successful. Two such programmes are the Accelerated Development Programme and WASA, both of which require annual reporting.

In 1.2.5.3.1, I discussed the Accelerated Development Programme in terms of an institutional structure that provides support to some academics. I noted that the Programme aims to accelerate the academic careers of individuals from designated groups, one such group being women. A central component of the Accelerated Development Programme is mentoring, and each Accelerated Development lecturer is assigned a mentor by the HoD. As is often the case with formal mentoring programmes, the mentoring aspect is dyadic in nature in that junior staff members are matched with more experienced senior staff members. The mentors are based in the same department as the mentees. The programme co-ordinators and the Centre for Higher Education Research, Teaching and Learning (CHERTL) provide additional Institutional mentoring, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.

Another formal mentoring programme of a different nature was offered by WASA. From 2004, WASA provided informal mentoring, but in 2007, a structured mentoring programme was introduced for two years. In formalising the mentoring programme, the WASA committee decided to create a programme that was 'woman-specific, collaborative and mentee-driven' (WASA report, 2009, p. 13). Between 2007 and 2009 fourteen mentoring relationships were established (WASA report, 2010). Many of these relationships, but not all, involved women academics who mentored postgraduate students or junior lecturers and occurred independently of RU academic departments, i.e. there was cross-departmental mentoring.

While the mentors on the WASA mentoring programme received a modest financial compensation, one concern that arose out of the WASA mentoring programme was how to generate academic recognition for WASA mentors. Research claims that women determine career success based on subjective criteria such as job satisfaction rather than objective criteria such as remuneration (Allen, et al., 2004). One of the WASA mentors felt that *'recognition* [is], *to me, more important and productive than payment'* (WASA Report 2010, p.17). The majority of my questionnaire respondents (83%) felt that mentors receive personal satisfaction from mentoring but are not rewarded by the Institution. Lack of Institutional recognition for mentoring was mentioned by one of my questionnaire respondents, who felt that the mentoring and nurturing roles she performed were not recognised or rewarded by the Institution. One professor interviewed concurred when she said:

> *At the moment* [mentoring] *is not recognised much anywhere. So it's left to individuals to decide whether it is something they want to do. It does just get squashed out because it is not something that is automatically happening.* (Lindi)

The revised Personal Promotions Policy (2009) partially recognises mentoring. Leadership is one of the categories of performance and mentoring is cited as an example of evidence of leadership. However, one of my interviewees who had been on the Personal Promotions Committee for a few years suggested that involvement in mentoring is not really taken into account by the committee. She said:

> *The current systems don't recognise mentoring at all, or in a very, very, slight way. You are not going to get your promotion because you are a fantastic mentor. You're going to get your promotion because you've done a whole bunch of other things. The big problem with the promotions is that you have to be able to quantify it. You have to be able to prove that you are a jolly good mentor and spend lots of time mentoring junior staff. I think it needs to be a change in institutional culture and it is perhaps starting to happen with the formal mentoring.* (Carol)

In the new knowledge economy where value appears to be measured in quantifiable terms, it would seem that mentoring, which is difficult to evaluate, does not receive due recognition. However, the fact that mentoring is a core component of the formal Accelerated Development Programme indicates that mentoring is seen by the Institution as a means of increasing research productivity and improving career advancement of young academics. But the perceived lack of recognition and reward that

the Institution places on the service of mentoring suggests that mentoring is perceived to not be sufficiently valued by the Institution, although there is an indication that this might be changing. This suggests conflicting cultural items about the value of mentoring.

While most academics who provide mentoring may be motivated by the resultant personal satisfaction, lack of institutional recognition for mentoring could be a disincentive for mentors and potential mentors and could be a reason why almost half of my questionnaire respondents (45%) had provided minimal or no mentoring. Two of the main reasons that the questionnaire respondents cited for not providing mentoring were that the opportunity had not arisen (cited by 54%) and that no existing programmes or structures were in place to facilitate mentors to undertake mentoring (cited by 24%). This could suggest that the paucity of structures that facilitate mentoring may inhibit some women from providing mentoring.

Having looked at the structures and culture of mentoring, I now discuss agency in terms of how the agency of mentors impacts on the quality of mentoring they provide; and, how mentoring impacts on the agency of women academics.

5.6.4. Mentors and mentees: agency

Mentorship is understood to include a multi-dimensional relationship which can comprise dyadic relationships and/or peer support (see 2.4.2.4). Of the 63% of questionnaire participants who had received mentoring, 63% responded that they were mentored by their supervisors; 59% by departmental colleagues and 50% by family or friends. Mentoring by HoD or Dean was only received by 39% of the questionnaire respondents.

For many women their mentor is also their role model. Women academic role models have a powerful part to play in assisting women academics 'to become participants in the circuits of esteem, recognition and influence' (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004, p. 16). The literature on women and role models suggests that the relative shortage of women at the top levels of HE has a negative impact on women's access to role models in terms of their career development (Delamont & Atkinson, 2004; Girves, et al., 2005; Shackleton, et al., 2006; Poulos, 2011; HESA, 2011).

The data from my questionnaire revealed that 46% of the respondents indicated that they felt neither advantaged nor disadvantaged as a woman by access to role models and only 23% expressed feeling disadvantaged as a woman by lack of access to role models. This is a surprising finding given the relative shortage of women in the upper echelons of academia at RU particularly at the levels of Associate Professor, Professor and Dean, and in HEI in general. One respondent, who had encountered women role models, wrote that she felt *'advantaged as a woman in terms of the role models that I have available to me; when I think of academics that I particularly respect and admire, they are in fact primarily women'* (Participant S27).

Quinlan claims that 'women's relationships with other women play an important role in providing the emotional, psychological and social support that is so vital to survival in male-dominated workplaces' (1999, p. 36). This is supported by Ragins and Cotton (1999) who cite a range of research projects (Ragins, 1997; Tajfel, 1978; Tsui, Egan & O'Reilly, 1992) which found that in same gender mentoring or role modelling relationships, the partners are able to identify more with each other than in cross gender relationships. Based on this they concluded that the psycho-social functions of mentoring would be stronger in same gender mentoring and role modelling. In the analysis of my data there is a sense that for personal aspects, such as balancing work and family life, same gender role models are more beneficial for women.

One interviewee noted that although she had not had a woman role model in her department, there were women academics in the Institution that she had admired from a distance. In addition she was exposed to role models in other fora. For example, she attended a HERS- SA Academy where she had contact with senior academic women who shared their experiences of dealing with challenges that are particular to women academics. She said:

> [HERS-SA] *got women who were Deans and Professors and VCs to come and talk about exactly these kinds of intimate personal things. And I found that extremely useful and there are just not enough women in those positions who have dealt with those kinds of situations or if they have they are not willing to talk about it because that is somehow weakening it... we mustn't talk about family things at work, the two are separate. But they just can't be.* (Carol)

As the first woman Associate Professor in her Department, she noted that she is now seen as a role model and is now asked questions by other women about how she manages a work-life balance.

Access to 'like-self' role models was perceived by Lisa, a young black woman, to be an important issue for black women especially. She expressed feeling at a disadvantage by not having a role model to identify with in terms of gender *and* race. She said of the '*people who are in academia, I don't have a whole role model, I have people who probably do 70% of that, but without necessarily being able to model for me how I do that as a black woman*' (Lisa). This was echoed in the following questionnaire respondent's comment:

> *There are times where I wish for more black women whom I could relate to as mentors. There are basically two here at RU that I have that connection with. And I feel that there is a gap for me as there are areas of working out who I am as a black woman academic who subscribes to a lot of traditional black/Zulu values which seem to 'clash' or not 'fit in' with the 'normal' 'liberated /enlightened /informed' values that are celebrated here at RU and indeed elsewhere in the academic community* (Participant S3).

Given the historical racial imbalance of academics within HEIs, it will take time to ensure that there are sufficient black people, especially black women in senior positions.

Another black woman interviewed, mentioned a prolific researcher in her department and her two supervisors as her role models and then noted with surprise *'They're all male!'* Another participant also appears to have been surprised by the realisation that her role models were all men and wrote: *'I have not thought about this until now - the fact that most of my mentors (and role models) at a professional level are men'* (Participant S29). The element of surprise in these two responses indicates that the fact that men occupy senior positions is taken for granted.

I shall discuss gender issues around mentoring in more detail in section 5.6.6. First I will discuss the social capital of mentors and the personal powers and properties of mentors followed by a discussion of other forms of mentoring relationships.

5.6.4.1.   Social capital of the mentor

Siebert, et al. (2001) integrated research and theories on social capital, social networks and career success to form their own social capital theory of success (see 2.4.2.2). Their theory suggests that access to information and resources, and career sponsorship

positively affect career success. Siebert, et al. (2001) found that senior level mentors provided more career sponsorship than junior level mentors, and that an individual's career success benefitted mostly from career sponsorship.

My data are consistent with Siebert, et al.'s (2001) findings that senior academics provided more career sponsorship than junior academics. One questionnaire participant felt that she *'could have benefitted perhaps from more formal mentoring "higher up" in the hierarchy'* (Participant S1). Two interviewees felt that generally, a senior mentor who has established him/herself is more generous as a mentor. The Co-ordinator of the Accelerated Development Programme aimed at accelerating the development of novice lecturers, noted that in her experience:

> *The more senior the mentor has been, the better the relationship has been. I think the trickier ones have been when they are closer in age and the mentors themselves aren't firmly established academics.*

However, in one interviewee's experience, the seniority of her mentor did not make him a good mentor. Unlike the other Accelerated Development lecturers, she was expected to choose her mentor. She made her choice of mentor based on his seniority, however he proved not to have the requisite social capital in terms of research experience. Her second mentor, although younger, was a prolific researcher and was willing to share his knowledge with her. She said:

> *He wanted all his experiences as an academic to be passed onto me. And to teach me the good habits that he has, so it was completely different.* (Ann)

This suggests that while the seniority of the mentor plays a role in an effective mentoring relationship, the individual powers and properties of the mentor, such as personality, will also affect the social capital of the mentoring relationship.

5.6.4.2. Personal powers and properties

According to Archer (2000) agents have the power to effect change, to set up goals and achieve them (see 3.2.2). The personal powers and properties of both mentor and mentee will impact on the nature of the relationship. The importance of a good mentor-mentee match was emphasised by several of the interviewees who indicated that the personalities of both mentor and mentee played a large role in influencing the success of the mentoring relationship. Generosity, ego and self-esteem appear to be the personality

traits that can make a mentoring relationship succeed or fail. The Accelerated Development Programme Co-ordinator noted that successful mentoring: *'is so personality-driven. Some people just have a more generous, kinder, nicer* [mentor]... *than other people'.* This interviewee went on to say:

> *You have to have emotional energy to mentor someone, you have to get to know them, you have to care a little bit about them as people, for them to take their mentoring advice seriously and it just takes a lot of time and effort.*

All three Accelerated Development lecturers mentioned that personality matching played a part in the success of their mentoring. The following two comments demonstrate this:

> *Maybe it's my personality, I respond well to being mentored and I respond well to mentoring. My understanding of what* [mentoring] *means and what you do and what you expect, I understood what it is.* (Lisa)

> *It worked because I had a good mentor and a great department to work in; but also because it was a good match. He is mature and well established and yet he is humble and he was very transparent. I was very lucky to have so much wisdom readily available. He didn't hover and micro-manage me. He really gave me a lot of freedom and yet safety because I knew if things fell down, he'd be there to help me pick up the pieces and to know how to repair the broken fences.* (Sandra)

In a mentoring relationship that was unsuccessful, the Accelerated Development Programme Co-ordinator observed the following:

> *In one case, a young woman, her mentor was a man with a huge ego, and they just seemed to clash. He either was trying to micro-manage her and tell her what to do all the time or he was expecting her to be able to do things without really giving her any support.*

It would appear that receiving mentoring has the potential for enduring benefits beyond the initial mentoring relationship. Three of my interviewees who had experienced mentoring themselves, either formally or informally, expressed the desire to give something back. One Accelerated Development lecturer went on to be a WASA mentor which she experienced as a positive experience. Another interviewee, a professor who had received positive career enhancing mentoring also went on to become a WASA mentor. She said:

> *… [I] got involved in the WASA mentoring programme because I felt I really needed to give something back in terms of the mentoring that I had. I am always interested in offering advice or help when people need it. It's a bit difficult to do on an informal basis. When I have postgraduate students then I try and be more than just a supervisor commenting on their work but try to find out more about their lives and what kind of direction they want to take and so on. And when we have junior members in departments they sometimes come and ask for advice on how they should split their time and so on and I hope that it is helpful.* (Carol)

As mentees acquire knowledge, skills and experience they grow from being novices to being experienced, to the point where they are able to share their knowledge with a new-comer and become a mentor themselves. Northedge (2003) sees this sharing of knowledge between people of different levels as a key function of discourse. Established members of an academic discourse are positioned in central forums, where they are active and generative participants. Applying Northedge's (2003) idea to this context, a mentee will start off participating in a vicarious manner on the periphery with an unformulated understanding of the discourse while the mentor will participate as a more established member of the discourse. Gradually as the knowledge is shared, the mentee becomes more part of the discourse and is able to participate more to the point where he/she is able to share with others less experienced and knowledgeable (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Northedge, 2003).

This evolution of the role of a mentor is illustrated by several participants who referred to the mentoring relationship developing into a different relationship as their own experience and social capital grew. One professor acknowledged how difficult it can be to study in a department and then take an academic position in the same department. She said:

> *They always talk about growing your own timber but how do you go from being a junior lecturer who is struggling to do her Masters to being a colleague? The relationship changes quite dramatically. If the supervisor or mentor isn't willing to let the person grow and to adapt to that, it can be so destructive in the long run. Now it has changed. We are much more like friends, so we chat more as colleagues and sometimes he asks my advice on things and I ask his advice on things. He still is obviously the senior partner in the relationship, but we have developed much more into the collegial mode.* (Carol)

Lisa, who had been an Accelerated Development lecturer and then was employed in a permanent post as a Lecturer in the same department, had a similar experience of a mentoring relationship that developed into a more collegially supportive relationship. She said:

It's not necessarily that I'm always coming to the table with my problems or issues, it's also the other way round, where she will come and say "ok this is what's happening, I've no idea how to answer this email". And the same with other folk in the department, it's no longer being seen as the little sister. We all bring stuff to the table now. (Lisa)

However, Jean had a different experience. She felt her supervisor never allowed her the space to develop her own style as she grew in experience and confidence. She said:

Now I've done 10 or 12 conferences, I want to develop my own style and don't want to use her style. So that got rocky and we have a distant relationship now so she is no longer a mentor or even really a friend. (Jean)

While mentoring relationships can evolve and develop into a more equal collegial relationship as the social capital of the mentee develops, this is not always the case and may be dependent on the personal properties of the individual mentors and mentees.

5.6.4.3. Peer supportive relationships

In addition to, or in the absence of formal mentoring programmes, individuals and groups sometimes form peer mentoring relationships. Peer mentoring as defined by Mullen (2005, cited in Driscoll, et al., 2009) is a relationship where individuals in the group are both mentors and mentees with mutual inter-dependence; equal power balance and where both the professional and personal aspects of life are addressed. Driscoll, et al. (2009) suggest that peer mentoring is an alternative that may help women to forge their own identities. They claim that peer mentoring does not carry the possible negative undertones of a formal mentoring programme where an unbalanced power relationship may imply deficiency in the mentee.

Peer supportive relationships were noted by some participants in my study as successful forms of informal mentoring that have more balanced power dynamics than dyadic mentoring relationships. For example, one questionnaire respondent felt that *'forming supportive networks amongst same level colleagues is more successful in terms of mentoring'* (Participant S1). This view was also expressed by two other participants (one in a questionnaire response, the other in an interview) in the following way:

Although it is not strictly mentoring, I have observed that when we have two new staff members they often form quite a tight unit and help and support each other. They talk through their teaching responsibilities with each other and that

kind of thing. Certainly when I was new in the department I got a lot of support from talking things through with peers, and still do. (Participant S38)

It's not so much mentoring as it is a kind of partnership or collaboration. I arrived here just after somebody else arrived and we found each other as young teachers. We started to share with each other what we were thinking and we found a lot of common ground. So that was really productive and useful for the first 5 years of my teaching life that we negotiated it together and we did lots of sharing with each other ways of coping etc. (Jean)

Prior to the existence of WASA, one interviewee formed a women's group of fellow academics outside of RU which was *'constructed deliberately for the purpose of plugging a big hole'.* She noted that had WASA existed it may have served the same purpose. She said:

When I was doing my Masters' degree, a bunch of us who were studying Honours, Masters, all women, set up a support group for each other and that was a lot of discussing what we were doing and how we were doing it and how we were negotiating our way in the classes and through the research and in the Institution. I did that again, before I started embarking on a PhD. I set up another group and that group saw me through the process of making the decision to do the PHD. That really is more than just friendship or support, it often was that I need to bring to you this intellectual difficulty I am having and will you help me think it through. So it was a multi-layered thing and it was set up very deliberately in the beginning, all around thesis work and support. And again the kind of sense of who else does this for you unless you create your own group of like-minded people. You won't find it in the Institution. (Jean)

5.6.4.4. Supervisors as mentors

Another form of mentoring that emerged from my data and from the literature was through the supervisory relationship. Of the 63% of questionnaire respondents who responded to having received mentoring, most (63%) responded that the mentoring they received was from their supervisor/s. In addition, mentoring was mentioned by ten of the questionnaire respondents in open-ended questionnaire questions as being experienced as part of the supervision process while they were completing their PhD studies. The research on mentoring as part of the supervisory relationship suggests that mentoring at this level mostly occurs at the vocational level of support. For example, Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that supervisors as mentors provided vocational support in the way of sponsorship, protection, challenging assignments and exposure; but not psychosocial support which they suggested may be withheld due to conflict with the supervisory role. However, when supervisors did provide psycho-social mentoring to their PhD students this was found to be beneficial in terms of research self-efficacy and research productivity (Paglis, Green & Bauer, 2006). Paglis, et al. (2006) found that

supervisor mentoring contributed to higher research productivity on the part of mentees.

One interviewee, an Accelerated Development lecturer noted that having a mentor who was also the academic's supervisor

> *could be good and bad because it could blur the line between mentor and supervisor or it could strengthen it and I was lucky because it did strengthen it. He knew not only everything about my research but everything else I was doing, admin, teaching, etc.* (Ann)

The amount of experience that a supervisor has as a supervisor and a researcher can make a difference to the kind of mentoring she/he is able to provide. My data analysis indicates that when the social capital of the supervisor was insufficient to meet the mentoring needs of the mentee, this led to an unsatisfactory supervisory and mentoring relationship. In one instance, an inexperienced supervisor led to a lack of confidence in the mentee when she herself supervised students. The questionnaire respondent wrote: *'I was the first postgrad student of both my MSc and PhD supervisors and have never felt a very "secure" supervisor'* (Participant N8). Another questionnaire respondent expressed difficulty with doing her PhD late in life and having to take advice from a younger supervisor. She wrote: *'I found it difficult to be treated as young and immature and in need of advice at points where I didn't want advice'* (Participant S17). However, another questionnaire respondent experienced the social capital of her supervisor as enabling to her development and wrote: '[I] *was lucky enough to have a wonderful supervisor who also gave me invaluable advice about how to structure an academic career'* (Participant S5).

5.6.5. Gender issues

Research findings on the impact of gender on mentoring relationships seem to indicate that gender is a variable that could affect mentoring relationships (Quinlan, 1999; Ragins & Cotton, 1999; Allen, et al., 2004). Ragins and Cotton (1999) found that mentees who had a history of male mentors received significantly better compensation than mentees who had a history of female mentors, regardless of the gender of the mentee. They attributed this to men having more power in the organisation and more influence when putting their mentees forward for promotion (career sponsorship). Based on Ragins and Cotton's (1999) research, the assumption is that more male mentors would encourage their mentees to apply for promotion than female mentors.

The analysis of my data indicates that in line with the gender composition of the faculties[38], more women in the Natural Sciences had male mentors than in the Social Sciences[39] where the gender distribution of mentors was more equal. Because there are more male mentors in the Natural Sciences, the research would suggest that more women in the NS group stood a greater chance of being encouraged to apply for promotion than women in the SS group. This was the case with my participants. More of the NS group indicated they were encouraged to apply for promotion (46%) than the SS group (32%).

However, of the 52% (n=44) of women who had applied for promotion, overall there was a greater percentage of women from the SS group who had applied for promotion (57%, n=30) than from the NS group (42%, n=11), i.e. a greater proportion of the SS group applied for promotion of their own volition. This may suggest that perhaps more women in the SS group had higher levels of self-esteem which empowered them to put themselves forward for promotion. One of the reasons for this could be that there were a greater proportion of women mentors in the SS group which enabled higher levels of self-esteem in the SS group than in the NS group. Further research would be needed to establish whether this is in fact so.

Scandura and Ragins suggest that 'gender-related traits may play a larger role in predicting mentorship than biological sex' (1993, cited in Phillips & Imhoff, 1997, p. 47). Analysis of my data supports this. As I alluded to earlier, two questionnaire respondents believed that the characteristics of role models and mentors cannot be generalised in terms of gender but rather by stereotypical feminine or masculine attributes of the role model. They said:

> *I have had one male informal mentor and one female. They both demonstrate personality types and management styles typically associated with the other gender i.e. the male was warm and supportive, the female competitive.* (Participant S38)

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[38] Women comprise 48% of Social Science academics and 28% of Natural Science academics at the Institution (HR spread sheet/database, 2011).

[39] The SS group comprised an equal number of mentees who had had either mostly men mentors or mostly women mentors (41% of each) and 18% who had been mentored by both men and women at different times of their careers. In the NS group there was a vast difference, with 65% who had had mostly men mentors, 10% who had had mostly women mentors, and 25% who had had both men and women mentors during their careers.

> *I am not convinced that it is based on "sex" but on the WAY in which mentoring happens - for instance, some men may work with more "feminine principles" or "economies" of being able to listen, absorb, place ego aside whereas some women may behave with aggressive traits; demanding and dominating traits/energies in order to assert their power.* (Participant S40)

This feeling was shared by two of the Accelerated Development lecturers interviewed, both of whom had had male role models/mentors. They felt that gender was not the issue but rather that the conventional feminine or masculine attributes of the role model/mentor were important. Sandra said:

> *I think he is a fantastic role model, as an academic, as a person of integrity. The fact that he is a man doesn't take away from all those role model facets that I want to be like. And he values his family, so that nurturing side that I value is also there and I see how he makes that work with being an academic of excellence.* (Sandra)

A high response (78%) was received to the optional open-ended questionnaire question on whether academics believed, based on their experience, that men and women have different strengths as mentors. A greater percentage of the NS group believed that men and women have different strengths as mentors (NS - 65%; SS - 44%). About a quarter of the participants noted that they felt uncomfortable generalising about mentor strengths based on gender. As with role models, they felt it often had more to do with the individual mentor and their feminine or masculine attributes than with gender. As one Accelerated Development lecturer said *'I don't feel that I have missed out because* [my mentor] *is a man and not a woman and there are things he doesn't understand, because he is an incredibly empathetic person'* (Sandra). However, there were clear perceptions, even from those who stated feeling uncomfortable with this question, of certain differences between women and men mentors which I shall now discuss.

In the open-ended questionnaire responses, emotional support was the dominant discourse that described the strengths of women mentors. Women were perceived as being able to relate to, identify with and understand constraints that women face, mainly; multiple demands, non-linear career paths, gender-role conflicts and guilt associated with conflicts over work and family life balance. One participant said *'women somehow understand the personal battles (guilt) associated with careers'* (Participant N7).

Women mentors were perceived by some questionnaire respondents as being better able to focus both on personal and professional development. More 'feminine' characteristics associated with women mentors such as compassion, empathy, sensitivity, intuition, patience and nurturing were mentioned by my research participants. Women mentors were also perceived by the questionnaire respondents as being more generous with their time, being good communicators and good listeners, less judgemental and aware of the need for positive reinforcement and for building self-esteem.

A couple of participants highlighted what they perceived to be the negative side to women mentors, namely that women tended to be more emotional and older women could be more controlling, competitive, unaccommodating, and expecting compliance rather than seeking to develop an equal relationship. One participant wrote:

> *I have experienced some negative aspects of women mentors -particularly the older women academics who are often harder on young women academics and incredibly competitive rather than supportive. I have also found that many women in the role of mentors act as controllers, and battle to recognise diversity of wishes, desires or experiences, and expect compliance rather than equality.* (Participant S11)

While women were perceived as more emotional, the dominant discourse described men as being less emotional. One questionnaire respondent described male mentors as not letting *'emotions get in the way of the facts'* (Participant S13). Male mentors were described by some of the questionnaire respondents as more goal-orientated *'towards the big picture', 'pushier', 'better connected', 'more career focussed',* as having *'clarity and access to power',* being able to deal with issues *'head-on'* and being able to teach the mentee to be more single-minded in approaches to projects. They were perceived as *'more likely to stretch the person professionally'* by advocating research productivity above anything else, having a *'can-do attitude',* being competitive, *'very strategic'* and focussed, with an *'outward vision'.* They were perceived as being good time managers who do not feel guilty about pursuing their goals. One respondent described a male mentor as having *'a good knowledge of the academic system for career progression* […] and] *know*[ing] *how the rules work, and how to play by them'* (Participant S27).

Men were seen as less likely to manipulate people emotionally and were seen as *'less pedantic and petty'* (Participant S19). They were seen as *'more cold and clinical'* (Participant S36), and able to separate work from friendship by not getting *'too close'* and by being more *'hands off'.* Male mentors were perceived as having a sense of self-

esteem, being self-assured and confident in their own abilities. They appeared to be '*less threatened by women and therefore more inclusive and less competitive*' with their mentees (Participant N2).

Ragins and Cottons (1999) propose that women mentees with male mentors may view their male mentor in parental terms to avoid sexual undertones. One questionnaire respondent noted the possible sexual implications in cross gender mentoring and/or supervisory relationships. She felt that the power imbalance in the emergence of personal relationships between more senior male mentors or supervisors and more junior female mentees or students is a '*dangerous landscape for both parties to navigate*' (Participant N8). This could explain why the discourse that many of my questionnaire respondents used to identify the strengths of their male mentors was through paternal terms such as '*uncle*', '*fatherly*', being '*in more powerful gatekeeping positions*', having '*access to power*' and '*traditionally being the leaders within academia*'.

5.6.6. Summary: mentors

Overall mentors and role-models were perceived to support career development. While the social capital of the mentor was found to be important much depends on the personal powers and properties, such as the personality-match, of the agents involved. Successful mentoring relationships were those that allowed the mentee to develop her own social capital and become an established member of the academic discourse. Mentoring has potentially enduring benefits beyond the initial mentoring relationship with some mentees indicating the desire to in turn become mentors.

Gender-related attributes were seen as impacting on the type of mentoring received. Masculine attributes of mentors included good self-esteem, being less emotional, and focusing on career advancement and the rules of the academic game. Feminine attributes of mentors were seen as able to relate to and understand the constraints that women face, and to be nurturing and understanding of the need to build self-esteem in their mentees. Women role models were found to be more beneficial for mentees with family responsibilities where the challenges that women face were understood and shared.

5.7. Conclusion

In this chapter I attempted to establish the support structures that women experience in their research careers and the ways in which mentoring and supportive relationships have influenced women's agency to develop their research careers.

Institutional programmes that provide time-relief or reduced teaching loads were experienced as enabling as they address dominant constraints to producing research – available time and heavy teaching loads. The role of the HoD emerged from my data as an influential structure. HoDs can contribute positively to the career advancement and research careers of women academics but only when certain structural, cultural and agential conditions exist. Currently, the structure and culture of the role of the HoD, affected by changing demands in HE, does not appear to present enabling conditions for the HoD to exercise his/her agency as a mentor, promoter of careers, or as a role model as a researcher.

While women do not perceive themselves as significantly disadvantaged by their access to role-models, my interpretation is that many of the role models that women have access to are not 'like-self' role models which is exacerbated by a white male dominated hegemony. The role models may therefore not have the feminine attributes that provide nurturing or understand the need to build self-esteem in their mentees. Self-esteem underpins many of the factors that affect research productivity and putting oneself forward for promotion. Male role models are less likely to understand family responsibilities from a woman's perspective and therefore less able to provide advice about balancing work and family-life. The social capital of the mentor/role model as well as the personal properties and powers of both mentor and mentee attributes to the agency of the mentor in fulfilling the mentor role, and the agency of the mentee in benefitting from being mentored.

Mostly the women academics believed that mentoring impacted on them more as researchers than as teachers. It emerged that mentoring facilitates professional capabilities, developing a professional network structure, access to information, and improves levels of self-esteem, the lack of which is seen as a significant constraint for some women. Improved self-esteem enables women to exercise their personal powers and properties in order to promote themselves in the research arena and within their Institutions. While there is a discourse of mentoring in Institutional policies and

documents, it is not a dominant discourse that permeates the culture of the Institution. Mentoring is not experienced as being rewarded or much recognised by the Institution. This may result in fewer people being willing to mentor due to limited structures that facilitate and recognise mentoring.

In the final chapter, I draw conclusions from the findings of this research. I discuss the strengths and limitations of the study and suggest possibilities for future research.

CHAPTER SIX

Conclusions and reflections

6.1. Introduction

In this final chapter, I reflect on the main findings of this research, particularly the constraining role that gender inequity, social capital and self-esteem play in women's place in higher education. I discuss how mentoring and support structures are enabling mechanisms that can help women to overcome obstacles in developing a research career. Then looking forward to what lies ahead in terms of the future for women in higher education in South Africa, I suggest that policies, practices and discourses that engender mentoring are required to enable women to overcome constraints to academic career advancement. Thereafter the strengths and limitations of this study are discussed. Finally I mention some possibilities for further research.

6.2. Findings

Using the depth ontology of critical realism, I analysed women academics' experiences in their research careers at the layer of the empirical. At the layer of the actual, I uncovered events that make things happen and affect the way things are. Delving deeper still to the layer of the real, issues of gender inequity, self-esteem and social capital were revealed to be the major causal powers that affect how women perform in the research arena. Mentoring was revealed to be a generative mechanism capable of having a favourable impact on women academics' research careers because it can facilitate and enable women to overcome obstacles to research productivity and career advancement. The social realist framework facilitated the investigation of the theoretical strata of structure, culture and agency. This enabled me to understand the interplay between the different strata and the role that they play in the research careers of women academics in the social world.

Although the status of women in the workplace has progressed in the last fifty years, the primary factors constraining women's career development and in particular their research career development still appear to be related to gender inequity. At a societal level, social, cultural and business practices are structured in ways that work for men

better than for women. Slaughter (2012) claims that it is only in a society where there is an equal balance in leadership that women's needs will be equally considered.

One practice that appears to favour men is the increased emphasis on research in HE, which has affected the way academic careers are recognised and rewarded. Research is a domain that men generally appear to succeed in, more so than women, as the literature and my data indicate. Perceived masculine attributes include competitiveness, being goal orientated and understanding the rules of the game. These masculine attributes are well suited to a competitive research environment, more so than feminine attributes related to nurturing. Simply put, this differentiation in gender-based attributes can be ascribed at least in part to how men and women have traditionally been socialised, with men as the breadwinners and women as the nurturers.

The career pressures resulting from the emphasis on research in HE are at odds with the overall demands on women. For all academics, balancing work life and home life is difficult, but it is arguably more difficult for women who tend to be the primary caregivers. My research also indicates that women often value family responsibilities over work responsibilities, a preferential hierarchy that conflicts with the culture of the Institution. The result is that women may feel inadequate or guilty because of how they choose to prioritise their responsibilities, and this sense of inadequacy may be one cause for their generally lower levels of self-esteem. Low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy will in turn affect women's career advancement.

Gender inequity issues are also apparent in male-dominated leadership and decision-making spaces in the Institution, and this may inhibit the social and cultural participation of women. Women who generally perceive themselves (and are perceived) to have lower self-esteem than men may not experience spaces or contexts dominated by men as supportive communities of practice. This may impede their development of self-esteem and restrain them from making their voices heard. On the other hand, environments where women are well represented appear to be experienced as supportive communities of practice. This then allows for the development of self-esteem in those discourses and spaces. Self-esteem is necessary for women to put themselves forward for promotion (at RU) and to promote themselves within the research environment.

Although my research did not interrogate the complex issue of race *and* gender, the literature suggests that many of the constraints experienced by women academics are

exacerbated for black women academics (Mabokela & Magubane, 2004). Black South African women also face the problems of 'institutional culture and practice, academic marginalisation and professional identity' as well as having to confront both gender *and* racial stereotying (Mobokela & Mina, 2004, p. 112).

Role models and mentors with feminine attributes tend to fulfil the psycho-social functions of mentoring by providing acceptance, confidence, counselling, friendship, and role-modelling. Such role models and mentors also appear to be more aware of the need to build self-esteem in women, as well as being able to offer advice on how to balance the demands of work and family life responsibilities. Role models and mentors with masculine attributes attend more to the vocational functions of mentoring in the way of sponsorship, coaching, protection, exposure and providing challenging assignments (Kram & Isabella, 1985). The shortage of female role models and mentors thus means that insufficient attention is paid to building the self-esteem of women academics.

Another primary issue that affects women's performance in the field of research is the accumulation of social capital. Accessing social capital early in one's career appears to be easier for men. Many women are more tied down to childbearing and rearing during the early stages of their careers and are therefore less able to access networks that will grow their social capital, for example, through international conference attendance. Restricted access to networks early in a career retards the cumulative effects of social capital and makes women less visible in the field of research. Reduced visibility affects the advisory participation of women and has a negative impact on their peer review evaluations, which in turn jeopardises funding opportunities and career advancement.

Mentoring and supportive structures, such as communities of practice, potentially improve levels of self-esteem and assimilate women into the academic and research discourses of their disciplines. My data indicates that low self-esteem is the primary inhibitor for many women's relative underperformance in the research arena and within the Institution. Improved self-esteem enables women to use their personal powers and properties in order to develop their professional capabilities, their professional network structure, their access to information and their advisory capabilities and participation. These areas are perceived to have the strongest impact on women's research productivity. For this reason, mentoring significantly affects women's research careers *when it occurs.* However, there are only a few structures within the Institution that

focus on mentoring or are experienced as supportive structures to research productivity. In addition, there does not appear to be a dominant discourse of mentoring within the Institution. Few mentoring structures and lack of a mentoring culture will inhibit conditions for mentoring to occur, in particular at the HoD level.

Given the inhibiting factors of gender inequities within the Institution, and the evidence that supportive communities of practice facilitate the development of self-esteem for women, I was surprised that WASA, being the one initiative aimed specifically at supporting women academics, received relatively little prominence in my data. Although some women participants (38%) acknowledged the benefits of a structure that promoted women's issues, it appears that few were active members. My interpretation is that this is because many women do not want to set themselves apart or show signs of weakness or alienate themselves from those in positions of power by constructing transgressive identities that challenge the status quo (Walker, 1998).

6.3. Looking ahead

HE nationally is under pressure to compete globally within the research domain and this in turn places pressure on the research profile of RU. The HE Quality Committee recommends that RU implements strategies that increase research outputs and changes the demographic profile of those producing research outputs (Quality Improvement Plan, 2009). While we can argue about the repercussions of prioritising research over teaching, it is unlikely that this pressure for research productivity will change in the short term. If women at RU are to compete in the academic environment, they will be expected to increase their research productivity. To create an enabling environment for this to happen, RU will need to give greater consideration to women's needs in institutional policies *and* in practice.

In general, one of the main needs of women is to improve their levels of self-esteem. Since gender inequity in places of decision making within the Institution is a factor in the low self-esteem of women, RU policies that aim to change gender demographics in leadership positions will be one way to contribute to improved levels of self-esteem in women. Policies such as a Gender Policy and a Mentoring Programme for all new academic staff are to be devised in the coming years (Employment Equity Plan, 2010). In addition, the process for appointing HoDs is under review, and the intention is to

speed up change within the current HoD demographic profile which may have a ripple effect on gender inequity in the Institution.

The data indicate that mentoring is one way to develop levels of self-esteem in women, particularly mentoring by mentors with feminine attributes. Changing the gender demographic profile in leadership positions at RU will provide more women who could potentially be mentors and more role-models that women can identify with. Policies and practices that encourage mentoring are needed at a structural level, and discourses that support and value mentoring are needed at the cultural level, in order for mentoring to become a normalised process (or a norm) within academia. These would create enabling conditions for women to exercise more agency. There is the possibility that should this occur, mentoring will have a snowball effect. Some of the women in my study who were mentored indicated the desire to give something back by becoming mentors themselves.

It seems that a mentoring discourse is slowly emerging. The Senior Scholar's Emerging Researcher Programme was launched by the RU Research Office in 2011. The programme employs senior scholars to mentor, share knowledge and develop emerging researchers as one way to deal with research productivity challenges at RU. In addition, as mentioned in 1.2.5.3.1, the Institution has provided internal funding for the Accelerated Development Programme. This indicates recognition for and acknowledgement of the success of the Accelerated Development Programme that to date has been externally funded. However, the Accelerated Development Programme now tends to appoint black women and black men only. While there is a strong transformational need for racial equity, there is the potential that the pursuit of racial equity may be prioritised above gender equity rather than treated in conjunction with it (Shackleton, et al., 2006).

6.4. The strengths and limitations of this study

This research has ventured into the complex territory of gender and gender differences. I acknowledge that not all women have attributes that are commonly seen as feminine, nor do all men have masculine attributes. Equally while some challenges have been recorded as more prevalent to women, I am cognisant that some men take on roles that are commonly ascribed to women and experience similar challenges as those described by women.

A limitation of this research is thus that it has only dealt with women academics. Had time and resources allowed, the research would have been more comprehensive if it had included men academics. As it was, only one man's comments were included, and these emanated from personal communications. Likewise the research would have been enriched had it dealt with racial inequities as well as gender inequities. However for practical purposes, the scope of this masters' study was limited to women researchers. This opens up possibilities for a much deeper discussion on race and gender in future research.

A further limitation of this research with regard to generalisability may be that it was conducted at the smallest SA Institution situated within a small city. I believe that the logistics of living and working in a small city may reduce or mask some of the challenges that academics in larger centres may experience, particularly in terms of family responsibilities. Even so, I believe that RU can be seen as a microcosm of HE nationally, as the literature indicates that many of the challenges that emerged in my data are experienced more broadly within HE.

I believe the strength of this study is that it is relevant and addresses current concerns and pressures regarding equity and research productivity within HE nationally and internationally. This research may also inform impending policies concerning gender and mentoring at RU and other HEIs in SA. With the growing discourse on mentoring within RU and nationally, my research may have relevance for other HEIs and serve as a platform for further research.

6.5. Possibilities for further research

The relatively rapid rate of change in education in SA has ramifications and consequences in the HE sector. This raises possibilities for further research beyond the scope of my Master's study. Some areas that I have identified for further research are:

- The effect that the focus on research productivity within HEIs in SA has on teaching and learning. If academics who prefer the teaching and learning aspects of their academic role are forced to focus more on research in order to advance academically, what will the consequences be for teaching and learning, and for community engagement? A view of success that is too limited may devalue other equally important facets of education.

- The role of the HoD in the new knowledge economy of HE and the consequences that the multi-dimensional and increasing demands on HoDs have on the HoD, the department and the institution.

- A comparative study of the mentoring and support requirements of different genders, and different racial groups.

- Interrogation of the fairness in the way research subsidy units are allocated within disciplines: a research output (either publication or PG graduation) in the Social Sciences brings in the same subsidy as a research output in the Natural Sciences even though it may take longer and be more onerous to produce.

- Academic leave and how it facilitates research productivity. My research did not delve into the area of sabbatical or academic leave. It would be interesting to explore whether and how periods of leave enable academics to increase their research productivity.

The findings of my research illustrate the need to delve beneath the empirical and the actual to uncover the causal mechanisms at the level of the real that make things happen. According to Bhaskar and Lawson (1998), reality is:

> constituted not only by experiences and the course of actual events, but also by structures, powers, mechanisms and tendencies – by aspects of reality that underpin, generate or facilitate the actual phenomena that we may (or may not) experience. (p. 5)

The social realist framework ensures that all aspects of the social world – structure, culture and agency – are examined and that interplay among these aspects is explored.

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APPENDICES

<u>Appendix A</u> - List of Institutional documents

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Academic Staff Development in Humanities and Social Science Protocol, 2008.

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation WASA Report, 2009 & 2010.

Claude Leon Foundation Merit Award for Lecturers Protocol, 2010.

Digests of Statistics, 2006-2011.

Employment Equity plan, 2010.

Equity Policy, 2004.

HoD Forum Minutes, 2011.

HoD Guide, 2008.

HoD Task Team recommendations. 2009.

Institutional Imbizo Record, 2011.

Kresge Accelerated Development Programme Employment Procedures, 2009.

Personal Promotions Policy, 2005.

Personal Promotions Policy, 2009.

Quality Improvement Plan, 2009.

Travel and Subsistence Guidelines, 2011.

Staff Development Policy, 2010.

Appendix B – Interview questions to guide the interviews

1. Emerging researchers

In what ways do the women academics/mentees experience existing structures and cultures?	How did you experience the Accelerated Development programme?
	What are the difficulties that new lecturers experience, as you see them?
	How does this programme help with these difficulties?
	Did your department support you as an Accelerated Development lecturer? Were you mentored by others in the department?
	Do you think the programme was successful for you, and what made it so? If not, why not?
What are the mentoring experiences?	Please can you tell me about the mentoring you received on a <u>personal level</u> (promoting self-confidence, counselling, role modelling, friendship);
	Please can you tell me about your mentoring you received on a <u>professional level</u> (sponsorship, coaching, providing challenging tasks, networking & exposure)
	Have you had other mentoring experiences outside of the Accelerated Development programme, for instance, were you involved in WASA mentoring? Can you tell me a bit about that?
How has mentoring enabled/constrained career development?	How do you think the mentoring you received has helped your career development?
	What academic areas have been most positively affected by the mentoring you received: teaching, research or community engagement?
	Have there been any negative mentoring experiences?
	Is there anything else you would like to add that you think would be pertinent to my research?

2. <u>Established researchers</u>

In what ways do the women academics/mentees experience existing structures and cultures?	Can you tell me a bit about your career development, what were your early experiences? How did you experience the induction into academia- from being a student to being an academic?
	What kind of support did you receive from your colleagues, your department supportive, and the institution?
	(where applicable) When you became Deputy Dean/Acting HoD, how did you know what was required of you?
	(where applicable) Can you tell me about the Personal Promotions process and how it has changed over the years you have been on the committee?
How do women understand career success?	Did you have a clear path when you started out, did you know where you were going and what was required to get there?
	What kind of experiences have you had around promotion?
What are the mentoring experiences?	Can you tell me about the mentoring you have received on <u>a personal</u> level, how it affected your self-confidence, whether you received counselling, did you have a role model, did you have support from friends?
	Can you tell me about the mentoring you have received on a on <u>a professional</u> level; did you have a sponsor –someone who promoted you, and acted as a referee; did you receive training and coaching; did you have someone who provided challenging tasks that stretched you; and someone who exposed you to a network?
	Do you still have a mentor; and a role model?
	Do you feel you are a mentor to others? How has this been affected by the mentoring you received?
How has mentoring enabled/constrained career development	How would you say mentoring facilitated your career development?
	Which of your academic areas have been most positively affected by mentoring: teaching, research or community engagement?
	Have you had any negative mentoring experiences? What has the impact of this been?
	Is there anything else you would like to add that you think would be pertinent to my research?

Appendix C - Questionnaire

RUconnected

RHODES UNIVERSITY
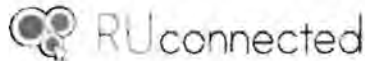
RUconnected ► Noëlle's site ► Questionnaires ► Women's Career Development - print format
► Previewing Questionnaire

View   All responses (3)   Advanced settings   Questions   Preview

WOMEN'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.
Your honest answers will contribute to this research into
women's career development. Please include as much
information as you think necessary. All this information will be
treated confidentially. Please note that by participating in this
survey you are indicating your consent. Your participation is
voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any point in the
process.

Please print a hardcopy of this document and send it to: Noëlle Obers, Research
Office, Rhodes University.

There are two main sections to this questionnaire. Broadly, section 1 (questions 1-
19) deals with the concept of 'career success' and section 2 (questions 20 – 36)
deals with mentoring. The final section discusses the selection of candidates for
interview purposes and allows for any additional comments you feel may be
relevant to my research.

1

SECTION 1 – CAREER SUCCESS

The term 'career success' means different things to different people and
organisations. In this question I am interested in establishing what 'career
success' means to you personally? Please give a brief description of what it
means to you to be successful in your career. The second question will address
how you think the institution (Rhodes) views 'career success'.

2 Give a brief description of how you perceive a 'successful academic' to be
defined from the Institution's point of view.

3 Do you feel you are **successful** in terms of how you view 'career success' and of how you think the institution views 'career success'?

	yes	no	uncertain
In your view of success	○	○	○
In the institution's view of success	○	○	○

4 Do you think your **colleagues think of you** as successful in the following areas?

	yes, all do	yes, some do	a few do	no, none do	uncertain	N/A
As a teacher	○	○	○	○	○	○
As a researcher	○	○	○	○	○	○
As an administrator	○	○	○	○	○	○
As a student (if applicable)	○	○	○	○	○	○

5 Are you **satisfied** with where you are at this stage of your career? (optional)

○ yes   ○ no   ○ uncertain, please elaborate [   ] ⊙
No answer

6 Have you ever **applied for promotion** in the academic arena, at Rhodes or a previous institution?

○ YES. If you select 'YES' please answer questions 7 - 9
○ NO. If you select 'NO' please answer question 10

7 If YES, did you do so of your own volition, or were you encouraged to do so?

○ own volition   ○ encouraged to do so   ○ both   ⊙ No answer

8 If you were encouraged to do so, who encouraged you? (You may tick more than one).

☐ Colleague/s in the department
☐ Colleague/s from another department
☐ Mentor/s (formal or informal)
☐ HoD or Dean
☐ Friend or family member/s

9 If you have applied for **promotion** in the academic arena, please indicate the **outcome/s** where applicable.

Unsuccessful	Successful on application	Successful on appeal of outcome	Other	N/A
○	○	○	○	⊙

junior lecturer to lecturer					
lecturer to senior lecturer	○	○	○	○	●
senior lecturer to associate professor	○	○	○	○	●
associate professor to professor	○	○	○	○	●

10 If you have never applied for promotion, please select the reason/s that best describe why not (select as many as you think apply).

- ☐ I am satisfied with my current status
- ☐ I have insufficient experience to seek promotion
- ☐ I have not been encouraged to apply by my department
- ☐ I do not have the required qualification to be promoted
- ☐ I do not feel confident enough to apply
- ☐ My research record is not strong enough
- ☐ I do not have a permanent post
- ☐ other (please state) [ ]

11 Do you consider yourself more of a teacher or more of a researcher?

- ○ Teacher
- ○ Researcher
- ○ both equally
- ○ other (please state) [ ]

12 Please select whether you feel that the following factors have on average **supported** or **constrained** your career development.

	supported	constrained	both	neither	N/A
Family responsibilities	○	○	○	○	○
Personal support structure (family and/or friends)	○	○	○	○	○
Institution (Rhodes)	○	○	○	○	○
Department	○	○	○	○	○
Access to professional network structure (fellow scholars, collaborators, etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Access to alternative networks (such as WASA)	○	○	○	○	○
Access to role models	○	○	○	○	○
Access to mentors (formal or informal)	○	○	○	○	○
Access to information (conferences, publications etc.)	○	○	○	○	○
Conference attendance	○	○	○	○	○
Amount of teaching commitments	○	○	○	○	○

Conflict with traditional gender roles (e.g. career vs. parenthood)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Personal capabilities (IT and professional skills, time management,conflict management, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Self-esteem (such as confidence, assertiveness, self-promotion)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Advisory participation (peer reviewing, sitting on advisory boards, editing journals, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

13 Would you like to elaborate on or explain your choices in question 12?

·14 Please state whether you feel you are at an advantage or disadvantage as a woman academic as opposed to your male colleagues, in terms of the following factors.

	Advantage	Disadvantage	Both	Neither	N/A
Family responsibilities	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Personal support structure (family and/or friends)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Support of Institution (Rhodes)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Support of department	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Access to professional network structure (fellow scholars,collaborators, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Access to alternative networks (such as WASA)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Access to role models	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Access to mentors (formal or informal)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Access to information (conferences, publications etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Conference attendance	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Amount of teaching commitments	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Conflict with traditional gender roles (e.g. career vs. parenthood)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Personal capabilities (IT and professional skills, time management, conflict management, etc)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Self esteem (such as confidence, assertiveness, self-promotion)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
Advisory participation (peer reviewing, sitting on advisory boards, editing journals, etc.)	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

15   Would you like to elaborate on or explain your choices in question 14?

·16   How would you describe your 'career path'? Please choose one.
(Where *linear* means you have progressed steadily up the 'academic ladder' and *staggered* means you moved around and made changes before settling on your chosen position/path).

- Linear and uninterrupted
- Linear and interrupted
- Staggered and interrupted
- Staggered and uninterrupted

·17   I have devised the following categories with these provisional titles, adopting the institution's perspective of **different research career stages** using my own terms as I am interested in interviewing women academics from different career stages. Please select **the description that best describes you as a researcher**, or create a description that you feel is more representative or suitable.

*Output*s refer to research measured by traditional textual outputs (journals and books), creative outputs other than journals and books and graduating Masters and Doctoral students

Planning stage – you have yet to produce outputs at or beyond the Master's level, or supervise postgraduate students

Emerging – you have begun or completed your PhD within the last 5 years, started supervision of PG students or you have begun to produce creative outputs in the last 5 years
Mid career and research dormant – You focus more on teaching and do not produce much research or supervision at this stage
Mid career and research sporadic – You produce outputs sporadically
Mid career and research active– You are active and produce outputs regularly
Established researcher - You have regularly produced at least one research output per year for the past ten years

- Planning stage
- Emerging
- Mid career and research dormant
- Mid career and research sporadic
- Mid career and research active
- Established
- More suitable category (please specify and describe) [_____]

18

In this question, I would like to know how the categories listed below have impacted on the research productivity aspects of your career. For each category (row), please choose one answer.

	Positive impact	Negative impact	both positive and negative	No impact	N/A
Your career advancement (promotion, respect of colleagues and prestige)	○	○	○	○	●
Your professional capabilities (academic writing, presentation skills, editing etc.),	○	○	○	○	●
Your personal administrative capabilities (such as IT skills, time management, conflict management)	○	○	○	○	●
Your advisory capacity (such as peer reviewing, sitting on advisory boards, editing journals)	○	○	○	○	●
Your access to information (publications, conferences etc.)	○	○	○	○	●
The completion of your postgraduate degree (if applicable)	○	○	○	○	●
Your supervision of postgraduate students	○	○	○	○	●
The professional network structure you have in place (such as fellow scholars, role models, mentors, critical readers, collaborators)	○	○	○	○	●
Your professional self- esteem (such as your confidence and assertiveness or lack of, ability to make your voice heard and to put yourself forward/self-promotion)	○	○	○	○	●

19 Please include any other areas you think have impacted on your research productivity that may have been omitted from the list above, or add any comments about your responses to the above question here.

SECTION 2 – MENTORING

Traditionally mentoring has been understood as the personal and professional development of a less experienced individual by a more senior or more experienced person/s in the same or related field. In this context I would like to find out your understanding and experiences of the role and value of mentoring.

·20

Please tick the categories in the list below that correspond with your understanding of the role of mentoring in professional and personal development.

- ☐ A. Sponsorship (of mentee's promotion, acting as referee to mentee, etc.)
- ☐ B. Coaching/training the mentee in teaching and research areas
- ☐ C. Protection of mentee from constraining or adverse pressures
- ☐ D. Providing challenging tasks and assignments that stretch the mentee
- ☐ E. Networking and exposure (increasing mentee's exposure and visibility)
- ☐ F. Supervision of postgraduate students
- ☐ G. Promoting self-confidence & professional identity
- ☐ H. Counselling (whether personal or professional)
- ☐ I. Friendship
- ☐ J. Role modelling
- ☐ other (please state) [   ]

21

If your interpretation of mentoring differs from or is wider than the above list, please elaborate here.

·22

Of all the categories in question 20, please list in order of priority, the top three you think are the most beneficial in terms of an academic's research career development.
Most beneficial

·23

Second most beneficial

·24

Third most beneficial

·25

Please indicate if you have participated in mentoring in terms of research career development as a mentor or mentee, in a formal or informal capacity.

	As mentor	As mentee	Both as mentor and mentee	No participation
Formally (i.e. mentorship programme)	○	○	○	○
Informally	○	○	○	○

Questions 26 - 30 relate to **mentoring received**. If you have not received any mentoring, please proceed to question 31.

26 If you have **received mentoring**, in what ways has mentoring (formal or informal) been helpful to you? Please mark as many as are applicable.

	Formal mentoring	Informal mentoring	both formal and informal	N/A
As a teacher	○	○	○	●
As a supervisor of students	○	○	○	●
As a researcher	○	○	○	●
As a student	○	○	○	●

27 This question relates to **the impact of mentoring** in professional development (sponsorship, coaching, protection, challenging tasks, networking and supervision) and personal development (confidence, counselling, friendship and role modelling). Please bear in mind your responses in question 20.
Please **rate the impact that the mentoring you received** during your academic career had on you in the following areas:

	Positive impact	Negative impact	Both positive and negative	No impact	N/A
Career advancement (promotion, respect of colleagues and prestige)	○	○	○	○	●
Professional capabilities (academic writing, presentation skills, editing etc.)	○	○	○	○	●
Personal administrative capabilities (such as IT skills, time management, conflict management)	○	○	○	○	●
Advisory capacity (such as peer reviewing, sitting on advisory boards, editing journals)	○	○	○	○	●
Access to information (publications, conferences etc.)	○	○	○	○	●
Completion of postgraduate degree	○	○	○	○	●
Supervision of postgraduate students	○	○	○	○	●
Developing a professional network structure (such as fellow scholars, role models, mentors, critical readers, collaborators)	○	○	○	○	●
Self- esteem (such as confidence, assertiveness, making your voice heard, putting yourself forward/self-promotion)	○	○	○	○	●

28 Would you like to elaborate on or explain your choices above?

29 Please rate the mentoring you have received from those listed below.

	Very good	Good	Adequate	None	N/A
Colleague/s in your department	○	○	○	○	●
Colleague/s in other departments	○	○	○	○	●
HoD or Dean	○	○	○	○	●
Friend or family member	○	○	○	○	●
Supervisor	○	○	○	○	●

30 If you have received mentoring, have your mentors on average been mostly women or mostly men ?

○ mostly women   ○ mostly men   ○ both men and women equally   ● No answer

The next six questions relate to the **mentor and mentorship**. Please answer these questions even if you feel you have not provided mentorship.

31 If you feel you have **not provided mentoring** or you provided minimal mentoring, please indicate why this may be the case? (tick as many as appropriate).

☐ I do not feel sufficiently qualified
☐ I have not felt motivated to do so
☐ I have too many other demands on my time
☐ The opportunity has not arisen
☐ There are no incentives to do so
☐ No existing programmes or structures are in place which facilitate mentors to undertake mentoring
☐ Other (please state) [   ]

32 Do you feel mentors are rewarded for time spent mentoring others?

	YES	NO	UNCERTAIN
Personally (personal satisfaction)	○	○	○
Professionally (by the institution)	○	○	○
Professionally (beyond the institution)	○	○	○

33 Do you feel you are a role model for other academic women at the institution?

○ YES   ○ NO   ○ UNCERTAIN

34 Do you believe, based on your experiences, that men and women have different strengths as mentors?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ uncertain ◉ No answer

If 'yes' please answer the following two questions.

35 Based on your experiences, what do you believe to be the strengths of women mentors generally?

36 Based on your experiences, what do you believe to be the strengths of male mentors generally?

Thank you for your time, patience and contribution to my research up to this point.
The questionnaire is almost complete.

SECTION 3

For my research, I need to interview a select number of academic women at Rhodes, in order to probe the issues around women's career development. I anticipate interviewing about 14 women academics from a range of academic stages, for about one hour each. Depending on the data collected, a follow up interview or email may be required.

37 Would you consider contributing further to this research by being available for an interview about your professional career development, if you are selected?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ UNCERTAIN

38 As I have only just begun to research this area, I may have missed some crucial aspects. Please include any comments related to your research career development, or mentoring relationships that you feel would be relevant to my research.

·39 Name

·40 Department

·41 Current position (e.g. junior lecturer)

Once again, I would like to express my gratitude for the time you have devoted to the completion of this questionnaire. I am aware of the many demands on an academic's time, so your contribution to this research (and my career 😊) is much appreciated.

Please feel free to contact me at g11o4731@campus.ru.ac.za, if you have any concerns, queries or comments that you would like to discuss.

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