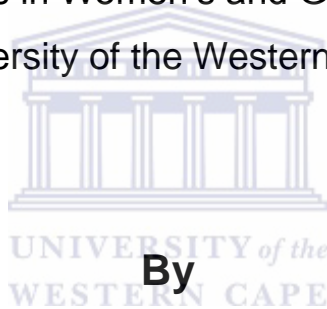


**EXPERIENCES OF GENDER AND POWER RELATIONS
AMONG A GROUP OF BLACK WOMEN HOLDING
LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: A CASE STUDY OF SIX
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS IN THE WESTERN CAPE**

A mini-thesis submitted to the Faculty of Arts
of the University of the Western Cape
in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Arts in Women's and Gender Studies
University of the Western Cape



Nwabisa Bernice Mgcotyelwa

Supervisor: Professor Tamara Shefer
University of the Western Cape

Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation of **Experiences of gender and power relations among a group of black women holding leadership positions: A case study of six government departments in the Western Cape** is my own work and that it has not been submitted for a degree at any other University. All sources and quotes cited have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

Nwabisa Bernice Mgcotyelwa

November 2012

Signed



Abstract

In this study, I explored the experiences of gender and power relations among a group of black women holding leadership positions in six government departments in the Western Cape. South Africa is in a process of transition and, to create a departure from the past, key objectives focus around the transformation of gender disparities and the eradication of racism and other forms of inequality and discrimination in all spheres of this society. There are many methods utilized to increase the number of women in leadership positions in the private and public sectors. However, there is a lack of research regarding the social environment for women once they have entered into these structures (Angevine, 2006).

This study made use of a feminist qualitative methodology which guided the research. Six semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted in order to carry out an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences. After the participants had given consent, the interviews were audio-recorded, then transcribed verbatim. Data was analyzed in accordance with qualitative thematic analysis. All standard ethical considerations to protect the participants and the researcher were taken into account and practised throughout the research.

The findings show evidence that black African women leaders in government departments have internalized learnt subservient characteristics; and that this serves to undermine their authority as leaders. Specifically, larger social power relations and traditional forms of authority undermine their capacity to express authority in work environments. They also experience both subtle and blatant racist and sexist

prejudice in the form of stereotypes and hostility in the workplace. A minority of women managers actively oppose the gendered notions that undermine their leadership. Ultimately, black African women managers are not accepted or supported as legitimate leaders in the workplace. Women leaders are perceived to be incapable of performing effectively as leaders because of gender and racial stereotypes that serve as hindrances to their expression of leadership.

The study found that some participants conform to the socially constructed notion of maintaining a work-life balance and this poses a challenge for such leaders. Those who are married attempt to balance career and life by maximizing on their management of their time. A number of women had made the personal decision to remain single in order to focus explicitly on their careers.



Key Words

Power relations, gender relations, women, leadership, career, workplace, government departments, employment equity, empowerment, transformation.



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'Umtu ngumtu ngabantu. Kuni Nonke, mandithi Nangamso'

**“Freedom cannot be achieved unless the women
have been emancipated from all forms of
oppression”.**

(Nelson Mandela – 24 May 1994)



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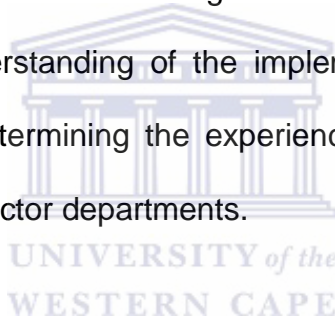


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WESTERN CAPE

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The new political dispensation in South Africa brought employment equity and affirmative action policies as well as a national policy framework for women's emancipation and gender equality. However, the advancement of women in the workplace and gender equality in general still remains a challenge as socio-cultural perceptions and societal values such as patriarchy continue to oppress women. The negative cultural aspects in patriarchal societies make women more vulnerable, causing them to be victims of crime, HIV/AIDS and gender-based violence (Chiloane-Tsoka, 2010). Gaining a deeper understanding of the implementation of the transformation policies is an imperative in determining the experiences of black¹ African women in leadership positions in public sector departments.



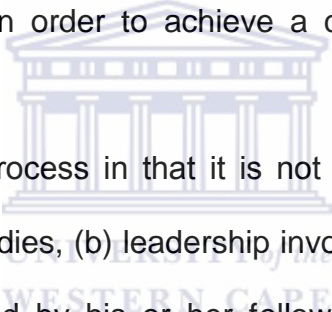
Context of the study

This study is concerned with exploring experiences of gender and power relations of a group of black African women employed in leadership positions in government departments within the Western Cape Province. The study presents a potentially valuable platform for tracking the shifts in gender and power within the public sector resulting from black African women's entry to leadership positions at this time when South Africa is undergoing redress of racial and gender inequalities.

¹ I use 'black' here to refer to people who were historically disenfranchised and discriminated in South Africa in terms of socially constructed 'racial' categories and includes the different apartheid categories of 'coloured', African and Indian/Asian. While I reject the racial categories, for the purpose of redress, it remains important to continue with such categories. I will use the term 'black African' to refer to those who were historically categorized as African. It is from this group that my participants are drawn. 'White' refers to people who were privileged under the apartheid government in South Africa due to being perceived as the superior race.

The public sector in South Africa includes government departments, provincial administrations, public enterprises, universities, research institutions and local government. Given the breadth of this sector, it has been necessary to narrow the focus of this research to that which is both feasible and pertinent. For the purpose of this study, the public sector is understood to comprise specifically the provincial and national government departments. The Public Service Act (Proclamation 103 of 1994) regulates the composition of departments at national and provincial government level.

In the context of this study, leadership is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of people in order to achieve a common goal. As described by Northouse (2001, p.3),



(a) 'leadership is a process in that it is not a trait or characteristic that the leader naturally embodies, (b) leadership involves influence whereby a leader affects and is affected by his or her followers, therefore without influence leadership does not exist, (c) leadership occurs within a group context where the leader influences a group that has a common purpose, and (d) leadership involves goal attainment by the leader directing a group of people towards goal accomplishment'.

Leadership and identity are intertwined (Van Knippenberg, De Cremer, Van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2004); and identity is formed partly through interaction with others. In the workplace, formal and informal interactions with colleagues and managers over time shape identity and reveal perceptions and expectations of others. Because

leadership is a social process, the formation of self-identity, social identity, group identity, and gender and ethnic differences may be important (Lord & Brown, 2004). Leaders in the workplace play a pivotal role in this process because they convey role expectations and reward performance that fulfils these expectations, thereby shaping the self-concepts of others (Lord & Brown, 2004). Goetz (1997) asserts that organizations impose their own gendered logic as they not only reproduce gender imbalances within society, but also reinforce these imbalances within their structures and daily practices.

Acker (1992) states that organizational theories and research have been heavily weighted towards the study of male society and that gender aspects have been historically neglected in these disciplines. The absence of a focus on gender relations, sexuality, emotionality and issues of reproduction and domestic life in organizational logic and theory is an additional element that both obscures and helps produce the underlying gender relations and inequalities within organizations and society more broadly (Acker, 1992). A perusal of literature reveals that there is a dearth of empirical information in South Africa investigating the progress of women in senior leadership positions and documenting, in particular, women's experiences in government.

Patriarchy is defined by Morrell (2005) as a form of male domination based on the powerful role of the father as head of the household and can be expressed in a multitude of ways in the public and private spheres of life. The phenomenon of patriarchy is in existence internationally (Robinson, 2005; Frosh, Phoenix & Pattman,

2002), on the African continent (Ampofo & Boateng, 2007; Izugbara, 2004; Koenig, Zablotska, Lutalo, Naloguda, Wagman & Gray, 2004) and in South Africa (Leclerc-Madlala, 2003; Wood and Jewkes, 2001).

Hassim (1991) posits that feminism aims to challenge the barriers that patriarchy continues to create between the private and public spheres of women and men's political identities. The political identities that Hassim (1991) refers to are traditional in that women are associated primarily with the private sphere in terms of family roles while men are framed within the public sphere outside the familial context. These barriers continue to confine the concept of politics within the public domain, primarily to the detriment of women, as they remain marginalized in public spheres and their inequalities in the domestic sphere remain hidden and unacknowledged in the public terrain. Such barriers are further exacerbated for black women. The marginalization of black women in particular intersects and overlaps powerfully with racial subordination in South Africa and in other racist societies (Hassim, 1991).

According to Human, writing in 1993, many white male managers in South Africa held the belief that black people and white women were less capable than white men. This had been the rationalization for not hiring women or black people because they supposedly did not have the ability to be competent in the workplace setting. Similarly, Acker (1990) argued that organizations were gendered and racist; and that power relations were patterned through the taken-for-granted, often hidden, assumptions about gender and race that were entrenched in organizational discourses that were

powerfully biased towards the experiences and interests of the dominant race and gender group (white, middle-class men, for the most part).

More recently, Mathura-Helm (2005) draws attention to the circumstances of the end of apartheid and the emergence of democracy. She states that organizations started transforming, with women gaining far greater access to middle- and senior-level positions. With the focus on equity and affirmative action, as well as the promulgation of government legislation to include all previously disadvantaged people in the mainstream labour market, attention was turned to addressing racial imbalances, while also foregrounding women's issues and gender equality.

The focus on gender equality in South Africa is largely located in the history of South African national democratic struggle for equality but it has also been shaped by international developments and imperatives. At the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995, the Beijing Platform of Action highlighted twelve critical areas for women's empowerment and gender equality, one of which was Women in Power and Decision Making. This followed from an assessment of the low numbers of women in governments globally. Thereafter, the United Nations called on all governments to ensure at least 30 per cent representation of women in government by the year 2000.

This was subsequently followed by a global civil society *50/50 Campaign* with the goal of 50 per cent representation of women in government structures by year 2005

(Women's Parliament Report, 2007).

It is understood that the proportionate representation of women and men will allow for legitimacy, justice and participation in the democratic process. It is also affirmed that equal representation will result in women's interests and perspectives being taken into account in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of policy discussions and outcomes. Therefore, it is maintained that increasing women's representation in government allows for representative democracy (Women's Parliament Report, 2007).

Contrary to the above, Hassim and Meintjies (2005) argue that quotas are a means of achieving recognition: they are best understood as a form of symbolic politics, as there is no predictable relationship between the greater number of women in decision-making and feminist outcomes. They argue that quota demands tend to emphasize the creation of collective identity and that they rest on the successful articulation of women's group-based interest on entering arenas of power. Moreover, interest representation relies on the assumption that women are a homogenous unitary category. Within this framework, the resource claims of some women based on their class and/or race disadvantages may be to the detriment of building a grassroots constituency.

Sanger (2008:2) asserts that the essentialist notion that women in elected office will automatically care about women's empowerment is equally problematic. She continues by stating that this is partially attributable to the patriarchal culture of national, provincial and local government structures and the ways that this culture creates barriers to women's participation in decision-making processes.

Karam (1998) maintains that in the political area, the first obstacle women face is the prevalence of a 'masculine model' of political life and elected governmental bodies. The reason for this is that the political arena is dominated by men and political life in most societies is organized according to male norms and values. The existence of a male-dominated model of politics results in women either rejecting politics or rejecting male-style politics (Shvedova, 2002:35). Thus women who do participate in politics and public sector leadership tend to do so in smaller numbers; and those who do participate may face multiple hurdles to impacting decision-making and leading effectively on women's interests.



It is possible to consider progress in South Africa towards this target by reviewing the results of the Business Women Association *African Women in Leadership Census* (2011), which states that the public sector consists of a total of 56.3per cent of women and 43.7per cent men across all racial groups. In terms of the split of racial groups across salary levels, 62.5per cent of senior management positions (being senior salary levels 13 to 16) are filled by black women. The study does not provide a statistical breakdown of the profile for each government department in the nine provinces.

Rationale for the study

The study is located within the context outlined above. Growing numbers of women are in leadership positions, yet there is little work documenting their impact or their experiences. The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of gender and power relations resulting from the ingress of black African women into senior positions

in the workplace, with a particular focus on subjective experiences. I concur with Hassim (1991: 69) when she writes, “to begin to engage with the questions of gender and power relations is in itself to begin to break patriarchal chains”.

Although South Africa has made progress in terms of women’s emancipation and empowerment particularly in parliament and government departments, women still experience gender inequalities in the workplace. Angevine (2006) describes how there are many methods of increasing women’s numbers in leadership positions in the private and public sectors through either electoral processes, political appointments, quotas and campaigning. For example, the Office on the Status of Women developed a gender policy framework, namely South Africa’s National Policy Framework for Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality (2000). This framework attempts to achieve the integration of gender consideration into the ongoing transformation process in South Africa. The target for an increase in the numbers of women occupying senior positions in government is supported by policies intended to achieve equitable transformation, particularly in the work sector.

However, a research gap still remains regarding the social environment for women once they are within these governing structures (Angevine, 2006). Furthermore, in studies about the leadership of women over the 1970’s and until the contemporary era, the focus has been on the experiences of middle to upper-class white women without adequate focus on women from other classes and women of colour (Collins, 2000; De Laney & Rogers, 2004). This study thus attempts to contribute to knowledge in this area

and to consider potential interventions aimed at mitigating the challenges of black African women in leadership positions.

The study is located within a feminist social constructionist approach. Conventional research has been challenged by feminist researchers because it is viewed as biased, reflecting only a vision that is representative of and in the interest of the dominant group (in this case, white men). A feminist standpoint advocates the value of starting with the lives of women in order to document gender inequality, since their perspective is seen as less distorted than men's because it gives the view of the oppressed. Gergen (1985) points out that the social constructionist approach assumes that all research and knowledge is a process of creation where the content, beliefs and ideas of researchers form part of the processes of constructing knowledge. It is from this foundation that my research seeks to investigate black African women's subjective experiences.

Parker (2001) states that black African women's standpoints have been excluded or devalued in theorizing about organizational communication in general and women's leadership in particular. Hence the current study is significant since it addresses the imperative to document the experiences of black African women leaders in public sector departments from their own subjective perspectives. The study will hopefully contribute to reducing the scarcity of knowledge and information regarding women in leadership roles in contemporary South African organizational contexts.

Objectives of the study

In order to understand the experiences of gender and power relations among a group of black women leaders in public sector departments, the study's primary aim was to document and analyze the reported ways in which participants experienced their attainment of power in occupying the leadership positions, and how they were responded to as female leaders by colleagues both senior and junior to them. This included an exploration of the extent to which participants reported experiencing discrimination or prejudice on the basis of gender and race, and how they deal with challenges relating to gender and power relations in their respective workplaces.

Overview of the thesis

The research report includes six chapters. Chapter One has outlined the context of the study and argued for its relevance within the context of contemporary efforts towards women's empowerment and gender equality in South Africa.

The second chapter presents the theoretical framework in which the study is located, including feminist social constructionism and intersectional feminist approaches. This chapter also presents a key conceptual framework on women's leadership with reference to women's location and experiences within the organizational framework.

Chapter Three presents a review of empirical literature on women in organizations and in leadership, with a particular focus on the experiences of women in leadership roles within the public sector in international, continental and local contexts.

Chapter Four elaborates on the key principles of the methodological framework that shaped the study. It further provides the details of the objectives and research questions of the study, the methods employed to recruit and select participants and demographics of the participants, as well as methods of data collection and analysis. Reflexivity and ethical considerations which are fundamental to a feminist research process are also discussed in this chapter.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the study. It includes a discussion on the participants' experiences of gender and power relations in the public sector workplace. This discussion is structured in accordance with a number of key emerging themes, being: women's subjective experiences of being leaders including their sense of authority; challenges they face as women leaders, including sexism, racism, horizontal hostility and sabotage, and patriarchal ideologies and culture; and balancing home and work.

Chapter Six provides findings, limitations and recommendations for future research and policy practice. It summarizes the key findings and draws out their implications for knowledge in this area, as well as for policy and practice. Furthermore, the chapter highlights the limitations of the research study conducted; and generates recommendations for future research emanating from the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

This chapter outlines the theoretical framework of the study. This study takes a feminist social constructionist approach informed by feminist theoretical work on intersectionality. The chapter also overviews theoretical work on women and gender inequalities in organizations. The use of theory and its significance for the current study are elaborated.

Feminist Social Constructionist approach to theorizing women in leadership

A feminist social constructionist approach draws on both feminist work and social constructionism to argue that we cannot understand gender outside of culture and dominant norms in a particular society or organizational context. Berger and Luckmann (1967) argue that all knowledge including the most basic, taken-for-granted, commonsense knowledge of everyday reality is derived from and maintained by social interactions. People interact with the understanding that their perceptions of reality are related; and as they act upon this understanding, their common knowledge of reality becomes reinforced. Feminists highlight the relationship between and within private and public spheres as providing the source for the notion of gendered subjects. The social interactions of women and men in societies are not natural or biologically determined, as assumed in popular culture, but are historically and culturally constructed and socially located (Hassim, Metelerkamp & Todes, 1987).

Burr (1995: 2) suggests that that, while there are many versions of social constructionism, all of them hold in common the following key aspects:

- Social constructionism challenges us to be critical of our assumptions and taken-for-granted knowledge about how the world appears.
- Historical and cultural specificity is assumed: social constructionists suggest in this regard that our common understanding of the world and the categories and concepts we use are historically and culturally specific.
- Knowledge is sustained by social processes and interpersonal interaction: social constructionism argues that people's common understanding of the world is constructed between them.
- Knowledge and social action go together: in this perspective, a social constructionist approach argues that 'understandings of the world' are negotiated and that they take different forms, and therefore we can assume numerous possible social constructions of the world. This suggests that each different construction also brings with it a different kind of action from different human beings.

The use of feminist social constructionist theory is fundamental to my study of gender and power relations in order to understand how gender and power interplay within public sector organizations. A universalist feminist position is that women are biologically equal to men, but are historically denied equality (Blackmore, 1993). The inequality between genders is legitimized through everyday practices across time; and is socially constructed and reinforced through accepted norms, meanings and values

attached to complex human interactions within society. As women in leadership perform their duties in the workplace, their subjective experiences with others will be better understood through this framework which allows us to understand, for example, the impact of a socially constructed leadership as the preserve of men that clearly advantages men while disadvantaging women.

Key to social constructionist understandings is the rejection of essentialism, whether biological or social, and the assertion that all knowledge and meaning, including individual subjectivities, are constructed in a social context, therefore remaining fluid, multiple and constantly shifting. Essentialism assumes that there is a core and essence of humanity that makes people what they are and that essence can be studied and discovered (Burr, 1995; Gergen & Davis, 1997). An essentialist approach to women assumes an essential femininity that is common to all women regardless of race, class and ethnicity; and sees 'women' as a coherent and unitary category devoid of multiplicity and cultural, social and political positions (Butler, 1990). This focus on the assumed essential similarities between women has the effect of creating a presumably neutral subject or, by default and given the historical context of power and privilege, a woman who is white, middle-class and heterosexual (Chanter, 1998).

Essentialist approaches have a comforting 'normality' to them. They describe gendered reality, for example, in a way that is congruent with everyday understandings of women and men. In this way, they appear appropriate and relevant in their description of women and men because their descriptions are similar to the prevalent, dominant ways

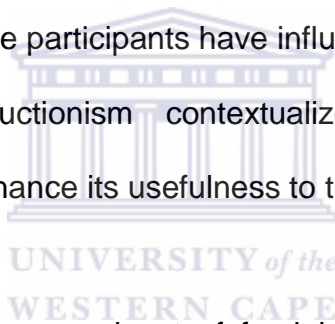
of thinking about the two genders. Essentialist theories, however, pose some serious problems despite their apparent attractiveness, as they do not describe the complexities of gender or other forms of social life and meaning accurately (Gergen & Davis, 1997). Butler (1990) states that the construction of an essential woman is an “unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations” (1990: 5) and that it is contrary to what feminism aims to achieve.

According to Fuss (1989), social constructionism is seen as an opposition to essentialism and is concerned with essentialism’s philosophical refutation that essence is itself a historical construction. Constructionists reject the notion of biological determinism and proceed to show the way that previously assumed self-evident positions (like ‘man’ or ‘woman’) are the effects of complex discursive practices. Anti-essentialists are engaged in interrogating the intricate and intertwining processes which work together to produce seemingly ‘natural’ or ‘given’ objects. The issues at stake for constructionists are systems of representation, social and material practices, laws of discourses, and ideological effects. Constructionists are concerned above all with the production and organization of differences; and they therefore reject the idea that any essential or natural givens precede the processes of social determination (Fuss, 1989).

Weiner (1994) defines feminism as a movement for political, social and economic equality of women and men. Similarly, Colgan and Ledwith (1996:7) write that “feminism encompasses the move to erode all forms of women discrimination in order to strike a balance on a gender scale”. Gergen and Davis (1997: 6-11) suggest that the

following five aspects are common to the goals of feminist social constructionist theory:

- Feminist constructionist theory implies knowledge that utilizes reflexivity in its approach.
- Its perspective is centred around an understanding that knowledge claims are continually developing, are always contested and never reach a point of conclusion.
- It gives focus to the search for alternative forms of cultural life.
- It acknowledges that the group identifications of the author or researcher and the group identifications of the participants have influenced the work.
- Feminist social constructionism contextualizes research and knowledge production in order to enhance its usefulness to the participants of the research.



Women-centred studies have emerged out of feminist scholarship as an attempt to unpack the ways in which the experiences of women, who are often in marginal positions in patriarchal societies, are brought into the research and knowledge production arena (Hartsock, 1998; Hendricks & Lewis, 1994). This perspective recognizes the social positioning of women; and it acknowledges the various forms of subjection which women experience in their peripheral positions in society and in relation to other forms of social inequalities and hierarchies. The focus of the debates and studies located within this framework are therefore not solely on gender, but include the recognition of other forms of subjection. Among these forms of subjection are race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and differences in physical and emotional competence

which impact on women's experiences (Harding, 1991; Hartsock, 1998).

In the latter respect, while most feminist theory has criticized biological determinism and essentialism, Fuss (1989) also suggests that some feminist work has reproduced essentialism in the assumption of a unitary category of women. De la Rey (1999) affirms that second wave feminist theoretical perspectives tended to rely on universal female oppressions. Such theories based on the assumption of totalizing the system of patriarchy and explanations depending on notions of the fixity of male-female difference have been criticized for being essentialist. Contemporary feminist theory has recognized the intersectionality of different forms of social identity and power with gender and has been critical in bringing the realisation that gender never stands on its own.

Although the number of African women leaders in 'white organizations' is increasing in the South African context (Catalyst, 2004), the dilemma remains that socially constructed hierarchies of race, gender and social class together may undermine the practice of leadership (Collins, 1999). It can be seen that these hierarchies reflect the intersectionality of gender and represent direct and indirect forms of oppression that perpetuate race and gender stereotypes of men as natural leaders both socially and in organizational contexts. Thus intersectional approaches to gender and women's position are important in framing this study and in challenging unitary accounts of women in general.

Intersectional approaches to gender

In the context of this study and in line with feminist constructionism, intersectional feminist theory will be drawn on to understand, in particular, the gender and power relations experienced by black African women leaders in public sector organizations. The theory of Collins (2000) will be applied to the current research to provide a lens through which the analysis of the current study will be viewed.

The premise of intersectionality theory is that people live multiple, layered identities derived from social relations, history and the operation of structured power. In other words, people are members of more than one category or social group and can simultaneously experience advantages and disadvantages related to those different social groups. There are two reasons for employing intersectionality theory to study women in leadership. Firstly, intersectionality aims to reveal the multiple identities and personas of social actors, exposing the connections between those points. Secondly, it suggests that analysis of complex social situations should not reduce understanding to a singular category; rather, it should facilitate the understanding of substantively distinct experiences from the effects of inextricably connected roles and situations (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

Collins (2000) has worked on elaborating how intersecting oppressions and the matrix of domination which refers to the organization of power in society shapes women's experiences. Her main work is centred around the relationships between empowerment, self-definition and knowledge, with particular focus on the experiences of black women

in racist and patriarchal societies. She argues that black women are distinctly placed as they are at a central point where two prevalent systems of oppression are combined, that is race and gender. Collins (2000:299) postulates that:

“Intersectionality is a particular way of understanding social location in terms of crisscross systems of oppression. It is an analysis suggesting that systems of race, social class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation and age form mutually constructing features of social organization, which shape black women’s experiences, and in turn are shaped by black women.”

According to Collins (2000), intersectionality works within a matrix of domination and this matrix comprises of four intersecting systems of oppression and how these systems connect is socially and historically specific. Furthermore, the intersecting systems of oppression are interrelated in terms of a structural domain which consists of social structures such as law, polity, religion, economy, discipline, hegemony and interpersonal power; and this domain organizes societal power relations. The disciplinary domain manages oppression and consists of bureaucratic organizations that have a duty to control and organize human behaviour through routine, rationalization and surveillance. The matrix of domination is expressed through organizational protocol that disguises the effects of racism and sexism under the shadow of efficiency, rationality and equal treatment. The hegemonic domain legitimizes oppression at the same time as culture shapes and gives legitimacy to ideology and consciousness; and it is made up of language, images people respond to, and values and ideas that are held.

Lastly, the interpersonal domain comprises personal relationships and the daily interactions with others. Collins (2000) suggests that for change to occur in this domain it should begin with the intrapersonal, being how people perceive themselves and how they understand their own life experiences. This refers to how thoughts and actions maintain someone else's subordination. In this domain, people identify with an oppression that they have experienced and perceive all other oppressions as less significant. This results in the oppressed being an oppressor of others. For instance, a black heterosexual woman may discriminate against lesbians. In sum, Collins (2000) posits that oppression is contradictory and that many approaches fail to recognize that a matrix of domination contains few victims or oppressors. Intersectionality implies that social categories are not bounded or static. One's social nearness to or distance from the other changes as the matrix of domination shifts, depending on which scheme is salient at any given moment. For instance, you and the person next to you may both be women; but that social nearness may be severed as the indices change when different markers such as religion, race, ethnicity, sexual practice or identities are constructed as primary at the expense of others (Collins, 2000: 247).

Women's gender oppression is viewed by feminist social constructionists on the basis of race, gender and social class and, moreover, as a qualitative and complex processes of discrimination. However, Clara (1989) mention that South African women, particularly black women, have been historically marginalized and subordinated through a triple form of oppression based on race, class and gender. The argument that black women in South Africa suffer a triple oppression as black, as workers and as women, has become

a cliché in the literature on black women (Gaitskell, Kimble, Machonachie & Unterhalter, 1984). Hassim (1991) argues that the triple oppression concept lacks depth, works on a general level and would face major challenges as a framework for political action. Instead of problematizing the complex and nuanced interaction between race, gender and class, the concept suggests an additive relation between these different dimensions of oppression.

In South Africa, the concept of triple oppression was historically used as a means of identifying a political constituency, rather than a method of understanding the specificities of women's oppression. The result of applying the notion of triple oppression was to legitimate women as a group in order to take account of women's extra burden - but only within the context of the broader national liberation movement. The implicit analysis of gender relations using the concept of triple oppression is the reduction of discussion to a strategic problem: that of identifying and overcoming the constraints on mobilizing women. The significance of class and gender oppression lies in the posing of a barrier to women's participation in politics, through the mechanism of the double shift or double burden. Women's double responsibilities as workers and managers of families limit their time and energy when compared to men (Meer, 1984).

Hassim (1991) argue that the concept of triple oppression has omitted any definition of the implications of the sexual division of labour, an issue essential to developing an understanding of the mutually reinforcing links between capitalism and patriarchy. Moreover, the lack of valuing of a deeper understanding of gender oppression leaves

out critical issues which are significant and relevant to feminist politics (Hassim, 1991). Hence the theory of intersecting oppressions will be utilized as it is more theoretically appropriate to the focus of the current study.

According to Symington (2004), intersectionality is an analytical theory for studying, understanding and responding to how gender intersects with other identities, as well as how these intersections contribute to the unique experiences of oppression and privilege. The combination of identities is not additive as suggested by the concept of triple oppression; instead, the identities interact to produce substantively distinct experiences for women leaders. Such an understanding may allow for an exploration of the connections between multiple identities and personal lived experiences of social actors. Intersectionality also suggests that the analysis of complex social situations should not be reduced to independent categories, but should include connected roles and situations (Richardson & Loubier, 2008).

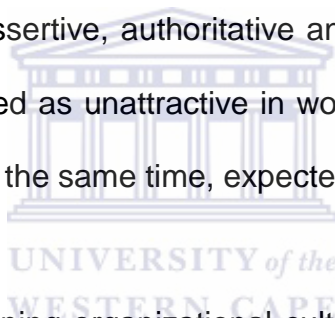
Conceptual framework for understanding women and gender inequality in organizations

There is vast research that investigates the gendered nature of organizational contexts (Acker, 1990; Booyesen & Nkomo, 2010; Kottke & Agars, 2005; Longwe, 2004; Pompper, 2011). This section concentrates on three broad themes evident in the literature addressing women's position in organizations: (1) the notion of masculinized and male-stream organizations; (2) the binarism of work and home, and its impact on women's double load; and (3) conceptual frameworks for understanding institutionalized

processes of exclusion of women as leaders.

Masculinized organizations

According to Edwards (2006), traditionally work has been understood as forming the fundamental basis of the masculine identity. The notion of work is placed in a breadwinner-homemaker dichotomy whereby the man earns the family wage and the woman takes care of the domestic sphere (Connell, 2002). The fundamental challenge to women's leadership and success in organizational frameworks results from the difference between the qualities traditionally associated with leaders and those associated with women. The assertive, authoritative and dominant behaviours that are linked with leadership are viewed as unattractive in women or uncharacteristic of them (Eagly & Carli, 2007) but are, at the same time, expected to be common in men.



The masculine values underpinning organizational culture have a systematic influence which creates an environment in which men are more at home in work environments than women. This influence extends to systematic discrimination which is the complex, direct and indirect discrimination practices that operate to produce general employment disadvantages for women as a particular group in organizations (Loughlin, 1999). Women who encounter stereotypes and negativity are seen to adjust their behaviours to fit in with normative male-oriented notions of leadership in order to be accepted as legitimate leaders. Kiamba (2008) asserts that women who reach senior levels in the workplace often end up conforming to the dominant male culture in the workplace by adopting male leadership styles. Female leaders perceive their gender as an obstacle;

they are forced to lead the way that men do as it is considered a norm (Grove and Montgomery, 2000). Bierema (2003) also notes that the few women who enter the leadership sphere in organizations do so by behaving like men and reinforcing the patriarchal systems that discriminate against women and people of colour, and that they thereby fundamentally restrict women by maintaining their inferior status compared to men.

On the other hand, women are also reportedly punished for assuming traditionally masculine roles in leadership, and experience conflict roles in assuming leadership since their femininity may be questioned. For example, Akingbade (2010) suggests that by behaving assertively and confidently, a woman's behaviour may be perceived as being 'man-like': she may be perceived to have transgressed the prescribed traditional gender stereotypes and may be disliked and therefore not hired into a position. Women are, however, in a double bind because if they display behaviour that is perceived as soft and gentle, in line with the prescribed gender role for women, they will be accepted but perceived as non-competent, thereby not being hired into leadership positions. Many women also internalize gender stereotypes, which creates a psychological glass ceiling², a topic which will be addressed in more detail later in this chapter. As a result, women see themselves as less deserving than men of rewards for the same performance and less qualified for key leadership positions (Babcock & Laschever, 2003; Barron, 2003).

² The glass ceiling concept refers to an impenetrable organizational boundary that prevents the progress of women in organizations (Brett & Reilly, 1996) particularly into senior level positions.

In leadership contexts, it is evident that there are biases in the different methods through which organizations structure leadership paths and positions, in the ways people perceive women and in the ways women leaders perceive themselves and what they must do to succeed (Hogue & Lord, 2007). Organizations consistently communicate that women are not fit for leadership roles; and just as others may view leadership through a cultural lens distorted by gender bias, so many women have difficulty in developing viable self-views as leaders (Ely & Rhode, 2008).

The private/ public binary: working women's double load

Another key theme emerging in the literature includes the acknowledgment of women's double load. This also reflects on the patriarchal framework of organizations which reproduce a binary between work and home. The values which underpin the great majority of organizations, thereby defining success, often include money, power and status. The corresponding behaviours include working long hours and putting in 'face time' (as proxies for productivity), competitiveness and a willingness to place work above all else (Ragins, Townsend & Mattis, 1998).

In order to succeed in organizations, many women feel that they have to put aside the values and behaviours that they believe are important in defining who they are. This includes having to minimize the importance of family and children in order to be seen as being serious about their careers. However, this creates conflict which women deal with in ways that tend to disadvantage either their health and wellbeing, or that of their families (Hyman, 1996). According to Bell (1990) and Berkowitz and Padavic (1999),

black women in particular are generally socialized to value their families and community. Strong ties and commitment to both are expected to be maintained by women as they become successful in their careers.

The work/family double load has been defined by Greenhaus and Beutell (1985:77) in the following way: “A form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role (home) is made more difficult by participation in another role (work).” The writers explain that work-family conflict can take three forms: firstly, conflict due to an inability to satisfy family and professional role expectations in the time available (time-based conflict); secondly, conflict due to the sum of efforts which the person must make in the job and family fields (strain-based conflict); and thirdly, conflict due to the incompatibility of behaviours which the person must adopt in both spheres (behaviour-based conflict) (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008). McKenna (1997) argues that a change in organizational values and behaviours must lead the structural change, because until men and women both value the personal and professional facets to themselves, any structural change will not be effective. Some organizations have family-friendly policies but employees are not taking advantage of them. They hold the belief that colleagues and supervisors will perceive their use of flexi-time or family leave as demonstration of their poor commitment to work and a hindrance to their being promoted (McKenna, 1997).

On the other hand, some women choose not to apply for more senior positions because they believe the balance between work and life that they manage to achieve in their current position cannot be maintained in a higher-level post (Hyman, 1996). According to Greyvenstein (1989:21) contemporary South African society has not yet reached the point of accepting that it is appropriate and achievable for women to be homemakers and effective career women. Although working women have increasingly moved away from the home domain into the wider spectrum of economic employment, many have internalized the traditional stereotypes to an extent whereby they suffer guilt when they choose self-development beyond the realm of homemaker (Jones & Montenegro, 1982). This role conflict can lead to personal sanctions and lack of ambition, poor self-image and inadequate confidence (Greyvenstein, 1989; Jones & Montenegro, 1982). The traditional roles of women as mothers or housewives and professional roles as leaders and managers in the workplace lead to the role conflicts women face, and are responsible for the stresses and burdens they experience (Brink & De La Rey, 2001; McLellan & Uys, 2009; Van Aarde & Mostert, 2008).

Institutionalized exclusionary practices for women in accessing leadership

Much of the work on women in organizations has focused on trying to understand why women fail to progress to positions of leadership. It has been argued that women's career progression into leadership positions is impeded by organizational, interpersonal and personal barriers (Northouse, 2001). Practices such as the glass ceiling, homophily³, the old boys' network, tokenism and the queen bee syndrome are all viewed as hindrances that not only exclude women but also limit women's access to

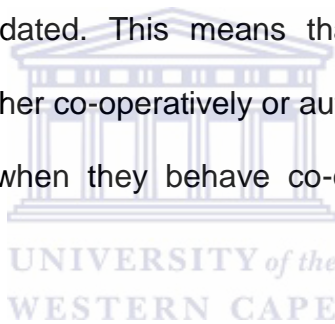
³ This term is described in further detail in the next paragraph.

leadership. These barriers, which are subtle and normalized, are believed to be the major causes of the low representation and negative experiences of women in leadership positions (Northouse, 2001).

Organizational barriers to the advancement of women into positions of power are structural conditions that place women in subordinate levels compared to equally educated and qualified men in the same organizations. The values and norms that favour men in the workplace, for example, balance of career and private life or women to accomplish tasks with limited resources places women in a situation where they feel that the corporate culture is inhospitable. One of the institutional barriers to women's progress and effectiveness in senior positions, identified by Northouse (2001), is the notion of 'homophily' which refers to employees of a certain group who share similar demographics and attitudes, and who associate together due to their perceived similarities, thereby excluding others different to themselves. The negative result of this is that homophily can limit creative thinking and balanced decision-making (Cox, 1993).

Cox (1993) asserts that when top-level management in an organization is dominated by one demographic group of people (for example, white men), the process of selecting employees for promotion is often biased to those who are demographically similar to them. This can place women, particularly black women, at a disadvantage in the arena of advancement into leadership positions in the workplace.

Interpersonal barriers refer to challenges that occur in organizational work relationships. The perceptions that women are less competent than men has forced women to work extra hard to prove that they are indeed capable. The preconception of women leaders not being interested in challenges has meant that challenging projects are not offered to women, resulting in their having to explicitly request the challenging work (Ragins, Townsend & Mattis, 1998). McDonald and Hite (1998) concur with Ragins et al. (1998) in identifying that women's lack of advancement to higher positions is due to less exposure to high visibility projects, gender discrimination and difficulty in adapting to male culture. Women leaders perceive a need to alter their behavioural style so that men may avoid feeling intimidated. This means that male leaders are positively evaluated when they behave either co-operatively or autocratically, while female leaders are evaluated positively only when they behave co-operatively (Eagly, Makhijani & Klonsky, 1992).



Women are also excluded in informal networks, including social contact with superiors and networking with colleagues in and outside the work domain, which leads to limits on their potential to influence management (Kelly & Dabul Marin, 1998). According to Oakley (2000), the members of the old boys' network⁴ transfer the power advantages implemented in the formal structure into friendship patterns and alliances within the informal system. This type of network structures work processes and career advancement to the benefit of males and provides protégés with mentorship from senior

⁴ Old boys' networks refer to informal social relationships between male colleagues in the work environment, mainly used to exchange resources and services. As a result, women's exclusion from these informal relationships may result in men's greater influence and centrality in the formal work environment.

leaders. Mello and Phago (2007) suggest that to counterbalance the old boys' network, women already occupying in senior positions could mentor and empower other women. Interpersonal barriers for women affect their relations with fellow employees in the work setting, while personal barriers including women's personal lives and lack of work-related political knowledge, impede on their career development. The work/home conflict explained above persists in all cultures as women remain primarily responsible for care giving and running the household (Northouse, 2001).

Another key concept that has been applied to describe exclusionary practices for women in leadership is tokenism. Kanter (1977) defines 'tokens' as individuals who belong to a social category that comprises less than 15per cent of the entire group composition. For example, anyone in a numerical minority will be considered a token and will experience discrimination. The author outlines what she refers to as three 'perceptual tendencies' caused by the numerical rarity of tokens, being visibility, contrast and assimilation. The tokens will be visible to other group members and majority group members will contrast tokens by polarizing or exaggerate differences between the majority group and tokens. Majority group members also use stereotypes or prejudices about a person's social type, and the attributes of the token are then distorted to match the generalizations, resulting in assimilation. Others argue that men being regarded as tokens either has no negative effects (Budig, 2002) or results in more positive outcomes (Fairhurst & Snavelly, 1981; Yoder & Sinnet, 1985). Therefore the negative consequences of being a token appear to impact women to a much greater degree.

By contrast, Zimmer (1988) affirms that there is no reason to assume that increasing the number of women in an organization will improve their situation in the work environment. She further posits that increasing the number of women in an organization without addressing the sexist attitudes found in male-dominated organizations may even worsen women's occupational challenges. She further argues that the gender-neutral concept of tokenism is inadequate for understanding and solving gender problems in the workplace, as the complex relationships between women and men in sexist societies are not addressed. There is little evidence proving that the strategy of employing more women in an organization will result in equal conditions of employment for women and men once the women are employed.

Similarly, Yoder (1991) argues that the negative experience of women labelled as tokens has its root cause in sexism, thus Kanter (1977) only attributes the negative consequences of token status to the result of limited numbers. Reskin (1988) also argues that men refuse to accept that women can work with them as equals because they perceive that accepting this undermines differentiation and male control. Following this position, Reskin (1988) posits that women's lower gender status is an additional cause of boundary maintenance, performance pressures and role encapsulation in addition to their numerical status as posited by Kanter (1977).

Frankforter (1996) and Mooney (2005) take the theory of tokenism a step further, arguing that 'new tokenism' results when women are not being employed on the basis of competence and ability but instead on their ability to fill affirmative action quotas in

organizations. As women fill these positions based solely on gender, rather than explicit qualifications, 'new tokenism' arises, resulting in organizations which, in an effort to appear diverse, place women in positions of high visibility but relatively low power, so that they may appear to the outside world to have 'made it', while internally they are still scrambling for a sense of security and acceptance as leaders (Mooney, 2005: 112).

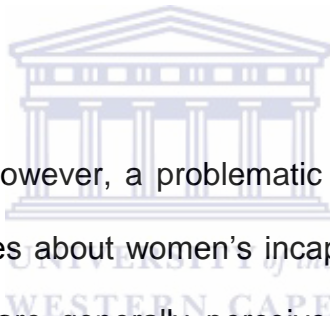
Rajuli (2007) discovered that the tokenized woman in a leadership position remains passive in the presence of men leaders at work because when she speaks up, she is confronted by male backlash. Therefore it cannot be concluded that an increase in women leaders would result in the non-tokenization of women as patriarchy is deeply entrenched in the all societies in general.



I concur with Yoder (1991) and Zimmer (1988) that gender and power relations between women and men are complex issues that must be viewed holistically within the larger socio-political, economic and ideological framework of South African society that shapes interactions of individuals in all contexts.

Another interpersonal barrier that has been identified with specific reference to relations between women is that of queen beeism. Stainers, Jayaratne and Travis (1973) first coined the term 'queen bee' to refer to a woman in a powerful position who treats women in subordinate positions unfavourably because they are female. Davidson and Cooper (1992:10) define queen beeism as an executive woman who is unhelpful to other women, partly because of a desire to remain unique in an organization. This

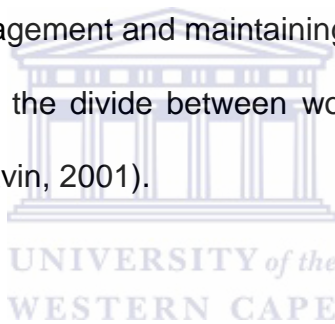
syndrome is mostly prevalent in organizational environments where the female is a supervisor or leader of an organization or department and has female employees working under her. It is suggested that the queen bee leadership style involves power and control. In terms of power, queen bees withhold it or use it to advance their personal agendas. They also design mental models which tend to influence workplace disputes and inequities, and employ tactics to ensure personal advancement, power maintenance and power dominance (Czarny, 2010). Maurtin-Cairncross (2003) suggests that women labelled as queen bees accept androcentric values and overcompensate by overachieving in the pursuit of acceptance by the inner circle (particularly by men).



The queen bee syndrome is, however, a problematic concept because it perpetuates the existing negative stereotypes about women's incapacity to fulfil leadership roles in the workplace. While women are generally perceived as emulating males in these positions, at the same time they are viewed as traitors to and by fellow women in organizations. Again, this is a double standard that is not only socially constructed and places women at a disadvantage, but also reinforces and communicates the misconception that leadership and management within organizations are roles reserved solely for males. Mavin (2001) argues that this term needs to be problematized since it is used to describe individual senior women and serves to reinforce a 'blame or fix the woman' stance. If a woman is in a leadership position and does not conform to typically feminine styles and develop similar behaviours as men in equal positions, she will be negatively labelled for not prioritizing women's interests and for becoming more male

than the men. However, this binary places women in management and those aspiring to be leaders in the workplace at a disadvantage.

Mavin (2001) maintains that there is a contradiction between the gendered context of senior management and the expectations that senior women will promote and prioritize women's issues. This solidarity behaviour sets expectations of senior women which cannot easily be fulfilled and perpetuates the unhelpful labelling of senior women as queen bees who are responsible for other women's lack of progress. The reinforcement of the queen bee syndrome concept may be part of a broader discourse of maintaining women in second place in management and maintaining male dominance. Furthermore, it may also serve to reproduce the divide between women in management and other women within work settings (Mavin, 2001).



Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the reader to the theoretical framework of the current research. It has outlined the principles of feminist social constructionist theory, as well as intersectional theory and its application to the study. The theoretical understandings of organizational leadership and processes of women's exclusion were discussed. It is evident that even though women and men may have the same job functions, the interpretation of their jobs is based on an implicit institutional understanding of what women can or cannot do, and so shapes outcomes through particular institutional arrangements (Longwe, 2004).

The chapter that follows moves to elaborate on empirical studies that throw light on the situation of women in leadership positions, moving from international literature to African literature on women in government.



CHAPTER THREE

Women in leadership in public sector workplaces

Introduction

A perusal of literature shows that there is minimal empirical data regarding women's experiences of gender and power relations in public sector departments. The majority of studies conducted focus on parliament and local government contexts. Juhasz (1983:318) states that women who enter the world of politics in Western democracies or fill high-status, decision-making positions are still seen as transgressing male territory and will suffer the consequences for their occupational ground-breaking achievements. Many factors contribute to the lack of gender equality in political leadership and representation in the public sector: these include the institutional context of the electoral systems and structural barriers as highlighted in the previous chapter (Inglehart, Norris & Welzel, 2004:2).

In this chapter, I will review previous empirical studies that relate to the topic under study. The literature review focuses on international, continental and local research studies.

International research of women in government leadership

In studying women leaders in local government in England, Sweden, India, Philippines and Australia, Irwin (2009) indicates that, although local government has masculine structures, practices and processes, women are making a difference by using their agency to change practices and the environment of their councils, thereby transforming

the organization. However, the contributions women make in local government regardless of the country are often devalued and can at times be personally affronting. Merrick (2001) posits that it has become evident that as women enter into high-level management in increasing numbers, gender-based stereotypes and discrimination can and do limit their performance and further advancement. This position is supported by Su's (1993) study regarding women's frustration with and influence on local government management in the United Kingdom, which discovered that gender relations at work affected women managers personally and professionally. The challenges women face relate to traditional attitudes, assumptions about the private/public realms and women being potentially disruptive because of their position on the margins. Shvedova (2003) postulates that men largely dominate the political arena and formulate the rules of politics, often defining the standards of evaluation. Political life is organized according to male norms, values and lifestyles. For instance, politics is often based on the idea of winners and losers, or competition and confrontation, rather than on systematic collaboration and consensus.

Charles (2008) explored the cultural practices characterizing local and devolved government and the pressures felt by politicians to adapt their behaviour to the dominant norms surrounding political life in Wales, England. She found that the patriarchal culture of politics is dominant: working in a consensual way is perceived as femininity and doing politics aggressively is understood as masculinity. In a masculinized political space, both women and men adopt masculine styles of working, while in a more feminized political space, there is less pressure on both women and

men to practice politics in a masculine style. Women in politics feel that they have to perform in a masculinised way in order to be taken seriously in the workplace. Dempsey and Diamond (2006) argue that this situation makes it hard for a woman to be a good leader because if she adopts masculine characteristics, she will be perceived as cold and distant, while at the same time the adoption of feminine characteristics may be considered weak.

However, other studies indicate that women have managed to rise above the existence of dominant patriarchal culture of politics while playing significant roles in leadership positions. Skjeie (2002) studied women in the Norwegian Parliament and found that female Members of Parliament are able to influence decision-making and change within political agendas. This has been possible due to women learning of rules and using them. The writer outlines several features that characterize the style of work of female Members of Parliament in Norway. These are: close co-ordination and networking within women's organizations; forming inter-party and cross-party alliances both within their political parties and across their parties around women-specific themes; learning the rules within parties and Parliament, and thereby gaining legitimacy and credibility through their actions; and using the rules of the party to their advantage by lobbying to include issues important to the female electorate on the agenda, thus providing policy platforms for parties and voters (Skjeie, 2002). Reiterating the rules strategy, Lovenduski and Karam (2002) define rules in this context as customs, conventions, informal practices and regulations that govern the way a legislature functions. They

state that the strategy consist of three aspects, namely learning, using and changing the rules.

Olsen and Pringle (2004) studied the experiences and perceptions of women managers in both the private and public sectors of New Zealand. Their findings indicate that women executives celebrate their management roles, opportunities and abilities. In both sectors, women did not acknowledge the presence of the glass ceiling in their own careers and barriers were perceived as obstacles that can be overcome (Olsen & Pringle, 2004). As indicated in the previous chapter, the barriers that impede on women's effective participation in leadership and decision-making are multifaceted and would generally be a challenge to circumvent. Bacchi (1990), Burton (1991) and Charles (1993) recommend that if change is to be effective, it must be implemented in two ways. Firstly, it must address indirect forms of discrimination experienced by women through organizational policies enacted, constantly monitored and supported by sanctions for non-compliance. Secondly, individuals - particularly those with referent⁵ power - must raise the consciousness of those with whom they work by consistently bringing attention to the systems and procedures that could potentially reinforce or facilitate gender inequity.

Samarasinghe (2000) studied leadership and participation of women in politics in South Asia through case studies involving participants from India and Sri Lanka. She affirms that women in these countries have used the system of patriarchy to break into politics.

⁵ Referent power is a term that refers to an individual's influence based on sense of identification in the context of the workplace.

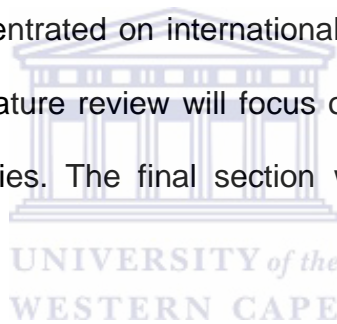
In this study, it was found that women in the study do not reject patriarchy but use the patriarchal structures to challenge the political system and emerge from the private sphere to the visible public sphere, bringing with them reproductive issues as legitimate political concerns. In this way, they create political spaces in which they challenge male hegemony over political leadership and active participation (Samarasinghe, 2000).

Rindfleish (2002) explored the ways in which women in senior management in Australia's public and private sector workplaces view and behave towards problems associated with gender inequity, as well as whether they hold differing views according to their organizational context. She concluded that women in the public sector were more likely than women in the private sector to question the status quo and be cognizant of the need for gender equity programmes that could bring about structural and systemic organizational change. A woman who saw herself as a feminist, had experienced sexual discrimination in the workplace or had been assisted in her career by a mentor was much more likely to take active steps to assist other women who were aspiring to gain management positions. Senior women within the public sector are also more willing than their private sector counterparts to monitor and implement strategies to assist gender equity. The author concluded that private sector organizational contexts will continue to have slower progress towards gender equity than public sector contexts that do not have senior managers who champion and implement policies and practices that address gender imbalance (Rindfleish, 2002).

It has been discussed that gender imbalances are also prevalent in the private sphere. Lichter, Anderson and Hayward (1995) state that it is becoming increasingly common for women to choose to remain unmarried, largely because it is difficult to achieve an egalitarian marriage. Nemoto's 2008 study of postponement of marriage by women in Japan found that women distanced themselves from marriage as they perceive it to be incompatible with their jobs. Career women also described that they were perceived as unfeminine and therefore did not meet males' expectations of marriage partners.

African studies of women in leadership

Thus far, this review has concentrated on international studies of women in the public sector. This section of the literature review will focus on research conducted in North, East and West African countries. The final section will focus specifically on South African studies.



Olatunde (2010) focuses on women's participation and representation in Nigeria's politics over the decade from 1999 to 2009. She discovered that the increased participation of women in politics remains a continuous struggle as gender inequality still exists in Nigeria. Although there is a slight increase in the number of women in politics, the opportunities are generally available to those who are part of an elite and who benefit from the high levels of nepotism through family connections or connection by marriage. Women are employed in junior ministerial positions or leading ministries dealing with issues traditionally seen as falling within the women's sphere, such as women's affairs and social welfare. Longwe (2004) affirms that although the functions

expected of women and men and by which their performances are judged appear to be gender-neutral, they are deeply engendered.

Other research that illustrates the engendered system of politics has been conducted by Allah-Mensah (2005) in her study of Ghanaian women in politics and public life. She found that the minimal number of women in politics and public sector organizations is due to the lack of affirmative action. Recruitment is done on the basis of performance which is in line with public service employment requirements. Ghanaian women reported challenges that result in the low numbers in the public service: these include traditional and cultural factors based on the patriarchal system that affects the participation of women in decision-making. For example, females reported that men were sometimes insubordinate as they refused to take instructions from women because of their gender and because the men have been in the service much longer than the women they are expected to work with.

In Zimbabwe, Zikhali (2009) focused on women in organizational management and explored women's challenges in accessing senior leadership positions in public, private and governmental organizations. The findings in all the studied organizations indicated that women's inclusion in management positions was constrained by cultural practices and their socialization into feminized roles, similarly to Allah-Mensah's (2005) findings above. Although education and training was reported to be the key requirements in accessing leadership positions, traditional culture was reported as the only hindrance to their advancement to management positions and that progress towards gender equity is

slow as a result.

Similar findings are also reported by Gilike (2009) who studied the experiences of Botswana women in national leadership positions. She reports that hindrances such as gendered role expectations, cultural and stereotypical attitudes, and family responsibility contribute to the low representation of women in Botswana's positions of power and decision-making.

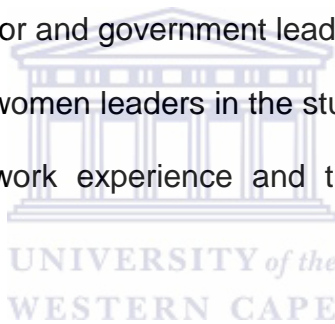
Other research has explored the effect of the increased representation of women in parliament. Mkilanya (2011), studying women in the Tanzanian parliament, found that the increase in the number of women does not result in substantive representation by altering either the content of debates or policy outcomes for women. The latter findings had been synonymously argued earlier by Sanger (2008) and Hassim and Meintjies (2005), who noted that quotas are insufficient to women's empowerment. Devlin and Elgie's 2008 study on women parliamentarians in Rwanda similarly indicates that an increase in the number of women in parliament may not be influential in comparison with a government commitment to develop legislation that promotes women's rights. In a similar vein, Karam (1998) argues that, while necessary, quotas are not sufficient to women to make a significant difference in policy initiatives and political goals. Htun and Jones (2002) state that broad-based political alliances must also be harnessed to work with women in the bureaucracy and executive if laws that will benefit all women are to be produced.

Abbott, Haerpfer and Wallace (2009) examined the factors that affect attitudes to gender equality in Rwanda and found that, among men, there are age differences in attitudes to gender equality, whereas this is not the case for women. It is noted that Rwanda has made significant progress in gender equality through the representation of women in parliament and top positions. Significant legislation has been passed to tackle issues affecting women such as education, gender-based violence and rural poverty. It is stated that reforms have been difficult to implement because society still holds patriarchal attitudes that resist such changes. The research findings indicate that this resistance is more likely to come mainly from older men who uphold traditional values that serve to perpetuate the minor status attached to women. Tamale (2000) posits that when women move from the private to the public sphere, traditional values are used by men as a tool to remind them of their 'proper' place. However, the same men will reject traditional values as outdated if such values stand in the way of their achieving power and privilege.

Tamale (2010) continues to argue that the old boys' network of male politicians in Uganda extends to include the fraternity of reporters, journalists and editors who serve as gatekeepers on makes the news. Women politicians are portrayed as intruders into the serious domain of politics as journalists perpetuate the gendered public/private divide through media. The public internalizes these ideologies, creating and fuelling feelings of resentment toward women who participate in politics. Geisler (2000) echoes the same sentiments regarding the negative portrayal of women in the media. She reports that the media does not acknowledge the substantive work women do and

amplifies the problems that female members of parliament face while managing multiple roles. This results in a detraction from women's achievements within politics.

There is research that has focused on women leaders' self-perceptions as leaders. Tsegay (2008) explored this phenomenon in Ethiopian women's leadership effectiveness in government, private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The findings of the study indicate that, with slight differences among them, private sector leaders seem to possess better leadership qualities, followed by NGO and government leaders. NGO leaders use the power of the person to the highest degree, followed by private sector and government leaders. The overall findings indicate that the higher performance of women leaders in the study is a result of their high levels of educational qualifications, work experience and training on leadership (Tsegay, 2008).



Other research conducted is a comparative study of women in politics between African countries. Jacobs (2009) focused on the attitudes towards gender equality and representation of women in parliaments of South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The study findings indicate that there are political, socio-economic, ideological and psychological barriers that affect equal representation of women in parliament. The percentage of women represented in national parliaments in South Africa, Uganda and Zimbabwe differ not only as a result of different value patterns with regards to gender equality, but also as a direct result of the different electoral systems implemented in each country. South African participants had a more positive attitude toward women in

leadership positions compared with Uganda and Zimbabwe. In the three sub-Saharan countries, more female respondents had positive attitudes towards equality than males. According to Siemienski (2004:37), attitudes towards gender equality may vary widely amongst different groups within countries. She argues that inequality and social and cultural barriers are problems confronting more women than men. This may be a reason for men and women's different interpretations of gender differences.

Alexandra (2004) explored the place of women in Cameroon and South African political spheres. In Cameroon, the quota system exists, favouring the inclusion of more women in politics. In South Africa, the problem is at the intersection of class, race and gender, as well as within the electoral system which sees parties being formed according to their overall ideological and political positions. However, it was found that the strong emphasis on tradition in African societies is the major issue for the suppression of women's right to equality in both countries. Furthermore, there are existing challenges such as the masculine model of politics, lack of party support for female candidates, economic, social and cultural barriers, and gender stereotypes.

There are similarities with regard to the challenges women face in African and international countries in the political sphere workplace and this indicates that challenges for women in leadership remains a global issue. Another global issue affecting women is the work/ home dichotomy experiences of women as indicated above. Kargwell (2008) found that female managers in Sudan place their families first and give secondary importance to their jobs, which is contrary to the international

context.

Local studies of women in government leadership

This section reviews empirical studies in the South African context. The limited empirical studies available in the local context have focused on women's experiences of leadership in provincial government and parliament; however, no studies specifically focused on women in government departments were located.

Francis (2009) explored women parliamentarians and the politics of presence in KwaZulu-Natal provincial parliament. Women parliamentarians who participated in Francis' study indicated that their presence in parliament influences women's concerns favourably. Examples were successes in legislating on matters of concern to women, organizing campaigns to raise awareness of women's concerns and intervening in policy in order to prioritize women or make policy more women-friendly. The study also found that women are divided along racial and cultural lines. White English-speaking women emphasized first-generation rights such as constraining customary law, workers' rights and rights over the physical body: rights designed to alter the position of women in relation to the law. In contrast, black isiZulu-speaking women placed more emphasis on second-generation rights, such as healthcare, education and rural development. Such concerns focus less on the position of women in relation to men and more on ensuring that developmental goals incorporate women.

Francis (2009) states that such stark divisions in priorities as illustrated above are the product of women's differing racial and cultural experiences. In examining women's experiences of leadership and power, the study found that there are institutional inadequacies that severely curtail the impact of the Women Parliamentary Caucus⁶ (WPC). As a result, women in the WPC cannot take decisions and are therefore unable to deal with anything effectively.

Similarly, Angevine (2006) focused on women parliamentarians' perceptions of political influence in the South African parliament. The study found that spaces such as the Women's Caucus and the Joint Committee for the Quality of Life and the Status of Women are available, but that women parliamentarians did not feel that these opportunities could influence the political agenda. Other findings from this study indicate that women parliamentarians perceive themselves as having a positive level of political efficacy and a strong ability to influence the political agenda. Gender stereotypes were mentioned as obstacles to their political effectiveness and their ability to influence the political agenda. Women parliamentarians perceived gender stereotyping problems occurring on the floor of Parliament, in committee assignment distribution, in media portrayals and in their personal lives. Other gender stereotypes, such as the expectation that women parliamentarians were responsible for women's issues ranging from education to domestic violence, were highlighted. Additional issues reportedly undermining women's effective functioning that were mentioned were sexual harassment and a brotherhood environment in Parliament's social spaces.

⁶ The Women's Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) was established in 1997 as a unit within the provincial legislature of Kwa-Zulu Natal. The WPC provides an inter-party forum for women Members of Provincial Parliament (Francis, 2009: 134).

Longwe (2004) researched gender equity in parliament and the institutional constraints that women Members of Parliament experience that hamper their effective participation. Similar to Angevine (2006), Sanger (2008) and Hassim and Meintjies (2005), she affirms that access and representation through increasing the number of women in parliament is an insufficient condition to ensure parliament produces gender-equitable processes and outcomes. It is argued that access and representation have to be linked to the fundamental objective of transforming the institution of parliament, starting from its structure, practice and culture. The private/public dichotomy was identified to cause huge tension through the balancing of the demands of parliament and the expectation within female parliamentarians' private lives. On the other hand Naidoo and Jano (2002) found that female managers in South Africa experience work and home as complementary rather than conflicting. The results of these two research studies contradict the dominant views in Western cultures and many African cultures, where work and family life are seen as having a direct conflict (Catsouphe, Kossek & Sweet, 2005).

Prince (2006) explored the perceptions of managers regarding the barriers to implementing the Employment Equity Plan (EEP) of the City of Cape Town. The participants of the study were male and female middle and senior managers in the Department of Social Development. They reported three strategic barriers to the achievement of equity, being short-term goals, political authority and legislation requirements. The operational barriers were also found to be experienced by managers and these are the lack of communication, lack of executive support and reverse

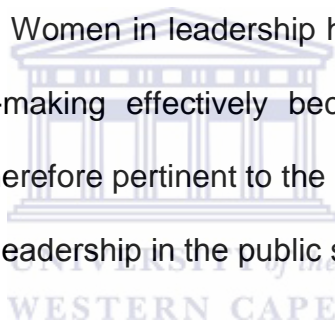
discrimination. These barriers relate to the short-term expectations that were set to meet employment equity targets. For example, the resignation, retrenchment or early retirement of skilled staff due to change in political powers may result in a lack of service delivery; and policies around employment equity are neither available nor communicated to staff members (Prince, 2006). The findings illustrate that the lack of support exists as far as informing and educating employees, or encouraging support to reduce concerns around employment equity planning in accordance with its implementation process.

Conclusion

Empirical research available about female leaders within government departments in Africa and internationally is scarce (Nkomo & Mgambi, 2009:52). Most of the existing literature on women's leadership roles is centred around women's perceptions of employment equity, women's effectiveness in politics, barriers to women's entry to leadership and progress. Within this literature, there is broad consensus that women's early socialization, limited education attainment, multiple roles, stereotyping, discrimination and organizational policies and procedures that work against women (such as long hours, lack of child-friendly policies and limited flexible working) can negatively impact on women's leadership.

Another major theme emerging from the literature is that leadership is a masculinized domain and that traditional values are used as rationale to maintain the low status of women in both private and public spheres. The media is also found to perpetuate the

accepted norm that women are 'outsiders' in leadership and political realms. In many instances, women employed in governance or politics are allocated positions that are traditionally perceived as 'women's arenas' such as social welfare and women's affairs, which in turn reinforces the private sphere as 'a woman's responsibility', even though women are employed in the public political sphere. However, in some cases women use patriarchy to enter into politics by challenging patriarchal structures and political systems to bring to the forefront reproductive issues as legitimate concerns. They are also reported to challenge hegemony over political leadership, which is imperative because quotas are not sufficient in transforming either gender relations or policies regarding women in leadership. Women in leadership have also been able to influence political change and decision-making effectively because they have formed close alliances and networking. It is therefore pertinent to the current study to explore how this study's participants experience leadership in the public sector.

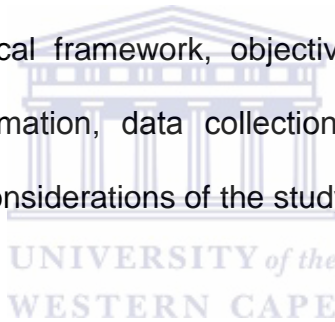


CHAPTER FOUR

Methodological Framework

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the methodology of the research. The first section begins with discussing the methodological framework of feminist and qualitative research. The rationale for selecting a qualitative research methodology over quantitative is followed by a critique of objectivity. Furthermore, I discuss key factors of feminist research, such as reflexivity and acknowledging power dynamics while highlighting women's experiences. The methodological framework, objectives, recruitment of participants, participants' biographical information, data collection, data analysis, reliability and validity, reflexivity and ethical considerations of the study are presented.



Methodology

The current study is concerned mainly with exploring the experiences of gender and power relations of women holding leadership positions in relation to their institutional contexts. Therefore a qualitative methodology was chosen in order to allow for a more in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions. Patton (1990) maintains that a qualitative design allows the researcher to study selected issues in depth and detail without predetermined hypotheses. A qualitative study also assumes the value of context and setting, and searches for a deeper understanding of the participant's lived experiences of certain phenomena (Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

The study is located within a feminist theoretical and methodological framework. According to Gray (2004), feminist epistemologies regard women themselves as an oppressed social class and take the view that what a person knows is largely determined by their social position. Feminist research aims at establishing collaborative, non-exploitative relationships, placing the researcher within the research and conducting transformative research (Gray, 2004). Brayton (1997) adds that feminist research constitutes changing the power relations between the researcher and the participants.

Westmarland (2001:8) similarly notes that, to a large extent, feminist researchers attempt to actively involve the participant in the research process as much as possible. They reject the use of the word 'subject' that implies the participant is an object to be experimented on. Although a more equal relationship between the researcher and participant is often seen as increasing the validity of the research, this is not the main reason that feminist researchers insist upon this relationship. Feminist researchers are working within the wider women's liberation movement and are working towards the overall aim of all women being free from oppression. In sum, it would not be acceptable for researchers to further oppress women in the name of academic research.

According to Mies (1983:135), the change of the status quo becomes the starting point for a scientific quest. Gcabo (2003) reflects on this position, arguing that it implies that research for the sake of research is deficient. This research will hopefully be a form of consciousness-raising for the participants. As participants in the research were

engaging in the process of articulating their own experiences, they began to reflect more critically on and perhaps work towards transforming their situations (Gcabo, 2003).

Harding (1987:9) affirms that studying women from their own perspective, recognising the researcher as part of the participants and acknowledging that the beliefs of the researcher shape the research is what makes feminist research feminist. She asserts that they can be thought of as methodological features because they show us how to apply the general structure of scientific theory to research on women and gender. Merely including women in the research equation is insufficient (Brayton, 1997).

This study is not only about including women as part of the research process, but about taking women's locations and standpoints as the basis of the study (Gcabo, 2003). The study therefore proceeds from a perspective that values participants' experiences, ideas and needs (Weston, 1988:148). This, according to Brayton (1997) means that the multiple and diverse perspectives of women serve as a way of grounding the research process.

Objectives of the study

The main aim of this thesis is to explore the gender and power relations resulting from the entry of black women into senior positions in the workplace. It is concerned to explore their subjective experiences and perceptions of their leadership positions. The study focused on six government departments in the Western Cape and was guided by

the following research questions:

- How do participants experience being in a leadership position?
- To what extent do participants feel that they experience authority as a leader; and do they feel they are responded to differently by women and men?
- What challenges do participants report with respect to being a woman in leadership?
- Do participants report experiencing prejudice and discrimination on the base of gender, race or other forms of social identity in the workplace?
- What mechanisms do participants reportedly employ in dealing with challenges relating to the gender and power relations in the workplace?

Recruitment of participants

The participants of this study were six black African women holding leadership positions in government departments in the Western Cape region. Preliminary investigation focused on locating and targeting departments in the public sector that have black African women in management positions as employees. The participants were selected on the basis of the following sampling criteria: (a) they were employed in provincial or national government departments; and (b) they were at the level of manager or director (salary level 13-16 according to government policy). The participants of the study all worked in provincial and national departments within the Western Cape region. Participants were recruited through the method of snowballing. The snowballing sampling method is defined as a biased sampling technique because it is not random and it selects individuals on the basis of social networks (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981;

Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Once a participant agreed to take part in this study, she was requested to inform the researcher of other women who met similar criteria in terms of gender, race and rank in the workplace. All participants were recruited using this method.

Request letters and emails were sent to the following departments to identify appropriate participants: Department of Agriculture, Environmental Affairs and Planning, Water Affairs, South African Police Services, the Premier's Office and the Mineral Resources Department. In all the departments listed above, the women granted permission via emails and telephone conversations. The appointments were secured, consent forms were signed and participants agreed to be interviewed and to be audio-recorded before the interviews commenced.

In this study, the term 'black Africans' refers to previously disenfranchised and discriminated people in South Africa in terms of socially constructed 'racial' categories. In this study, the term also refers to women who are Nguni first-language speakers.

A letter explaining the rationale of the study, ethical considerations and a request for participation was provided to the participants, which they signed before commencing with the interviews (Appendix B). Although the participants were given an opportunity to express themselves in their home languages, they chose to be interviewed in English. Each interview took place at a convenient time and at a safe, non-threatening venue where participants and the researcher met. Each interview was one to one hour thirty

minutes in length. The table below records pseudonyms for participants in order to maintain confidentiality. The actual age, position, number of years in the current position and marital status of each participant is also included on the table.

NAME	AGE	POSITION	NUMBER OF YEARS IN THE POSITION	MARITAL STATUS
Bongiwe	35	Director	4	Married
Khuthala	47	Deputy Director	4	Single
Nompumelelo	36	Deputy Director	5	Single
Sihle	28	Regional Manager	0.5	Single
Yanda	35	Director	4	Married
Zandile	50	Director	13	Single

Methods of data collection

Data was collected through face-to-face interviews that were audio-recorded.

Interview Method

Semi-structured questions were used to guide the interviews whilst open-ended questions were posed to participants. In the same light as Terre Blanche and Durrheim (1999), the open-ended questions allowed the participants to provide descriptive

information and for the interviewer to probe for more information. The participants chose to be interviewed in English as it was the common language between the researcher and participants. Some participants are first-language speakers of other Nguni languages that both participants and the researcher might have had difficulty understanding each other.

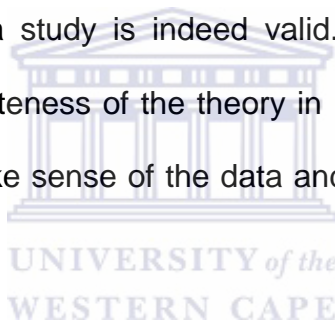
Data Analysis: Generating categories, themes and patterns

Thematic analysis has been a useful method of analyzing the data. The research questions provided a springboard from which certain themes are generated. The analysis of data took the form of identifying themes by repeatedly listening to the audiotapes in order to identify recurrent statements and also repeatedly reading the verbatim transcripts. According to Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), thematic analysis is a coherent way of organizing or reading interview material. Not only does it allow for the answering of researchers' questions, but it also takes into account other relevant information that may have emerged during the discussion.

Similarly, Joffe and Yardley (2004) describe thematic analysis as a specific pattern found in the data where a theme of a coding category can refer to the manifest content of the data, that is, something directly observable in a series of transcripts. Alternatively, it may also refer to a more latent level, such as talk which is implicitly inferred. Thematic analysis often draws on both types of theme, even when the manifest theme is the focus. Therefore, the aim is to understand through interpretation what the latent meaning of manifest themes observable within the data is.

Validity and Reliability

Marshall (1990) affirms that in order to prove validity in a qualitative study, one need to consider the personal, relational and contextual aspects of the research. Therefore, validity may include the ability of a researcher to keep a 'reflexive journal' in relation to the researcher's data, which is enhanced by the use of different vantage points and forms of learning (Gcabo, 2003). This is contrasted to quantitative research that makes use of objective scales in order to prove whether or not one has been truthful in giving accurate representations of one's findings (Silverman, 1993). Marshall (1990) points to the increasing concern for qualitative research to be conducted with considerable rigour in order to demonstrate that a study is indeed valid. Relational validity is achieved through checking the appropriateness of the theory in relation to the data in the study. Theory is used primarily to make sense of the data and to highlight the complexities of the research phenomena.



However, from a feminist point of view, a completely valid research study representing the ultimate truth is not achievable. This is because all knowledge is socially constructed and no knowledge is certain: it is rather a particular reflection of the process. Therefore, validity cannot be defined in absolute terms but only as relative to the purpose of the study (Gcabo, 2003). According to Boje (2000), a valid study is one in which the researcher manages to represent the experiences of participants. Rigor and credibility of explanation of the research process are necessary qualities for qualitative research. Boje (2000) further observed that an understanding of participants' situations through immersion into their lives and from their vantage point of view gives

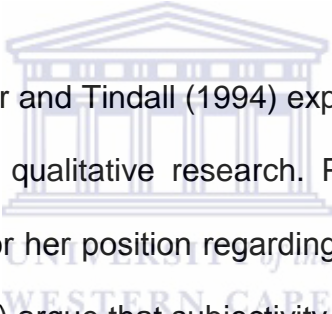
the researcher an experience of understanding participants' experiences.

It has been argued to date that qualitative methods have not been able to produce reliable and dependable data. On the other hand, quantitative methods are said to be formulaic in nature, and are therefore standardized and valid (Silverman, 1993). Many qualitative researchers feel strongly that replicable, standardized research tools are not applicable when it comes to qualitative research (Marshall, 1990). Furthermore, some qualitative researchers argue that proving reliability of a study by trying to make social research replicable and generalisable is counterproductive and limiting (Silverman, 1993). This is because social phenomena are fluid, making it difficult, and even unnecessary, to duplicate the study and to measure the accuracy of the research instruments (Silverman, 1993). In this study, it would therefore be unnecessary to prove reliability, as it is understood and accepted that individuals' experiences, opinions, attitudes and perceptions change over time.

Issues of Reflexivity

According to Edwards (1990), self-reflexivity is an important component of feminist research. As outlined earlier, according to both qualitative and feminist research, the researcher is not an objective, separate, superior person without identity or personal bias. Instead, the researcher is also a component of the research process. I am aware that I cannot be totally neutral as perceptions, beliefs and opinions form part of one's internal processes and interpretations of what is being observed. Therefore I was and still am aware of my preconceived notions in terms of the topic to be studied. Similarly,

Ackerly and True (2008) posit that the feminist research process is a commitment to enquiry about how researchers conduct studies. This research practice involves being conscious of the power of knowledge, epistemology, boundaries, marginalization, silences, relationships and power differentials, and our own situatedness as researchers. We need to be aware of how our own privileges and experiences condition our knowledge and research. However, the feminist researcher's responsibility to reflexivity is not limited to a commitment to reflecting on their identity as a researcher, but rather to acknowledging and thinking through silences in epistemology, boundaries, and power dynamics of the research process itself (Ackerly & True, 2008:695).



Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994) explain two main types of reflexivity that need to be considered in qualitative research. Personal reflexivity involves the researcher's awareness of his or her position regarding the definition of the problem to be studied. Banister *et al.* (1994) argue that subjectivity in qualitative research is viewed as a resource and is not necessarily negative. Thus one cannot profess to be neutral when one's research always has a particular standpoint. Functional reflexivity refers to the process of the research including all the variables that impacted on or influenced the research in some way. Reflexive analysis also includes treating all material as important, rather than regarding certain data as something of no value to be discarded (Banister, *et al.*, 1994).

As an employee in the public sector, I was managed by a black African woman during the time I conducted the greater part of this study. I am aware that I play an active part in the power dynamics that exist between the manager and other employees on a daily basis. I am a black African woman, as are the participants of the study that were recruited. As an 'insider', I was advantaged in gaining rapport with participants as I am of the same race and working in a government department like them. However, the latter came with a disadvantage in terms of the research questions posed, as most participants would respond as though seeking validation from me even though their answers were incomplete. This was evident in phrases such as "You must know what I mean since you are also employed in a government department" and "Was I correct about that?" Given such challenges, I always communicated that it was their opinions and personal experiences that they were reporting on and that there was no incorrect response or identical experiences. At the same time, I was an 'outsider' as I am younger than the women I interviewed and majority of the participants are first language speakers of other Nguni languages. Therefore the interviews were conducted in English. I was also newly employed in a government department at the time, so I was constantly negotiating my position to get respect from the participants. In other words, I had no prior experiences and knowledge of politics existing in the public sector, and participants were aware of this as I openly communicated my standpoint with them.

Banister, Bowman and Taylor (1994) refer to power differentials in qualitative research. I managed to minimize such differentials by openly communicating to the participants that they could ask about my background, why I had chosen to research the current topic

and how the recorded information would be disseminated. I spoke about my personal background in terms of where I came from and what I had studied thus far; and further explained that I am a woman working in a government department, with vested interest in gender and power relations given the government's explicit commitment to promoting policies that support gender equity and redress.

Ethical considerations

In the process of conducting the research, I adhered to all the standard ethical and professional guidelines for research with human participants. As the researcher, I ensured that the rights and welfare of the participants I worked with was protected. Participation was voluntary and all participants were notified that if they wished to withdraw from the interview for any reason, they could do so at any point in the research process without any consequences. I attempted at all times to treat participants with respect, positive regard, empathy, warmth and a non-judgmental attitude. I also protected the identities and interests of participants by guaranteeing and assuring them of confidentiality of information communicated to me and anonymity regarding their identities. With regard to the dissemination of recorded interviews, permission was attained from participants for interviews to be transcribed verbatim, with the assurance that the audio-tape would be discarded once transcription was completed. Participants were also assured that their names would be changed in the analysis section and that the thesis was for academic purposes and would be available at the University of the Western Cape library. Participants signed a research contract including all these aspects (See Appendix B).

Conclusion

This chapter has provided a rationale for the chosen research methodology. The selection of qualitative over quantitative methods has been discussed in relation to the topic under study. Furthermore, feminist research principles have been outlined in order to provide clarity and the importance in the research process. The issues pertaining to reliability, validity and reflexivity and ethical consideration have been discussed. The next chapter presents the results and discussions of findings of the study.



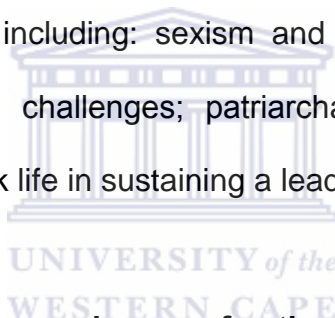
CHAPTER FIVE

Results and Discussion

Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, the transcripts were analysed according to themes. This chapter presents the key findings emerging from the study. The discussion of findings is presented in the following key themes that emerged from the data:

- Participants' subjective experiences of being leaders, including their sense of authority as female leaders.
- Challenges as leaders, including: sexism and racism; horizontal hostility and 'sabotage'; dealing with challenges; patriarchal ideologies and culture; and balancing home and work life in sustaining a leadership career.



Women managers' subjective experiences of authority and leadership

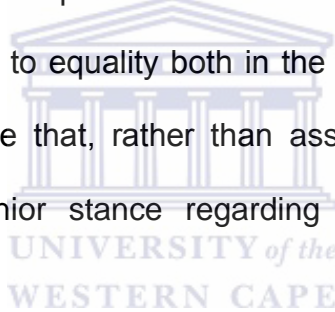
The literature has shown that biases exist in the ways that women are perceived as leaders, as well as the ways leaders perceive of themselves and what they think they must do to succeed (Hogue & Lord, 2007). Corporations consistently, if unwittingly, convey that females are not suited for management roles; and others may see women's leadership through a cultural perspective altered by gender bias, resulting in many women having difficulties in developing viable self-views as leaders (Hogue & Lord, 2007). Similarly in this study, two participants indicated how they have internalised learnt subservient characteristics and acknowledge this as being inherent in 'African' tradition. Participants' narratives below illustrate how they feel that their internalised

raced and gendered self-perceptions undermine their sense of authority as leaders and how they also actively undermine themselves to ensure they do not threaten others:

As a woman, the challenge is inward. It's within me the fact that I always remember and think I'm a woman and I'm an African woman. You look down upon yourself...even when you do the work. (Zandile)

Do not be Mrs Know-it-all especially with superiors. I make sure they don't feel threatened by me. (Nompumelelo)

Zandile and Nompumelelo's reported experiences are synonymous with Alexandra's findings (2004) that the importance placed on tradition in African societies is one of the major barriers to women's right to equality both in the private and public spheres. The participants' comments illustrate that, rather than assert themselves, they alter their behaviours by adopting a junior stance regarding the self-perceptions and their behaviours as leaders.



On the other hand, some participants shared how they actively challenged the gendered notions that undermine their femininity and leadership qualities:

I am capable and my motto since I was young is if someone else can do it, so can I. I never see a job that it can be done by males; I see the male as a person. (Khuthala)

It is imperative that, as leaders in the workplace, women need to develop confidence and assertiveness, regardless of the negative perceptions and challenges this would bring. Alexandra (2004) also found that women's lack of self-confidence is one of the

major obstacles in their advancement to representation and political participation. She also noted that, with confidence and determination, women can advance to the highest levels in political processes. Similarly, Mainiero (1986) stated that advocates of the socialization perspective contend that the only way in which powerless individuals can overcome structural obstacles is by acting assertively and aggressively to gain the information, resources and support that they need to reposition themselves in the cycle of power. No-one gives away power; one has to take it or create it. This is consistent with Khuthala's view that she does not believe certain jobs are exclusively for males as she perceives males to be as equal to her. Mainiero (1986) suggests that if women continue to act in helpless, dependent ways, regardless of their relative structural power as compared to men, they may unwittingly contribute to the perpetuation of their own powerlessness. This appears to be the case with Zandile and Nompumelelo as illustrated in their comments. On the other hand, it is encouraging that Khuthala is actively challenging such a notion.

As stated earlier, leadership is socially constructed: it is a negotiated process of mutual influence between those in power and those who are led (Parker, 2001: 44) that requires others to perceive of one as a leader (Peters, Kinsey & Malloy, 2004). With respect to their experiences of having authority as required by leadership, participants for the most part indicated that they do not feel totally respected as they should be or do not enjoy the sense of authority that they realise they should have:

They would ask questions like, "Who is she? She is a token", most of them were googling my name. (Nompumelelo)

Nompumelelo's reported experience indicates that co-workers did not accept her as a legitimate leader and wanted to find out more about her by searching for her background on the internet. This is an indication that women are not instantly supported or accepted as legitimate leaders. This is similar to Kanter's 1977 findings that women in positions of authority experience disadvantages in the workplace which are a result of the token status attached to them which arises through the numerical rarity of women in leadership. Yoder (1991) states that sexism is the reason why women are labelled as tokens. Therefore, affirmative action policies of redress result in women in management who are perceived to be lacking leadership skills and employed in leadership positions solely because of race and gender. This is also evident in the statement expressed by Sihle:



You think women should support each other it's the other way around. Male leaders are supported and women always want to take their chances and question your authority. (Sihle)

Similarly, Su's 1993 findings suggest that the challenges women face are to do with traditional attitudes, assumptions about the private/ public realms and women perceived as being potentially disruptive because of their position on the margins. The participants indicated that they experienced similar challenges: they felt undermined and taken advantage of. They also experienced resistance when giving instructions to co-workers across gender and race. The quotes below illustrate how staff reporting to participants resisted meeting their demands, as well as their behaviour to compensate for the lack of efficiency of their subordinates:

Funny enough, I experience that from another black lady. One would expect to get it from another different race. She would delay deadlines and now I have to be firm with her so to her it's maybe, she is also black, she thinks I take advantage coz she is black. (Yanda)

The participant's reported experience illustrates that other black women do not adhere to completing work given to her within prescribed timeframes. Yanda stated that her junior staff member believes that she is taking advantage of her mainly because she is black. It seems that black women in management experience a myriad of challenges that are intersected. In this case, the manager and subordinate are similar in terms of gender and race, but at the same time are different regarding their positions in the workplace, which ultimately results in different practices of authority and compliance. As discussed earlier, Collins (2000) argues that the social similarities will shift when different indicators are constructed at the expense of others. In this case, both women perceive each other differently: Yanda's experience shows that she is undermined by her co-worker by not adhering to timeframes at the same time that the employee perceives Yanda to be taking advantage of her because she is a black person.

While Nompumelelo and Yanda's reported experiences amplify the way in which race and gender challenges are intertwined, Sihle's experience is that she needs to compensate by performing the tasks herself when employees do not adhere to timeframes or deadlines:

It's a downfall, my downfall. I find it happening month after month, if a person does not do something past the deadline, I do it myself. (Sihle)

This response has an undertone of a lack of seriousness in relation to her authority as a leader and being undermined as a leader in the instructions she gives to some of the employees. On the other hand, her response reproduces the devaluation of her authority since she does not challenge this insubordination but rather she resorts to performing these tasks herself without enforcing her authority or implementing disciplinary measures. On the hand, Khuthala illustrates how she sets limits so that even when employees resist, they do follow through with her instructions because she is assertive and enforces her authority in strategic ways:

There is resistance but they do take instructions. For me what works is that I manage in accordance with the situation, if the situation requires me to be autocratic, democratic or transformational. (Khuthala)

The participants were asked to report whether they receive the 'power' that comes with the leadership or managerial position they have acquired. The following illustrates the differing ways they unpack their experiences of power:

Yes and no. No in the sense that I don't feel the power, I still see myself as Zandile working with colleagues. Yes in the sense that when you think of other people I started with in the service, some are still in lower levels. (Zandile)

The kind of power you are given is minimum. (Yanda)

I don't think I'm powerful because of the way colleagues who are junior and senior treat me. They don't respect me as a senior official. (Nompumelelo)

Participants noted that they do not fully experience the power that comes with the positions and also do not perceive themselves as powerful. They reported feeling undermined and disrespected; and believe that they are afforded minimal power by colleagues in the workplace. This echoes Mooney (2005: 112), who described 'new tokenism' as the phenomena of women occupying positions of high visibility but low power. Angevine's 2006 findings, which indicate that gender stereotypes were seen as obstacles to women parliamentarians' political effectiveness, are also consistent with the participants' reported experiences; and according to Hassim (1991), such barriers are to the detriment of women as they remain marginalized in the public sphere of leadership. Furthermore, the studies of Hassim and Meintjies (2005), Mkilanya (2011), Devlin and Elgie (2008) all reinforce such findings as they argue that quotas are a form of symbolic politics as there is no relationship between substantive representation of women in decision-making and feminist outcomes or promotion of women's rights. Accurately, Collins (1990) asserts that black women cannot be fully empowered until interlocking systems of race, gender and social class oppression within organizations are unveiled and dismantled.

Another related component of participants' subjective experience of being leaders was that of feeling insecure in their positions and feeling that they needed to prove themselves to others. The imperative to prove that they are 'good enough' leaders emerged as enmeshed in their experience of leadership. Women leaders in the workplace reportedly face the imperative to work extra hard in order to prove that they are competent workers and leaders. Northouse (2001) described this as an

organizational barrier that women are subjected to. Responses from the participants are synonymous with Olsson and Walker's 2004 study which found that women reported their gender had made it difficult to advance into leadership and that they therefore had to work harder than men to obtain equal recognition in the workplace. Sihle's experience, in particular, is similar to Connell's 2006 discovery that some people perceive women managers' progression to senior leadership as facilitated by the rules being laid aside in order to make the senior positions easily accessible for them:

Ever since I started my career, I worked ten times to prove myself. People think we use our beauty or other channels. I hear many rumours about myself that I did this, I did that and it's disappointing and ridiculous, as well as patronising. (Sihle)

I do everything to the best of my ability. If you are a female in this position you have to prove you are capable because you are a female. (Khuthala)

As a woman really nothing much is expected. If there is an administrative responsibility, preferably it would be given to a man and not me is a sense that a man has the power, he is going to drive and you as a woman will be soft.... This position was given to a man outside. So you have to work harder unfortunately. (Zandile)

I work hard thinking of a bigger picture. There is a lot at stake. I need to make sure that in whatever I do, I keep up the work ethic. (Yanda)

The reported experiences indicate that although participants work hard, there is little recognition and they must put in extra effort because they are female. Also, it was reported by one participant, that for women's advancement into leadership was associated with lenient decision-makers who did not fully apply the rules. This situation is undermining to women and it remains prevalent. Although women in leadership are

faced with these challenges on a daily basis, they report to uphold work ethics.

Challenges as a woman leader in the workplace

Key challenges that participants face in the workplace and that further undermine their leadership capacity and experiences, emerged in five sub-themes: (1) the experience of racist and sexist practises; (2) practices of 'sabotage'; (3) patriarchal ideologies and cultural practises that shape workplace dynamics; (4) dealing with challenges and (5) balancing work and home life in sustaining a leadership career.

Racist and sexist practices

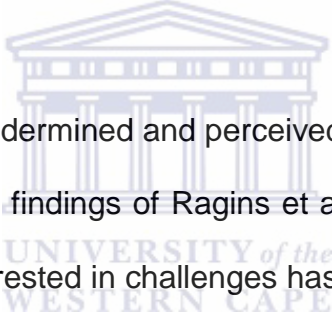
Crenshaw noted that 'race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of black women's employment experiences' (Crenshaw, 1989:139). She describes three ways in which gender intersects for black women, being structurally, representationally and politically. She further explains that structurally, a woman and black person are both perceived to be lower in status within patriarchal and racist societies. The low status that black women are seen to occupy is related to the fact that they are in position of being subjected to both racism and sexism. At times, they may experience sexism from members of their own social groups within the black community and racism from both women and men (Reid & Comas-Diaz, 1990). This explanation is consistent with the remarks relating to this theme, where the participants highlighted their experiences of being prejudiced against on the basis of race and gender, as well as their sense that their identities as both female and black shaped the responses from others:

There is work my supervisor does not give me because he assumes I cannot do it. I struggled they assume I cannot do things because I'm a woman and I'm black. (Nompumelelo)

When you come in as a black person they're always, like, "Who is this coming here as a manager?". You always have this open hostility. (Sihle)

I experienced a lot of rejection. Colleagues were blatant and vocal. I experienced discrimination people looked at me with very angry eyes. (Yanda)

A white manager came and told me that in three months I will leave this department. In a meeting, one of the managers - who were all white - said that the government is bureaucratic...now they must talk to the pink tape. (Khuthala)



Nompumelelo reported being undermined and perceived as incompetent because of her race. This is consistent with the findings of Ragins et al. (1998) that the preconception that women leaders are not interested in challenges has meant that challenging projects are not offered to women and they must explicitly request the challenging work. Sihle reported to be experiencing hostility and colleagues questioning her identity as a woman leader. Yanda's reported experience is that of rejection and colleagues resenting her. Khuthala's position was labelled as 'pink tape' because the colour is associated with females. The government's policy of equity was rejected and labelled as 'bureaucratic'. It is evident that equity advancement initiatives and female empowerment in the workplace are not readily accepted by people in organizations in general, including other women.

Collins (1999) asserts that socially constructed hierarchies and intersectionalities of race, gender and social class may be disempowering to the practice of leadership; and this is evident in the participant's responses. In the context of racist and sexist discrimination against women in leadership, Collins (2000) has argued that black women are at the centre of two systems of oppression, being race and gender. This is the result of deeply embedded, normalized gender expectations and racial stereotypes that makes it difficult for women in leadership to be perceived as successful leaders. Essed (1991:31) introduces the notion of gendered racism, which she describes as the racial oppression of black women as structured by racist and ethnicist perceptions of gender roles. Essed also describes gendered racism as expressions of racism shaped by gender systems. Bell and Nkomo (2001: 137) refer to the entwinement of race and gender as racialized sexism: "...the theoretical concept of racialized sexism also captures the idea that the experience of gender discrimination in the workplace depends on a woman's race. For black women managers, sexism is entwined with racism."

As a result, repeated public displays of diminishment and disregard have the power to undermine the leadership of black women. These violations of civility and mutual respect highlight power imbalances when race and gender are factors; and are 'linked to unconscious and subtle forms of racism that escape the organizational mechanism of redress' (Lester, 2009: 447). This is the case in the participants' reported experiences in this theme.

Horizontal hostility: 'sabotage' in the workplace

Another key area that participants reported as a challenge to their position as leaders is that of active undermining by others in the workplace, which was referred to as 'sabotage'. Workplace 'sabotage' is defined by Crino (1994:312) as "behavior intended to damage, disrupt, or subvert the organization's operations for the personal purposes of the 'saboteur' by creating unfavorable publicity, embarrassment, delays in production, damage to property, the destruction of working relationships, or the harming of employees or customers". This relates to 'horizontal hostility', a term originally coined by Kennedy (1970) and used by many scholars (Domínguez, 1994; Greer, 1999; Penelope, 1992; Tannebaum, 2002) to describe a situation in which members of the same oppressed, powerless and marginalized group fight amongst themselves. It is noted that they take out their anger, fear, lowered self-esteem, frustration, and mistrust on those closest to them, those as vulnerable as they are, and those who have equal or less power or status than they do. In most cases, this is caused by the individuals competing for scarce resources such as power, positions, tenure or authority. In light of the above, three participants reported that they had experiences of 'sabotage' from those with similar backgrounds to them in their respective work environments. The participants reported that women at work compete with each other, are jealous of each other or engage in practices that actively undermine other female staff. This is illustrated in the comments below:

The sabotage was big; they would even steal a file you working with and do things, it was females mostly. Females are capable to bring other females down the bring-me-down syndrome if there is another female in these positions. (Khuthala)

It's with women. We don't support each other. It's the way we are. They say, "I'm the one who deserve to be there and not her". As women we should stick together. We stick together in the wrong way trying to destroy the person. (Sihle)

Women sabotage each other, that is one thing I've learnt. Sometimes you would rather trust a white woman than a black woman. You get ones that are supportive and ones who say that they are the one who is supposed to get the post. It is driven by jealousy, straight jealousy. (Yanda)

The reported lack of support and levels of jealousy relate to the notion of queen beeism elaborated earlier, whereby some women in organizational contexts are not supportive and oppress others because they feel that they themselves deserve the leadership post. In specific cases mentioned, other women interfered with documents that women leaders were working on or actively tried to bring them down in order to maintain their unique status. As the above comments indicate, the participants experience oppression from other black women and will form unlikely alliances in order to destroy the other female staff member. Consistently, Pandor (2006) also calls attention to the taken-for-granted statement that women at senior level positions are not always supportive of other women and tend to want to maintain the status quo. In her research study cited earlier, Marshall (1995) highlights that the participants in her study reported hostility from women lower down in the organization. Contrary to popular belief, other women are not necessarily instant supporters, or people with whom female managers will have an affinity.

Potentially, it would benefit women in organizations to form alliances to deal with interpersonal, social and organizational issues that affect them as a collective in an

effective manner. Skjeie's 2002 study found that women who form alliances are able to influence change within political agendas and decision-making in government. Examples of such alliances are close co-ordination and networking within women's organizations, and forming inter-party and cross-party alliances, both within their political parties and across their parties, around women-specific issues. Women have also successfully learned the rules and gained legitimacy and credibility, through their actions, to place important issues on the agenda (Skjeie, 2002).

However, the ways in which challenges are mitigated by women in this study differs with Skjeie's 2002 findings. Most of the participants reportedly dealt with challenges in passive or indirect ways. The participants reported that they do not deal with these problems because they are avoiding confrontation and choosing to maintain the work ethic at all times. Some participants reported that they sometimes experience emotional outbursts at work. Yet they consistently remain silent and ignore problems. This is attributed to their expectations that the most senior official will be biased to white and coloured raced people if there is a problem and the woman manager will experience even more problems.

Even if there's a problem, one is restricted. Even though there is a person treating others badly, one is not going to take it up especially us black women because the white director will support the other person who is coloured or white and you will be treated more badly. Maybe it's my character helps me because generally I ignore things. Even in my marriage, it is working out because I ignore most things, I don't jump. I never enforce harshness; things sort themselves out. (Yanda)

You might not be direct or confrontational; you deal with it indirectly. (Sihle)

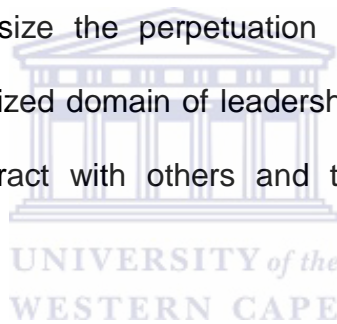
There was a day I broke down and cried here (at work). My previous boss was a kind of his own. He was giving me a hiding (*whipping gesture with her hand*). Normally I don't respond when a person is giving me. They have this perception about me and they continue to say what they're saying, then I just keep quiet because I can't convince them. (Zandile)

I think I'm passive. You cannot have one approach in dealing with people. (Yanda)

I'm a mixture of being active and passive. (Sihle)

I need to make sure in whatever I do I do keep up work ethic. (Bongiwe)

The above quotations emphasize the perpetuation of women in leadership being disadvantaged by the masculinized domain of leadership. Although they occupy senior positions, the ways they interact with others and the ways they respond further exacerbate this challenge.



Patriarchal ideologies and culture in the workplace

Daily interactions with colleagues are shaped by larger cultural normative practices, in particular those related to gender and male authority over women. Participants shared how they often do not raise workplace problems or enforce their authority as a result of larger social power relations and traditional forms of authority that undermine their capacity to express authority in the work environment. Zandile reported on her experiences of finding it difficult to extend her authority over black African men given the complication of cultural norms:

To African men I have to think before I say anything. I have to show them respect. Sometimes I would not address the problem today. (Zandile)

When the researcher enquired about the reasons for her 'respect' for African males in the work setting, she asserted:

Here I have men, real adult males (*lifting up arms and shoulders*) over 50 years of age, African (black) men whom I have to really respect. I know from home culturally I have to respect men. It's not easy to tackle them. The key is to show them respect. Normally you treat people like children and say whatever...but with them I know I cannot do that. (Zandile)

Nompumelelo similarly shared how she felt that cultural gendered constructions of authority impact on her ability to take leadership:

The colleagues in lower ranks, especially African males, it is difficult for them to take instructions. Our culture plays a big role; it is an issue. My superiors noticed that this guy has cultural issues being under me. (Nompumelelo)

Thus patriarchal ideology is believed to afford men automatic respect due to culture and socialization. The researcher asked Zandile whether her respect for African (black) men in the workplace impedes on the daily functions and process of the work. She emphasized the following:

It is challenging in a work respect because you normally want to deal with things as they come. When they are messing up, it's not easy to call them in and, like (*whipping gesture using her right hand*). (Zandile)

It is evident that Zandile approaches work challenges with males in a deeply embedded patriarchal manner which is normalized, subtle and complex as argued earlier in this thesis. This in turn produces and reinforces the socially constructed gender norms between biological males and females. However, contrary to Zandile's reported experiences, the studies of Skjeie (2002) and Samarasinghe (2000) found that women have overcome the barriers of the dominant patriarchal culture in their workplace by performing their roles significantly in leadership positions to influence change and decision-making. The female participants in these two studies are reported to have used the patriarchal structures to challenge political systems and hegemonic masculinity.

Further elements of the influence of the patriarchal workplace are demonstrated by Zandile's statement that males 'protect' her as when there are issues at work and that she relies on the protection she receives. According to Catalyst (2005), stereotypes still exist, perpetrated and reinforced by both men and women. Social and cultural stereotypes limit women's opportunities for advancement and sustainability in top leadership positions because they often portray women as lacking the very qualities commonly associated with effective leadership (Catalyst, 2005). The following statements were made:

I have African guys and they are supportive and very much aware of how the different races operate so they are very protective (*lifting up both shoulders and arms*) the same manner they would attack the previous white boss who was not right. (Zandile)

The researcher requested the participant to unpack in terms of what exactly the males do to 'protect' her:

When there is unfairness of the other race, they get in. They come in to advise me. They ask me, "Don't you think we should do this and this?" (Zandile)

The participant perceived the 'protection' she receives from male subordinates in the workplace positively as 'racial patriotism' which can be linked to loyalty. She emphasized:

It's racial patriotism! Secondly because I'm a woman they have that protective kinda thing. (Zandile)

The protection Zandile receives from males in the workplace is a way of them undermining her authority as a woman leader and perpetuating male dominance over her as a leader. For instance, she has a 'buy-in' to the patriarchal systems. However, she attributes the 'protection' she receives as 'racial patriotism'. Collins' 2000 claim is useful in this respect, given her argument that, within the matrix of domination, the hegemonic domain legitimizes oppression through culture, ideology and consciousness. Collins (2000) further explains that the hegemonic domain is made up of language, images people respond to, and values and ideas held. Schoeman (1998) argues that ideologies hinder well-balanced interpretations of reality, to such an extent that even the oppressed become restricted in their thinking. The writer continues by stating that the oppressed eventually accept their subservient position in society and presumed inferiority as a natural or given state of affairs that can never be changed. In the

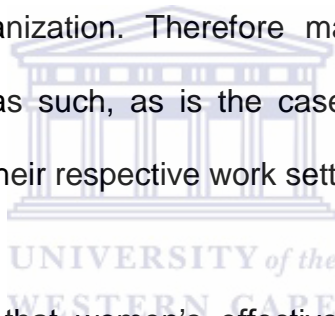
reported experience by Zandile regarding the respect she gives to African males in the organization and the males protecting her, Schoeman's (1998) view is also pertinent to assisting in understanding how this participant has internalised the docile cultural expectation reportedly prevalent in black African culture.

Another indication of participants' buy-in to patriarchal norms was evident in their responses on the question of sexual harassment. Sexual harassment has been seen as a widespread challenge for women leaders in general; and so I was concerned to investigate to what extent this has impacted on the experiences of women leaders. Sexual harassment in the form of sexual remarks, sexual coercion and intimidations remain prevalent in the public/private work spheres (Bowes-Sperry and Tata, 1999). Participants of this study did indicate that sexual harassment was not an uncommon allegation by women in lower ranks about males in higher ranks, but they tended to question such allegations in a way that undermines the reality of sexual harassment for many women:

Most of sexual harassment cases are when usually there has been something going on between the two people and if the woman is tired of the situation or the woman has achieved whatever, then they start reporting sexual harassment. The woman use it (sexual harassment) for her benefit. A woman alleged that four people harassed her. Then it was found that no people who are really, really sexually harassed do not report it. (Zandile)

Here is a woman we could see in the end she would say sexual harassment. We talk about harassment and sexual abuse to suit us. Women tend to use it in the wrong manner. A woman provokes a man, and then says sexual harassment. (Khuthala)

Unfortunately, as the participants' responses illustrate, it is not only men who ignore sexual harassment issues, but also women. Female managers in this study shift the blame to women victims. These responses reflect that women leaders accept and perpetuate masculinist notions of sexual harassment through a 'blame the woman' discourse. As a result, many victims may believe that they will not be listened to sympathetically and the lack of action by management may lead them to believe that it is not worth reporting sexual harassment. Wilson and Thompson (2001) note that there is a process of non-decision-making that results in no action taken to change the status quo. This is the mobilization of the bias against women that is sustained by the masculine culture of the organization. Therefore managers do not always define sexually harassing behaviour as such, as is the case in the participants' expressed views of sexual harassment in their respective work settings.



Angevine's 2006 study found that women's effective functioning in leadership was impeded by sexual harassment and a brotherhood environment in social spaces within parliament. The participants' statements are also synonymous with Phillips, Stockdale and Joeman's study (1989) where they identified that, in some cases, the work atmosphere and perceptions can perpetuate sexual harassment. For instance, where masculine behaviours are the norm and harassment is widely accepted and when a friendly climate leads to confusing signals, the person harassed may believe they are partly at fault by failing to be more assertive or for inadvertently encouraging comments or advances. According to Wilson and Thompson (2001), sexual harassment will not be reported by victims as a consequence. Many victims react passively and keep silent.

This, I argue, perpetuates a double standard. On the one side, feminists, lawyers and activists encourage the victims to report such incidents, while on the other side those who report are considered to have falsified the sexual harassment. As a result, this will cause a vicious circle where the perpetrators get away with this kind of abuse.

Gutek's 1989 study show that many people view sexual encounters in the organization as interpersonal rather than as related to the organization's culture or norms. The agenda that renders harassment is set within an organization. In line with the participants' responses to sexual harassment, Gutek (1989) continues by stating that it is commonplace for sexual harassment charges to never reach formal decision-making because the practice of sexual harassment is made invisible by the prevailing normative rules or through the capacity of managers (who are often males) to mobilize the cultural resources of the organization in their favour. Davidson and Earnshaw (1990) also state that the majority of sexual harassment incidents are not reported to management because victims, who are mostly females, must report largely to men, and thus cannot be certain that their complaints will be dealt with seriously and sympathetically.

Conforming to the socially constructed notion of balancing home and work life in sustaining a leadership career

Another challenge is the work/ life dichotomy experienced by working women. Yanda and Bongwiwe's experience resonates with what Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) and Van Aarde and Mostert (2008) have defined as time-based conflict arising from responsibility for the dual roles of career and family life. This is evident in the participants' reports of

ending their day very late due to household and family responsibilities, and taking work assignments home. Participants also reported to experiencing physical strain as a result of the double load.

My body system has grown used to not sleeping before eleven p.m. I leave work at four-thirty p.m and fetch the kids from school. My first child had a learning problem so I have to do constant practice with her after school so it's difficult and my husband wants me to cook. I'm constantly tired but I try to continue to do everything. (Yanda)

Family is my foundation. If I don't have a job tomorrow, my family is my shoulder to cry on I try to create space for them. When I go home I give undivided attention. Sometimes I take work home and even wake up when everyone is asleep and work. (Bongiwe)

Although this is a challenge, they perceive family as an important factor in their lives. Yanda and Bongiwe's comments allude to the fact that they try to cope with these responsibilities by managing their time and investing their energy in attempting to meet the demands of a career and the family. These findings are similar to Gilike's 2009 argument that some of the challenges that women in leadership experience include gendered role expectations and family responsibilities.

The participants' experiences of attempting to conform to the socially constructed notion of balancing work and family life is differently perceived, since some are striving to balance a career and family life while others have made a decision to remain unmarried and to focus on their careers. The decisions that the majority of the participants made to remain single or unmarried is also attributed to the patriarchal system that results in gender role imbalances that subject women to limits on their

career aspirations. The majority of the participants reported that they avoid marriage as they perceive this institution would be a hindrance to their careers because of gender expectations of being a wife and being solely responsible for performing household responsibilities. Participants reported that they choose to remain unmarried or single in order to shield their careers:

I am single fortunately. I have a son.... It's easier because I am not married, I don't have this husband. I don't have to worry about cooking and the hubby. (Nompumelelo)

My balance is 70 per cent work and 30 per cent home. Most of the time I finish work at eight and nine p.m. The fact is that I choose not to have a husband, if I had a husband it would be a disaster. (Zandile)

I do not wish to get married because my career is my life. A husband would not allow me to spread my wings by developing my career. (Sihle)

I'm happily single and not married. My work is too much and I travel a lot. (Khuthala)

These findings are similar to Hyman (1996) who found that in order to succeed in organizations, many women feel that they have to place family or marriage secondary in order to be perceived as being serious about their careers. This is consistent with Nemoto (2008), and Lichter et al.'s findings (1995) that women distance themselves from marriage as it is perceived as conflicting with their jobs. The majority of participants therefore, perceive marriage as exacerbating gender inequalities.

Conclusion

This research aimed to explore the gender and power relations of black African women in government department leadership positions. The data analysis section and discussion have been presented and evaluated against existing research findings and literature that support or contradict the analysis of the current study. It was found that women encountered negative experiences that are a result of racism, sexism, cultural ideologies and horizontal hostility. Other experiences related to their reported imperative to work harder in order to prove competence. Women also buy into patriarchal systems in perceiving sexual harassment complaints to be false allegations by women against men. Another finding indicates that majority of the participants have chosen to remain single or unmarried in order to be able to advance in their careers. Ultimately, it was found that women do not experience the power that is associated with management positions, and their authority is undermined in a myriad of ways by co-workers. Most of them do not perceive of themselves as powerful leaders; and when faced with challenges, they tend to remain passive.

The next chapter will focus on the summary of results, limitations and recommendations for this research thesis study.

CHAPTER SIX

Results, Limitations and Recommendations

Introduction

This chapter will present the summary of the study results, limitations, and recommendations for future research for policy and practice in the context of women in organizational leadership.

Summary of results: gender and race struggles in the workplace

This study highlights how this group of women leaders appear to have internalized learnt subservient characteristics which serves to undermine their authority as leaders. Further this study illustrates how women in public sector departments continue to reportedly experience subtle and blatant racist and sexist prejudice in the form of stereotypes and hostility in the workplace. It is also disconcerting that according to participants women leaders also experience hostility among themselves as women. Notwithstanding they report how they choose to remain oblivious to challenges, largely in an effort to uphold work ethics. Findings foreground the common perception that women leaders are not capable to performing effectively as leaders because of gender and racial stereotypes that serve as hindrances to their experiences of leadership. As a result, they reportedly have to work extra hard in order to prove their competency to others. Notwithstanding all these challenges, it is also evident from the findings that some women managers actively challenge the gendered notions that undermine their leadership by dealing with such challenges in strategic ways.

Compliance to patriarchal systems

The study illustrates the continued compliance of women in management to patriarchal norms in their organisation contexts. This was evident in their acceptance and reinforcement of cultural gendered constructions that impact on their leadership. The buy-in of women to patriarchal values was further evident in participants' perceptions of sexual harassment as the responsibility of female victims who make such allegations. The questioning of women who report such harassment illustrates a masculinist perception that women either 'ask for it' or 'make it up' for other purposes. Also illustrative of women's challenges with respect to transgressing normative gender roles was participants' responses to men in the workplace. Although they hold positions as workplace leaders, participants tended to adopt a subordinate position in relation to black males in the workplace, even if such men are subordinate to them in the workplace. As a result, they do not enforce their authority because of larger social power relations and traditional forms of authority that undermine their capacity to express authority in work environments. Ultimately women managers do not feel that they are supported or accepted as legitimate leaders in the workplace.

Life and work life double load

In order to perform efficiently and advance in their careers, the study further reveals how many women who are in management positions may face the choice between remaining single or marriage in order to gain and maintain their career success. The study found that the socially constructed notion of women having to maintain the work-life balance is challenging: some women leaders attempt to conform to the latter to

balance career and life and take considerable strain, while other choose to focus on their careers. Some participants of the study are married and juggle their career and family lives by attempting to manage their time in order to perform what is expected of them as mothers and wives. Others choose to remain unmarried in order to shield their careers because they perceive having a husband would limit their career prospects and bring about additional gender-based responsibilities within the domestic sphere.

Limitations of the research study

The sample of the study was limited as it consisted of six participants. Coloured and white women were purposefully excluded as the main focus was on black women's experiences. This focus was adopted due the prioritization of black African women's entry into leadership as a redress for past gender inequality in this country. Had women of other races been included in this study, the intersectionality of race, class and gender would have posed a challenge to understand and explain the interconnectedness of these social constructs and how they affect black African women in leadership. Therefore, the findings cannot be generalized to explain all women's leadership experiences. As discussed earlier, proving reliability in qualitative research is counterproductive because social phenomena are constantly changing making it difficult and unnecessary to duplicate the study. Furthermore, it would also be unnecessary to prove reliability as it is understood and accepted that individuals' experiences, opinions, attitudes and perceptions change over time (Silverman, 1993). From a feminist point of view, a completely valid research study representing the ultimate truth is not achievable. This is because all knowledge is socially constructed and no knowledge is certain: it is

rather a particular reflection of the process. Therefore, validity cannot be defined in absolute terms but only as relative to the purpose of the study (Gcabo, 2003).

Recommendations for future research, policy and practice

According to the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women report (2005) to achieve effective policy and practice, it is an imperative that women's movements form alliances with policy-makers and women to be equally represented in government policy making bodies. Women's movements and policy-makers should assist in the support and promotion of public awareness raising campaigns to combat negative perceptions and emphasize the legitimate role of women in decision-making positions. The public sector needs to facilitate linkages between women in decision-making positions and those working for empowerment of women at grassroots level, academic community and civil society organizations. Furthermore there is a need for men in organizational contexts to be engaged in the challenges. In this respect it would be important for men to be trained on gender mainstreaming and to form alliances with women in leadership positions in order to strengthen relations in the professional sphere. The practices of government departments need to be gender-sensitive in terms of gender issues such as domestic and family responsibilities including ways to reconcile family and professional responsibilities.

Future studies in this area need to focus on gender and power relations of women leaders of across all races in order to gain a holistic understanding in this regard. Another aspect that needs to be explored is the degree of power that women leaders attain by virtue of their positions in the workplace; and whether employment equity policies in South Africa are effective in granting women true gender empowerment that is sustainable. It is also an imperative for sexual harassment in public sector departments to be explored, since the results of the current study yield ambiguity and misinformation regarding the victim's predicament. Lee (2004, p. 2) affirms that practical strategies to combat sexual harassment need to be diverse, contextual and flexible in terms of specific circumstances. The victims need to take an active and assertive approach towards their harassers. Moreover, the male-dominated cultures of organizations need to be transformed, along with broader socio-cultural changes within society. Additional scholarly studies could also be conducted to examine the various gender, race, culture and social factors that impact on women's organizational leadership, while also including relevant contributions from other disciplines, such as industrial psychology, sociology and public administration.

In conclusion, this research will hopefully have had some positive impact on the lives' of participants themselves through their engagement in the process of articulating their own experiences. In this respect, it is hoped that the experience might facilitate self-reflection about their position towards transforming their situations and contributing to gender transformation in their organisational contexts (Gcabo, 2003). The study has

highlighted the many similarities between theory and practice regarding women's experiences in government leadership, as well as similarities between this study and research elsewhere on the continent and internationally. In spite of laws and policies enforced and implemented by South African government and civil society at large, racism and sexism still remains prevalent in organizations. Such inequalities continue to affect women, both in private and public spheres of their lives. For gender transformation and equity to be effectively and sustainably implemented, the intersectionalities of race, gender and class need to be acknowledged and critically assessed, particularly for black women. Furthermore, equity policy implementation plans must take these intersectionalities into account in order to achieve significant transformation in organizations. This research study's findings will possibly be valuable in informing such interventions.



The results of this study highlight that this group of women in leadership positions within government departments in the Western Cape region reported not attaining the power that is warranted by their positions. Further normative gender roles, especially those linked with cultural notions of authority and other power relations, including race, continue to impact on the experience and impact of black women in leadership positions. The study reinforces the imperative for more work in organizations to ensure that policies are more successfully enacted in day-to-day practices. There remains plenty more work, both in challenge of the inequalities of the past and how they continue to shape contemporary South African workplaces and in the arena of

facilitating women's authentic and effective leadership.



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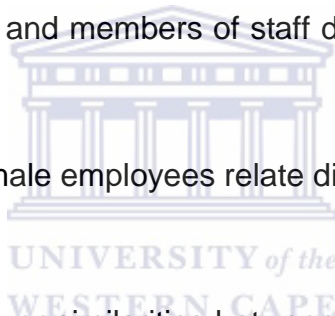
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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Please describe the work that you do and the rank of the position
2. How long have you been performing in this position?
3. Describe the kind of work relations you have with subordinates and your supervisors
4. In terms of complying with your requests and directives, explain how male and female employees relate to you? Explain any differences or similarities?
5. If you give an instruction and members of staff do not follow through with it, how do you solve this?
6. Do you find male and female employees relate differently to you? Please provide examples.
7. Are there any differences or similarities between the races when they relate with you?
8. Do you think employees would behave differently if you were male in this position? Please explain.
9. Please explain any challenges you encounter in the workplace.
10. Do you feel a sense of achievement and power in this position? Please elaborate.
11. Have you experienced the 'glass ceiling' prior and subsequent to being in this position?
12. Are you supported as a leader in this position?



13. Do you experience discrimination at work? Please elaborate

14. As a female in this position, do you experience that you must work harder to prove you are capable?

15. Are there any alliances with other females in the organization? Please explain.



Appendix B

Participant's Consent Form



RESEARCH CONSENT LETTER

I, hereby give my consent to participate in this research project which is an exploratory study of women’s experiences who hold middle and senior management positions in their workplaces with respect to gender and power relations with their employees. I understand that the project is being conducted under the Women’s and Gender Department and is supervised by Professor Tamara Shefer at the University of the Western Cape.

I have been fully informed of the aims of the research and I’m participating on a voluntary basis. I fully understand the purpose of the research and agree to the future uses of the research findings. I have been informed of the ethical considerations and I have not been pressured to participate in the research. I understand that the information will be treated with confidentiality and my identity and workplace will be kept anonymous. I understand and agree that the interview will be audio-recorded. The audio-recording will be kept locked in a computer file that only the researcher will have access to, and the same applies to the transcripts as they will be locked in a secure place. Once the research is fully completed, the audio-recordings and transcripts will be discarded.

Participant’s Signature :

Date :

Place :

Interviewer :

Witness :



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