

- (1) Birth domain: “the person who gives birth is the *mother*.”
- (2) Genetic domain: “the female who contributes the genetic material is the *mother*.”
- (3) Nurturance domain: “the female adult who nurtures and raises a child is the *mother*.”
- (4) Marital domain: “the wife of the father is the *mother*.”
- (5) Genealogical domain: “the closest female ancestor is the *mother*.”

In order to adequately understand the contextual uses of the term *mother*, we must be aware of these domains and how they may be activated in discourse. In the prototypical matrix associated with the concept mother, these domains all converge, with the birth domain generally prioritized. Any particular instantiation of the concept, however, may profile against any number of these domains. For instance, a *birth mother* might not raise her child or be married to the father, thus only activating domains (1), (2), and (5), with domain (1) prioritized. A *donor mother* does not give birth to her child and may only activate domain (2). A *foster mother* will not have given birth to the child or have contributed genetic material, activating only domains (3) and (4), with the former taking priority. In each case, the context or some qualifier will make it possible for listeners with adequate encyclopedic knowledge to identify the activated domains, hierarchize them, and generate an adequate meaning for the expression. Along with the fact that conceptual categories are not commonly formed with reference to boundaries, this dynamic is a primary contributor to the fuzziness of the boundaries of conceptual categories, including that of deity. A hearer, viewer, or reader who is not aware of these domains will not adequately understand when a less prototypical domain or configuration of domains is activated independently. In the same way, to adequately understand the concept of “deity” as it was deployed in the biblical literature, we must be able to distinguish the main domains that could be activated by the use of the term, as well as to understand the less prototypical configurations of those domains.

Positing a semantic base for the profile “deity” is more complex than that of “radius,” but it allows us to set aside the artificial dichotomies inherent in reducing the category to necessary and sufficient features, and it gives us a foundation upon which to begin to more confidently reassemble the conceptual frameworks of deity and divine agency. Such a base is not the *essence* of deity—other concepts can share the same base—it is simply a conceptual foundation apart from which the profile cannot be adequately conceptualized. Once the domains and matrices that constitute the literary manifestations of deity are identified, we can examine their prioritization and hierarchization to better understand what aspects of deity served what rhetorical functions in what contexts. Beginning with prototypical features and then moving to the unique, unexpected, and innovative features allows us to better understand not only the core and contours of the concept, but its fuzzy and contested boundaries. Interrogating the contexts in which authors