South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of
their gender and leadership roles

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A mini-thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Master's in Psychology in the
Department of Psychology, University of the Western Cape

2013

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While the African woman in the diaspora has attained achievements even far beyond those of her non-African counterparts, one must search hard to find an African woman regarded as 'normal' (and not extraordinary) when she is a professional, a success in business or occupying a significantly high position in government. Instead of recognising this as usual and natural, the tendency is to consider her as an exception.
- Oshadi Mangena

We still think of a powerful man as a born leader and a powerful woman as an anomaly.
- Margaret Atwood

Abstract

Literature on leadership and gender has primarily focused on gender differences between men and women's leadership styles as well as the existence of barriers to the advancement of women. This research has also shown that due to these barriers there is underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. It also appears that this research is mostly based on subordinates' perceptions of leaders and their leadership preferences. This research has also been quantitative in nature and has ignored women's personal experiences as well as their perceptions of gender dynamics within the organizational context. It becomes of interest how some women manage to advance into senior positions despite research indicating that women are still faced with many obstacles in doing so. This study was thus aimed at exploring the perceptions and experiences of South African female senior managers with regard to gender and leadership roles. The study's objectives were; to explore with South African female individuals in leadership positions their perceptions of gender roles and leadership, their experiences in leadership positions, their home and family lives and finally notions of gender stereotypes and prejudice within leadership. The theories used in making sense of the information and findings were the social role theory, and a derivative of it; the role congruity theory. An exploratory qualitative framework using purposive and snowball sampling was used. Six female individuals with at least a year's experience in a leadership position in the private sector who were based in the Western Cape and Gauteng provinces of South Africa were part of the study. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used in collecting data and an interview guide containing open ended questions was used in guiding the interview process. Ethical considerations with regard to anonymity, confidentiality and informed consent were also adhered to. Braun and Clarke's method of thematic analysis was used and themes that emerged were organised and coded accordingly. The thematic categories that were identified were; leadership and gender,

barriers and challenges to the advancement of women, work/life balance, support structure and cracking the glass ceiling. Participants identified certain characteristics that they believed are attributed to leaders and were also of the opinion that women and men display different types of leadership styles while at the same time sharing how they approached their leadership positions. The participants also identified various socio-cultural, organisational and individual barriers that were viewed as preventing women from advancing to leadership positions. Further, the participants shared anecdotes with regard to work/life balance and the various strategies they employed in achieving this. In maintaining this balance the participants had in place support structures composed of various individuals who provided instrumental as well as emotional support. Finally, the participants were willing to provide advice and strategies that could be used in advancing women's careers as well as improving the representation of women in leadership positions.

Glossary of terms

Gender - The social and cultural meaning attributed to the sexes.

Gender equality - The notion that women and men should receive equal treatment and should not be discriminated against based on their gender.

Gender roles - Expectations related to the social conduct of women and men based on perceived gender differences.

Gender stereotypes - Stereotypes of women and men based on social and cultural perceptions of their place in society.

Glass ceiling - A barrier that prevents women from attaining leadership positions.

Leadership - The process of taking an organisation in a particular direction for the purposes of fulfilling its vision and/or mission.

Management- Organisational functions that include planning, organising, controlling and leading in order to achieve an organisation's goals and objectives.

Work/Life Balance- The balance of all domains in one's life specifically related to work and personal life.
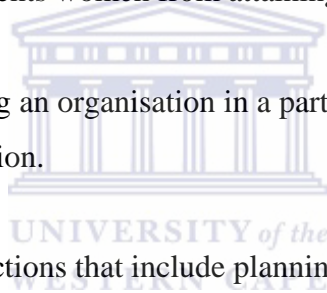
Declaration

I declare that "*South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles*" is my own work. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university. All the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

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Tshinondiwa Ramaite

March 2014

Acknowledgements

Chapter1

Introduction

1.1   Background and Rationale

Theories of differences between men and women in terms of their traits and social

behaviour differentiate between sex and gender. Sex is often referred to as biological while

gender refers to psychological meaning attributed to the sexes. Gender is also linked to the

gender category and gender stereotypes which are external perspectives and gender self-

concept which is an internal perspective (Abele, 2003). Gender is often associated with ideas

of femininity and masculinity. Early sex and gender research in psychology centred on the

idea that femininity and masculinity are factors that determine or predict temperaments,

abilities, characters and roles which are embedded in the individual (Shefer, 2001). While

psychological research in gender has tended to focus on the differences between men and

women on a wide range of topics (Russo, Pirlott & Cohen, 2012). This research defined

gender as stable, fixed and unitary and continues to be popular (Shefer, 2001).

Abele (2003) postulates that gender in the psychological sense is not fixed; it is

dynamic and always changing and is influenced by socio-historical and cultural factors which

in turn have played a role in the expression of gender stereotypes and social roles. Perceived

gender differences in men and women play a role in defining social conduct to form what is

referred to as social or gender roles. Gender stereotypes and social roles also tend to influence

the self-concepts of individuals (Abele, 2003). The Collins Dictionary of Sociology (2006)

defines gender roles as "The social expectations arising from conceptions surrounding gender

and the behavioural expression of these, including forms of speech, mannerisms, demeanour,

dress and gesture". Gender roles influence beliefs of how women should be (feminine), and

how men should be (masculine). Feminine traits are viewed to be communal (caring and emotional) while masculine traits are described as agentic (assertive and decisive). These traits are often stereotypically defined as related to gender; however "the relationship between biological sex and agentic and communal traits is more complex." (Abele, 2003, p. 768).

Social and traditional conceptions of gender portray women as emotionally sensitive and physically weak. This is sometimes viewed as a weakness specifically in male dominated occupational fields. These perceived differences based on sex have at times been used to legitimate injustices and sexism. Shefer (2001) posits that gender research in Psychology that investigates and emphasises gender difference is seen as perpetuating binaries and inequalities. This is often presented as scientific discourse "which continue to legitimise, naturalise and rationalise" (Shefer, 2001, p. 34) the construction of gender as difference and this reproduces gender differences. In doing this it justifies the differential treatment of males and females and "legitimates "the status quo of male domination" (Shefer, 2001, p. 37).

Further, inequalities in one context are also likely to be reproduced in other contexts if they are not challenged (Kabeer, 2005). This can be seen in the fact that patriarchy and male domination have also been reproduced in the boardroom and workplace and are not just limited to the home. Male domination is particularly evident in the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. The following definition of leadership will be used for the purpose of this study: "The term leadership implies movement, taking the organization or some part of it in a new direction, solving problems, being creative, initiating new programs, building organizational structures, and improving quality" (Davis, 2003, as cited in Eddy and VanDerLinden, 2006, p. 7).

Gender researchers internationally have been tracking women's economic advancement. McGregor (2010) mentions studies that have been conducted in New Zealand and Australia. Other studies have been conducted in Sweden (Adams & Funk, 2009) and in the United States (Catalyst, 2005). The Global Gender Gap Report has also tracked economic activity and the involvement of both men and women in the labour force across the world (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2011). These studies and reports have allowed for us to be able to measure levels of gender inequality within and between countries and have exposed the fact that women are still economically disadvantaged and that there is a huge gender gap as well as underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. The glass ceiling is often cited as one of the challenges and/or barriers that women face in terms of obtaining leadership positions. The Penguin Dictionary of Sociology (2006), states that the "Glass ceiling describes the subtle and barely visible obstacles in the way of women's promotion". The glass ceiling is a barrier that prevents women from reaching senior leadership positions.
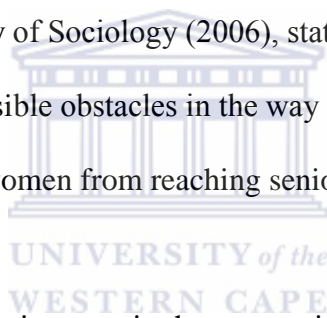
Although there has been an increase in the economic activity of women and more women are occupying positions previously thought to be meant for men (England, 2010), statistics show that the scale of economic gender inequality and underrepresentation of women in leadership positions is still a cause for concern (Dorius & Firebaugh, 2010; McGregor, 2010). This can be said for South Africa and the rest of the world. Catalyst, an organisation that conducts research on "women in leadership", "organizational change & effectiveness", and "diverse women & inclusion" has consistently produced the women in leadership census since 1993. It was reported that in Africa 54.5% of women and 80.1% of men were in the labour force in 2010, while in Europe 51.8% women and 66.1% men were in the labour force (Catalyst, 2011). In North America there were 53.9% and 46.1% of men and women respectively in the labour force (Catalyst, 2011). While countries such as Norway and

Sweden are currently reported to have 40.1% and 27.3% of women holding board seats and chairs respectively, Catalyst also report that in 2011, 15.8% board seats and 5.3% board chairs were held by South African women (Catalyst, 2011).

Females make up 52 % of the population in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2011) and women make up 45.2% of the economically active population (CEE report 2012-2013); that is individuals aged 15-64, either employed and unemployed and seeking employment (Statistics South Africa, 2012). The Businesswomen's Association (BWA) in conjunction with Catalyst have been producing the annual South African Women in Leadership census since 2004 indicate that in 2011 the representation of women in senior management positions in the companies surveyed was as follows; 4.4% women were Managing Directors (MDs) and Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), 5.3% were chairpersons, 15.8% held directorship positions while 21.6% held executive management positions. It reported that between 2009 and 2011 there was an increase in female executive managers from 18.6% to 21.6%.

In addition, 14.6% directorships were held by women in 2009, and although there was an increase in 2010 to 16.6% there was a decrease in 2011 to 15.8%. There is a similar trend for female chairpersons where in 2009 it was 5.8%, in 2010, 6.0% and in 2011 there was a decrease to 5.3%. In 2009, female CEOs and MDs accounted for 3.6%, in 2010, 4.5% and in 2011, 4.4% (BWA Women in Leadership Census, 2011). Although there seems to be a general increase in the representation of women in senior leadership positions the glass ceiling effect can be observed.

The Commission for Employment Equity (CEE) also provides statistics with regard to nature and makeup of the workforce. In the CEE 2011-2012 annual report it is reported that in the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012 senior management consisted of 71.8% males and 28.2% females, while top management consisted of 80.9% males and 19.1% females. In addition the private sector has been identified as being the worst performing in terms of representation of South African women in leadership positions. In the report it is reported that women accounted for 25.6% of senior managers in the private sector. With higher numbers of women in senior management; government (35.1%), Non-Governmental organisations (41.6%) and educational institutions (37.7%) are better performing compared to the private sector. Further, women comprise of 16.9% of top management in the private sector. In comparison to Government (29.7%), Non-Governmental organisations (25.4%) and educational institutions (33.9%) the private sector has considerably fewer women in senior positions.
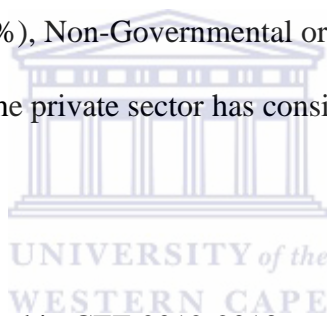
Similar findings are reported in CEE 2012-2013 annual report which indicates that in South Africa between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 senior management consisted of 69.2% males and 30.7% females while top management consisted of 80.1% of men and 19.8% of women while. The private sector is again identified in this report as being the worst performing with regard to representation of South African women in management positions. Within senior management it is indicated that Government (35.9%), Non-Governmental organisations (50.7%) and educational institutions (43%) had higher representation of women compared to the private sector which had a 28.9% representation of women. Top management is indicated as having a female representation of 18.2% in the private sector while Government, Non-Governmental organisations and educational institutions are indicated as having 35.1%, 37.4% and 36.2% female representation respectively.

Although there seems to be a general increase in the representation of women in leadership positions the glass ceiling effect, where women are kept from reaching senior management positions, appears to still be in existence. As evidenced by the statistics provided the higher we move up the leadership hierarchy the fewer women there are. Pande and Ford (2011) also state that in the corporate world, with seniority female representation also drops. It has become evident that the underrepresentation of women in leadership is a cause for concern.

The lack of women in leadership and decision-making positions is disadvantageous in that there are too few women to represent women's issues and these may be overlooked. Women also internalise ideas that women not being suited for leadership and this "creates a psychological glass ceiling" (Rhode and Kellerman, 2007, p. 8). Rhode and Kellerman (2007) posit further that it would seem that women are often unwilling to take risks and be assertive in obtaining leadership roles. There presents a need for research that will provide solutions to getting more women into leadership positions.

1.2   Significance of the Study

Leadership and gender research has predominantly been done internationally in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Norway and Sweden (Adams & Funk, 2009; England, 2010; Klasen & Lamanna, 2008; McGregor, 2010). This study explores a topic that has been relatively under researched especially in the African context. International studies have also largely focused on elucidating whether there are gender differences in the leadership styles of men and women in the work context. Mavin (2001) posits that "there is a need to move women's career theories into the mainstream and to highlight women's

experiences of careers …" (p. 190). This study does exactly that as it looks at South African females' perceptions of leadership and their experiences within leadership positions. In this way a different perspective on gender and leadership can be provided; that is in the words of the individuals themselves. It allows for us to get first-hand accounts of women who have been fortunate enough to navigate through the leadership labyrinth and are cracking the glass ceiling.

This research enables us to learn more about how women in senior positions make sense of and manage the dual roles of gender and leadership. This study could provide information on wellness in the workplace as well as contribute to knowledge about ways in which career women can cope especially in male dominated workplaces. Further, it may provide insight into the lives of career women who have cracked the glass ceiling and hopefully inspire women who aspire to be in similar positions. Leadership research is also beneficial in that it tends to expose the barriers and obstacles that women face in their attempt at breaking the glass ceiling

It is important to inspire girls to aspire for more and this can be done through socialization practices that do not only favour boys in terms of them being encouraged to pursue certain careers. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995, is in agreement with this and postulates that the notion of equality between men and women is something that should be playing an integral role in the socialization process. The declaration recognises the importance of empowering girl children as they are the women of tomorrow. In empowering the girl child it is believed that her energy, skills and ideas are essential in achieving peace, development and equality. Further when girl children are afforded the same

rights and opportunities as boy children and are nurtured in environments this will enable them to reach their full potential (The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action of 1995)

The tracking of the progress of women worldwide indicates that there are inequalities with regard to the representation and participation of women not only in the labour market but also in governance and management both in the developed and developing world (Hausmann, Tyson & Zahidi, 2009). There is a need for effective strategies to getting women into leadership positions. Rhode and Kellerman (2007) are of the opinion that gender and leadership research has the potential of doing exactly that. In giving women a voice in organisations this can enable better analysis of organisational and structural practices as well as facilitate the process of making policies and practices applicable to both men and women and a general culture change of expectations and stereotypes about women (Mavin, 2001). This can be beneficial in the long run for economies and states.
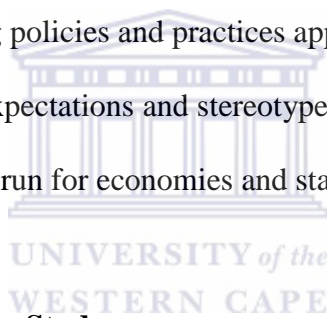
1.3   Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of South African female individuals in leadership positions, perceptions and experiences with regards to gender and leadership.

The objectives of this research study were:

- To explore with South African female individuals in leadership positions their perceptions of gender roles and leadership.
- To explore with South African female individuals their experiences in leadership positions.
- To explore with South African female individuals experiences of their home and family lives.

- To explore notions of gender stereotypes and prejudice within leadership with South African female individuals in leadership positions.

1.4   Conclusion

The introduction has contextualised the study as well as defined the pertinent concepts in the study, namely; gender, gender roles and leadership. The rationale and significance of conducting this study on the perceptions and experiences of female individuals in leadership positions have also been discussed. The aim and objectives have also been outlined.

1.5   Chapter Outline

Chapter 2 - Literature review

In this chapter an overview of theories and perspectives on leadership is given. Social role theory and role congruity theory are outlined with the aim of situating the research study within a theoretical framework. In addition a review of relevant literature with regard to leadership and gender is provided. The topics under consideration within the literature review include gender differences in leadership, barriers and challenges that prevent women from obtaining management positions, women's career support and advancement as well as equity, equity and legislation and women's empowerment

Chapter 3 - Method

This chapter focuses on the implemented methodology in the study. The methodological framework, study participants, data collection, procedure, data analysis, reflexivity and ethical considerations are discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 - Findings and discussion

In this chapter the findings of the study will be discussed. An in depth analysis of the identified thematic categories, primary themes and related secondary themes will be provided. In addition, in making sense of the data relevant literature and gender and leadership theories, specifically the social role theories, will be made use of in supporting the findings of the current study.

Chapter 5 - Conclusion

The closing chapter will focus on tying together the discussions provided in the preceding chapters. In addition limitations of the study as well as recommendations for future research and for addressing the issues identified in the study will be discussed.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Introduction: An overview of Theories and Perspectives on Leadership

Research on leadership indicates that "leadership has historically been depicted primarily in masculine terms, and many theories of leadership have focused mainly on stereotypically masculine qualities" (Eagly, 2007, p. 2). The trait and great man theories "suggest that certain individuals have special innate or inborn characteristics or qualities that make them leaders…" (Northouse, 2010, p. 4). As there were even fewer female leaders in the past, these theories were conceptualised with male leader characteristics in mind. Thus male stereotypic qualities such as assertiveness and agency are viewed as congruent with leadership. The situational approach on the other hand postulates that different situations require different kinds of leadership styles and the participative approach states that the leader includes their subordinates in the decision making process (Northouse, 2010).

Leadership style theories provide a description of what leaders do such as being people focused or task focused (Gill, 2006). The former places emphasis on building relationships and working in teams while the latter usually involves delegation of tasks to subordinates who are then responsible for getting the job done. In addition some researchers distinguish between transformational and transactional leadership. A transformational leader is said to place emphasis on interpersonal relationships, gaining the confidence and trust of followers as well as being innovative (Bass, 1998), while a transactional leader is described as more goal-oriented, where the responsibilities of subordinates are clear and their work is also monitored (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1998).

Additionally, there are three categories for the models and theories that are aimed at explaining gender issues within the organisational context, these are; biological, social as well as structural/cultural (Lueptow et al., 2001). Biological explanations are usually not used in explaining gender issues in the organisational context (Lueptow et al., 2001), rather, structural/cultural and socialisation theories have gained prominence within this field (Bartol, Martin, & Kromkowski, 2003). The theory to be discussed next belongs to the structural/cultural category, and was made use of in providing a theoretical lens through which the study was looked at. It is used in explaining gender differences as well as reasons for the persistence of the glass ceiling and why it prevents women from advancing to senior management positions (Weyer, 2007).

2.2   Social Role Theory and Role Congruity Theory

The theories that will guide this study are the social role and role congruity theories. According to Weyer (2007) these belong to a family of structural/cultural models that describe the differences between males and females. The central tenet of these theories is that men and women are allotted different social roles based on their gender (Weyer, 2007). The social role theory posits that the roles that men and women are allocated not only create expectations as to how men and women should behave but they also influence their behaviour in that they tend to behave in ways consistent with their roles (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003). As a result men are viewed as breadwinners and agentic and women as homemakers and communal, and it is often expected that individuals conform to the roles assigned to them (Unger, 2001).

Further, due to the perception that females are nurturing and supportive they are seen as being more suited to roles in line with that and they are thus deemed as not being suited for

decision-making roles in management (Wood, 2008). Thus within the workplace women are often seen as unsuited for leadership positions as the social roles they occupy are viewed as incongruent with leadership roles due to leadership being more associated with men. This has led to men having an advantage in terms of leadership as they are more likely to hold senior positions. Male roles are viewed as having greater status and this has reinforced gender stereotypes of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners (Rudman & Glick, 2008).

Eagly and Karau (2002) have conceptualised a role congruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders. (Eagly & Karau, 2002, p.573) state that;

> A role congruity theory of prejudice toward female leaders proposes that perceived incongruity between the female gender role and leadership roles leads to two forms of prejudice: (a) perceiving women less favorably than men as potential occupants of leadership roles and (b) evaluating behavior that fulfills the prescriptions of a leader role less favorably when it is enacted by a woman.

In summary the assumptions of the role congruity are as follows: Social and gender roles influence how we perceive and make sense of individuals' behaviour. These gender roles influence our expectations of how these individuals should and should not behave. Gender roles and norms are further perpetuated by stereotypes that in turn influence our views and beliefs about how individuals should behave. When an individual's behaviour (or leadership role) is incongruent with social and gender roles there is cognitive dissonance. Individuals who do not conform to traditional gender roles are often negatively evaluated. This negative evaluation may result in prejudice, discrimination and sexism in the workplace and various other contexts. Further, "…stereotypical expectancies affect men's and women's self-perceptions and behaviour" (Chrisler & McCreary, 2010, p. 423). Thus, not only are the gender role and the leadership role viewed as being incongruent and resulting in negative

evaluation of individuals who do not conform but gender roles are also thought to influence individuals' self-perceptions and behaviour.

2.3   Leadership and Gender: Are there gendered differences in leadership?

Gender norms have an effect on men and women's lives and are "shaped by… different expectations and opportunities", "gender norms… also privilege certain groups" (Clarke and Braun, 2009, p. 234). Further, Clarke and Braun (2009), state that according to gendered ideology masculinity is associated with individuality, rationality and aggressiveness. On the other hand, femininity is associated with relationality, submissiveness and emotionality. This continues to reinforce a gendered division in the labour force where decision making and high paying jobs are viewed as unsuited for women and thus favouring men.
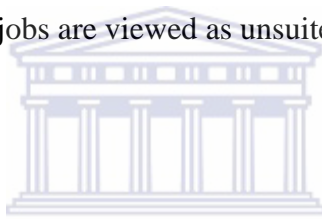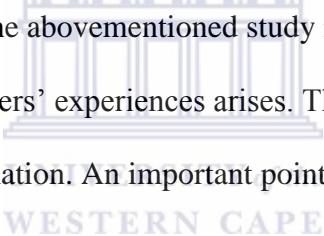
Catalyst's (2005) "women 'take care', men 'take charge'" study looked at gender stereotypes and how they filter into leadership. It shows that both female and male senior managers also seem to believe in these stereotypes. Catalyst (2005) analysed over 40 studies and found that in most of these studies there were very little differences in men and women's leadership, although there were misperceptions about gender differences in leadership. Perceptions of male leaders indicate that they are viewed as those who "take charge" while women are "care takers". Oshagbemi and Gill (2003) examined self-perceptions of leadership styles and management of United Kingdom managers in the private and public sectors. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was used and participants were asked to indicate whether they believed that their leadership styles and behaviours were laissez-faire, management-by-exception, contingent reward, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation or idealised influence. The results indicated that female

managers delegated less and men used inspirational motivation more than women. However, there were no significant differences of males and females' participative, consultative and directive leadership styles. Thus the leadership styles were essentially the same.

Adams and Funk (2009) conducted a survey on CEOs and board members in Sweden on gender differences in leadership using the Schwartz 40 Question Portrait Value Survey. The results from this study indicate that even at the top of the corporate ladder there are gender differences in values. Male directors placed more emphasis on power and achievement than female directors, and placed less emphasis on benevolence. Littrell and Nkomo (2005) have not only looked at gender but also race and have assessed the effects of the two variables on leader behaviour preferences in South Africa. The aim in their study was to investigate differences among the two genders and several racial groups (Asian, Black, Coloured and White) on the preferences of managerial leadership behaviour.

By administering the Leadership Behaviour Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) XII to 550 part-time Master of Business Administration (MBA) students Littrell and Nkomo (2005) found that "…leader behaviour preferences of South African managers are diverse and representative of many racial groups." (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005, p. 572). Black male and female participants were found to have the highest preference for behaviour related to production emphasis which is the extent to which a leader places emphasis on productive output. On the other hand Black and White females indicated a low preference for consideration (considering the comfort, wellbeing and contributions of followers). Coloured males had an even lower preference for consideration with all the other groups indicating a higher preference for consideration behaviour (Littrell & Nkomo, 2005).

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Booysen and Nkomo (2010), made use of Schein's gender role management stereotype hypothesis to investigate the combined effects of race and gender. MBA students at a large South African university were used as a sample. This study looked at perceptions of the think-manager-think-male hypothesis of individuals who were or have been managers at some point in their careers. The results of this study indicate that the think-manager-think-male hypothesis stands for both black[1] and white men. Men, both black and white were not likely to consider women as potential successful managers. Black women were more likely to find a higher resemblance between the characteristics of women in general and successful managers, while white women viewed both men and women as potential successful managers.

One of the limitations of the abovementioned study is that the sample only consisted of students. A need to look at leaders' experiences arises. The present study aims to do that and will thus get first-hand information. An important point to note as posited by Eagly (2007) is that although women are praised for their exceptional leadership skills and for having leadership styles that are more effective than those of men, people still prefer male than female superiors and this has made it more difficult for women to obtain leadership positions and to succeed in leadership positions.

Eagly et al. (2003) did a meta-analysis of 45 studies that looked at laissez-faire, transactional and transformational leadership styles and found that male leaders were less likely to be transformational than female leaders. Further, female leaders engaged more in the

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[1] "black people" is a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians (Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998, p. 3), although the term was used in a derogatory manner during the Apartheid era to refer to these racial groups.

contingent reward of behaviours which is a component of transactional leadership. Male leaders were more likely to employ active and passive management-by-exception which are also aspects of the transactional style as well as the laissez-faire leadership style. The differences in styles are also reported to be small. These results are considered as encouraging for women as other research has indicated that the styles women scored higher on and exceeded men are positively related to leaders' effectiveness, while the styles that men scored higher on have negative or no relations to effectiveness.

2.4   Barriers and Challenges that Prevent Women from Obtaining Management Positions

In the 1970s Schein recognised that sex typing of managers was a barrier not only structurally but psychologically to women's advancement in the United States. Schein (2001) provided a review of replications of sex-typing research in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, China and Japan in order to provide a global perspective of the think-manager-think-male phenomenon. The samples consisted of either middle managers or students. There were three forms of the Schein Descriptive Index (SDI) used. All three contained 92 instructions and descriptive terms with the exception of one that asked "for a description of women in general (Women), a description of men in general (Men), as well as a description of successful middle managers (Managers)." (Schein, 2001 p. 676). Participants were asked to rate descriptive terms they thought were characteristic of the three categories of individuals. In all of the countries where there was strong evidence of sex typing of middle managers especially by males and being a successful manager was more likely to be ascribed to men.

Duehr and Bono (2006) examined gender and management stereotypes of male and female managers as well as students. They also examined personal characteristics of participants such as age, gender and organisational experience to determine the source of differences between individuals in their beliefs about men, women and managers. A survey was used; a revised version of the Descriptive Index. The results indicated a change of male managers' perceptions of women over the past few decades. This is attributed to "greater congruence between their perceptions of women and successful managers" (Duehr & Bono, 2006, p. 815) and acceptance of women's agentic and task-oriented leadership characteristics. However male students' stereotypes changed less and remained very similar to those of male managers 15 years ago. Men were also less likely to attribute successful manager qualities to women. There was also a same-sex bias where women were much more likely to view female managers as more similar to successful managers. Individuals who had positive experiences with female managers rated women higher as managers.
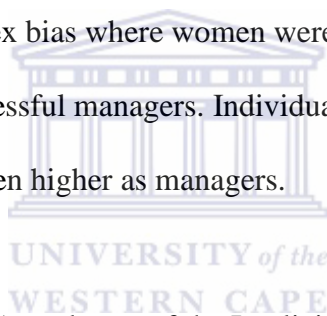
Rudman and Phelan (2010) made use of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) on a sample of 175 female students at an American university to study gendered self-concept and stereotypes. In this study, communal and leadership roles were presented for both genders. That is both men and women were placed in traditional as well as in contrasting non-traditional gender roles. Rudman and Phelan (2010) "…reversed the gender of the role occupant so that women occupied the traditionally male roles, and men occupied the traditionally female roles" (p. 194). The results of this study show that traditional gender roles do influence women's implicit gender stereotypes and self-concept. When women were shown in non-traditional roles (e.g. female surgeon) instead of it being a motivating factor, women's implicit leadership self-concept was decreased. This means that women were more likely to favour traditionally "feminine" occupations and avoid "masculine" occupations.

Davies et al. (2002); Davies, Spencer and Steele (2005); and Parks-Stamm, Heilman, and Hearns (2008) have shown similar results in their studies where gender roles played a significant role in individuals' views of occupations and leadership.

Rudman and Glick (2001) examined the backlash toward agentic women by looking at prescriptive gender stereotypes. This was done in the form of an experiment where participants watched videotapes of applicants after which they completed the Implicit Association Test. The university undergraduate students were asked to make hiring decisions for a computer lab manager. The position was presented in two ways, either as needing masculine (agentic) or feminine (communal) traits. The job description and applicants' attributes were also provided. The applicants were also described as being either agentic or nice and competent. The results indicated that the female agentic applicant was discriminated against and generally considered as unlikeable while the female applicant who was shown as nice and competent was not discriminated against. These results were attributed to implicit stereotypes of agency and communality.

Killeen, L´opez-Zafra, and Eagly (2006) examined the aspirations for leadership on a sample of male and female United States and Spanish students. They were asked if they envisioned themselves as a CEO, vice president or middle managers in the clothing manufacturing or auto manufacturing industry. The two were chosen for their seemingly feminine and masculine nature. Women perceived the positions as less possible to attain. Men were also more attracted to the masculine industry. Effects related to gender that were found were positive perceptions of women in the feminine industry and men in the masculine industry. Only when the position was feminine could the female participants envision themselves in a leadership position.

In a study by Mtintso (1999) where parliamentarian women were interviewed, it was reported that they found "professional fulfillment are at the expense of personal fulfillment", and that "the expectation of Parliament contradicts with the expectations in terms of socially defined gender roles" (p. 43). Headlam-Wells, Craig and Gosland, (2006) have also exposed barriers to women's career success. In a career progression survey professional women indicated that career breaks taken for childcare and further training and education were viewed as barriers in returning to work. Lack of support and organisational support were identified as significant or very significant.

2.5   Women's Career Support and Advancement
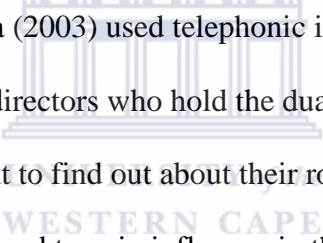
Wood and Lindorff (2001) tested the prediction that there would be sex differences in middle managers' perceptions of promotion requirements and these differences would be "influenced by societal expectations of gender appropriateness, in which women are expected to display communal (nurturing, interpersonally sensitive) and men agentic (independent, assertive and ambitious) qualities and behaviour." (p. 152). The aim was thus to discern male and female middle managers' attitudes toward promotion. The results indicated that sex does not have a strong influence on beliefs that managers receive the same opportunities for career advancement. There were sex differences however in reasons provided for inequities in career advancement and why promotions in the future may not happen. Women were also less likely to expect a promotion irrespective of the fact that both male and female managers reported similar aspirations to reach a more senior position. These results are somewhat in line with the social role theory as gender role can be seen as affecting managers' attitudes and beliefs of career success. Women felt that factors such as gender stereotyping and organisational policies hindered their careers while personal characteristics such as doing the

job well, being a team player, communication skills, determination to succeed, self-confidence and integrity helped them to succeed in their careers.

Wood (2006) conducted a follow up study of a 1996 survey that looked at middle managers' attitudes to promotion. The majority of the participants in the survey had a favourable response to the question "Do you want to obtain a senior management position during your managerial career?" Additionally they were asked "How confident are you that this will happen?" and "How soon do you feel this will happen?" 11 female and 19 male managers were interviewed in order to find out the outcomes of the promotion aspirations, the elements that could have hindered their progress, personal strategies employed as well as future aspirations for promotion. The female managers reported that factors that hindered promotion were that CEOs preferred their friends in the role, the "Boys Club" stereotyping, as well as being a woman, having children, maternity leave, being the only woman in a group of men, the lack of opportunity and lack of experience. More male middle managers achieved promotion to senior roles and in less time than the female managers. Men were divided on the question of whether they would pursue a promotion while women reported that they would be less likely to pursue a promotion. Of those interviewed only one of the female managers was able to attain a senior management role and even she had no desire of pursuing a higher position in her organisation.

Burke, Burgess and Fallon (2006), conducted an exploratory study examining "the relationship of the perceived presence of organizational practices designed to support women's career advancement and their work and extra-work satisfaction and psychological well-being." (p. 416). Questionnaires were used to collect data from 98 women in Australia who were in the early stages of their careers (business graduates). Five areas of organisational

practices for support and development of professional women were considered; "top management support and intervention, policies and resources, use of gender in human resource management, training and development initiatives and recruiting and external relations efforts." (p. 416). These collectively refer to resources and provisions such as support for the development of women, policies against sexism, childcare resources, training and development well as public exposure of women. The women who reported more organizational support also reported higher levels of career and job satisfaction as well as low intent to quit. These women also reported less emotional exhaustion and fewer psychosomatic symptoms. They were also more likely to be satisfied with their family, friends and communities.

Zelechowski and Bilimoria (2003) used telephonic interviews in their study of corporate inside directors; that is directors who hold the dual role of board member and corporate officer. The study sought to find out about their roles in board decision making, the influence they had, the strategies used to gain influence in their organisations as well as to find out how women function effectively at the top of corporations. In decision making they reported involvement on making decisions of both high and low impact. In creating influence they felt they provided a skill that no one else had. Three influential strategies were named; relying on facts and figures and being well prepared, forming relationships and building alliances or a combination of the two with no particular preference of one or the other. Support ranged from offering guidance and words of encouragement to intimidation and obvious dislike by colleagues. These experiences are significant in the effectiveness and success of women corporate leaders.

Singh, Vinnicombe and James (2006) explored the usage of role models by young career-minded women in the form of a theoretical paper and interviews conducted with ten young professional women. These women drew on role models from different areas. For some they were personally known by the participants and in some cases they were unknown. Few business role models were identified. It was also revealed that they preferred external role models for learning and not women at the top in their own professions. This is particularly surprising and Singh et al. (2006) speculate that the lack of identification of role models in their professions might be due to a lack of women in general in senior positions.

2.6   Towards Gender Equality: Equity, legislation and women's empowerment
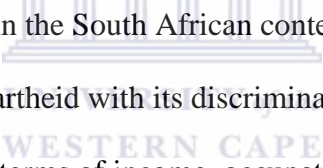
Gender equity refers to processes that ensure fairness to both men and women. In ensuring fairness, measures and strategies are used in compensating women for socio-historical disadvantages that excluded them from decision-making processes and also prevented them from accessing economic and social resources (United Nations Population Fund, 2008). Cultural and ideological norms are not only sources of power imbalances and gender inequality but they also deny that these imbalances and inequalities exist (Kabeer, 2005). Equity strategies are aimed at addressing gender inequality in order for women and men to have equal access and enjoy opportunities and resources (United Nations Population Fund, 2008). The strategies and measures employed aimed at achieving equity are in the form of **policy and legislation**. Gender equality also incorporates the **empowerment** of women which is important in that power imbalances are redressed but also women gain autonomy (United Nations Population Fund, 2008) and agency where they possess the ability to make their own life choices and also act on them (Kabeer, 2005). The following sections outline some of the policies, legislation and efforts aimed at achieving gender equality.

The Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations general assembly (United Nations, 1995). CEDAW "is the sole international legal instrument specifically designed to promote and protect women's rights in a holistic and systematic way" (UNIFEM CEDAW briefing kit, p. 2). South Africa has been a participant since 1993 (United Nations Treaty Collection, 2013). It is concerned with the rights of women and girls. It sets out principles, standards and obligations that State Parties have to agree to fulfil. State Parties are required to ensure equal rights and recognition for women without them being discriminated against on the basis of gender. States are not only required to make sure that there are no laws that discriminate against women but also ensure that arrangements are made that will guarantee equality for all women. CEDAW looks at issues of gender equality at all levels and in all spheres; in the home, community, workplace, private sector and state (government). CEDAW State Parties including South Africa are expected to adhere to CEDAW principles and all its signatories who agree are legally bound and are to respect, protect and fulfil rights for women in line with human rights (United Nations, 1995; UNIFEM CEDAW briefing kit).

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995) was adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women on the year of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. The declaration set forth to "to advance the goals of equality, development and peace for all women everywhere in the interest of all humanity" (p. 2) The Platform for Action's key strategic objectives and actions address the following critical areas of concern; women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment and, the girl child. The governments (South

Africa included), organisations and institutions involved agree that they will also take part in realising the goals of the declaration.

Similarly, at The United Nations (UN) Millennium Summit in 2000 the UN established eight developmental goals to be adopted internationally and that are aimed at being achieved by 2015. The **third Millennium Development Goal (MDG)** seeks to **promote gender equality and women's empowerment** and the indicators that this goal focuses on are education, employment and political participation of women (United Nations, 2000). The aim of the goal is stated as: to "Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015" (UN Development Programme, 2013).

With regard to legislation in the South African context, the **Employment Equity Act, No. 55 of 1998** recognises that apartheid with its discriminatory practices and laws resulted in disparities in the labour market in terms of income, occupation and employment. It also recognises that these disparities create disadvantages for certain groupings of people that cannot be simply redressed by the abolishment of inequitable laws. It thus promotes the right to equality, employment equity, economic development and diversification of the workforce in a manner that is representative of the population. This Act also prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and gender and other social categories that individuals identify with such as ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and disability. According to this Act affirmative action measures can also be implemented and this is applicable to designated groups which include women, black people and people with disabilities. This ensures that appropriately qualified individuals of the three groups have equal employment opportunities and can be represented at all levels in the workplace. Employers are also to have employment equity plans for

between a year and five years that aim to achieve employment equity in the workplace. From the Employment Equity Act came the **Commission for Employment Equity (CEE)** which was established in 1999. The commission serves at an advisory capacity to the minister of labour on policy, regulation and good practice (CEE Annual Report, 2011).

Other legislations within the South African context that protect the interest of women include the **Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act 4 of 2000** which addresses inequality and discrimination and aims to restructure and reform as well as rectify the injustices brought upon by colonialism, apartheid and patriarchy. Discrimination on the grounds of gender is also prohibited under this act. In addition, the **Labour Relations Act, Act 66 of 1995 as** well as the **Skills Development Act, Act number 97 of 1998** were put in place to promote the development and improvement of skills of the labour force.

South Africa's National Policy Framework for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality otherwise known as the Gender Policy Framework is a framework that "outlines South Africa's vision for gender equality and for how it intends to realise this ideal" (p. i). It does not aim to prescribe to sectors of government what to do but it outlines principles that can be incorporated by sectors into existing programmes, practices and policies. This framework is aligned with the Bill of Rights of The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996 (Act 108 of 1996) and recognises that women and men should be afforded equal rights in order to achieve gender equality. It acknowledges that social and cultural factors have influenced the view that women are inferior to men and have thus placed them in unfavourable positions in the private and public spheres. This has led to men having more power and assuming decision-making and leadership positions. The effects

26

of patriarchy can not only be seen in the home but have also filtered into the workplace. This framework is an attempt at ensuring that the gender equality is central to transformation in South Africa at all levels, that is in all the programmes, practices, procedures, policies, institutions and structures of not only government but the private sector as well. It thus serves as a guideline for the sectors.

The Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities (2011) proposed a **Gender Equality Bill** aimed at enforcing compliance to women empowerment and gender equality in government, private companies, non-profit organisations, as well as political parties and trade unions? (Vollgraaff, 2012). The Bill identifies weak government coordination and the lack of alignment of the numerous laws and policies that are aimed at promoting gender equality as critical concerns. It is aimed at enhancing coordination and ensuring that existing equality programmes are aimed at addressing gender-based issues in a more integrated and holistic manner. The Bill will also ensure that there is no replication of initiatives and processes that have already been undertaken and will eventually be elevated into an Act "that clearly defines the institutional mechanism for gender transformation." (Gender Equality Bill, p. 6). The move to elevate the Bill into an Act is seen as an attempt to strengthen the National Gender Machinery and it is also imperative that South Africa have a gender policy that is legally binding and can be enforced at all levels (government, private sector, labour and civil society).

The Act will serve as a regulatory document for the state and other related agencies that will also be required to purposefully and systematically promote gender equality and eradicate any hindrances to the achievement of gender equality. It will be an overarching Act that will ensure gender equity in South Africa so that women participate equally and fully in

all spheres. It is also aimed at addressing and reducing gender-based discrimination. This Act will also give power to the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities to issue compliance notices to entities that do not comply with the mandated 50% of representation of women in decision-making structures. Entities that do not comply can be fined or sentenced if the imposed fine is not paid (Gender Equality Bill, 2011).

2.7 Conclusion

The studies presented focussing on gender and leadership and are mostly quantitative in nature. Klenke (2008) states that "Historically, leadership research had been grounded in the objectivist, positivist, quantitative paradigm since the inception of leadership studies as a field of scholarly inquiry" (p. 3). In addition, studies on gender and leadership have also tended to focus on comparing male and female leaders and their leadership styles. However, the results of these studies on gender differences have been largely inconclusive. Rhode and Kellerman (2007) also agree that evidence of gender differences in leadership styles, when evaluated by peers, subordinates and supervisors, is weak. Although present, gender differences appear to be insignificant. Further, there seems to be no evidence that women are less capable as managers.

Although the number of middle managers has increased in the past few decades, underrepresentation of women in corporate organisations is quite evident with low numbers of female senior managers and even lower numbers of female CEOs. women experience difficulties even in some of the most developed countries such as Australia, the United States and the United Kingdom (Oakley, 2000; Wood, 2006). Heilman (2001) posits that the dearth of women in top positions is a result of evaluations that are gender biased. This gender bias is considered to be the principal cause of the underrepresentation of women in top levels of

organisations. Stereotypes about women and the sex typing of the managerial role in combination result in gender bias in how women are evaluated. Women's success in leadership is considered a violation of gender roles and prescriptive norms that dictate how they should behave.

Rhode and Kellerman (2007) state that factors attributed to the underrepresentation of women in leadership positions are gender roles in families and gender biases in leadership opportunities. In addition, stereotyping of women and the "old boys network" are factors that have been resistant to change (Oakley, 2000) and continue to act as barriers that prevent women from reaching senior positions. The gender stereotypes that exist perpetuate the idea that the gender and leadership roles are mismatched. That is, traditional conceptions of the gender role of women and leadership are irreconcilable. Men also continue to be rated highly in terms of qualities associated with leadership. People are more likely to attribute leadership ability to men and accept men as leaders more than they do women. It is also evident from studies that look at perceptions of leaders that female leaders are generally evaluated negatively due to conflicting gender and leader roles. The two roles are seen as incongruent.

Implicit gender stereotypes and beliefs stemming from traditional roles influence how we view men's and women's abilities, roles and traits even though we are often not aware of this (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). When an individual's behaviour does not conform to these stereotypes and beliefs, it sometimes results in role incongruence, where we may be confronted with uneasiness as the traditional role does not match the behaviour of that individual. In addition to this, people also "…possess implicit self-concepts" (Rudman & Phelan, 2010, p. 193) which influence the ways in which we view and make sense of ourselves with regard to our roles, behaviour and attitudes. Dasgupta and Asgari (2004), also

report that women who hold implicit gender stereotypes are more likely to believe that they would not succeed as leaders.

The aspirations or lack thereof of the female participants in Killeen et al. (2006) study can be explained using the role incongruity theory of prejudice towards female leaders. Gender role and expectations can be said to affect their self-perceptions in that they do not view themselves as likely to attain a leader role. Only when the position is considered feminine could female participants envision themselves in a leadership position. However, there are positives to this in that it is not that women do not envision themselves in senior positions it is the masculine characteristics that are attached to certain industries that discourage them from pursuing careers in them. Sex-typing can also be problematic as it creates bias in the selection of candidates for managerial positions. This leads to male candidates seeming more qualified or being favoured more for managerial positions.
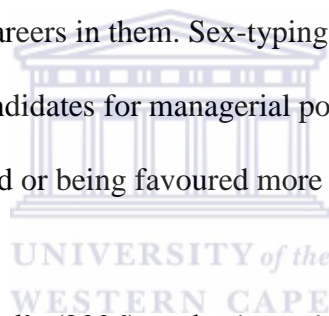
In addition, results in Wood's (2006) study showed differences in gender in the outcomes of promotion. Men's responses show that they attribute limitations to promotions to external factors while women recognised more the barriers they face due to their gender. This highlights the difficulties that women experience in advancing their careers. In addition, the lack of female business role models in the Singh et al. (2006) study is also of concern as young women aspiring for senior leadership positions do not have a lot of successful women to look up to. As Headlam-Wells et al. (2006) have shown that career women experience difficulties in terms of managing work and life it is of particular importance to have studies such as the present one that focuses on the experiences of women as women who are seen to be able to manage and balance the two may serve as role models to other women.

In addressing gender imbalances in the workplace the post-apartheid South African government has adopted a variety of strategies, policies and programmes aimed at doing away with inequity and injustice. These have been aimed at ensuring economic development, promoting equity, creation of employment and poverty alleviation. Irrespective of this within the private sector employment equity has been slow (Selby & Sutherland, 2006). Mathur-Helm (2006) also states that the South African corporate environment is inundated with male values and little has changed over the past few years. Considering that South Africa has national policies such as the Gender Policy Framework that consists of guidelines that promote gender equity in the workplace in both the public and private sectors (The Office on the Status of Women, 2000) this becomes of concern. According to Rhode and Kellerman, (2007) the coordination of legislation has been weak and there are inadequacies in social policies. These can be viewed as some of the reasons gender equity has been slow.
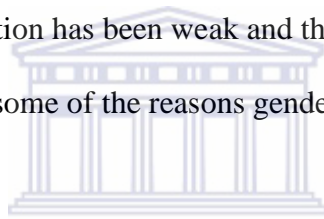
Although some legislation that addresses gender inequities legally binds parties there has been very little change in promoting women to senior leadership positions. Noble and Moore (2006) are in agreement that despite legislation and organisational support that promotes gender equity and inclusive practices in organisations such as employment equity and affirmative action the glass ceiling still remains. Samuel (2001) argues that on paper it is all there but in practice it is not evident. Some reasons as to why legislation has had limited success are; top management is not committed to employment equity, organisational culture is resistant to transformation and there is insufficient monitoring of legislation (Booysen, 2007)

By using secondary data from previous studies Mathur-Helm (2005) discusses and examines whether affirmative action legislation that was put into place by the democratic

government has led to greater employment of women to senior and top management positions in the South African government and in corporate organisations. Mathur-Helm (2005) finds that although there have been greater numbers of women being appointed to government and in senior management positions in general, women still face difficulties in reaching top management (CEO or board director) positions especially in the private sector and corporate environment. This is explained as due to the unwillingness to accept women as professional equals. It is then recommended that corporate organisations become more women-sensitive and open to women's empowerment.

Thomas (2002) further states that the process of diversification in the workplace has been a slow one at company level. Efforts have been made by employers since the 1990s to include previously disadvantaged individuals in management positions. However management positions are still dominated by white males. Goetz and Hassim (2003) maintain that gendered preferences are engrained in the practices, structures and norms of organisations and are not a result of deliberate oversights in policy or unfounded choices by individuals. Goetz and Hassim (2003) contend that organisations have "forms of prejudice deeply embedded in organizational cognitive systems and work cultures." (p. 16). And according to Samuel (2001) "Any attempt at achieving substantive equality requires highly developed intergovernmental cooperation, critical analysis of state policies and programmes and an acceptance that conflicts of nights may often arise, since we are seeking equity, not merely similar treatment." (p. 27).

Mathur-Helm (2005) posits that women who work in the private sector only occupy marginal positions while representation of women in Government and Parliament is relatively higher. Women's presence is also particularly evident in non-profit and religious contexts and
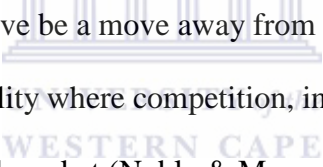
women are grossly underrepresented in most influential leadership positions. Government and public decisions are viewed as not holding major economic or financial implications hence women are not seen as a threat in government occupations. Private sector and corporate organisation decisions, however influence economies and may lead to significant implications.

It is unfortunate that women have not completely been accepted in occupations and positions that involve economic and financial decision-making. The process has been slow and at this rate Rhode and Kellerman (2007) are of the opinion that it could take up to a century for women to be equally represented in these positions. A similar pattern is evident with heads of state where there are very few women who have reached the status of president of a country. Globally, the workforce is segregated and stratified in terms of gender "and progress toward equity at the highest levels have been slow and uneven" (Rhode and Kellerman, 2007, p. 3).
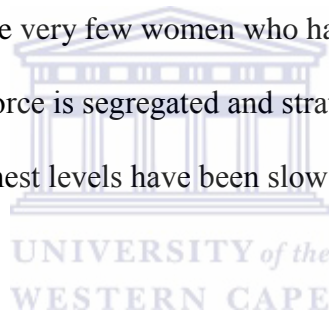
Day-O'Connor (2007) as well as Rhode and Kellerman (2007) are of the opinion that barriers that women face in attaining leadership positions have implications for the society we aspire to live in and contradict the notions of social justice and equal opportunities. Further they believe that it is of importance that the values, needs and life-experiences of women are reflected and represented in decision-making. Women are considered to have different perspectives that they can offer in the workplace that may also be beneficial. Diversity is considered to be beneficial in terms of the business performance of organisations thus barriers may also have financial implications.

Herring (2009) reports that diversity is considered to be beneficial in terms of creativity and better business solutions. Racial and gender diversity have been found to be associated with better business performance, resulting in increased sales, more customers, as well as better earnings and profit as illustrated by Herring (2009). Other research has also found that organisations that have women occupying top management positions benefit from positive fiscal returns (Catalyst, 2004) as well as ethical outcomes (Bell, McLaughlin & Sequeira, 2002). Thus inequality in senior management may also have a negative impact on organisations (Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007). The presence of women in leadership positions can also be beneficial in that these women will serve as examples who will encourage subsequent generations to aspire to these positions and disprove beliefs that women are not capable of holding leadership positions (Day-O'Connor, 2007; Rhode & Kellerman, 2007)

In addition, there seems have be a move away from the equality agenda to an emphasis on individual responsibility where competition, individuality, self-reliance and efficiency are praised in the global market (Noble & Moore, 2006). This school of thought advocates that with hard work and talent everyone can make it. However, it completely ignores the fact that there are still inequities that need to be addressed. This can be considered as a move back to patriarchal and heterosexist practices where women's needs are disregarded. Differences in leadership styles may be insignificant but gender differences in the workplace do indeed exist, in the form of inequities and the underrepresentation of women in certain occupations and positions specifically those of power, decision-making and leadership (Shefer, 2001)

Pandor (2005) states that the South African labour force has a gendered labour division and men are viewed as leaders and women followers (as cited in Mathur-Helm,

2011). This is evident specifically in business and the private sector. Literature has also pointed to people preferring men as leaders and this makes it difficult for women to break the glass ceiling in the corporate sector (Eagly, 2007; Alvesson & Billing, 2009). However, the traits that women are traditionally thought to possess are increasingly being recognised as beneficial for leadership. Being warm, communal and understanding translates into having good interpersonal skills and female leaders are also viewed as being more transformational than male leaders (Eagly, 2007 and Catalyst, 2005). This does not necessarily mean that women are better leaders than men, however, this points to the possibility of reconciling women's gender roles with their leadership roles.

Wood (2008) states that irrespective of government legislation, more educational participation and an increase in the entry of women in the labour force as well as in management positions very few women actually make it into senior management. As has illustrated, there is a gross underrepresentation of women in leadership positions in South Africa. Further, gender inequality in South Africa is rife. Gender inequality in the labour force is usually attributed to gender based discrimination and prejudice that disadvantage women from obtaining senior leadership positions. Apartheid South Africa was divided across race, gender and class hierarchies. With democracy, redress follows, however it seems the process is much slower in leadership positions especially in the business/corporate sector. Inequality becomes of concern when there has been an increasing number of educated women and potential leaders. Noble and Moore (2006) recommend that

> "future research needs to adopt an agency approach that situates women in work and who aspire to leadership positions and those who have assumed these positions become the subject of study, that their experiences and aspirations become the centre of the analysis to help explore the ways in which they make sense of their world and the way women

shape and change their own practices, which are socially and organisationally mediated by access to power." (pp. 601-602).

In exploring the perceptions and experiences South African female individuals in leadership this study aims to address the above recommendation by Noble and Moore. In addition, we can gain a better understanding of gender and leadership dynamics in the organisational context as well as seek out strategies for women's career advancement from individuals who are knowledgeable and experienced within leadership positions.

CHAPTER 3

METHOD

3.1   Introduction

The aim of the research study was to explore female senior managers' experiences and perceptions of their gender and leadership roles. Thus the research proposed to gather information on the perceptions and experiences of gender and leadership from female individuals in senior management positions. In order to do so a qualitative approach was best suited for the study. This next section will focus on the methodological considerations in relation to the research design, participants, data collection method and procedure, data analysis and ethical considerations. In addition a reflection on validity and reflexivity will be provided.
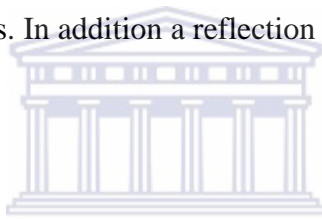
3.2   Methodological Framework

This study implemented an exploratory qualitative approach. Qualitative research allows for the researcher to explore people's perceptions and experiences as these may be difficult to measure (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). It is concerned with the individual's perspective (Howitt, 2010). This type of research takes researchers into the natural setting and allows us to explore participants' points of view as well document their understandings of the social world (Miller & Glassner, 2011). It also helps us in making sense of the human experience within the context in which it occurs (Kelly, 2006). When we embark on qualitative research we seek to find meaning that participants attach to social interactions (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). According to Howitt (2010) qualitative research generates extensive data that is also rich and it provides us with "complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue" (Mack, Woodsong, Macqueen, Guest & Namey,

2005, p. 1). Qualitative research is thus grounded in lived experience and is interpretive (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

Given the nature of the topic the exploratory qualitative approach was best suited for the study. In addition, the bulk of research on leadership and gender has been quantitative as is evident in the literature review and a qualitative study provides us with a different perspective. Further, gender and leadership research has focused on subordinates' or colleagues' perceptions of women in senior management positions. It appears that the experiences of these women have been largely ignored and it was the researcher's wish to explore their experiences not only in the workplace but also with respect to their gender roles and home and family lives.

3.3   Participants

In obtaining participants purposive sampling was used based on the objectives of the study. In purposive sampling participants are selected intentionally based on the assumption that they can make a meaningful contribution to the study (Klenke, 2008). It was thus assumed that the selected participants would be able to share their experiences of being a female senior manager. Participants were identified through recommendations by gatekeepers who worked in the teams that the participants managed and led. These gatekeepers were personal contacts of the researcher. In addition, recommendations for additional participants were made by participants who had already been interviewed. This is known as snowball or chain-referral sampling which is normally used to find individuals in "hidden populations" or in other words groups that are not easily accessible (Mack et al., 2005).

Participants were also selected using specific criteria. The individuals selected occupied senior management position(s) in various industries within the private sector. A senior manager in this instance referred to an individual who is responsible for the leadership and management of a group of people. These individuals were also based in Cape Town and Pretoria as these areas are considered to be economic hubs and were thus suitable for the study. The study consisted of six South African female participants who had worked for at least a year as senior managers within the private sector in Gauteng and the Western Cape. The participants were aged between 33 and 47 years old.

Five of the participants were married. Of these married participants three of them had 2 children each and one participant had one child. All the participants' children were under 18 and living at home. With respect to race the study consisted of three White participants, two Black participants and one Indian participant. Each of the participants had at least a post-matric qualification and the sectors in which they worked included financial and accounting services (insurance/risk management and internal auditing), oil and gas and environmental services. **Table 1** outlines the demographic characteristics of the sample. For the purpose of the discussion and in upholding anonymity pseudonyms/ initials will be used when referring to the study participants.

As has been shown in the literature review there is a small population of female individuals in senior management positions, specifically in the business and private sector. This then justifies the methods that were employed in obtaining participants and makes a qualitative exploratory method more appropriate for the current study. It is also important to note that qualitative research does not aim to generalize its findings thus a small sample size should not be a great cause of concern (Klenke, 2008).

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the sample

Socio-demographic characteristic		Number of Participants
Age	30-39	4
	40-49	2
Education	Diploma	2
	Undergraduate Degree	1
	Postgraduate Qualification	3
Socio-demographic characteristic		Number of Participants
Marital status	Unmarried	1
	Married	5
Ethnicity	Black	2
	White	3
	Indian	1
Industry sector	Financial and Accounting Services	3
	Environmental Services	1
	Oil and Gas Industry	2

3.4   Data Collection

The interview method was used in the study. According to Seidman (2006) we

conduct interviews because we are interested in what people have to say. We are interested in

hearing their stories and believe that they are of worth. An interview is an interactional

(Miller & Glassner, 2011) and meaning-making process where the participant tells their story

(Seidman, 2006). Interviews provide us with insight into the meanings that individuals attach

to their experiences which are culturally and socially situated (Miller & Glassner, 2011).

Interviews also elicit opinions, feelings and experiences (Mack et al., 2005). In addition, Howitt (2010) states that in qualitative interviewing the interviewee does most of the talking while the researcher guides the conversation in order to elicit responses that are in line with the objectives.
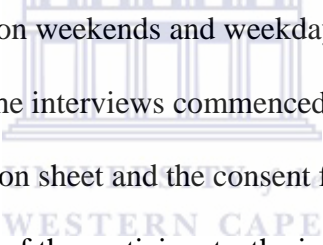
Data was collected through face-to-face semi structured interviews. Semi structured interviewing is a data collection method where the researcher approaches the interview with some pre-written questions in the form of an interview guide. An interview guide is a skeletal guideline of the interview (Howitt, 2010). The drafting of the guide was informed by the aims and objectives as well as by salient themes identified in the literature. These questions do not serve to limit the scope of the interview. However, they are constructed in a way that allows for some open-ended interviewing as well as probing in order to get authentic accounts that are not limited to likert-type questions and answer (Miller & Glassner, 2004).

The semi structured nature of the interviews allowed for probing as well as exploring any other themes that may not have been identified in the literature. In qualitative interviewing questions and probes are used by the interviewer in a manner that encourages the interviewee to share their experiences and thoughts on the topic freely. This flexibility allows for spontaneity and adaptation. Participants can then respond immediately and elaborate in greater detail (Mack et al., 2005).

3.5   Procedure

Prior to the commencement of the commencement of data collection a list of questions were compiled for the purposes of developing an interview guide. These questions were piloted on a female individual who holds a senior position in the workplace although in

the public sector. This process resulted in an interview guide (Appendix C). Recruitment of participants was done through gatekeepers, namely; individuals known to the researcher and working in the private sector as well as through the Business Women's Association. At this stage of the recruitment phase eight individuals had been identified, however, due to their busy schedules some of them could not commit to participating in the study. After participants had been identified they were contacted via emails that introduced the researcher as well as explicated the purpose of the research. The emails also contained attachments of the information sheet and consent form (refer to Appendix A and B) for the potential participants. The same was done for participants who were obtained through referrals by participants who had already been interviewed.

The interviews took place on weekends and weekdays at restaurants as well as at participants' workplaces. Before the interviews commenced the purpose of the study was explained. Copies of the information sheet and the consent form were taken with to the interview and with the permission of the participants, the interviews were tape recorded. The interview guide that was developed prior to the commencement of data collection was used to guide the interview process. The length of interviews ranged from approximately 25 minutes to 60 minutes. The disparity in the length of the interviews can be ascribed to the fact that some participants were more conversational than others. The audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and analysed.

3.6   Data Analysis

The information obtained through the interviews was analysed using thematic analysis. Howitt (2010) states that in thematic analysis we analyse what is said and not necessarily how it is said. Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis was used to analyse

the data. This model consists of six phases as put forth by Braun and Clarke (2006). These are; (1) familiarising yourself with your data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. The analysis of data involved reading interview notes and listening to the audio tapes and was done manually. The sections to follow will outline the thematic analysis process as proposed by Braun and Clarke.

In *data familiarisation*, the researcher familiarises him/herself with the transcripts or any other text that is used. This happens during the data collection and transcription processes. Listening to the audio recordings and reading transcripts repeatedly are important at this phase. The next step is *initial coding generation* which is the "line-by-line coding of the data" (Howitt, 2010, p. 174) where the data is scrutinized in order to identify codings. A coding is a label that describes the contents of a line or even paragraph. Codings then produce summaries that capture the essence of the data/text. A data-led approach was used where analysis of the data guided the generation of codes. "Coding do not emerge from the data according to Braun and Clarke (2006) but are actively created by the researcher trying out ideas in relation to their data" (Howitt, 2010, p. 175). At this stage initial codings that are similar may be combined and renamed so they have the same label.

Searching for themes (based on initial coding) entails generating of themes from codings determined from the previous step. This step requires more analytic effort, where the researcher looks for patterns in the codings. It involves "categorising the codings into meaningful groups of codings" (Howitt, 2010, p. 176). The process of searching for themes results in the generation of tentative themes. In the next step the researcher *reviews the themes*. This means the researcher examines themes in relation to the data. At this stage

themes have not been refined and clearly defined and the researcher is still organising the data and refining the tentative themes. This process of reviewing the themes may result in some themes being abandoned or modified. Some will be divided or subdivided and more themes may even be generated from reviewing the data (Howitt, 2010, Braun & Clarke, 2006)

The next step *involves theme definition and labelling*. This step involves clearly defining the themes. The result of this should be that themes are conceptually distinct. Here subthemes may also be identified and should also be defined and labelled. The final step in Braun and Clarke's model of thematic analysis is *report writing*. Here the researcher provides descriptions and explanations of the themes in the form of a report. The inclusion of excerpts from the data may be used to illuminate the findings (Howitt, 2010, Braun & Clarke, 2006).

3.7   Reflexivity and Validity

"[T]he research report is not transparent, but rather it is authored by a raced, gendered, classed, and politically oriented individual" (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 22) which may prove to be important in understanding experience. However, these orientations have a potentially biasing effect. When conducting qualitative research one needs to be sensitive and aware of the influence that the biases and assumptions one holds can have on the research process whether it be during the data collection or data analysis phases. Our experiences, values and attitudes may have a biasing effect on the research process (Howitt, 2010).

As a qualitative researcher one has to take into consideration one's "culture, age, gender, class, social status, education, family, political praxis, language, values" (Marshall &

Rossman, 2011, p.98). These can be accounted for by answering the following questions as suggested by Patton (2002, as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 98) these are I, as the qualitative researcher; "What do I Know? How do I know what I know? What shapes and has shaped my perspective? With what voice do I share my perspective? What do I do with what I have found? Reflexivity also involves self-analysis and the researcher will conduct the proposed study with the following saying in mind: know thyself. I am aware of my preconceived notions, prejudices and biases about the phenomena I wish to study. I am aware of my values and experiences as a young woman. I am also aware that these can filter into the research process.

Having read a newspaper article about the Commission on Gender Equality (CGE) lacking discourse on feminism this got me questioning my own position on feminism. In this article the CGE is criticized for lacking members who take a strong feminist stance. Gender activist Liopello Pheko in the article is quoted as saying that: "We also need people who are not just gender activists, but have a strong feminist discourse. We need that feminist discourse in education, justice and on broad social issues". This got me thinking of my own struggle in to making sense of feminism and what it really meant to me. For me this "F" word scared me and I found myself almost denouncing it as I was afraid I would be considered too radical. This coincided with the struggle to find myself and in forging an identity that I would be comfortable with.

As an African woman I found the duties that women carried out in the home to be unfair and always questioned the notion of gender prescriptions that tell us what we should and should not do. Witnessing working women come home after a long day at work to cook, clean and bathe the children while their husbands were waited on hand and foot troubled me
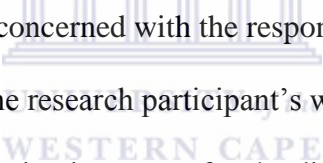
deeply. I could not understand why this was so. I never protested and would oblige when asked to do certain tasks as this is considered to be a part of my culture. The prevalence of women abuse in South Africa was also something I could not ignore. What was perplexing to me is that only a handful of women in leadership positions were truly invested in fighting for women's rights. Although I understood that not all women are gender activists or feminists it was still a matter of concern as women's issues are not only gender or feminist issues these affect all of humanity.

I have always known that women's rights matter to me immensely and that in one way or another I would like to dedicate my life to this area. I find that I have learnt a lot from this experience and it has reaffirmed my passion for gender and feminist work and also realise that there is still a lot to be done. One would expect that with time practices that have placed women in disadvantaged positions would cease to exist. However when people are not committed to transformation, injustices remain and certain populations bear the brunt of this. Having said this I realise that these views have the potential of tainting the research process. Further, as the literature I had studied largely indicated that stereotypes and prejudice within the workplace were still prevalent I did not want this to affect the process by trying to find these within the study participants' experiences. It was important that I embark on this study with an open mind and record as well as report the participants' experiences as accurately as possible.

Howitt (2010), states that validity in qualitative research involves detailing the processes and methods involved in data collection and data analysis. This is in line with the concept of rigour. Rigour in qualitative research is important in order to ensure that data collection is rigorous and detailed. Further, when research is conducted in this manner it

ensures that the data that is interpreted is usable. This can be achieved through accuracy, integrity and honesty throughout the research process (Howitt, 2010). To ensure that these principles were adhered to, ethical and other practical considerations were taken into account in the preparation for the research, collection and analysis of data as well as in reporting of the results. In the preparation and in conducting the literature review the information that was collected and is presented here has not been altered or incorrectly reported. In addition, making use of a tape recorder and taking extensive interview notes meant that data was collected more accurately in order to ensure that correct information could be analysed and reported. The thoughts and the experiences of the participants were also reported as accurately as possible and have not been manipulated or misrepresented.

3.8   Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are concerned with the responsibilities of the researcher as well as the rights of the participants. The research participant's wellbeing needs to be a top priority. The researcher needs to maintain respect for the dignity of the participants. These participants need to be informed about the research and have the right to choose whether or not to participate. This is done through informed consent which means ensuring that participants know and understand what participation in the study entails and that participation in completely voluntary (Mack et al., 2005).

Ryen (2011) states that informed consent means that the participant is informed that they are being researched as well as about what the research entails. They also need to be aware that they can withdraw from the research at any point. It is also imperative that the privacy of participants is respected and that confidentiality is maintained. Maintaining confidentiality means that the participant's identity and the location in which the research

takes place are protected. Trust also needs to be established in the researcher-participant relationship (Ryen, 2011). These ethical considerations are line with those of the University of the Western Cape.

Prior to the interviews participants were provided with an information sheet clearly stating the purpose, objectives and procedures of the study. Consent was obtained using consent forms. Participants were also afforded the opportunity to ask any questions they had. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured at all times. It was also important that rapport was built with the participants prior to the interviews in order to gain their trust. Although challenging, an attempt was made to gain rapport via email by continuously staying in contact with the participants as it was not possible to meet in person due to their busy schedules. The interactions can be described as warm and frank and the participants were very accommodative and willing to share their experiences with me. I found that some of the participants were interested in my studies and I was able to share my own experiences in this regard. Participants were also reassured that any information shared would be confidential and any identifying information would be not included in the study. In addition, pseudonyms are used to further protect the participants' identities.

3.9   Conclusion

This chapter provided a discussion of the method of the research study. It looked at the research design, selection and identification of participants, procedure, data analysis method, ethical considerations and validity and reflexivity. The following chapters will present the findings and provide a discussion of these findings in relation to the literature review.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Discussion of the Findings

4.1 Introduction

The aim of the study was to explore perceptions and experiences of female managers with regard to gender and leadership. This chapter will focus on these perceptions and experiences as explicated by the study participants. Braun and Clarke's (2006) method of thematic analysis was made use of in analysing the data. The thematic categories that emerged from the study were; leadership and gender, barriers and challenges to the advancement of women, work/life balance, support structure and cracking the glass ceiling. In the discussion of these thematic categories extracts from the interviews will also be presented. In addition, the findings of the study will be supplemented with relevant literature and in making sense of the findings the thematic categories will be looked at from a theoretical perspective, specifically making use of the social role theory and the role congruity theory. Prior to this discussion a brief demographic of the overview will be provided in order to give a sense of the characteristics of the sample.

4.2   Thematic Categories

This section will focus on a discussion of the thematic categories that emerged in the study. Five thematic categories were identified, these are: leadership and gender, barriers and challenges to the advancement of women, work/life balance, support structure and cracking the glass ceiling. Within each of these thematic categories there are primary themes. In addition to the primary themes, related secondary themes will be discussed. The table presented below (Table 2) illustrates the thematic categories, primary themes and the related secondary themes.

Table 2

Thematic Categories, Primary Themes and Related Secondary Themes

Thematic Category	*Primary Themes*	*Related Secondary Themes*
4.2.1 Leadership and gender (pp. 51-60)	*4.2.1.1 Characteristics leadership (p. 51)*	
	4.2.1.2 Participants' leadership styles(p. 56)	
	4.2.1.3 Gender differences in management and leadership styles(p. 58)	
4.2.2 Barriers and challenges to the advancement of women (pp. 60-77)	*4.2.2.1 Stereotypes and prejudice (p. 61)*	
	4.2.2.2 Gender roles and family responsibility (p. 66)	
	4.2.2.3 Lack of (organisational) support (p. 70)	*4.2.2.3.1 By colleagues (p. 70)*
		4.2.2.3.2 Policy and legislation (p. 72)
	4.2.2.4 Individual/ Personal barrier(p. 75)	
4.2.3 Work/life balance (pp. 77-86)	*4.2.3.1 The workplace (p. 78)*	*4.2.3.1.1. Responsibilities as a manager (p. 78)*
		4.2.3.1.2. Relationships in the workplace (p. 79)
		4.2.3.1.3 Experiences of being in a management position (p. 80)
	4.2.3.2 Home and family (p. 82)	
	4.2.3.3 Planning, prioritising and organising (p. 83)	

Thematic Category	Primary Themes	Related Secondary Themes
	4.2.3.4 Health and wellbeing(p. 84)	
4.2.4 Support structure (pp. 86-89)	*4.2.4.1 Parents(p. 86)*	
	4.2.4.2 Spouse/husband (p. 87)	
	4.2.4.3 Hired help and nannies(p. 87)	
4.2.5 Cracking the glass ceiling (pp. 89-96)	*4.2.5.1 Career and future aspirations (p. 90)*	
	4.2.5.2 Words of advice (p. 92)	
	4.2.5.3 Strategies for change: cracking the glass ceiling (p. 95)	

4.2.1 Leadership and gender. This section focuses on how the study participants made sense of leadership, specifically with regard to characteristics of a leader and differences between males' and females' management and leadership styles as identified by the study participants. In addition, by drawing on the participants' reports of how they approached their roles in the workplace the study participants' leadership and management styles will be explicated. Thus the three major points to be discussed are (1) characteristics of a leader and (2) the participants' leadership and management styles and (3) perceived gender differences in leadership and management styles.

4.2.1.1 Characteristics of leadership. When asked about what leadership meant to them the study participants indicated several attributes that they perceived as being qualities

of a leader. The qualities identified by the participants were strategic planning, collaboration,

compassion, humility, and empowering, inspiring and motivating.

One of the most prominent characteristics of a leader as identified by the participants

was **_strategic planning_**. The participants were of the opinion that strategic planning and

thinking were important in carrying out one's leadership role;

> GS: *Leadership for me is… being able to think strategically*
>
> SC: *you need to be able to think strategically, think about how this is going to impact on
> higher level*

Strategic planning thus entailed looking at the bigger picture, being able to plan but

also, as the next extract explicates, allowing others to give input and as well as involving

them when carrying out the plan;

> NN: *it's about getting the other person to understand what is the bigger picture and also
> the leader then taking this person with them. So it's about providing the strategic
> direction but also letting the other person provide input in terms of how to get to that
> strategic direction.*

Strategic planning was thus not viewed as a solo activity but as an act that involved others

with whom one works with. This is closely linked to the next characteristic to be discussed,

that of collaboration. Collaborating with others in the making of strategic plans was therefore

viewed as being important.

Similar to the current study Wood (2003) found that female managers placed more

importance on strategic vision and the ability to anticipate organisational needs than did their

male counterparts, and when CEOs were asked what some of the critical areas required by

organisations for senior executives a highly rated response was strategic planning/change

management skills (Opportunity Now, 2000). Shapiro (nd) defines a strategy as an overall

plan or approach and a strategic plan as one that provides a bigger picture of where you are going and what you are doing to get there. A strategic plan looks at what you want to achieve and how you will go about achieving it as opposed to day-to-day activities (Shapiro, nd). According to Smit, Cronje, Brevis and Vrba, (2011) in addition to organising, leading and controlling, planning is a management function that is used determining where an organisation wants to be in the future. Smit et al. (2011) add that this normally involves the mission, vision and goals. With planning being a management function it thus makes sense that some participants would feel that it was an important aspect of being a leader.

As has already been alluded to in the above discussion, collaboration was also viewed as being one of the important aspects of being a leader;

> *NN: it's about providing the strategic direction but also letting the other person provide input in terms of how to get to that strategic direction.*

> *BL: It should be like a democracy. It shouldn't be a dictatorship… You gotta listen to…all the parties*

> *AD: I see a leader as more of a coach, as somebody who collaborates with others rather than sort of give instructions.*

As can be seen by the above extracts collaborating with others was valued by the participants. Further, in collaborating with them, it also meant trusting subordinates in that they would be able to carry out their tasks to the best of their abilities;

> *AD: a leader is not afraid to trust their subordinates to do that they do best.*

Collaborative behaviour in the organizational context has only been acknowledged recently in management and leadership literature and is increasingly becoming a valued characteristic of a leader. This characteristic is linked to the people-focused (Gill, 2006) type

of leadership as well as the transformational leadership where more emphasis is placed on interpersonal relationships (Bass, 1998) and has been associated more with female leaders. Eagly et al. (2003) also found in a meta-analysis on leadership styles that female leaders were more likely to be transformational than male leaders. Subordinates have also been found to perceive female leaders as having transformational leadership styles (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001).

In addition an interviewee in a paper by Malinga (2005) perceived giving one's subordinates independence was something a leader would do. This was also identified by a participant (AD) who believes that a leader is also not afraid to trust their subordinates to carry out their tasks without supervision. In doing so subordinates also learn to be independent and grow in the process. Compassion was another quality that was identified as being a characteristic of leadership;

> CS: I think compassion is incredibly important. Being able to understand where other
> people are coming from
> BL: and it's all about people and empathy and compassion

Compassion can also be linked to the people-focused (Gill, 2006) type of leadership as well as the transformational leadership (Bass, 1998) as more emphasis is placed on interpersonal interaction. Beyond just interpersonal interaction however, showing empathy, establishing a compassionate relationship and understanding the people with whom one works with was deemed to be important. Empathy was found to be an important personality characteristic for leadership positions by Amondi (2011). In addition Booysen (2001) found that South African female managers in the retail industry placed emphasis on participation and collaboration as well as empathy and intuition.

Some of the participants felt that possessing the quality of being humble was characteristic of being a good leader;

CS: I think very importantly is someone who is able to be humble in their leadership

MJ: humbleness actually…I think that is a very good quality of a leader

Certain individuals were also considered to be good models of what a leader is. These individuals included Mahatma Gandhi and Nelson Mandela;

MJ: a very good example is Nelson Mandela. I mean he's that absolute icon of being that leader that just nobody can, can try to even equalise

CS: I think about people like Ghandi and you know Mandela

These individuals have been considered to possess the quality of humility, a characteristic that was already identified as being an aspect of leadership. However in identifying these individuals this highlights the fact that most of the time when we think of leaders we think famous male leaders, irrespective of whether they are good or bad (Kelleher, 2005). This affirms that female leaders have not yet gained the prominence and recognition thus giving male leaders more recognition.
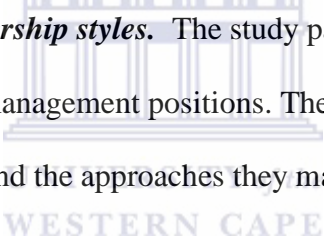
Empowering, inspiring and motivating others were also stated as being an important aspect of being a good leader;

MJ: It's empowering the people below you

NN: Taking the people with you, inspiring the people

GS: Leadership for me is motivating the people under you to work together towards a common goal and a good leader does that

Followers sometimes look to their leaders for motivation, guidance and direction. The ability to provide this was identified by the participants as they cited empowerment, inspiration and motivation as essential characteristics of a leader. Javitch (2009) also cites inspiration as one of the characteristics of superior leaders and Booysen (1999) found that in addition to encouraging collaboration and participation, the South African female leadership profile also includes support and empowerment. Further, in a study by Booysen (2001) it was found that empowerment was emphasised by female managers in the retail industry. In addition, Eagly et al. (2003) found that on a transformational subscale of motivational inspiration a female advantage was demonstrated, meaning that women managers were more likely to be motivational toward their subordinates.

4.2.1.2 Participants' leadership styles. The study participants relayed how they approached their leadership and management positions. They spoke about the relationships they had with their subordinates and the approaches they made use of in managing their teams. Firstly, the relationship or interactions that one has with the people one works with appeared to form an integral part of the leadership and management styles that the participants employed.

> *MJ: I think the important one is to know the people…you need to get time to know the people and listen.*

Most of the participants employed a relational and more person-centred style and were more compassionate and caring toward their subordinates. They also showed an interest in their teams' wellbeing and were more open toward them;

> *GS: I try to instil into them the fact that they can come to me with anything. Whether it is work relations, whether it is personal life, they can come to me with anything*

> *NN: I've also got an open door policy so people can walk in and walk out*

This relational style of leadership was viewed to be in stark contrast with styles that men are more likely to use which were viewed as being more distant;

> *GS: as a female, would go up and say is everything okay whereas a male manager they won't even notice*

Consistent with these findings, Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) in their study found that women rated highly in terms of being understanding to others, being aware of the feelings of others and being warm. Further, Booysen (1999) reviewed literature on the leadership styles of female managers it was found that there's a second wave of female leaders who do not conform to the male corporate culture or imitate the type of leadership style that has been associated with male managers. These second wave of female managers are more encouraging of participation and supportive and caring toward others. They make use of their feminine skills that are more relationship-focused and interactional and transformational (Booysen, 1999). These characteristics are also increasingly becoming more valued in the organisational context.

In addition incorporating both the feminine and masculine characteristics was viewed as being beneficial while aggressiveness was viewed as being counterproductive;

> *BL: As soon as you get aggressive… you see their barriers going up straight away…as soon as you are too negative people tend to rebel. They tend to do the opposite. So you have to be firm and yet nice*

> *AD: I think you need both characters; you need both the masculinity and the feminine side… I have found that when I allow some form of emotion be it in terms of showing how I feel, whether I am happy or not happy and sharing it actually works with my team where it is at first I used to be very harsh and very sort of direct… and then I realised that when I put in that little bit of emotion to it and not be afraid to share that, it actually works*

Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) identified in their study a shift in the perception of leadership as moving towards androgynous styles where feminine and masculine strengths are combined as being more valued. One of the participants of the current study also viewed the amalgamation of styles as being more effective and adapted this into her leadership style.

4.2.1.3 Perceived gender differences in leadership styles. The study participants identified differences between men and women as being a reality and these often filtered into the way that the two genders, as managers, manage and lead their teams. Women were viewed as being more warm and communal, better organisers and able to connect with their teams.

A perception that was shared by some participants was that men and women are different and these differences translate into and can also be observed in the workplace. A stereotypical perception that came up was that women are more emotional;

> *MJ: men are built to provide and protect. Uhm women is the emotional side*

One participant was of the opinion that women were better at organising and better at time management;

> *BL: I personally think that females are better organisers. They know how to organise time. They're very good with time management*

Female managers were also viewed as being able to connect more on a personal level with the teams they worked with. And being able to do so was seen as being important in that peoples' personal lives were viewed as having an effect on work life;

> *GS: What I found actually as a manager females tend to be a lot more aware how the team is doing on a personal level and able to assist them, because obviously your personal life affect your work life.*

The same participant also viewed this level of personal interaction as being an advantage for female leaders;

> *GS: I think that is the advantage that women leaders have is we are more in tune with other peoples' states of mind.*

In addition, there were certain qualities that women were perceived as having that set them apart from men. These are seen as advantageous for female managers. Being emotional was viewed by some participants as giving women "the edge" and being a beneficial personality characteristic that could even translate well in the boardroom;

> *DA: we always worried that as women we get… seem to be too emotional and as a result we are not strong, but actually that emotion is what gives us, it gives us an edge because if you can bring up children and mould them to behave in a certain way that same strength actually you can use that in an organisation.*

> *BL: men and women are different in their way of thinking sometimes. So it's good to get both sides of the pattern you know in a meeting.*
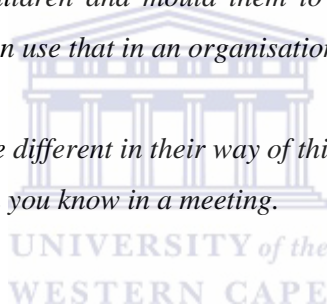
Similarly, Opportunuity Now (2000) found that female CEOs believed that female managers are different from male managers. They believed that they made better managers because they were more sensitive and intuitive. Carless (1998) also found that women managers viewed themselves to be more transformational than men particularly with regard to interpersonal behaviour and in a meta-analysis comparing men and women on their leadership styles Eagly et al. (2003) found that female leaders tended to employ more transformational styles than male leaders. In the current study gender differences were not seen as disadvantageous but were celebrated by the participants. What is important is that these differences were viewed as being valuable in the workplace and possessing a mixture of characteristics in the workplace was viewed as being good.

In concluding this thematic category, it appears that the participants value and employ very similar styles of leadership. These leadership styles are considered to be distinctly feminine and this also emerged in this study. The way they understood leadership was also in line with this as the characteristics identified were more related to the transformational and person-centred leadership styles. Some participants were also of the opinion that there were differences between men and women and that these also influenced the way in which male and female managers behave in the workplace. In addition to the issues discussed in this thematic category the participants identified various barriers and challenges that not only prevent women from advancing to senior positions but also make it difficult for female managers to perform their roles in the workplace and at home. These will be discussed in the next thematic category.

4.2.2 Barriers and challenges to the advancement of women. There are barriers and challenges that do not only prevent women from obtaining management positions but also affect women who have already obtained management positions in that they are unable to reach the highest levels of leadership in organisations. These barriers are often referred to as the glass ceiling which according to Carli and Eagly (2001) is a metaphor for the subtle and blatant barriers that prevent women from advancing to leadership positions. According to Oakley (2000) there are three categories that can be used in explaining barriers that consequently lead to the existence of a glass ceiling; these are "(1) corporate practices such as recruitment, retention, and promotion; (2) behavioral and cultural causes such as stereotyping and preferred leadership style; and (3) structural and cultural explanations rooted in feminist theory." (As cited in Weyer, 2007, p. 483). Some participants had this to say about these barriers and challenges;

GS: but then this whole glass ceiling concept for women, that no matter how hard you try you will never. I have seen that happen a few times, that people just do not see women in director roles or really senior roles

MJ: It's not a ceiling, I don't think that there's a ceiling anymore. I must be quite honest, the opportunities are there

The above excerpts give us an idea of the participants' experiences and perceptions with regard to barriers and challenges to the advancement of women. The general perception is that there has been progress in women moving up the corporate ladder, however this has been slow. The sections to follow aim to provide an analysis of these challenges and barriers with the hope that this will provide us with a better understanding of how these affect women in general as well as how this impacts the study participants' lives. The barriers and challenges that will be discussed are; stereotypes and prejudice, gender roles and family responsibility, lack of (organisational) support and the individual/personal barrier. These barriers can also be broadly categorised as socio-cultural barriers, organisational barriers and individual barriers.

4.2.2.1 Stereotypes and prejudice. The interviewees were aware of the various stereotypes that have come to be associated with women leaders. Stereotypes here referred to the misconceptions and preconceptions about women. These were viewed as having influenced how these women are perceived in the organisational context. Further, the interviewees were also aware of the prejudices that career women sometimes face in the workplace. The participants reflected on some common stereotypes and misconceptions about women in the workplace;

NN: people think that women are emotional and they tend to lose their toys easily…sometimes they think that they are not as resilient… they're not as hard working

AD: you experience comments like you show up at work and you get told you know this is not a fashion parade place you know

Some of the stereotypes identified by the participants were that women were viewed as being more emotional, less hardworking and less resilient. In addition one participant stated that women are also narrowly viewed as placing more emphasis on their looks and how they present themselves and this may undermine their abilities. Braun and Clarke (2009) argue that there is a gendered ideology of femininity around emotionality and submissiveness that continues to reinforce the idea that women are unsuited for certain positions, that are usually high paying, and this has resulted in there being a gender division in the workforce. Although the women in this study viewed being in tune with their emotions as advantageous, as illustrated in the above thematic category, this is sometimes viewed as a weakness by men and even by other women as will be illustrated soon. Women are thus viewed as not belonging in certain positions and continue to be affected by stereotypes even when they do make it into senior positions.

The idea of women being difficult or challenging also came up;

NN: sometimes people have had some difficult or challenging experiences with women and then they then think all women are like that

This view of women as being difficult is associated with the Queen Bee phenomena. Queen bees are women who have reached senior leadership positions by distancing themselves s from other women and in the process prevent junior women from moving up (Derks, Ellemers, van Laar & de Groot, 2011; Johnson & Mathur-Helm, 2011). These women are viewed as being more aggressive, preferring to work with men and less supportive of other women (Cherne, 2003). In focus groups conducted by Opportunity Now (2000) senior women felt that when women act in similar ways to men for example by coming off too

strong they are negatively evaluated and are referred to as blunt whereas when men act in the same way it is considered to be assertive. As a result people become unhappy about working with Queen Bees (Gini, 2001).

In their study Derks et al. (2011) found that women who exhibit Queen Bee behaviour displayed low identification with their gender upon entering the workforce and had experienced gender discrimination when moving up. Queen Bee behaviour was thus found not to be due to high competitiveness but as a way of pursuing ambitions as well as coping within predominantly male and sexist workplaces. This illustrates that the effects of gender discrimination can be far-reaching and women are affected in many ways by gender discrimination. Prejudice also filters into the recruitment and promotion process, as identified by one of the participants who heads the Human Resources department at the company she works at;
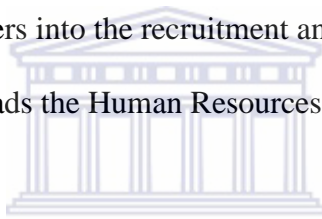
> *NN: I mean I was involved in a recruitment for one of our senior positions… we were looking for a female by the way, as in first prize we were looking for a female and then if not, obviously a male, so we had to choose from two equally competent candidates. One woman, one male and our CEO who is obviously male, chose then to appoint the male…I mean it was still a good candidate and I think that the woman came out as if she was very loud and all that and I feel that sometimes you get judged too harsh, it's almost like it's OK for a male to be like that but not for a woman so there's kind of certain things that they look at if you're a woman*

Another participant relays hers story on her experiences of prejudice;

> *AD: Well you know talking about boys club there was a few years ago a position that was posted and I was actually more than qualified for the job, I was the right person for the job, but there was just no ways they were going to put a woman in that job because they had a club and I was seen as a threat, somebody who was going to come in and spoil things in that club and they took a guy who was not competent, somebody that they could influence and steer him in a certain direction, because they knew they couldn't*

steer me in the direction they wanted to steer me in because I would have been focused and I knew what I wanted to do, so they appointed a guy

Similar to the current study in a Spanish study, Bagues and Esteve-Volart (2012) found that in the hiring process there was a preference for males. Rudman and Glick (2001) found in an experiment that a female applicant who is described as agentic was discriminated against and generally considered as unlikeable while the female applicant who was shown as nice and competent was not discriminated against. It also appears that men at times deliberately give women a hard time in the workplace;

GS: There are still men that do not give you the same respect that they would give a male colleague, that where you feel they make it deliberately difficult or they just disregard any effort that you put in and the only conclusion that you can draw is then because I am a female

AD: actually when I started the job the Chairman at the time was a guy, an elderly guy, he was in his sixties and he just refused to work with women. He would say no that person, all they good for is arranging functions, he would say it like that and he wanted you to call him Daddy. You know you couldn't address him by his first name, you know he was hard-core

Women as well were also said to prefer male managers;

NN: even women they do, they feel that they would prefer to have a male manager

Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) state that when asked a lot of women will not acknowledge that they have personally experienced any discrimination however they are more willing to share the experiences of others. This was also the case in the current study;

BL: you always get it in a minor degree but for me personally… Nothing I haven't been able to cope with

CS: I wouldn't specifically say that there was a particular incident where I was prejudiced, but I am very well aware of which of my clients respect me as a woman

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One participant adds that race is also an issue in the workplace, thus the is a form of double discrimination against women of colour;

> *NN: I don't think it has to do with just that because I'm a woman I think sometimes it has to do also with the race. I think most of the time, but yes it's a double because you are a woman and you are black.*

Jones and Schneider (2010) state that women may be discriminated against and face bias due to stereotypical beliefs that they have soft values. They are therefore perceived as being incapable of handling positions that are more rigid and were traditionally viewed as more masculine. Pande and Ford also (2011) report that individuals may discriminate against women based on personal taste and a preference for male leaders. This preference is based on the societal norm that leadership is a masculine activity and women can't be leaders (Pande & Ford, 2011). Beaman et al. (2009) found that in elections voters had a personal preference for male leaders and discriminated against women based on this.

In a South African study Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) found that 78% of the participants believed that gender discrimination prevented women from advancing into senior positions. In addition, for black women they experience an intersection of race and gender discrimination as identified by one of the participants and this makes it even more difficult for black women to advance as top management in the private sector is mostly occupied by white men (Research Focus, 2009). Prejudice and stereotypes can thus be viewed as barriers or challenges as they have an impact on the way career women are perceived and treated in the workplace and have at times led to women being excluded from leadership positions.

4.2.2.2 Gender roles and family responsibility. Another barrier to the advancement of women is that of gender roles and family responsibility. Gender roles in this instance

referred to the traditional home-maker role that has been ascribed to women while family responsibility denotes the activities that women are often expected to perform such as taking care of children or the elderly. The study participants viewed these as some of the reasons that women choose to leave their careers. The participants also relayed stories of women they had encountered, some of whom had been colleagues, who had left their careers to be stay-at-home-moms.

When the participants are asked what they thought of traditional gender roles most of the participants stated that they did not subscribe to these;

> *AD: well that is what society expects you to do, but at the end of the day the individual has to make a decision. So I don't really subscribe to them. I always believe that it depends individually on the individual and I think the biggest challenge is for the individual not to succumb to those if it is not something that they want. So if we happen to be in a role that society expects you to be and be in that role because you want to be not because society expects you to be.*

> *NN: in terms of tradition and all the traditions, I don't necessarily aspire to or look or believe in all the traditions that put down women or that make women more inferior to men because that just goes against what I believe*

However, for NN there are some traditional practices she is able to adhere to because it matters to her husband;

> *NN: I'm not saying I don't agree with any of the traditions at all. I will understand that it needs to be done, however, I won't, I'm not going to live like that, so there are certain things. I mean my husband and I have these discussions all the time. I mean one of that is because when you get married you have to then be a makoti you know like you go and work and whatever and I think, but why must it be that I have to go and work and dress like this and whatever and we have those discussions and I've agreed that I will do it because it matters to him.*

A participant explains how societal norms and gender roles affect the lives of women;

AD: I don't have children, I am married, but society expects me to have children because I am married, but I chose not to because that is not what I want. Obviously you get judged by that and you get things thrown at you, you selfish, you this, you that but it is my decision

Weyer (2007) states that women are allocated different roles due to their gender, while men are viewed as breadwinners and agentic and women as homemakers and communal, and it is often expected that individuals conform to the roles assigned to them (Unger, 2001). These views result in there being expectations about women with regard to how they should and should not behave. And when they do not conform to these expectations they are negatively evaluated as also identified above by AD.

Often women need to make the choice between family and career. In the following extracts the participants express their thoughts about making this decision;

BL: some of my friends that are housewives…They want to stay home

MJ: She had to come to a stage where she need to choose between her kids and her career. And, and I think that is… I think it's very brave for women to make that decision.

It appears that the participants also have a high level of respect for women who choose to be home-makers. However, for one participant something that she wants to impart to her daughters is that it is possible to have a career and a family as it was possible for her to do so:

CS: I think those woman are very special and that they are able to do that. I mean I definitely couldn't be one of those woman, but in their way they giving to their children. What I would choose for my own daughters is to also be able to have children but make your mark in the world in another way as well. I think it is critical in my perspective I think it is critical for a woman's self-esteem to achieve beyond just the home, to be able to achieve elsewhere as well and to have her own independence financially and all of that. I think that is something that I really want to impart on my little girls

A similar sentiment is shared by another participant who would like to see women being

more independent;

> *BL: So it's still that very old fashioned view of the man as the provider. You know. It… disappoints me a little cause I'd like women to be independent   I'd like them to be completely independent*

The scarcity of women in senior positions was also attributed to gender roles and

family responsibility;

> *CS: this whole traditional concept as a woman when we have the children you the one that needs to take care of them and then it becomes logistically very difficult for an individual to do both. So at one point you need to make a decision and in those cases the decision normally leans more towards your family responsibility and then you settle, you are comfortable to settle at a certain level because that allows you as a woman to still work and to look after you family*

From this, it appears that women are viewed to be settling for more junior positions in the

workplace in order for them to be able to manage family responsibility as well as work at the

same time. However, working moms also experience challenges in balancing their work and

family role and irrespective of what positions women hold in the workplace they still have

family responsibilities;

> *GC: you do find that regardless of what level woman achieve they still the mothers, they are still the people running the house, they are still the ones that has those responsibilities or in most cases, still have those responsibilities and then their career as well, whereas men for some reason don't seem to inherit those responsibilities as much*

Even temporarily leaving one's job due to family responsibilities, however may pose

problems as one participant explains;

> *MJ: But unfortunately from a employer's side the industry is changing so much so it's actually to a disadvantage of a person being without of industry for 4-5 years coming back. They most probably will not be able to come back at the same position, probably*

need to start again. So it's a decision you need to make, am I willing to take that risk? In some cases you actually don't have a choice, you need to. I fully respect those.

Mathur-Helm (2006) in a study of female executives in the banking industry found that family obligations were considered to be a prominent barrier as women are more likely than men to take over the responsibility of taking care of the family. This in turn results in them compromising their careers and most South African women would much rather stay in a senior management position than move up to an executive one as they fear that they would have to carry extra burdens (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Senior women have been reported as saying that some male colleagues had wives at home to take care of the children (Opportunity Now, 2000). This gives them an advantage in that they are able to pursue their careers while their wives take care of the home responsibilities.

In an Opportunity Now (2000) survey the majority of senior women (83%) and CEOS (76%) agreed or strongly agreed that commitment to family responsibility is a barrier to the advancement of women. In the follow up interviews some participants also expressed that it was difficult to balance one's career and family life, with some having less time to spend with their children. Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) also found in their study that the dual role of being a mother or wife and a career woman was viewed as being a barrier although by a small proportion of the sample (38%). According to Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) this was due to the fact that women have come to terms with it and have come up with strategies of coping with it thus it was not a significant barrier for them. Some of these strategies will be discussed later on in the thematic category of work/life balance.

4.2.2.3 Lack of (organisational) support. Lack of support in organisations poses a challenge to working women as it may result in them experiencing the workplace as

unpleasant. Further lack of support can also be viewed as a barrier to moving up the corporate ladder. The study participants identified this as emanating from organisations in general, and from both male and female colleagues. In addition policy and legislation were viewed as not being sufficient with some participants expressing that in addressing the issue of the underrepresentation in leadership positions more needed to be done.

4.2.2.3.1 By colleagues. Male colleagues were viewed as sometimes being less supportive of women. A common issue that the participants identified as being a challenge for the advancement of women was the unwillingness of men to help women out;

> *LB: men at the top are afraid of losing their positions…Especially the older chaps they don't wanna give up the power*

> *AD: Men work in packs and you will see this; I see it in my company. You know when a new man is joining the management team or the company immediately other men come around and structure and they start doing things together.*

Men are viewed as banding together and providing support to one another while women are left out. A common activity that they engage in is playing sport, especially golf, together. It is perceived that during this activity men network and strategize;

> *AD: those guys they play golf, they decide who is going to be the next successor in a certain position when they playing golf.*

> *NN: in the work place you do find that there are cliques so you'll find that obviously the CEO being a man, if it is a man, that he will have this boys club and that still happens and then also would want to, so these people are kind of advantaged and they kind of know things and they spend a bit more time with him, even outside of work. They go and play golf together and so forth*

This idea of the lack of support from or the banding together of men is commonly referred to as the "Boys club" (Wood, 2006) and belonging to this club would then mean that

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men are more advantaged and are more likely to move up the corporate ladder faster than women;

> *NN: and if you are within the circles then it's easier for you to progress and then you find it's the guys that are obviously within that then who would then progress*

The golf sessions they have together were seen as opportunities to network, discuss strategies and decide on successors to senior positions, where women are often not included and thus may miss opportunities for promotion. Similarly, in their study on the advancement of women, Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) found that almost half of their participants (48%) felt that men in positions of leadership were unsupportive of women and that generally organisations did not have support mechanisms such as development and mentoring or coaching programmes for women. In the same study the old-boys club was also identified as being a barrier. However, it was not only men that were viewed as being less supportive but women too;

> *AD: It is competition and we don't welcome it, we see everything if a new person, a younger person comes then we always make a comment, you know maybe a younger person who is more highly educated than you are because times have changed and you suddenly you know we don't offer that level of support for each other. You sit in a meeting and you would see that guys will always have something to say and they always sort of back each other up. We don't do that…that it is biggest reason why you are not successful*

In support of this, Starr (2001, p.9) states that "Competition between women may go deeper than professional rivalry, to include sub-conscious jealousy and competition based on age or appearance (attractiveness, weight, dress sense)." Starr (2001) adds that this type of opposition is often displayed in a passive manner. In another study it was reported that women sometimes display what is called the "pull her down syndrome" where women bring each other down instead of being supportive of each other's progress (Hofmeyr & Mzobe,

2012). In that same study 64% of the women agreed that women were, in general, less supportive of each other. Managers have the potential to serve as mentors to junior colleagues but when they are not supportive this may pose a barrier to learning opportunities and grooming of successors and as a result have a smaller pool of talent to look into when seeking to fill senior positions.

4.2.2.3.2 Policy and legislation. Lack of or ineffective policy and legislation that support career women can also be a barrier to the advancement of women. When asked about workplace policy the study participants were not able to identify any formal policies that were in place with the exception of one participant who mentioned a nine day week within her workplace where employees were afforded the opportunity of working from home every second Friday.

> *NN: fortunately we've got, here we've got what they call the 9th day Friday which is every second week I get that Friday off where I can be able to work from home and also obviously do other things or not do work*

With regard to whether legislation has worked in terms of addressing women's issues, the participants had this to say;

> *NN: legislation, it's a starting point. So definitely it helps to have it but it doesn't address everything.*
>
> *GS: In theory yes. In practise not necessarily, but in theory definitely. Fortunate for us South Africa or the South African Constitution does not discriminate so in theory it's a definite yes*

From these extracts it appears that legislation has improved the lives of women in the workplace and has served as a point of reference in dealing with prejudice toward women.

In a survey by Opportunity Now (2000) when senior women were asked whether employment equality practices and policies had had an impact on their careers, it was found that only 29% of the respondents believed the impact had been positive in the careers with 40% believing the impact was positive for women in general. However, 49% of the senior women believed that equality policies and practices did not have any impact on their careers (Opportunity Now, 2000). These findings point to mixed feelings about equality policies and practices but also illustrate that on their own legislation and policies cannot address gender inequality in the workplace and specifically in leadership positions. Booysen (2007) contends that organisations that place more emphasis on filling quotas do not understand the true value of workplace diversity. It is argued that they should rather focus more on training and development that will arm previously disadvantaged groups with the skills for effective performance (Booysen, 2007).
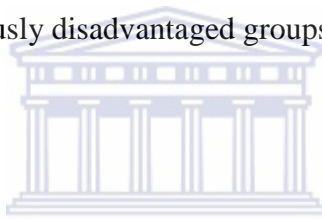
There were also problems associated with legislation;

NN: there's not so much monitoring of that legislation, I mean for example the employment equity, it's there but at the end of the day, so what gets done if you don't appoint women or if you discriminate against women and also sometimes because there are these implicit discrimination, it gets difficult for you to be able to pinpoint it because it's very subtle

Legislation is viewed as being only one aspect of addressing prejudice and gender inequality in the workplace. This participant believes that more needs to be done and legislation cannot fix it all;

NN: I think that we need to go beyond that now and there needs to be a bit more than just the legislation. I think it's about company understanding the value of true transformation but at the same time it's about monitoring that because unfortunately in South Africa there is still, it's very questionable

For her, monitoring is important but it is also imperative that organisations realise that there is a need for true transformation and that change can also be initiated by them. Participants in a study by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) stated that there needed to be more visible enforcement of the labour laws and initiation of the setting of quotas but also following up on progress and penalizing of organisations that do not meet equity targets.

A participant reflects on how implementing corrective measures in addressing gender equality may pose challenges;

> *AD: Well our industry [oil and gas] has been the biggest culprit there is a push now and they are under pressure to change quickly. I do see some challenges in that to be honest. They had all this time to try and bring people up and up-skilled them etcetera and they didn't do it and now they are being forced to do it in a short period of time… some people may not be ready so it could compromise a few things in the long run, but I am hoping that they will do it properly*

The issue here is that there is a danger in placing less qualified individuals in senior positions. These individuals may be viewed as tokens and inexperience may exacerbate the situation. Derks et al. (2011) also found that placing lone token individuals in leadership positions does not result in there being improvements in the opportunities for other individuals who belong to the same social group. A further suggestion with regard to legislation and policy was that;

> *MJ: Paternity leave should be longer…Because I mean the dad also needs to be with the kids as well*

This last statement exposes the unintended prejudiced nature of policy. The assumption that is made by these policies is that women need these more than men do. This perpetuates the idea that women should be the ones who are responsible for raising children. A catch-22 arises here as it could be argued that in extending paternity leave this impacts

negatively on productivity and companies stand to lose. However, this type of legislation may play a role in reinforcing traditional gender norms.

Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) argue that organizational cultures where male values dominate may have emotional and psychological effects on women in that they either become complacent or lose confidence and doubt themselves. When looking at whether supportive organisational practices have an impact on career women's satisfaction and wellbeing Burke et al. (2006) found that women who reported that their organisations were supportive of women were more satisfied with their jobs and careers and were less likely to suffer from emotional exhaustion or psychosomatic symptoms. This highlights the importance of organisational support for women. With women already having to go through various barriers and challenges as they try to move up the corporate ladder unsupportive organisational practices only serve to further exacerbate their ascent.

4.2.2.4 Individual/Personal challenges. Some of the study participants were of the opinion that women sometimes doubt themselves and are not confident in their abilities. This was identified as being one of the reasons that women don't aspire to senior positions and at times altogether do not apply for them;

> *AD: I would say not quite being confident enough, we never tell ourselves that we're good enough. We always don't think we're good enough and we are. We sometimes don't think we deserve it*

> *BL: I mean a lot of women think ohhh, they can't, they're not a man, they're not capable, like a man. That's absolute rubbish, you know, women are capable*

Lack of confidence was also viewed as even affecting job seeking behaviour in women;

> *AD: if a position is being advertised, you look at the requirements, these five minimum requirements and you think I shoo I only have three out of the five. And a guy doesn't*

> *even look at that when he looks at it, and you don't apply a result of that. The guy looks*
> *and say oh five, well I got three out of five and the guys will say, he won't say that I don't*
> *have all five. He will say I can do this and this and this for you. We will say or I can't do*
> *this and I can't do that and that is what our problem is*

Similarly, Desvaux, Devillard-Hoellinger and Meaney (2008) report that research conducted at HP indicated that women only apply for jobs when they believe they meet all the criteria while men respond to job listings when the think they meet 60% of the requirements. This lack of confidence gives men the edge over women as men do not place too much emphasis on what they cannot do but rather they focus more on what they can do. Even when women reach managerial positions lack of confidence prevents them from aiming higher;

> *GS: I think a lot of women think that they can't, that internally they feel that I might not*
> *be able to do this, because you find a lot of women at a fairly senior managerial level,*
> *but then they don't go any further and that could potentially be because they don't think*
> *that they can, so they don't enable themselves to move up*

A similar finding by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) was that lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem and intimidation were viewed as barriers to the advancement of women. In an Opportunity Now (2000) study female CEOs stated that they had observed women in general and women with whom they work with were more critical of themselves and lacked self-confidence in comparison to men. These women were perceived as being reluctant to put themselves up for promotion or special assignments and were also hesitant to emphasise their achievements. Mathipa and Tsoka (2001) also identified poor self-image as one of the barriers to the advancement of women. They argue that poor self-image is not something that women were born with but rather it has its roots in culture in that women are raised to act in certain way. The lack of suitable role models and peers in positions of leadership is also associated with poor self-image (Mathipa & Tsoka, 2001).

From the findings in this thematic category it appears that irrespective of legislation that is aimed at promoting gender equality within the workplace there are still barriers and challenges that women face in climbing the corporate ladder. These barriers are socio-cultural, organisational and individual in nature and the participants viewed these as some of the factors that have contributed to the slow progress in the advancement of women to senior positions and the resultant underrepresentation of women in leadership positions. However, irrespective of these barriers some women in senior management positions manage to balance their careers and lives outside of the work context.

4.2.3 Work/life balance. Work-life balance is defined as "achieving satisfying experiences in all life domains," and "To do so requires personal resources such as energy, time, and commitment be well distributed across domains" (Kirchmeyer, 2000, p. 81). This section focuses on issues relating to the participants' work and life domains and how they balance the two. Experiences of these domains overlap and experiences in one context tend to have an effect on another, hence they have been grouped into one thematic category. To illustrate career women's experiences with regard to managing work and home/life some of the participants had this to say;

> *MJ: most difficult thing is the balance… Like for instance today, I've got a hell of a lot of work but I just said to my husband, you go… the kids are mine for today.*

> *CS: I think finding balance as a mother and a wife and a career woman will be a lifelong challenge for all of us as women and there is no doubt in my mind that on some days my children win and on other days the company wins*

It appears that women experience challenges with regard to managing a career and having a family. Work/life balance thus becomes an important issue to look at. The participants' experiences and challenges with regard to work and home/life are organised into

four primary themes, these are; workplace, home and family, planning, prioritising and organising and health and well-being.

4.2.3.1 The workplace. The workplace forms an integral part of a career women's life as they spend most of their time here. It is for this reason that work responsibilities, work relationships, and experiences of being in a management position were explored.

4.2.3.1.1. Responsibilities as a manager. This section focuses on the study participants' everyday work duties and responsibilities within the workplace. Some of these responsibilities included managing, leading and mentoring a team of juniors as well as strategic planning and decision making within the respective organisations they work. In these following extracts the participants share what their work responsibilities are;

> *MJ: I need to assist with the strategic planning of the company…assist with the sustainability of the business. So we need to get more work, need to get clients and then ultimately we're responsible for delivering the project or whatever the case may be*
>
> *CS: I am the owner of the company. I obviously have to be dealing with things that relate to owning a business which is administrations, finances, staff those types of things*

In addition some participants mentioned responsibilities that were specifically related to the supervisory roles that they held in their respective workplaces;

> *GS: My current position is a managerial position mostly, so it is the managerial function over a team of about six people…So there is a lot of managerial responsibility but then there is also some functional responsibility, reviewing internal audit work, assisting with reporting, drafting reports and those kinds of things*
>
> *CS: because I have people who work with me I don't have to get involved in the detail as much. I perform very much a supervisory role*

Smit et al. (2011), report that planning organising, leading and controlling are managerial functions. These managerial functions emerged as illustrated in the above findings. The participants' responsibilities primarily involved strategic planning, interacting with clients and supervising subordinates. These responsibilities can also be described as planning and organising as well as managing and leading teams.

4.2.3.1.2. Relationships in the workplace.

The work relationships that female managers have with those they work with contribute to their experiences of the roles they occupy in their workplaces. This emerged in the anecdotes the participants provided about their relationships with colleagues, seniors and juniors. In general it appears that the participants experienced the relationships they had in the workplace as being pleasant;

> *NN: very good relationship with them, so I think we support each other and we get along well, obviously it depends, it differs from each manager. Some I'm closer to them and some it's very much a more working relationship but it's still amicable so I don't have an issue, I mean sometimes there is one or two people that get to me.*

With regard to the teams that the participants were in charge of the participants also had positive things to say;

> *GS: I think it is good. I try to instil into them the fact that they can come to me with anything, whether it is work relations, whether it is personal life*

> *CS: we are friendly with each other here, it is the environment I have created for all of us to work in, but I still have to be the boss sometimes. Yes it is a bit tricky sometimes, not always. I would like to think that we have an amazing, amazing camaraderie amongst us yes. And we work hard. We work incredibly hard, but we also have a lot of fun*

From what the participants have said it appears that they try to create environments that foster good relationships between themselves and the teams they lead. They encourage

openness and for one of the participants, fun. This is consistent with a previously discussed finding in this study that women leaders tend to employ transformational styles of leaderships where interpersonal relations are emphasized.

Wolfram, Mohr and Schyns (2007) found in their study on professional respect for men and women that female autocratic leaders or women who were role discrepant receive less respect from their followers than did democratic male leaders who are gender role discrepant. However there were no differences between democratic women and autocratic men who are gender role congruent (Wolfram et al., 2007). This finding suggests that women may receive more support when their behaviour conforms to gender roles. As has been illustrated earlier the participants employed leadership styles that are more collaborative, supportive and democratic in nature. It may be that their good experiences in the workplace are a result of their democratic style in leadership.
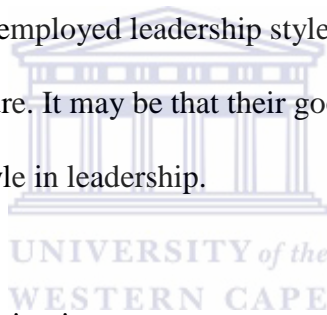
4.2.3.1.3 Experiences of being in a management position. Occupying a management position often comes with various challenges but also life lessons. The study participants had unique experiences as well as challenges they faced within the positions they occupied. Some participants shared that being in a management position had its challenges;

> *MJ: my position, I mean it doesn't matter if you're male, female. If we have a meeting up until 1 o' clock at night, everybody's sitting there. I mean… but you need to make that decision that I'm not gonna be at home bathing the kids and putting them to bed*

> *BL: It's very very busy. We've always got deadlines. We've got very demanding clients. No matter how small or large the task is. It's just a lot of pressure. You haven't got time to even have a cup of coffee and talk to your colleagues. You know you just work work work work work work*

The study participants also had good experiences being in a management position;

CS: I love my work, there is no doubt there are some days which are more challenging than others, but in general I love what I do. It is varied, I have amazing women who work for me and I have wonderful clients. It has been an incredibly colourful journey and a magical journey as well. I think I have grown incredibly having started this business on my own, in an industry which not very well respected at the time. I have had to grow with it. I found my whole journey in this environmental sphere then as the head of an all-woman company to be incredibly enriching

GS: For me it has been a good experience. I specifically joined [company name] to get managerial experience, because up to before joining [company name] I was a specialist. So a specialist means that you hardly even have people reporting to you. You do the work and there is one or two levels of management above you, but you hardly ever have a team under you because you are a specialist… it is actually my first leadership role. It's been a very good learning experience

It appears that being in a managerial position does not only come with challenges but can also be enriching, a good learning experience and an opportunity to gain managerial skills. In occupying these positions women gain the managerial experience that they would not otherwise get when barriers and challenges to their advancement exist. In addition when women become a part of the pool of talent there is greater representation of women that organisations can tap into (Ndinda & Okeke-Uzodike, 2012).

4.2.3.2 Home and family. The home and family is an integral aspect in the lives of many women. This also proved to be true for the study participants. The participants relayed stories of how their families played integral roles in their lives but for some striking a balance between work responsibilities and home and family responsibilities proved to be a challenge. The study participants also provided anecdotes about their homes and being part of a family. With regard to spending time with their children the some participants had this to say;

CS: I mean generally when I go and fetch my daughter for example on Tuesday afternoons I take off to be with my older daughter. And when I pick her up then we do

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something special. So we either go for massages together or manicures together or we have lunch together, so that is our time and nothing can invade that time. After they've gone to sleep at night I will look at my emails and do that, but in general when I am with them I try to give myself to them entirely, because I am away from them the whole day.

MJ: ... if you know I can only spend two hours with my kids at night then I do the best in those two hours. That's what you can do. Don't go and worry about the things you can't do. I will rather spend quality time than quantity time with them. I only get two hours a day with them. That's my two hours with them, you know.

Another participant shares about how her unique home situation;

BL: And I've got quite a unique relationship because my husband quit his job after 22 years without telling me and he decided to be a house husband   two years he's been at home now and it's worked exceptionally well. I'm happy because he looks after my daughter and my animals at home...our family dynamics are very unusual to other people because it's normally the man you know who's gotta go to work

With regard to their spouses participants shared how they value their relationships with them but also how the spouses help out at home;

CS: I think as a woman you also need to consider your relationship. So I do take time to nurture that as well. Ja I am insistent on date nights and that kind of things.

NN: he's also got his chores around the house and his role that he has to do

Although one of the participants did not have a family of her own the following extract illustrates how important family can be even to career women, however in the same vein the same participant muses that giving up a career for a family is not a luxury that everyone can afford to do so;

GS: family or looking after your children and making sure that they brought up very well, is key to anyone's development. And if that is my circumstances and I had to make that decision. It would not be decision ... its already made. But we know the reality, sometimes you don't have the luxury of giving up

From this we can see how challenging having a family and occupying a management position can be. It is for this reason that work/life balance is important for career women. With regard to the family aspect of career women's lives Cheung and Halpern (2010) report that in some of the studies they reviewed within marriages there was a lot of discussion and negotiation and evenings and weekends were designated for family. In the next primary theme the strategies the participants make of use to achieve a work/life balance will be discussed.

4.2.3.3 Planning, prioritising and organising. In order to cope with the busy schedules and to manage the various aspects of their lives the study participants placed emphasis on the importance of planning, prioritising and organising. In the extracts presented below the participants mention the strategies they use in managing their work and home lives;

> *GS: I believe in planning. Having lists of stuff, prioritise. I'm very organised. And that's the only way you can, having so much to do and still wanting to walk out of here at a decent time without going totally crazy. So I'm very much of a believer in prioritising, making your lists. Deciding what you tackle first, deciding what can stand over for the next day. So at the end of every day I plan my next day, at the end of every week I plan roughly, obviously, plan my next week. See what's still outstanding and that's something that works for me, being that structured.*

> *NN: I have got one diary, so for my daughter to go to school or whatever, I put everything in so that I can be able to monitor it, I can monitor it and I don't have conflicting meetings and all that and I can be able to manage it and also I try to manage stuff, I try to plan upfront because if I don't then things happen so I need to know that okay if I'm going to attend this or that or it's my daughter's birthday…*

In making lists, keeping one diary for all activities, leaving home early for work and generally separating work from home the participants employed different strategies in managing their home and work lives. In doing this it allowed them to have time to spend with

their families but also free time for themselves. In addition to planning, prioritising and organising some of the participants employed various strategies that could be considered as beneficial for their health and wellbeing these will be discussed next.

4.2.3.4 Health and wellbeing. Outside of work and the home the study participants engaged in activities to enhance their health and wellbeing. Thus, this section focuses on activities related to health, leisure and pleasure. The participants recognised the value of taking some time off work and looking after their health and wellbeing;

> *BL: maybe find a few hours at the weekend, sit down and read book cause you need that, you need some downtime and relaxation and then at least your family is still around you*

> *CS: I do Yoga and I love cuisine and restaurants and I think that it is really healthy to be able to balance all of that. I just come back from two and a half weeks for the first time ever of being away from my children. I took a trip to New York and to Canada and I really spent time with myself which I felt was really, really important*

In addition exercise, sport, and hobbies were some of the activities that the study participants engaged in;

> *GS: I go to gym. I do needle work. I make stuff, very creative. I paint. I read obviously a lot of books. Then family is big, a big thing, I've a got a huge family so we do a lot of things together with the children. I scuba dive*

> *AD: I play golf because I love golf…I play it, because my husband and I it is something that we do together*

These activities that the participants engaged in were things they enjoyed doing on their own or with their families. The participants also saw the importance of fulfilling this aspect of their lives in order to have a balanced life;

BL: Some weekends I like to have a afternoon nap cause I had a crazy week. You've just gotta listen to your body and do what it tells you to do and you'll be fine

GS: for your own sanity, you need to start… you need to cut off and say now I'm done for the day I'm going home, and I'm going to do my hobby, or I'm going to spend time with my husband or I'm going to spend time with my family. Or I'm actually going away for a weekend, taking a day off stuff like that. So luckily I'm at that point where I realise that you need to have the balance.

Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012) argue that unsupportive organizational cultures, especially where male values dominate, may expose women to emotional and psychological problems. In addition the culture of long hours in the organisational context that may serve as an obstacle (Drew & Murtagh, 2005) can result in women spending more time at work and having less time for themselves and their families. It becomes imperative for women to make use of various strategies in organising their lives and to engage in activities that they not only enjoy but are good for their health and wellbeing. The participants also saw the benefits and value of this and thus were involved in various types of activities that they believe were good for their own wellbeing and also provided them with opportunities for spending time with their families. In maintaining work/life balance the participants also had in place support structures that consisted of various individuals who have provided support throughout their lives, the next thematic category focusses on who these individuals are and their roles in the participants' lives.

4.2.4 Support structure. The presence of a support structure in the lives of individual can be beneficial in how they fare in their chosen careers. These support structures may serve to encourage them and even fill in for them in times when they are unable to fulfil certain responsibilities. This is particularly relevant where female managers are concerned. As their work schedules may be busy they need to have people around them who are

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supportive. This section focuses on the support structures that the study participants have identified as being pertinent in their lives. Having a solid support structure was viewed as being important;

> *MJ: support structure is THE most important thing. I don't think anybody would be able to manage in my situation*

> *BL: you can just relax and know that everything's fine at the home, otherwise you won't be able to concentrate very well at work*

These include: parental support, support from a significant other in the form of a spouse/husband and hired help or nannies. These will be discussed next.

4.2.4.1 Parents. Parents were viewed by the study participants as having played significant roles in their success. Socialisation was also viewed as being important in that the way we are raised plays a significant role in how we turn out. Here the study participants relayed stories of how they were raised and how their parents have been supportive throughout their lives;

> *GS: my parents never gave me as the only girl child the impression that there is any reason to limit what I want to achieve. They encouraged me actually more, deliberately than the boys, saying that there is nothing that prevents you from doing anything. They gave me equal opportunity to go and study that they gave my brothers. They still encourage me to look for opportunities that are good for me. So I appreciate my parents for that. That, I know in a lot of families the girls are not encouraged. Whereas my parents actively encouraged me to become the best*

> *GS: So your parental support and your parents' guidance it does play a big role in all of our achievements in life. They should be enablers. They should not discourage anything.*

Parents also take care of their grandchildren or take over the home responsibilities and for one participant her mother would at times serve the role of looking after her daughter;

BL: I've got a great support system. I've got my mom who now that my husband is back in a temporary position she steps in and she fetches my daughter

4.2.4.2 Spouse/husband. For the married participants their husbands played important roles in their lives and were cited as being an integral part of their support structure. They were credited for being supportive and understanding of their careers and busy schedules;

MJ: if you don't have a partner supporting you in this…I would most probably moan

AD: He is my biggest supporter actually which is fantastic. I have what I call a Board of Directors. He is one of the Executive Directors in my personal life. So I you know I tap in on him if I want to make a big decision

CS: my husband is very supportive and he understands my job and so he's very supportive and so I think with that, I don't have that stress

4.2.4.3 Hired help and nannies. Hired help and nannies were identified as being important considering the busy schedules that the study participants had. Without some hired help or nannies taking care of the home and children the study participants felt that they would not be able to cope;

AD: if you are mother you got to make sure you have got a nanny because you can't go and work through in a day and go back home and do home-work…you can't do it all by yourself, you got to have people helping you, so you need that support structure around…I have a young lady who comes in three times a week

CS: to try and assist me I feel like I have put really wonderful structures in place. So I have a nanny at home who supports me when I am at work and I have the amazing women here who support me when I need to go to ballet or to horse riding or to a parent/teacher meeting

An important point that was raised by some participants was that they felt that they had to take a huge leap of faith and trust that their homes are well taken care of when they were away;

> *CS: I can't phone home every hour to make sure everything is fine. I trust that what's going on there is what is going on there and you know. There is a huge leap of faith that you take either way. A leap of faith that your staff are doing what they need to do and a leap of faith that your nanny is doing what she needs to do. You know it is a trust thing*

> *MJ: if you don't have a person to phone, go pick up the kids, or you don't have a nanny or you don't a have… I just don't know. And that's just putting a lot of trust and faith in other people*

Similar to the findings in this thematic category, Cheung and Halpern (2010) state that career women who also have families employ various strategies and in the process redefine their roles, they outsource their household tasks because they are aware that they cannot do it all on their own. Cheung and Halpern (2010) also report that in the studies they reviewed on women leaders they found that social support was imperative in making it to the top and they depended on supportive partners/spouses, extended family and hired help to assist them. Similarly, in an Opportunity Now (2000) study senior women were found to mostly; employ domestic help, rely on supportive partner/spouse or made use of external service such as day-care as strategies in order to be able to manage both a career and having a family. Drew and Murtagh (2005) further, highlight the differences between men and women's responsibility in that in their study it was found that about nine out of ten of the male respondents in senior management had an unemployed spouse to take care of the children while the female respondents made use of non-family individuals to help them with childcare responsibilities.

Marcinkus, Whelan-Berry and Gordon (2006) also found in their study on social support and work outcomes that women got personal social support (from spouse/partner,

parents siblings and friends) more than they did work-based social support (from the organisation in general, supervisors and colleagues). Both types of support were found to be related to "job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and career accomplishment (Marcinkus et al., 2006, p. 86). In the same study, and similar to a finding in the current study, family was also found to provide instrumental support such as childcare and spouses/partners, parents, other family and friends were cited as being important as they provided emotional support (Marcinkus et al., 2006).

It appears that by employing various strategies and enlisting the help of others career women are better able to cope and according to Mathur-Helm (2002) female managers have access to professional and personal support and do not allow the challenges they face to detract them. With good support structures in place women in general and female managers may be able to advance to senior positions and in the process crack the glass ceiling.

4.2.5 Cracking the glass ceiling. This section focuses on themes relating to the participants' *career and future aspirations*, *words of advice* to those who aspire to occupy senior positions as well as *strategies for change* that aim to address women's career needs as well as result in workplaces that pose less challenges to women specifically those that occupy senior and demanding positions.

4.2.5.1 Career and future aspirations. In exploring the advancement of women to senior positions it becomes of interest to also focus on the career and future aspirations of the study participants. Some participants had this to say about their aspirations;

> *MJ: I'm a little bit sceptical, but it's a personal choice. I'm a little bit sceptical of me being a CEO of a company, I think director is something else because I'm still part of a bigger family in the workplace but CEO of a company, you need to make hard decisions*

LB: no I wouldn't like to do that. No it takes up too much of your time. I think my balancing life is good now. I wouldn't want so much to work and miss the family. You never see your kids…Not for me, that's not for me. You've gotta balance life as well

What was also interesting was that some participants did not mind holding more senior positions provided it was their own companies they were running;

GS: No, no I don't have that ambition yet. Maybe a MBA might be a good next step, but whether I really want to move into a business role like a CEO or, I don't really think that is what I want…Maybe if it is my own company obviously where you have the passion for your own company maybe

NN: I do aspire to hold a more senior position. I would like to be a HR director which doesn't have to be here, it can be elsewhere. Thereafter I would like to run my own company so I would like to consult and obviously be a CEO of that company

One participant had aspirations of changing careers altogether;

AD: I don't have aspirations for an example of being a CEO or a Chairman. I don't because I love my life…I want to pursue other things, I like change in my life so I am thinking of changing and going into actually playing golf fulltime… when I am forty five, forty six. So I am working very hard at that, you know I am training I've got a personal coach and that's something that I am going to pursue.

Interestingly the participants, with the exception of the participant who ran her own company, most of the participants had no interests of holding more senior positions, such as CEO, within the companies they worked in. One of the reasons cited for this were they already had busy schedules and holding a more senior position would mean they had less time to spend with their families. Another reason was that they were simply content with the positions they held. However, some of the participants expressed that they would not mind holding a more senior position if it were in companies that they themselves owned while one participant expressed wishes of changing careers entirely.

Contrary to this finding a significant number of senior women, 69%, in an Opportunity Now (2000) study stated that they aspire to holding higher positions within their organisations. In addition, corporate senior women (77%) were also much more likely to aspire to higher positions (Opportunity Now, 2000). In addition, Mathur-Helm (2006) in a study of female executives in the banking industry in South Africa found that family obligations were considered to be a prominent barrier as women are more likely than men to take over the responsibility of taking care of the family. This in turn results in them compromising their careers and them preferring to stay in a senior management position than move up to an executive one as they fear that they would have to carry extra burdens (Mathur-Helm, 2006). Thus, women prefer staying in positions that enable them to maintain a balance between work and family.
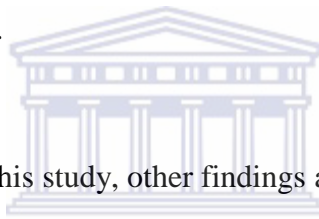
Similar to the findings in this study, other findings also suggest that women do not have aspirations of advancing to the highest levels of management. In their study Litzky and Greenhaus, (2007) found that women did not aspire to or desire promotion to senior positions as much as men do. This was to some extent due to women perceiving their personal characteristics and management positions as less congruent but also the perception that women had less favourable prospects for advancing to senior positions in comparison to men. In addition Wood (2006) also found that women managers' reports indicated that they were less likely to pursue a promotion.

Pande and Ford (2011) also report that women may not be motivated to aim for leadership positions unless they observe other women occupying these positions, or are made aware that these positions are also open to them. However, some women consider entrepreneurship as an option that would afford them some form of autonomy. Similar to the

findings in this theme, some participants in Mathur-Helm's (2006) study had considered taking up entrepreneurship (starting their own business). However, in Mathur-Helm's study this was in order to get away from the politics of the corporate world although they feared losing financial stability.

4.2.5.2 Words of advice. The study participants also provided valuable advice to aspiring women and also drew on their experiences in doing so. Some of the participants mentioned spirituality, humility and believing in oneself, passion and hard work as important in achieving success;

> *BL: never ever think that anything is impossible. Sometimes something might take a long time and it's achievable but then if you like, because you will get there, you know. Just believe in yourself*

> *CS: dream big, never ever let anyone tell you where you want to be is just not possible. So dream big and after you have had that dream three things: work hard; work hard and work hard*
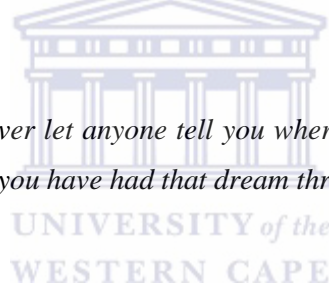
In addition not compromising one's values and celebrating one's femininity and womanhood were valued by some participants. In doing so it was believed that a benefit would be gaining the respect of people;

> *AD: don't compromise your values… whatever you do never compromise who you are. And that is the key and you will be successful if you do that because people start respecting you*

> *CS: I would like to encourage women to be themselves, be feminine, be sexy, be all of those things, don't be afraid of your womanhood, celebrate it and I think in the celebration of your womanhood also comes a certain type of respect that people will give you.*

Two of the participants felt that considering oneself as a brand while taking into consideration the different aspects that one has to offer and an being aware of what one's strengths are, were important;

> *NN: it's the total package because it's about who you are so I think it's about packaging yourself and from what you do, how you interact with people, how you look, who you are as a person.*

> *AD: you got to look at yourself as a brand right, you know if you a brand what do you stand for as a brand, what makes you special, so you got to do that as well, but really just stand out there and say I am the brand that everybody is going to want to use and everyone is going to recognise this brand, be selfish about it.*

Getting the right qualifications and training were also mentioned as being important for one to have;

> *GS: So get the qualifications, get the training, get the mentorship.*

> *NN: I do think also it's about having the qualifications because you kind of need that to back yourself up.*

An awareness of the challenges that career women face was also mentioned as being important;

> *AD: Don't be fooled, you do actually unfortunately as a woman you do get faced with tougher decisions and it is going to continue to be like that so you got to really stay true to yourself. First decide what you want as an individual. Not what your family wants, nor your husband if you have a husband. Decide what you want and what you want to achieve and be selfish about it.*

> *CS: never let obstacles get in your way because life will throw you all kinds of obstacles in every shape, in every form, be it a bad client or something that will come in your way or an emotional distress in your life or something will happen to stop where you going and always either veer on the side of it or jump over it, but don't let it stop you.*

The above extracts illustrate that some participants felt that it was important to be aware of the challenges that women often face when climbing the corporate ladder. However the awareness of these challenges did not mean that women should be discouraged from going after what they want. But in order to advance their careers the participants felt that women had to equip themselves with certain tools to assist them in doing so. Similarly to this study as explicated above, in a study on e-mentoring for professional women, a majority of the participants considered mentoring to be an essential aid to the development and progression of women (Headlam-Wells et al., 2006).

Mentorship and coaching programmes as well as education and training were also identified as possible solutions for women to advance to leadership positions in a study by Hofmeyr and Mzobe (2012). In addition some advice provided by the participants in this study was similar to several top strategies for career advancement cited in an Opportunity Now (2000) study. These strategies identified were; consistently exceeding performance expectations, developing and adhering to career goals and gaining line management experience. In addition, capacity for hard work, integrity and a positive attitude were highly rated personal attributes that are critical to career advancement (Opportunity Now, 2000).

4.2.5.3 Strategies for change: Cracking the glass ceiling. Some of the study participants provided strategies that they felt could contribute to eliminating the barriers and challenges that career women face. Some of these were related to better monitoring of the implementation of legislation, but beyond this; companies seeing the value in true transformation, education with regard to women's capabilities with the aim of bringing about a mind shift and change in society's perceptions of women as leaders. These sentiments are illustrated in the excerpts below;

NN: there needs to be a bit more than just the legislation. I think it's about company understanding the value of true transformation but at the same time it's about monitoring that. Because unfortunately in South Africa it's very questionable

CS: Well the first thing which is I think critical and I think the obvious one is the education. Not only education of women, but education of men about what women can do. Then after they know that in theory, women have to go out there and actually do it.

In addition to educating people about women's capabilities, women have to earn their space through working hard and performing well in their positions. Another participant added that being part of a supportive women's network may prove to be beneficial;

CS: So I think it is about a change in the mind, a mind shift is the first place, but then when that happens or in that process woman must also perform you know and earn that space.
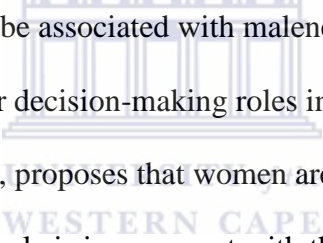
BL: at least the women are also getting an opportunity to have women conferences…but I suppose I think gee you know we're never gonna get onto the golf course so let's go and do this it's better than nothing
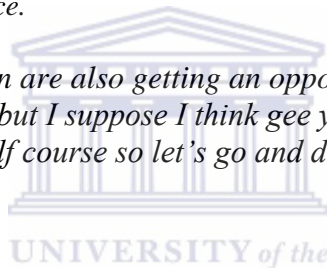
In Hofmeyr and Mzobe's (2012) study support networks where women share ideas and experiences were also identified as being one of the solutions to the advancement of women. These may be in the form of conferences as mentioned by one of the participants above. In addition, one of the participants identified that there is a need for the monitoring of efforts aimed at bringing about transformation and recognises how these things are taken for granted in South Africa. Another participant sees the value in not only educating women but also educating people about women's capabilities in order to bring about change. In doing so it is believed that it will bring about change in the perception of women and result in a change in people's minds about the roles of women in society. However the same participant feels that in order for women to earn their space in the world of work they would also have to work hard to do so.

4.3 Theoretical Considerations of the Findings

This section focuses on making sense the findings by making use of the theoretical framework that guided the study; the social role theory. The social role theory is used in explaining the various reasons for the existence of gender differences as well as perceptions of men and women as leaders. This theory suggests that bias in the evaluation of women is a result of differences in expectations of how men and women should behave due to their allotted roles in society (Eagly et al., 2003). Eagly et al. (2003) add that this theory also posits that men and women behave in ways consistent to their allocated roles. Consequently, men are viewed as agentic and breadwinners while women are viewed as home-makers and communal (Unger, 2001).

As leadership has come to be associated with maleness and being agentic, women are thus viewed as not being suited for decision-making roles in management (Wood, 2008). The role congruity theory, additionally, proposes that women are negatively evaluated due to the perception that the female gender role is incongruent with the leadership role. Consequently, potential occupants of leadership roles who are women are perceived less favourably than men and the leadership role is also evaluated less favourably when occupied by a woman (Eagly & Karau, 2002). These theories can be used in making sense of the findings.

With regard to the leadership characteristics identified by the participants it appears that they place more emphasis on characteristics related to the transformational leadership style which has also been associated with female managers' leadership style. As the social role theory proposes that men and women behave in accordance with their gender role it can be expected that the characteristics that they display at home would not be any different to the characteristics they display in the workplace. Thus instead of adapting typically masculine behaviours they employ a leadership style that they are more comfortable with. As a result

they experience fewer backlashes from other individuals in the workplace as can be seen in the participants' accounts of the positive nature of their relationships and experiences as senior managers. In addition, as the traits of being warm and communal that women are traditionally thought to possess are increasingly being recognised as beneficial for leadership and as these also become more valued in the organisational context the possibility of reconciling women's gender role with the leadership role may become a reality.

These theories under consideration may also be used in explaining barriers and challenges to the advancement and why the glass ceiling persists and prevents women from advancing to senior management positions (Weyer, 2007). The social role and role congruity theory posit that women leaders are negatively evaluated due to the perceived incongruity between the gender and leadership role. Thus it comes as no surprise that the participants identified stereotypes and prejudice in the workplace as some of the reasons that women's advancement to leadership positions has been slow. Prejudice, discrimination and sexism in the organisational context may be components of this negative evaluation that has made it difficult for women to advance to senior positions.

Upon reviewing literature on female leaders Cheung and Halpern (2010) found that in integrating the family and work roles female leaders redefine what it means to be a good mother and a leader. Cheung and Halpern (2010) add that in the process they make these roles compatible whereas society views them as incompatible. In addition, according to Hakim (2006) there are three types of women, namely; adaptive women, work-centred women and home-centred women. Adaptive women choose to combine work and home aspects in their lives and try to achieve a balance and select roles that will allow them to have both, while work-centred and home-centred women choose one over the other. The

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participants in this study appear to be adaptive women and have employed strategies that enable them to have the best of both worlds. In this was they redefine their roles in society.

In addition, findings on perceptions of women as managers suggest that over time there are changes in male managers' perceptions of women as managers and as a result they are not as negatively evaluated as they were a few decades ago. This change in perceptions has been attributed to perceived congruity between women as successful managers and an acceptance of women's agentic and task oriented leadership characteristics (Duehr & Bono, 2006). Diekman and Goodfriend (2006) also conducted experiments to ascertain whether changing perceptions in social roles also result in corresponding changes in prescriptive beliefs about gender. It was found that when participants read manipulated descriptions of changes in roles and assessed future citizens in a novel society, their "responses reflected a pattern of anticipated accommodation to shifts in social roles, with greater value projected for characteristics that facilitate role success." (p. 369). This means that rather than changing roles being met with resistance, the results indicated that there is projected accommodation of change in social roles (Diekman & Goodfriend, 2006).

The above findings suggest that over time society may be able to accommodate individuals and behaviours that appear to be incongruent with gender roles. This could also be used in explaining why the participants experience their positions positively and view women's positions in the workplace as changing. It may be that being a woman and a leader is much more accepted than it was decades ago. It also appears that the participants in the current study are redefining their roles in society to suit their needs. They opt to occupy both roles that are congruent (motherhood and family) and seemingly incongruent (being a leader and a senior manager) with gender roles. Eagly et al. (2003) argue that the effects of role

expectations can be mediated when individuals hold other roles, and consistent with the findings of this study, the participants lead their lives in ways that mediate these seemingly incongruent roles.

These findings point to the fact that as more women hold leadership positions perhaps perceptions of women as leaders may change over time. If being female and a leader are seen as congruent over time there may be a greater acceptance of women in senior positions. However it appears that the social role and role congruity theories are not sufficient in explaining why there are even fewer women in top management or executive positions. The findings in the study indicate that the relative absence may be due to women not aspiring to the most top positions in organisations as they are viewed as taking up too much of their time thus compromising their work/life balance. And without role models who hold positions at the top while maintaining a work/life balance or supportive organisational practices underrepresentation of women in these positions may persist.
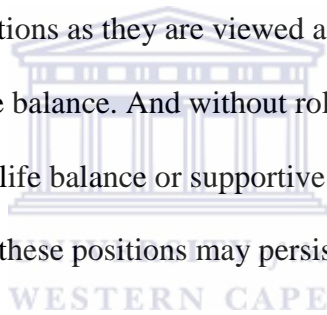
4.4 Conclusion

This chapter focused on the thematic categories that emerged in the study and looked at the participants' perceptions and experiences of gender and leadership. The participants provided useful anecdotes on their perceptions and experiences of leadership and gender and the barriers and challenges to the advancement of women to senior positions. The study participants were also able to relay stories about how they try to maintain a work/life balance and expressed how integral their support structures were especially considering how busy their schedules and lives may be. When exploring their future and career aspirations most of participants expressed that they were content with their current positions and at the time had no wishes of occupying more senior positions, such as CEO, unless it was in companies they

owned. The study participants also drew on their experiences in providing advice for young aspiring career women and provided strategies for change that may help women in overcoming the barriers and challenges and that will also encourage the advancement of women.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

5.1 Summary of the Findings

This study explored female senior managers' perceptions and experiences of gender and leadership. This was done in order to get a better understanding of individuals who according to the current political dispensation are said to be previously disadvantaged due to their gender, but have made it into leadership positions. Evidence, as illustrated in the review of the literature and in the findings, shows that women are underrepresented in leadership positions and they still face obstacles in advancing to senior positions. In spite of policies and legislation that have been put in place, barriers and challenges that make it difficult for women to advance to the highest positions in organisations still persist. It thus becomes important to examine women's experiences in the organisational context as well as attempt to find solutions that may improve not only their position in that context but also their chances of advancing into senior positions.

The findings of this study suggest that women are still confronted by various challenges within the organisational context as well as with regard to career advancement. They are often overlooked for appointments or promotion to senior positions and experience prejudice due to the perception that being female is incongruent or unsuited with occupying these positions. At times they are not confident enough to apply or put themselves up for promotion into these positions. However, the women who do manage to make their way to senior positions redefine their roles in society when they occupy dual roles within their families and in the organisational context. They also employ various strategies that allow them to have a family and a career.

However, it appears that rather than aim for more senior positions within their organisations women opt to remain in positions that they feel comfortable in and that they believe will allow them to maintain a work/life balance. Entrepreneurship is also considered as an option where some participants felt that they would not mind holding a more senior position if it were in businesses they owned themselves. The question then becomes; what can be done to increase representation of women in top and executive management positions?

5.2 Recommendations

Some recommendations were provided by the participants in the final thematic category where they shared with the researcher the strategies they thought could be used in advancing women's careers. One participant suggested that there is a need for the education of women as well as educating people about women's capabilities. It is hoped that once people are educated and aware of women's capabilities there can be a change in perceptions about women in that they too can occupy positions of leadership. She adds that once this has happened women need to also show that they are capable of holding these senior positions.

Another participant recommended that there be better and more rigorous monitoring of policy and legislation that is aimed at addressing gender inequality. This recommendation lies on organisations and government to show commitment to promoting gender equality and for them to monitor progress. The same participant suggested that organisations need to be made aware of the value of transformation and diversity. This is also another suggestion that organisations need to take heed of in order to show a commitment to promoting gender equality and increasing the representation of women in senior management.

Drawing from one of the themes of the lack of organisational support, organisations need to realise that there is a pool of talent of women that they can tap into. In addition to encourage women to apply for senior positions organisations can provide management training. They can identify high performing females and provide in-house training to these individuals. This can also be done earlier in women's career so they can get the necessary exposure that will equip them for their career paths. Organisations need to be more flexible and female friendly in order to break the barriers that women are faced with (Jones & Schneider, 2010). Workplace policy can also be improved by including practices that are supportive of working mothers. South African organisations can introduce in-house day-care which has already been done in other countries such as in the United States (Jones & Schneider, 2010).
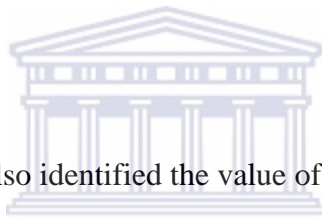
Some of the participants also identified the value of education, training and mentorship for women, and the researcher shares the same sentiments. It is important for women to get the right education and training that can improve their chances of advancing to senior positions. It is also important that girls and young women are afforded the opportunity to get exposure to programmes that encourage leadership in young women. Thus there is a need for increased efforts that support and encourage leader behaviour in girl children and young women. These efforts could also include life-skills and assertiveness training to improve young women's self-esteem and confidence that will equip them for their careers. Mentorship and coaching programmes for women can also be introduced within the high school and university contexts that will also equip young women for their impending careers.

With regard to research efforts additional research can be done to explore female senior managers' experiences and perceptions of leadership and gender in other provinces. It

may also be useful to look into the experiences and perceptions of women in other industry sectors as the current study was only limited to three sectors; financial and accounting services, oil and gas industry and environmental services.

5.3 Limitations

Although the fewer number of participants in a qualitative study may not necessarily be a limitation as this study does not seek to achieve representativeness nor is the aim to generalise the findings. However, with fewer representatives from different industry sectors within the private sector the study may be lacking depth in that the experiences of women working in different sectors are not included. It may be that women's experiences are not the same across all the different industries. In better performing sectors, that have higher representation of women, their experiences may be different from sectors that are still largely dominated by males in positions of leadership and vice versa. However, this study also gives us a glimpse into the lives and experiences of women in the private sector in general. The study also only focused on two provinces, Gauteng and the Western Cape. It may be useful to look at the experiences and perceptions of women in other provinces as they may be different from those of the provinces under study. This may also have added depth to the study.

5.4 Conclusion

The underrepresentation of women in senior and top management positions in the private sector continues to be a problem in South Africa. This study looked at the experiences and perceptions of women who have made it into senior positions. In doing so these women have redefined their roles in society and show us that although challenging it is possible to have a career as well as fulfil other roles outside of the workplace. They also adopt the transformational style of leadership that has enabled them to have positive experiences and

avoid backlash while occupying a senior position. They show us that these roles are not necessarily incongruent and it is possible to hold multiple roles. This study provides hope in that over time the leadership and gender role may come to be viewed as not being incongruent but as roles that can be held concurrently. In addition this study may be used in informing strategies for coping with the dual roles that can be used in improving the lives of career women. Further, this study may contribute to interventions that will help women in advancing women to the highest positions within organisations not only the private sector but in the public service.

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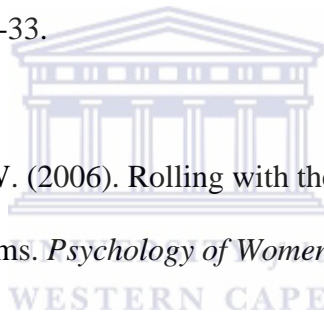
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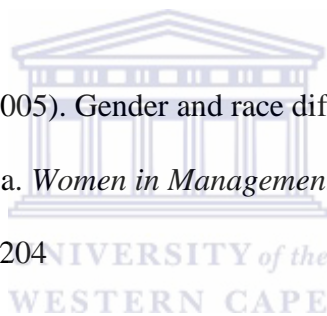
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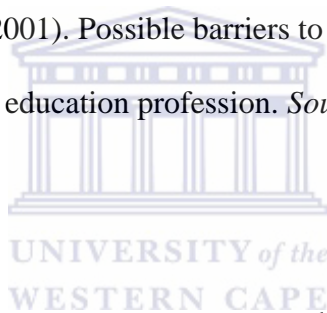
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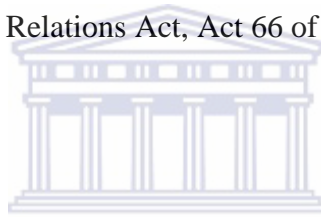
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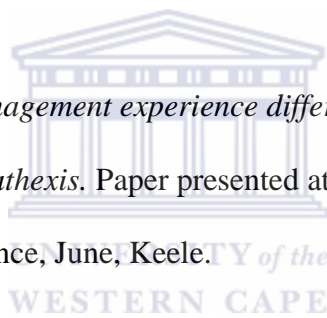
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Appendix A

INFORMATION SHEET

Project Title: South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles

What is this study about?

This is a research project being conducted by Tshinondiwa Ramaite at the University of the Western Cape. I am inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a South African female individual in a senior management/leadership position. The purpose of this research project is to explore perceptions and experiences of South African female individuals in leadership roles with regard to gender and leadership, as well as explore notions of gender stereotypes and prejudice in the workplace.

What will I be asked to do if I agree to participate?

If you agree to participate you will be asked to answer a few questions in the form of a face-to-face interview. Prior to the interview a few demographic questions will be asked after which questions in relation to your perceptions and experiences of your gender and leadership roles will be asked. You will also be asked questions about gender stereotypes as well as prejudice in the workplace. The interview will be conducted at a place of your convenience and will take approximately 60 minutes. With your permission the interview may be audio recorded.

Would my participation in this study be kept confidential?

I will do my best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, the information you provide will be kept completely private. There will be no names used to ensure that there is no way that you can be identified for participating in this study. This research project involves making audiotapes in order to ensure that all the information you provide is accurately captured.

____ I agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

____ I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

To maintain confidentiality, identification codes will be used on the transcripts of the audio recordings. The data it will be kept in a locked filing cabinet. Information obtained will form part of a Masters in Research Psychology mini-thesis. This information may be shared with the researcher's supervisor, written up in a publication or used as secondary data by other researchers. If a report or article is written about this research project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible.

What are the risks of this research?

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research project.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results may help the investigator learn more about South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles. We hope that, in the future, other people such as women who aspire to be in leadership positions might benefit from this study through improved understanding of South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles.

Do I have to be in this research and may I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop

participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Is any assistance available if I am negatively affected by participating in this study?

Every effort has been taken to protect you from any harm in this study. If however, you may feel affected in any way by the questions asked in the interview, you will be provided with information to seek help such as counselling.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by *Tshinondiwa Ramaite* at the University of the Western Cape. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Tshinondiwa Ramaite at: Cell: **0828192455**; Email: **tshinoramaite@gmail.com**.

Should you have any questions regarding this study and your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact:
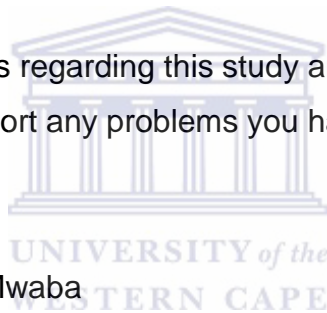
Head of Department: Prof K. Mwaba

Dean of the Faculty of Community and Health Sciences: Prof H. Klopper

University of the Western Cape

Private Bag X17

Bellville 7535

This research has been approved by the University of the Western Cape's Senate Research Committee and Ethics Committee.

Appendix B

UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE

Private Bag X 17, Bellville 7535, South Africa
Tel: +27 21-959, Fax: 27 21-959

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles

The study has been described to me in language that I understand and I freely and voluntarily agree to participate. My questions about the study have been answered. I understand that my identity will not be disclosed and that I may withdraw from the study without giving a reason at any time and this will not negatively affect me in any way.

Participant's name………………………..

Participant's signature……………………………….

Witness………………………………….

Date………………………

Should you have any questions regarding this study or wish to report any problems you have experienced related to the study, please contact the study coordinator:

Study Coordinator's Name: Tshinondiwa Ramaite

Cell: 082 819 2455

Email: tshinoramaite@gmail.com

Appendix C

INTERVIEW GUIDE

South African female individuals' perceptions and experiences of their gender and leadership roles

1. Could you please provide your age, race, current marital status and geographical location

2. Do you have any children? If so, how many?

3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

4. What is the name of the highest academic qualification you have obtained?

5. In what industry do you work in? (Employer type, and how long?)

6. Have you held a similar position at another place of work? (How long?)

7. What does the position which you occupy at work entail? (responsibilities and duties)

8. What are your thoughts on traditional gender roles that prescribe what women and men should and should not do? (women take care men take charge)

9. Leadership has been historically defined in masculine terms and is viewed as more suited for men. What do you think about this?

10. Irrespective of the progress that women have made some research indicates that people still view leadership as more suited for men. What are your thoughts about this?

11. How do you define leadership?

12. What do you think are some of the reasons there are few women in senior positions in the corporate world? (Barriers and obstacles)

13. Do you think there are gender stereotypes that prevent women from obtaining senior positions? (Could you describe these, or provide examples)

14. Have you experienced any form of prejudice while occupying a senior position or do you know of any incidents of prejudice toward women in senior positions? If yes, please elaborate.

15. How has the experience of being in a senior position in the workplace been? (Positive? Negative? Challenging? What has contributed to this?)

16. Could you tell me about the relationships you have with your subordinates and superiors at work? (Male and female, and support from colleagues)

17. Do you think legislation and workplace policy effectively addresses women's needs? (Would you like to elaborate?)

18. Is your role as mother/partner/female family member (identity as a woman) sometimes in conflict with your role in a senior position in the workplace?

19. How do you manage/balance your work/life domains?

20. What advice would you give aspiring young women who wish to pursue careers in the corporate world?