



The factors influencing women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa

SUKHDEO, Kumaravelli

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**The Factors Influencing Women's Progression to Leadership
Roles in South Africa**

Kumaravelli Sukhdeo

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration

January 2022

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
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Name	Kumaravelli Sukhdeo
Date	January 2022
Award	Doctor of Business Administration
Faculty	Business
Director(s) of Studies	Professor Helen Richardson

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ABSTRACT

'This research investigates the situation of women leaders in SA over 25 years after major policy reforms and the end of the oppressive apartheid regime that discriminated against so many people. Despite the reforms, it seemed apparent that women and black women in particular are absent from leadership positions in South Africa today. I therefore decided to undertake an enquiry underpinned by the theoretical concept of intersectionality and to use an intersectional analysis to look at the social and structural factors that influence women's career progression. I used Life History Calendars and in-depth interviews to reveal the life and work experiences of 15 predominantly Black female South African business leaders. This study sought to understand how women create and commit meaning around their lived experiences, how they experience the malleability and boundaries of multiple identities, and how they experience the imbroglio of macro, meso, and micro societal and organizational forces. In addition, it looks towards identifying practices and policies that are challenging for women. The study further explores the relationships between organizational and social cultures and ideologies that can be problematic for women and uses reflections on Intersectional experiences to comment with an intersectional lens and sensibility on how the lived experiences were similar or different in each case. The findings are portrayed through a storytelling lens and a golden thread makes the recommendations and link between research and literature very clear.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CANDIDATE DECLARATION.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	4
ABSTRACT	7
CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION	11
<i>CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF THE AFRICAN CONTINENT</i>	12
<i>CONTEXTUAL BACKGROUND OF SOUTH AFRICA</i>	14
<i>PERSONAL MOTIVATION AND BACKGROUND</i>	18
<i>AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS</i>	19
<i>ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS</i>	23
<i>OVERVIEW OF FORTHCOMING CHAPTERS</i>	24
<i>CONCLUSION</i>	25
CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW	27
<i>INTRODUCTION</i>	27
<i>WOMEN AT WORK IN SOUTH AFRICA</i>	29
<i>LEADERSHIP AND WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP</i>	35
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION	59
CHAPTER 3 – INTERSECTIONALITY	62

<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	62
<i>WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?</i>	63
<i>FROM GENDER STUDIES TO INTERSECTIONALITY</i>	68
<i>EXAMPLES OF RESEARCH UTULISING INTERSECTIONALITY AND INTERSECTIONAL SENSIBILITY</i>	71
<i>INTERSECTIONALITY IN SA.....</i>	74
<i>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</i>	79
CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH METHODS.....	81
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	81
<i>PHILOSOPHICAL POSITIONING.....</i>	82
<i>RESEARCH APPROACH AND METHODS</i>	85
<i>STORYTELLING</i>	88
<i>RESEARCH SAMPLE.....</i>	95
<i>INTERVIEW THEMES</i>	99
<i>THEMATIC DATA ANALYSIS.....</i>	103
<i>PRACTICAL PHASES OF THEMATIC ANALYSIS</i>	106
<i>ROLE OF THE RESEARCHER</i>	112
<i>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</i>	115
CHAPTER 5 – DATA ANALYSIS.....	117
<i>INTRODUCTION.....</i>	117

<i>PARTICIPANT VIGNETTES</i>	118
<i>SOCIAL FACTORS</i>	148
<i>STRUCTURAL FACTORS</i>	155
<i>INTERSECTIONAL SENSIBILITY IN MY DATA ANALYSIS</i>	175
<i>SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION</i>	177
 CHAPTER 6 – INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS	 179
<i>METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES</i>	181
<i>RECOGNISING INTERSECTIONALITY</i>	181
<i>IDENTIFYING AND UNPACKING MATERIAL STRUCTURES AND CULTURAL MEANINGS</i>	 183
<i>REFLEXIVITY AND POSITIONALITY</i>	184
<i>MAJOR AREAS OF CONCERN</i>	187
<i>GENDER BIAS AND STEREOTYPING</i>	187
<i>INTERSECTIONAL DIMENSIONS INCLUDING AGEISM</i>	188
<i>WORKPLACE ATTITUDES</i>	189
<i>THE DOUBLE BURDEN OF SOCIETAL AND WORK PRESSURE</i>	191
<i>CONTRIBUTIONS OF THIS RESEARCH</i>	192
<i>REFLECTIONS ON MY DBA JOURNEY</i>	196
 APPENDIX A – EXAMPLE OF LIFE HISTORY CALENDAR	 201
 REFERENCES	 203

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter introduces the issue of organisational gender disparity that exists in South Africa and how females are not attaining leadership roles. The factors impacting the progression of females to executive leadership has not been rigorously researched in the country and it is a significant focus area for both study and theory generation. Literature suggests that African Black females are the most compromised subset in terms of their high population ratio and contribution ratio to the South African labour force. An investigation into the gendered disparity that exists and the factors influencing it may serve to augment the strategic planning and implementation policies in organisations. This may serve to enhance the path to a positive and inclusive shift in organisations.

This research aims to develop an understanding of the factors that influence women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa. As such the focus is not so much the nature of gendered leadership in South African organisations. Gender and leadership studies often consider an essentialist and binary view of leadership, regarding for example traits and what constitutes 'effective' leadership. Men and women are thus compared and women found wanting and requiring remedial help such as targeted training to boost confidence and so on (e.g. see Eagly and Carli, 2007; Metz and Kulik, 2014; Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014)

What theoretically underpins this research is the notion of 'gendered regimes'

(Acker, 2006) - 'inequality regimes' that are produced, sustained and rationalised through a myriad of interrelated practices and processes meaning that 'intersectional sensibility' is needed (Healy et al, 2011). Intersectionality is an analogy and a framework that allows one to see where a person's experiences collide, where different types of discrimination interlock and intersect (Crenshaw, 1989). Human beings as such cannot literally or metaphorically be divided by their different identities (Gao, 2018:8). This approach recognises that South Africa post-apartheid is a complex society and race, class, gender and other cultural aspects influence life chances and opportunities, impacting in society and at work.

Contextual Background of the African Continent

The Women will lead (WILL) leadership report (2019) states the 'African Continent is home to 54 distinct economies that are on a generally perceived progressive path'. The majority of these countries within the continent have achieved democracy, with the rest slowly starting to lean towards achieving democracy. As a result of the democratic freedom gained, these countries have created a strong context for solid economic growth opportunities. Sanctions and various restrictive orders that prohibited trade within the continent and globally is now being lifted for most of these countries. In order to effectively respond to the challenges and opportunities presented, each country is required to analyze, identify and enable strategies to support and drive the growth initiatives, and this forms the context of this research (WILL report, 2019).

What will also underpin this research is that ‘women’s equality is good for business’ (McKinsey, 2014), with benefits companies received by focusing on increasing leadership opportunities for women. It is estimated that companies with three or more women in senior management functions score higher in all dimensions of organizational effectiveness. This is also supported by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015 to be achieved by 2030. The Sustainable Development Goals include aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and they acknowledge that this will immediately impact on ‘No Poverty’ (SDG 1) and ‘Decent work and Economic growth’ (SDG 8). This invariably presents opportunities for businesses to contribute to economic development through women development focused initiatives (United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Summit, 2015).

Likewise, the UNDP Africa Human Development 2016 report affirms that gender equality and women’s empowerment are fundamental dimensions of human development, and that half of humanity lacks equal progress in human development. It addressed the most pressing barriers for women, such as increasing investment in gender equality, reaching parity for women at all levels of decision-making, eliminating discriminatory legislation and tackling social norms that perpetuate discrimination and violence against women. (UNDP Africa Development Report, 2016:165). The UN has thus recognized and highlighted the impact of women on the economy and have started engaging with its

stakeholders to collate their effort and resources to start nurturing and developing women on the African continent to participate in the leadership of the economic surge taking place.

Contextual Background of South Africa

South Africa emerged to democratic freedom in 1994 from previous eras of repression, whereby the entire South African Black, Indian and Coloured population had their political, social and cultural freedom controlled forcefully through oppressive laws and military measures. This was referred to as the 'apartheid era's', ruled by a White monopoly government. Women as a collective were repressed even further due to their gender and in varying degrees as a result of their race and ethnicity. Some of the women were stirred into action by key activists of the era (globally and locally), which resulted in them joining hands and standing up against the blatant subjugation of women by the White monopoly Government of the time. This resulted in the positive winds of change that started to gain traction to result in the Women's Charter of 1954 being promulgated, which opened the doors for the start of the emancipation of Women in South Africa:

"We, the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, African, Indians, European and Coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and

customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population”, (Preamble, Women’s Charter of 1954, 17 April: Johannesburg).

South African history has documented the 1954 march of ‘thousands of women visionaries’ to the Union Buildings (Government buildings in Pretoria) as a ‘turning point’ for the country as their ‘words of wisdom inspired a nation’. As the former South African President, Nelson Mandela stated:

“the legacy of oppression weighs heavily on women. As long as women are bound by poverty and as long as they are looked down upon, human rights will lack substance. As long as outmoded ways of thinking prevent women from making a meaningful contribution to society, progress will be slow. As long as the nation refuses to acknowledge the equal role of more than half of itself, it is doomed to failure” (Women’s Day Presidential speech, 1996).

Women represent more than half of the labour force of South Africa, yet they are grossly under-represented in all echelons of organisations, specifically in leadership roles. Since the newly elected democratic government had a consensus motion that new and pertinent legislation must be promulgated to address past imbalances and overcome these challenges. There would also be

penalties for non-compliance by organizations. This legislation was called the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) Code and included addressing Black economic imbalances and Employment Equity (EE) Code addressing gender equity imbalances. These legislations were introduced by government and 'seemingly' adopted and implemented by organizations to remain compliant with legislation. The research will highlight the issues and allow its corporations and leaders to be advised of the factors that accelerate and also inhibit women's progression.

In terms of the Gender Empowerment Measure that considers how far countries have attained parity in educational, political and economic opportunities and health, in 2021, South Africa had an overall gender gap index score of 0.78, ranking 18 out of 156 countries globally. Most noticeable, gender disparity was largest in political empowerment, indicating low political participation of females in the country. Moreover, the nation also scored relatively low in terms of economic participation and opportunity scoring 0.42 points. On the other hand, a more equal pattern between genders in health and survival as well as educational attainment was recognisable (Galal, Jul 30, 2021 <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1253864/gender-gap-index-in-south-africa-by-sector>).

However a 2011 independent study by Business Unity South Africa (BUSA) shows that there continues to be very low representation of black people in general, and black women in particular in executive positions in companies listed

on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), (BUSA report, 2011). The study identified the demographics of the boards and top executive positions of JSE listed companies, and compared them to the findings in BUSA's 2009 report as well as against targets set in the Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) codes of 2007. In addition, the 2011 study assessed the transformation status of the JSE top 40 companies, ranked by market capitalization (BUSA report, 2011).

Key statistics revealed by the 2011 study:

- The overall percentage of black people was at 25.3%, well below the 50% target set in the BEE codes.
- Black Executive Directors account for 9.5% of executive directors, Black non-executive directors stood at 27.6% - the target for each is 50%.
- Black chairpersons account for 22%, black CEO's for 6.9% and Black CFO's for 7.0% - again the target for each is 50%.
- The percentage of Black female directors was at 10.2%, Black female CEO's at 1.2% and Black female chairpersons at 3.9%
- White males account for the majority of senior positions on the JSE, 52% of all board positions, 72% of executive directors, 51% of chairpersons,
- 76% of CEO's and 76% of CFO's. (BUSA, 2011)

An analysis of the findings showed that Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) companies have disappointingly taken the path of least resistance, appointing

black people to non-executive rather than executive positions. In executive positions, less than 10% of all CEO's and CFO's are black. Critically, the study found that it is unlikely that this deficit is only related to a lack of skills within the black community as the shortfall of executive directors is only 322, while on the supply side there are more than 5,500 black chartered accountants in South Africa (BUSA, 2011). Women represent 49% of the workforce of companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), but the percentage of women in top positions in these companies does not reflect these statistics (BUSA, 2011).

Personal Motivation and Background

Black women experience discrimination on many levels, and being born in the apartheid era, I personally experienced discrimination based on gender, race and culture. I also heard many stories of how Black, Indian & Coloured females were treated differently from white females in South African organizations during the apartheid era.

One such story was narrated by a black female colleague a few years ago. We were on a team building outing to enable us to better understand each other and work together more effectively. Each team member (5 females comprising of 2 black, 2 Indian, 1 white), had to share a fireplace story of what affected them the most - both positively and negatively - in their lives. This colleague shared how she worked in a multi-national corporate, based in South Africa during the

apartheid regime. She worked in a junior support role in a large corporate building and across the road to the back of the building was a public train station, (both the corporate building and the train station are still operational today).

She was not allowed to use the female bathrooms (reserved for white females only), in the corporate building where she worked, and had to walk to the public train station to use the bathroom facilities, while being leered at by the black males, as a 'woman's place was at home' and what was this woman doing trying to go to work in a western place. She experienced racial discrimination at her workplace and the gender discrimination at the train station. I had no idea then that this was a strong example of the intersections of race and gender being experienced. I could hear the pain in her voice and felt a helplessness rise up in me, as I experienced this frail colleague, who was a single parent break down emotionally while narrating this story.

Thus started a process of reflection and self-analysis on overcoming the feeling of helplessness and contribute to assisting and empowering my female sisterhood.

Aim, Objectives and Research Questions

The factors influencing women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa is an exploratory and investigative study with a view to understanding the journey

and life experiences of predominantly black South African women in corporate organizations. The study will comprise of narratives of the journey and experiences of successful women in executive roles in South Africa. They consist of Indian, Coloured, White and predominantly Black females, with a specific focus on their experiences of gender, race and class and how these intersect and impact their journey to the top.

The objectives of the proposed research are to:

- Investigate factors in society and in corporate organisations that influence women's progression to senior leadership in South Africa
- Develop an understanding of the role intersectionality plays in creating and sustaining disparity in the workplace
- To reflect on policies that could impact positively for women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa.

My research questions are thus:

1. What specific challenges impact on women's progress to leadership positions in South Africa?

2. What strategies have been employed to overcome these challenges?
3. How is intersectionality manifest in the lived experiences of women in leadership positions in South Africa?
4. What policies and practices could be employed to shape positive change for women in leadership in South Africa?

To meet these objectives and answer these research questions I adapted a framework from Holgate et al (2006). They put forward three feminist methodological approaches to analyse gender at work, namely recognising intersectionality; accounting for both material and cultural explanations and a research process that is reflexive. This framework has shaped my questioning, positionality and analysis throughout. The table below indicates my adaptation of this framework and how it relates to my approach and research design, execution and data analysis.

Framework (Holgate et al, 2006)	Focus	Influence on my research
Intersectionality	Difference and intersecting identities that can vary with regard to time and place. Gender as a dynamic of power relations	Intersectional sensibility applied throughout Appreciation of power relations shaping complex and uneven inequality regimes

	Deliberate choice of research sample, not assuming a norm	Directed choice of women leaders to interview where possible
Material structures and cultural meanings	Lived experiences that are multiple and shifting shaping life experiences in public and private space Giving participants voice to capture authenticity, nuance and meaning	Use of Life History Stories and interviews to understand intersectional experiences, including public and private contexts Enabling silent and silenced voices to be heard (Bowen and Blackmon, 2003)
Reflexivity and positionality	Critical (self-) reflection on the research process Recognizing the role of the researcher, influence of power and taking an ethical approach	Positionality made clear Ethical approval established and maintained Reflexive approach adopted throughout

Table 1: Adaptation of framework from Holgate et al (2006:314)

This research is an interpretive, qualitative enquiry. I chose to use a Life Histories method, which comprised of Life History stories and interviews to understand the intersectional experiences, including public and private contexts. The interviewees were purposely chosen from an identified group of women that had broken barriers to reach the top of their career paths. Many of these women are public figures in the corporate arena in South Africa and are often cited in the media as corporate trailblazers that have overcome challenges and surmounted obstacles in their path to rise to levels not reached by females in the workplace previously. Some of the interviewees are the first women in their roles within their respective organisations. The story telling approach best articulates the issues experienced by the women leaders selected for the study. Stories communicate history, they establish identity and help with recollection of lived experiences.

Ethical Considerations

Zaltman and Moorman (1988: 20) indicate that 'being a truth teller' is important to maintain trust. Access to reality means 'the ability to get close to the object of study, to really be able to find out what is happening' (Gummesson, 2000:25). Following the research ethical guidelines from Sheffield Hallam University, I drew up a confidentiality agreement for each interview, stressing that the transcripts of the interviews will be listened to by my Director of Studies and myself, solely for research purposes and the interviewees were assured of informed consent – the nature of the research, anonymity and the right to withdraw consent at any time. Robust data management and security practices were adopted to maintain the

integrity and secrecy of the data.

Overview of forthcoming chapters

This chapter has introduced the topic and focused on my motivation, aims, objectives and method.

In the next chapter I review relevant literature with the most common and recurring themes to be utilised as source for the research questions. It is underpinned by understanding of gendered regimes and intersectional dimensions of inequality within organisations (Acker, 1990; 2006). These challenges are presented using a framework about career paths developed by Ahuja (2002).

Chapter 3 will focus on the theoretical framework that underpins the research study. Intersectionality theory and its application thereof has not been rigorously researched in South Africa, yet resonates deeply given the legacy of apartheid.

Chapter 4 outlines my research philosophy, approach and includes justification of the research design and implementation.

In Chapter 5, I shall discuss the data analysis strategy deployed and the

interpretation of the findings.

In Chapter 6, I shall outline the emerging strategies and contribution to knowledge, method and practice that could be deployed to make a difference to Black women business leaders in South Africa. This final chapter will contain the elements of how race, gender, class and other social and cultural factors such as sexuality and age 'are enmeshed and different intersections can produce specific effects. The bases of inequality and the shape and degree of inequality are contextual and as well as manifesting in organisations reflect wider patterns in society (Healy et al, 2011). Thus 'difference matters' (Holgate et al, 2006) and this sensibility needs to be evident when discussing positive change for women at work and women's lives in South Africa. I shall also reflect on my DBA journey and the personal and academic growth that I have experienced.

Conclusion

This introductory chapter has provided an overview of the main issues relating to this study including what theoretically underpins this research. I have introduced the concept of gender regimes from Acker (2006) that has impact within society and organisations and affects women's progression to leadership positions in South Africa. The research shall also undertake to be appreciative of intersectional sensibilities, understanding the complex intersections of gender, class, race and ethnicity in post-apartheid South Africa. To meet my aim and

objectives and answer my research questions, I have adapted a framework from Holgate et al (2006) and outlined my intention to conduct storytelling and Life History methods of data collection. I now turn to my review of relevant literature in my aim to understand the factors that influence women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

‘By 2050, Africa will be home to around half a billion girls and young women. If respected and treated as equals, they have the potential to transform the continent’s security and prosperity. This matters because every penny invested in girls’ education, healthcare and social protection benefits society many times over, while failure to invest in girls results in monumental socioeconomic losses. We urgently have to break the cycle of gender-based discrimination and inequality. Girls are key drivers of transformation and investing in them will trigger a chain reaction that ultimately leads towards a peaceful and prosperous Africa’.

Graca Machel, former First Lady of South Africa,

(<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/nov/21/respect-and-value-girls-they-can-transform-africas-security-and-prosperity?>)

2.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on investigating and unpacking the current studies and theory on gendered issues including organisational culture, leadership and career progression, diversity management and what Acker (1990) argues are ‘gendered organisations’. Feminist sociologist Acker is most commonly cited as one of the first to theorise how gender gets institutionalised in organisations and workplaces. Two of Acker’s interconnected concepts - inequality regimes and intersectionality

play a key role in the literature being explored.

Acker (2006) suggests that the workplace is where societal inequalities originate to continuously create more complex inequalities within the workplace. She suggests that both similarities and differences exist among class, race and gendered processes and among the ways in which they are legitimised. Class inequality refers to status and economic inequality and is based on a skewed view of meritocracy and relative investment in human capital. Thus, this may largely be seen as legitimate unlike inequality based on gender and race. The legitimisation of inequality can occur through various practices and assumptions such as in belief systems, views of biological differences, racial inferiority and the superiority of certain masculine traits. Often these are invisible inequalities such as not seeing privilege and not questioning for example sexuality at work. Inequalities tend to be more steadfast in organizations that are bureaucratic and set in their ways.

Organisational inequality regimes are maintained through interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that maintain inequalities including disparity in power, control over goals, resources and outcomes, in decision making, opportunities for promotion and interesting work, security in pay and rewards and so on (Acker, 2006: 443). Even through the general organisation of work, like hours required to work and presenteeism at work serves to differentiate between genders – women tend to have more obligations outside work and so the organisation of work is immediately gendered and impacts on inequality. Relative

control is made possible through hierarchies and class and gender relations, what education is valued and how skills are defined and can be direct or internalised depending on factors like bureaucratic rules and information flows. Gender is thus clearly complicated by race, class and other differences which will become apparent in this research.

Firstly, in this chapter there is the context of the South African labour market presented to show its shape, ethnic outline, gender segregation and representation of women in senior leadership. This includes discussion of theories and context of gendered leadership. Then to understand the challenges that women face in progression to senior leadership positions, I outline a framework offered by Ahuja (2002) who suggests social and structural factors at work that impact on career choice, career persistence and career advancement. This proves to be a useful framework to understand the complexity of South African society and labour market as well as affording intersectional sensibility (Healy et al, 2011).

2.2. Women at work in South Africa

South Africa is young and female. According to Stats SA (2018) mid-year population estimate report, there are 57.7 million people in South Africa, up from 56.5 million people in 2017, and more than half of the population (51%) is female (Stats SA, 2018). Women make up over half of South Africa's population and 42%

of the working population (Stats SA, 2018), Further demographics are stratified as per the table below:

Total Population (57.7 million)	Male	Female
Black (80.9%)	22,786,200	23,896,700
Coloured (8.8%)	2,459,500	2,614,800
Indian (2.5%)	740,200	708,100
White (7.8%)	2,194,200	2,325,900

Table 2: Demographics in South Africa (Stats SA Report, News 24 website, July 2018)

This also reflects just about the proportion in parliament and cabinet achieved since 1994, with the advent of democracy and a liberal constitution. Prior to South Africa becoming a democratic state, laws dating back to the colonial and apartheid times excluded Black people from fully participating in the South African education system and labour market (Synergy 2019). However the struggle to

achieve parity between the number of men and women at executive level continues. Of the 400 companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE), only 4% of CEO/MD (managing director) positions are held by women (Businesswoman's Association of South Africa – BWASA, Census report 2017:10).

There are a lot of women coming up the ranks, but in support roles. In South Africa, women hold 27% of all Human Resources Director roles and 14% of Chief Marketing Officer posts. Women also hold 27% of Chief Finance Officer positions, due largely to the increasing number of women qualifying as chartered accountants (BWASA, 2014). However a major concern highlighted in the report is the statistic that 21% of South African (SA) businesses surveyed for 2013 had no women in senior management positions. The report further reveals that just over one quarter of top decision-making roles in SA businesses are filled by women. As has been the case since 2009, only 28% of SA senior management positions are filled by women and the statistic has disappointingly flat-lined for five years. This stagnant five-year trend is the same when global averages are reviewed, with international businesses also showing no improvement since 2009, at 24% (Grant Thornton IBR, 2013). The over-representation of men at senior management level seems to be entrenched (CEE Report, 2003-2013). Career progression for women is moving at a snail's pace, illustrating some blockages for women to reach the upper echelons of the organizational structure (CEE Report, 2003-2013).

Booyesen (2007), makes reference to the many attempts at reform, and stated that while statutorily based racial discrimination has systematically been abolished in South Africa since 1980, a number of significant law reform efforts have been initiated in the last 11 years:

Formal legislation	Year of implementation
Labour Relations Act 1995	1995
Constitution of South Africa	1996
Basic Conditions of Employment Act	1997
Skills Development Act	1998
Employment Equity Act	1999 (amended in 2004)
Skills Development Levies Act	1999
Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment Act	1999

Table 3: Relevant formal and implemented legislation (Booyesen, 2007:47)

The Skills Development Act and the Skills Development Levies Act shifted the focus away from Affirmative Action (AA) appointments to the recruitment, succession planning and development and training of persons in the designated

groups (Africans, Coloureds and Indians, as well as women and people with disabilities) and emphasized the emergent skills gap (Horwitz et al, 2005:6-7). These changes were followed by the establishment of the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) Commission in 1999, and subsequent strategies and policies set by Government and industry alike to increase black ownership of businesses and accelerate black representation in management. (Booyesen, 2007:47). The South African constitution sets out gender equality as a founding principle and the Women Empowerment and Gender Equality Bill calls for 50% representation in decision making roles.

Yet, the Quarterly Labour Force Survey released by Statistics SA (2018), states that the South African labour market is more favourable to men than it is to women and men are more likely to be in paid employment than women, regardless of race (Stats SA, 2018). Statistics (Stats SA, 2018) show that, males (white) mainly hold leading positions, followed by black males and then females. However, there is a more pronounced awareness of gender inequality and organizations are becoming more cognizant of integrating programs such as diversity and inclusion on the agenda. For the first time in South Africa, there has been a massive celebration of women at work, with all large organizations hosting women's day events and profiling the empowerment and upliftment of women in the workplace.

Although women accounted for 43,8% of total employment in the second quarter of 2018, yet only 32% of managers in South Africa were women. Women dominated the domestic worker and clerk or technician occupations, with men

dominating the rest.

As the table below shows, work is gender segregated in South Africa.

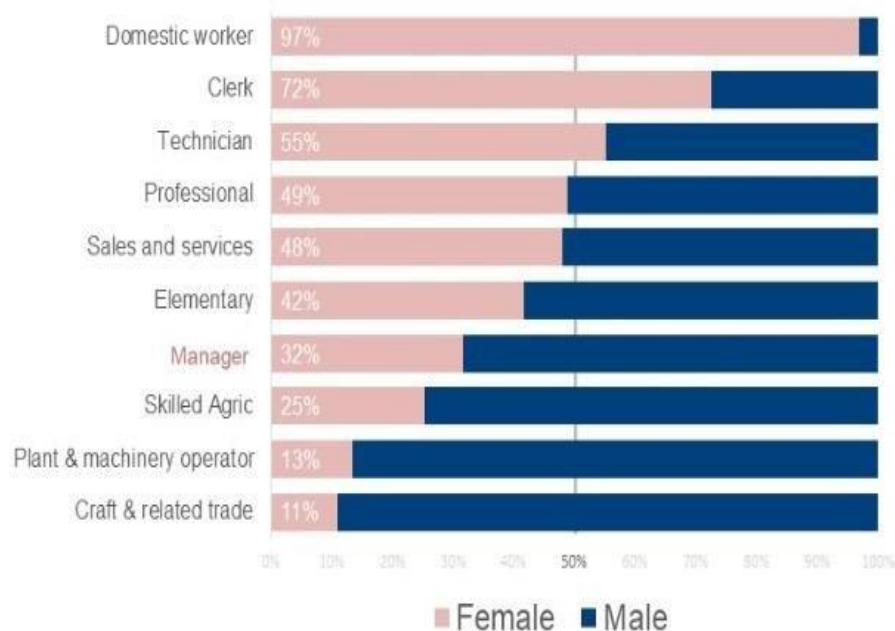


Table 4: Employment Shares by Occupation and Sex (Stats SA, 2018)

In South Africa, it is disquieting that less than 2% of JSE-listed firms (a total of five companies) have gender balanced boards with 50% or more women representation. It may be worth noting that the two companies with the highest share of female directors are represented at the top of the JSE listed Company list. Interestingly three of the top five companies have at least 50% female Executive Directors (BWASA Census, 2017:38).

The Peterson Institute, PIEE study, (2016) found that 30% female representation

on boards added up to six percentage points to a company's net margin. This augmented picture does not bode well for the reality in South African organizations. In a report released by EY (2016), it was found that only 13% of South African organizations expect to see an increase in women in their boards in five years' time. Despite evidence of economic benefits, women struggle to progress to senior management and board level. The next section considers issues of leadership, women in leadership and women's career progression that resonates in South Africa.

2.3 Leadership, Women in Leadership and factors impacting on career progression

2.3.1 Introduction

Researching the issues that impact on women's career progression to senior leadership acknowledges that South Africa is a complex society with a deep rooted legacy from the apartheid years that discriminated in a brutal way and divided non-white groups into categorisations that affected social and economic life for every citizen. Within each grouping there are also norms and values with regard to acceptable gender roles that provide challenges for women in the home and at work. Eagly et al, (2014:153-174) suggests there are many barriers to progression for women throughout their careers and rather than metaphors fixed in time, such as glass ceilings or sticky floors, provides the symbol of a labyrinth

with twists and turns that sometimes offer opportunities and at other times dead ends. The barriers outlined include bias that men not women are natural leaders, the disproportionate share of family responsibilities, discrimination, prejudice and resistance towards women leaders, style differences and organisational culture and practice.

In order to unpack these issues and try to offer some coherency and shape to the field work, Ahuja (2002) and her framework of understanding career paths was adopted. This is a stage model of barriers impacting on women's entry and performance at work that also recognises individual differences in careers paths and experience. Ahuja notes that there are social and structural factors in play and these impact on career choice, persistence and advancement. Social factors include biases and stereotypes. These can be external views held by society in general about expected roles and ways of behaving. They can also be held internally by women and how individual women think of themselves and their self-expectations. During a lifespan a woman may have a number of sometimes conflicting roles such as care giver, mother and worker. These can impact on career choice and experiences in the chosen profession. There are also conflicts where roles are regarded as not fitting for a woman – such as being a leader (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Eagly et al, 2000; Heilman 2001).

Structural factors include how organisations work that can limit opportunities (see also Acker, 1990 and Kanter, 1977). This can include how work is organised and requirements for example of long hours and presenteeism that can affect

opportunities. There may be perceptions too that women cannot travel or work long hours because of family commitments regardless of individual circumstances. So in the following sections social issues are explored including gender bias, family responsibilities, roles and culture. Structural considerations are organisational practices, culture at work, policies including pay and mobility and support such as networking. In each case the impact on women's experiences and progression to senior leadership are appraised, also applying intersectional sensibilities (Healy et al, 2011) where possible.

2.3.2 Gender bias and stereotypes

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) Global Report 2015 reflects that gender stereotypes have always served a necessary function in society by reaffirming traditional roles of men and women (ILO Global Report, 2015). Historically, this has translated into specific occupations being considered more suitable either for men or for women. Traditionally, management, running a business and decision-making in the public arena were viewed as the domains of men. These norms have also informed educational curriculum and recruitment and promotion policies for many decades. While these are now being addressed to eliminate gender bias, they remain deeply ingrained in the psyche of a broad spectrum of men and women (ILO WIBM Report, 2015).

Shamir et al (2005) has stated that most leadership theories view leaders'

influence as stemming from their traits or behaviours. Globally, people tend to hold dissimilar beliefs about leaders and women, whilst they hold similar beliefs about leaders and men. This might consequently expose women leaders across different countries to similar stereotypes. Considering leadership a 'masculine' style of management is presumed and valuing of what stereotypical attributes make a good leader such as being in control, unemotional and analytical as opposed to 'feminine' traits such as being co-operative, empathetic and collaborative. Stereotypes of the ideal leader then takes an essentialist view categorising men and women into two homogeneous groups, make binary comparisons and find women wanting and in need of remedial help such as confidence building and specific training. The jury is also out on whether women and men in general offer different management styles with women offering a slightly more democratic style than men overall (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014) and Eagly et al (2014) suggest context and situational factors are crucial in assessing 'effectiveness' of styles.

Pheko (2013) argues that gender socialization and gender stereotypes have led to a situation where traditional 'male' qualities or tendencies such as assertiveness, material success, toughness, ambition and independence (see Wood & Lindorff, 2001) are associated with effective leadership. Owing to this association, women may need to work harder than their male counterparts to gain the same recognition and respect as leaders or to be promoted into leadership positions (see Mainiero, 1994; Muhr, 2011). These cultural and 'masculine ethic' assumptions that men are 'hard wired' for analytical ability and so on then

excludes women (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014), with the stereotype of 'think-boss-think-male' being applied (see Powell, 2014). Stereotypes thus block women's progress and fuels doubts about women's leadership abilities and also infusing self-doubts . As a result women are often found at the bottom of hierarchies or 'tokens at the top' with the image of managers being a masculine ethic of rationality and reason (Acker, 1990:144).

Senior women in management and leadership often face an oxymoron - expectations of positive solidarity behaviours from other women and requirements to take up the 'women in management mantle' on behalf of women in the organization, whilst in parallel they are negatively evaluated for performing masculinities, through the use of 'Queen Bee' label. Women perceived as 'Queen Bees' are argued to disassociate themselves from their gender to survive and thrive in masculine work contexts (Mavin et al, 2010:3-5). Individual women as 'Queen Bees', are then positioned as "the problem;" perceived as unsupportive of other women and interpreted as attempting to hold on to power. However often only women who do not deviate from traditional dominating and leadership patterns of the organization are successful, and women and men have to become more stereotypically 'men-like' within male dominated groups (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014). As women move into senior positions they disrupt gendered expectations and embedded gender stereotypes supporting associations of management as male, and men as managers and 'bosses', to which both men and women might negatively respond. Grant Thornton IBR (2015) affirm that the power of stereotypes and gender bias is highlighted as a significant barrier on the

path to leadership. They state 'there is a distinct call to update the outdated business leadership stereotype'.

Women's Agency:

Gopalan (2020) notes from her research (that involved 160 experimental studies in lower and middle-income), the evidence suggests that policymakers, practitioners, and researchers should be more intentional when it comes to addressing power imbalances and social inequalities based on gender by designing programs that directly address attitudes about gender, (Gopalan 2020:8).

Hanmer et al (2015), refer to employment - paid work - as increasing women's agency by expanding their life choices and their capacity to better support their families and more actively participate in communities and societies, (Hanmer et al 2015:237).

Agency is at the heart of any model of empowerment. It refers to the capacity of women and girls to take purposeful action and pursue goals, free from the threat of violence or retribution. The three core expressions of agency are: decision-making, leadership, and collective action. These are not simply ingredients for agency; rather, they are ways that women and girls can exercise agency in their lives.

Women and girls express agency in decision-making when they influence and

make decisions and when they establish and act on goals. Key decisions that affect women and girls' lives and futures occur in both the private and public spheres and often entail a process that includes negotiation and compromise. A woman or girl exercises empowered decision-making when she uses her voice to influence key decisions and is aware of, and can act upon, a full array of choices.

Women and girls engage in collective action when they stand together in solidarity and exercise voice to transform institutions and power relations. Collective action is a powerful tool for social transformation and is fundamental to women and girls' empowerment on a societal level. Many factors can contribute to a woman's ability to participate in collective action, including social capital through her network and her ability to move safely and freely throughout her community.

Leadership can be a powerful expression of agency when women and girls lead and inspire social change and effectively participate in governance to improve the status of other women and girls as well as themselves. Women's increased participation in leadership is positively associated with a multitude of benefits for society as a whole (Gates Foundation, 2020:2-3).

2.3.3 Family responsibilities

There are different approaches to investigating the careers of mothers, firstly assuming women exercise individual choice and preference (e.g. see Hakim,

2002) or contextual approaches that consider specific cultural settings and organisational practices that can discriminate against mothers at work. These can include issues over reduced hours or flexi-work that can compromise careers. Motherhood ideologies - rooted in cultural and historical contexts, with its many languages and deep racial and socio-economic divisions - play an important part in South Africa's expectations of a mother's role. (Robinson, 2014: 25-41) talks of two ideologies that can describe South African mothers – intensive and collective. The 'intensive' mothering ideology is descriptive of the basic nuclear family ideal. Undertaking paid work then appears to compromise on fulfilling caring duties where the mother is:

'exclusively responsible for the emotional and physical nurture of her child; and the centrality of the child supersedes her needs' (Robinson, 2014:41)

The second ideology is in societies whose cultural conception of motherhood embraces 'collective' mothering, where responsibility for childcare is shared among family and community members. This is often a hallmark of extended family structures. In South Africa, this has traditionally been characterized by extended family formations. Robinson (2014) suggests that in South Africa, there is a higher prevalence of intensive mothering ideology among White women, than among Black Africans. Some African cultures are thus collectivistic and traditional in their gender role orientation. In the African cultures, it is commonly accepted that a woman is not supposed to lead a group. Furthermore, women in traditional cultures are expected first to be daughters, wives and mothers and to obey their

male counterparts.

(Pheko 2013:12) states that in this regard, various researchers have offered diverse explanations for why women might need to work harder than their male counterparts. Women may require maternity leave as a result of their responsibilities as child bearers and primary caregivers. As a result, when they get back to work, they may need to work harder than their male counterparts to catch up. The challenge of keeping up with male colleagues may also be more pronounced for women with families, as research suggests that they are more likely to retreat from the labour market than single women. Furthermore, their roles as primary caregivers and the competing demands of family and work may disadvantage women more than men particularly looking at research that suggests that for married couples, the husband's career is still commonly regarded as being of primary and greater importance than the wife's career (Pheko, 2013:12).

Malan (2008) identified that families with both partners working have replaced the traditional South African household where the man was the breadwinner while the woman was expected to look after the household tasks (de Lange et al, 2018:54). Family responsibilities has been cited as a recurring barrier to women progression (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014). This means having the double burden of work and housework with low mobility and less time to commit to a career. This can result in a lack of social capital for example restricting opportunities for socialising outside of work (Kumra et al, 2014:200).

Women often take time out for 'family time' whilst men take time out to 'change careers'. This can result in implications such as lost income, impeded career growth, depreciation of skills, difficulty in re-establishing one's career (Bianchi et al., 2000:228). (De Lange et al , 2018:61) further evidence that when men become fathers, they tend to spend longer hours at work, either to compensate for the loss of income from the mother or as a form of escape to a place of calm.

(Bianchi et al ,2000:228) concludes that childcare and housework responsibilities still remain the primary responsibility of the female in the household, and cites a recent gender gap survey which found that fathers only take about one day of parental leave for every month mothers take and 23% of men are not taking parental leave at all, even though their companies offer the benefit. There is still a strong stigma around taking parental leave and it harming one's career.

Care work, is, however, not viewed by society as work, because it is unpaid. When institutional care is used (like childcare facilities), families pay for the care, but care done at home is not considered work, and not remunerated. The South African White Paper on Social Welfare (1996) follows a familialist approach to the provision of welfare, assuming that care for children, the aged, and people with disabilities will take place in the family by women. This strategy ignores women's role in the workplace and further that the nuclear family is not currently the norm in South Africa - single-parent and extended families outnumber nuclear families. The White Paper also ignores kinship patterns and caring practices of extended families and is silent on the position of men, assuming the presence of a male

breadwinner whose caring duties are limited to financial maintenance of the family. Women often have to juggle paid and unpaid work, and often face the problem of 'women in the middle' – caring for children and ageing parents (Naude et al, 2017:9)

In South Africa, which can be considered a conservative country, given its patriarchal nature and strong adherence to cultural understandings of gender, it is difficult to change perceptions of women's and men's roles. In many sectors, the male-breadwinner role is still strongly adhered to and supported. For women, pregnancy in the workplace may lead to very serious challenges that act as a drawback in their careers. For example, in South Africa, in the past, married teachers had to resign when they fell pregnant, and many public organisations and private companies refused to give women maternity leave or provide childcare facilities. Labour legislation now provides for maternity leave, but many companies still adhere only to the prescribed minimum paid maternity leave or make it difficult for women to take maternity leave (Naude et al, 2017:9).

The 'male' model of work does not include parenting and caring responsibilities, so it is not expected to have a major impact on men's work. The 'ideal worker' is thus a man who can commit to long hours and puts work outside the home first. This 'flawed assumption' shapes mothers experiences and 'gender appears to be particularly significant in influencing what is perceived as normative, appropriate and feasible'. The male model of work, which is the traditional, cultural picture of an ideal employee as 'someone who can participate in work completely without

any social or caring obligations outside of work' has become the entrenched model (de Lange et al, 2018:61).

2.3.4 Organisational practices

Acker (1990) stresses that organisational structures are not gender neutral and assumptions about gender are used to construct what is an organisation. She outlines that gender segregation, income and status inequality and divisions between paid and unpaid work is partly created through organisational practices. Further organisations are where cultural images of gender are invented and reproduced and gender identity – particularly masculinity arise out of organisational processes (1990:140).

In terms of recruitment the 'ideal worker' – whether male or female – depends on what is perceived as ideal in a profession (Acker, 2006). Persistence in careers are influenced by conflicts between work and home demands for women and whether they can balance these demands. Several studies reveal the most significant predictor of work-life balance are working hours (working outside normal hours such as evenings, weekends and unplanned overtime) (de Lange et al ,2018:54-61). Work-life balance can be at risk if people are too tired after work to engage with their loved ones at home, or perform any necessary work at home. The studies confirm that long work hours, job demands, care responsibilities and work related travel can negatively impact. Another indicator

is that employed women spend more hours on household activities than employed men and more hours on work and household activities in total. Women still bear the primary responsibility for home and child-care tasks irrespective of their employment status (de Lange et al, 2018:55). Many women are also at child bearing ages when they find themselves also in a position of seniority in the workplace. Taking time off for pregnancy and maternity leave will move them to the bottom of the ladder, and they will have to start their work journey from the bottom rung. This situation plays an important role and impacts their decision to start a family.

Ageism bias seems to be a growing concern , and the Basic Conditions of Employment Act in South Africa states that “no person may unfairly discriminate, directly or indirectly, against an employee, in any employment policy or practice, on one or more grounds, including age ...”. According to the 1996 South African Census, people over 60 years of age constitute 8% of the population, increasing by 3% per year. In South Africa, the problems associated with an ageing population are further aggravated by a high unemployment rate (South African Census:1996).

Lack of pay parity is another feature of inequality regimes within gendered organisations. According to the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report, the global pay gap between men and women is only expected to close in 2186. South Africa ranks 15th out of 144 countries, with women earning on average about R130,000 annually, compared to men who earn R210,000 on

average. Women also work for a longer period of time than men, working for 445 minutes per day with men only working for 397 (BWASA Census, 2019:62).

According to South African law (the Constitution, Bill of Rights and Employment Equity Act) there must be equal pay for equal work. However, within South Africa's corporate culture there is little or no transparency regarding salaries. In many companies, discussing one's salary with colleagues is against company policy and may even be grounds for dismissal. Furthermore, women who negotiate hard for promotions and higher salaries are viewed negatively, described as intimidating or aggressive (BWASA Census, 2019:62).

Women executives in South Africa earn 28.1% less than men as measured by taxable income and are liable for 47.1% less tax than their male counterparts, according to PWC's executive director's remuneration report. This means a man earns in eight months what a woman earns in a year. It is estimated to take 50 years for the salaries of women executives to match those of male executives (PWC report, 2019). They have constructed a 'sticky floor' model of pay and promotion, women are just as likely to get promoted as men but find themselves 'stuck' at the bottom of the wage scale for their new grade.

Theories to explain why one person's wage is different from another otherwise identical person's for reasons of non-productivity like gender include the issue of 'statistical discrimination' whereby employers judge individuals on the basis of

average characteristics of a group. The argument here is that many women take a career break to have and care for children. Making this choice is regarded as a perceived risk and attributed to decisions of how to treat all women regardless of their individual circumstances. This presents an inner logic of discrimination with mothers' choices limited by the lack of flexibility, lack of support for children and employers' decisions based on perceived likely employment patterns and motivation with regard to childbearing and family commitments. It is evident therefore that 'even the 'explained' elements of the gender pay gap are likely to reflect discriminatory social norms or indirect discrimination' (Glover and Kirton, 2006: 48).

In the public sector in South Africa representation of women at senior levels is steadily increasing however, at the highest salary level (level 16), there are 2.5 times more men than women - the greatest disparity between the share of men and women in all the senior management salary bands. As salaries increase, the gap between the share of women versus men at the senior management level also increase (BWASA Census, 2019:76).

Then with advancement in a career the binary persists that men have leadership attributes that women lack. When women do advance they often face prejudice because of violating perceived gender roles, (Kumra et al, 2014: 200). Mobility in terms of overseas assignments and rotations is also often a criterion for promotion to management positions. However, for many women this poses a significant challenge due to family demands or the expectations of their spouses,

families and society. Mobility can also be associated with national and global roles, which require extensive travel. Female leaders comment that travel is often lengthy and unpredictable, which makes it tricky for women with children. This adds to the cost of childcare and makes it difficult to plan (Kumra et al, 2014:200).

Obstacles can also be artificial including employer and supervisor discrimination and perceived fit rather than particular performance at work (Streets and Major, 2014). Perhaps of greater concern to the field of Human Resource Management are the high numbers of women leaving organisations today. More women than men are leaving their organisations, especially at senior levels. (Bosch 2017:26) notes that women are more likely to leave their jobs for non-economic reasons, and cites that emotional exhaustion has been identified as a major cause of employee turnover.

2.3.5 Organisational culture

Organisational culture is made up of shared values, meanings, ideas and symbols (Alvesson and Due Billing, 2009). However, how shared and accepted the culture is, depends on how the inequality regime works. Arising from the findings of the ILO Report (2015), conscious and unconscious bias has been cited as an exclusionary practice, that is largely seen as favouring – either formally or informally - a white male dominant organisational culture. Conscious bias can happen for example, when White colleagues choose to deliberately stereotype

Black colleagues as not having the capability to carry out assigned work. It is even more pronounced with females, especially of colour. Gender bias occurs when females are seen as not having the ability to cope with handling senior roles (Booyesen, 2007:47). Unconscious bias can occur when White peers or managers exclude Black employees from for example the conversation or from training opportunities. A common example of this working in reverse in South African organisations is when people start speaking in their vernacular language in the presence of colleagues that do not identify with that particular language.

For women to fit into certain organisational cultures and structures, they might need to 'manage gender' which may include aligning oneself with men, 'working as a conceptual man', or indirectly positioning oneself as 'one of the boys'. Research suggests that women who succeed in male gender-typed jobs or positions are commonly perceived as having attributes traditionally associated with men (Lyness et al, 2006:777-785). The findings are also consistent with research suggestions that in organizations, because of the stereotypical belief that women might be less successful in managerial positions, because they can be forced to develop managerial styles that are acceptable to male colleagues, supervisors and subordinates. Such stereotypical beliefs may negatively affect the way female managers' performance is evaluated and this may in turn negatively influence women's subsequent career success (Lyness et al, 2006:777-785). Although belonging to a gender group is obligatory more covert or subtle forms of discrimination can make women try to fit in with male dominating cultures through becoming an 'it' and genderless through for example

androgynous dressing (Adam et al, 2006:368-378).

Part of South African culture that also impacts at work lies in the so-called 'Black tax':

The Black Tax is a colloquial term for financially assisting ageing parents, siblings and other relatives once a young Black person starts internship or formal employments. Labelled as a secret torment for some, a proud responsibility for others, 'black tax' is a daily reality for thousands of black South Africans and Black females seem to be the most affected by this form of Tax (Nair, 2019:61)

The South African Institute of Savings (SAIS) acting CEO, Gerald Mwandambira states that family responsibility is part of most cultures, but not always as far-reaching as the African culture. He explains that in the European or Afrikaner family it's a nuclear family system that includes parents and children. It doesn't go beyond first cousin. However 'the tentacles of an African family extend to even fourth or fifth cousins, or even sometimes sharing a surname is enough reason to declare responsibility'. This becomes a burden when people don't have the financial literacy or power within the family to draw the line about what they can afford (SAIS, 2018). Triple Jeopardy, a new study launched at the Wits School of Governance, explores race, class and gender dynamics among the South African black middle class, understanding complexities of black middle-class identity in

South Africa. it begins to look at the role of 'black tax' in alleviating inequality in South Africa and in understanding the socio-economic and cultural importance of remittances to the sustenance of families and poverty alleviation in South Africa (Development Southern Africa, 2018: 36). With regard to the 'black tax', they state:

'To drastically oversimplify the situation, women are generally earning less and paying more'

Another issue is that of the 'pink tax' where women are obliged to maintain a certain appearance at work and thus purchase expensive products to go with the image required. One of the key findings from the Triple Jeopardy survey was that 58% of men agree that women pay more for services and products that are targeted specifically at females such as toiletries, grooming products, medical screenings and haircuts and these are some of the items that see women spending hundreds to thousands of rands more than their male counterparts (van Heerde, 2018:1).

2.3.6 Organisational policies

Policies that are there to supposedly help women at work are cited as being a dimension of the organisational inequality regime. Affirmative action and work-life balance policies for example tend to be linked to costs and address deficiencies

in women failing to address the underlying processes of inequality (Acker, 2006). However women in South Africa do cite preferences for workplaces that provide sufficient paid leave, satisfactory remuneration, and supportive co-workers. When asked to rate organisations, the women highlighted flexible work hours, maternity and adoptive leave, a fair salary, mentoring, management opportunities, and representation of women in leadership positions as important.

In an attempt to fulfil their dual roles as working mothers, the issue of time and personal support are clearly very important factors in retaining the services of women. (de Lange et al 2018:61) cite) that after the democratic elections in South Africa in 1994, the most prominent place of change was in the South African labour force. Due to legislative (gender equity and affirmative action) initiatives, the previously disadvantaged groups now played a significant role in the composition of the South African workforce.

The concern from many is that organisations are complying with the law to avoid penalisation, however the full commitment of organisations in ensuring that the employed females are empowered with proper induction into the roles and continuous upskilling may not always be present. Gender and race often cast aspersions on the skills and responsibilities of a person and assumptions are made during the recruitment and hiring process (CEE Report, 2006). They state that when developing organisational strategies aimed at empowering and treating women in an equal manner, consideration needs to be given to avoid token appointments.

There are two issues related to responsible employment practices - the presence of formalised equity programmes characterized by goals, timetables, audits, and a custodian, and actions to remove discriminatory barriers and systemic obstacles. According to Hills (2010), actions to ensure economic participation include: implementing policies that enhance gender equality; implementing policies that address equal pay for work of equal value; offering women educational support; providing women with necessary resources and opportunities; and mentoring and training women to take up managerial roles.

2.3.7 Organisational support

Networking has been a traditional way to learn the corporate culture and unwritten rules and procedures. A problem for women employees and managers is the so-called 'old boys' network', which sometimes may arise from attending the same schools or sports activities (ILO, WIBM Report, 2015:34). In terms of networking, it was recorded that generally women prefer more professional, business networking events rather than informal drinks after work. Men and women network differently. While 42% of men used networking events or conferences, only 30% of women did. However, 27% of women used their social or online networks compared with just 20% of men (Grant Thornton IBR, WIB Philippines, 2015). Organisations with mentorship programs are found to boost promotion and retention rates for women by 15-38% and 67% of women view mentorship as a highly important factor contributing to their career advancement, yet only 10% of women actually have a mentor during their career(ILO, WIBM Report, 2015:34).

This raises the issue in South Africa of 'braai' or after work informal network gatherings. Mavin et al (2014) talk about interactions within organisations and raise the concept of 'homosociality', which is a general disposition to associate with people like oneself. They acknowledge the need to maintain power and be pervasive as the male homosociality. The reverse of this is women's 'homophily', which is the social process of friendship often seen as more emotional, intimate and inclusive. As a result, women's homosociality can be seen as less powerful (Mavin et al, 2014:3). A uniquely South African problem is when female colleagues are excluded from the 'boy's Friday beer n braai sessions' as the males feel that the females will not be comfortable joining them for a 'boy's evening'. Globally, studies cite golf and popular male dominated activities that are chosen by leaders as the 'culprit' for unconscious bias against women (Bosch, 2017:1).

Employers can be more aware of reinforcing such networks at the recruitment stage. They can also support internal networks, which are inclusive of women. Support for women-only networks, where women can learn from each other and feel free to express their ideas and feelings, can be an effective way for women to gain confidence and knowledge and so advance their careers (ILO, WIBM Report, 2015:34). Such networks can be within the company or between companies. There are also independent networks of women managers. Encouraging women to be part of such networks provides a good learning and support opportunity for them (ILO, WIBM Report, 2015:34). Ensuring that women and men receive equal access to education and work opportunities is a critical

element in safeguarding growth and inclusion and where education gaps still persist, investment in girls and women's education is critical for human capital development. A substantial body of literature has shown that investing in girls' education is one of the highest return investments a developing economy such as South Africa can make, and for these developing economies, closing education gender gaps will remain an important factor over time (Global Gender Gap Report, 2016:33).

In terms of the Educational Attainment the report finds that South Africa still has education and economic gender gaps. Gender bias in South Africa's education systems is also a contributing factor in women's workforce participation. Gendered subject choices in education and training are reflected in labour markets with traditionally 'male' and 'female' jobs. This gap may have an even stronger impact on income inequality in the future, necessitating action by Governments today (Global Gender Gap Report, 2016:33).

Although sub-Saharan African countries have made considerable strides in providing equal access to education for boys and girls, 23% of girls do not receive a primary education, and with 40% of girls getting married before the age of 18 in sub-Saharan Africa, girls are often forced to drop out of school to start families (Hyde, 1993:112-113).

Educational attainment is still low in South Africa. In 2018, over half (59%) of 25-

64 year-olds in South Africa had attained an upper secondary education as the highest level achieved, well above the G20 average of 32% and the OECD average of 38%, while 26% had not attained upper secondary education. (<http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance>).

Women's disadvantaged position is sometimes attributed to lack of human capital – less investment in key advancement factors such as education and training. Yet some educational attainment is seen as more favourable than others indicating bias against women rather than individual failings or deficiencies (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014).

Work relationships that are supportive include mentors and powerful sponsors (Metz and Kulik, 2014). An experienced mentor can help career development and sponsors can enhance visibility within and outside the organisation. Yet a lack of mentors and sponsors are indications of 'exclusion from male-dominated influential networks and gender discrimination' (Metz and Kulik, 2014:187).

Organisations with mentorship programs are found to boost promotion and retention rates for women by 15-38% and 67% of women view mentorship as a highly important factor contributing to their career advancement, yet only 10% of women actually have a mentor during their career(ILO, WIBM Report, 2015:34).

Having more women in leadership can mean more transformational

considerations, and can result in stronger mentoring and development, which can have a positive impact on retention. Eagly et al (2014) however, suggest that mentoring is still not enough to help women work through the “labyrinth” of unwritten rules and requirements. According to Hills (2010), actions to ensure economic participation include: implementing policies that enhance gender equality; implementing policies that address equal pay for work of equal value; offering women educational support; providing women with necessary resources and opportunities; and mentoring and training women to take up managerial roles.

2.4 Summary and conclusion

South Africa has made progressive inroads from the days of women having limited choice as to where they could go in the workplace. The latest transformational legislation pertaining to women empowerment and gender equality has given South African women more choice and a regulated avenue to assist with their climb up the corporate ladder into more managerial and decision making roles. Employment Equity legislation requires that organisations monitor the fairness and equality of employment practices and policies within their divisions and identify designated candidates to fulfil vacancies.

However, it is clear that women, and particularly Black women, do not have equity in the South African labour market and face disparity in pay, opportunities for advancement and strategic board roles. In relation to Black women’s involvement

and advancement, Booysen, (2007:64-5) finds the following in terms of the blockages in the retention of black candidates and in effectively implementing employment equity:

- A lack of cultural awareness programmes and of an organisational culture that values and promotes diversity
- A white male dominant organisational culture that continues to exclude black recruits (formally or informally through exclusionary network practices)
- Black people are perceived as tokens and not fully integrated into companies because of little delegation of real responsibility or decision-making authority, owing to persistent stereotypes
- Black staff are not systematically developed and trained – no effective talent Management
- Lack of black mentors and role models
- Low commitment to Employment Equity from top management, with lip service paid by the leadership about the need for Employment Equity

In this chapter I have outlined Acker's theory of gendered organisations and inequality regimes that help show that it is structures and not individuals that perpetuate inequality at work (Kanter, 1977). By using the career path framework from Ahuja (2002) has enabled consideration of social and structural factors that impact on career choice, persistence and progression and the challenges faced by women in South Africa. I now turn to the underpinning theory of

Intersectionality which has informed my inquiry into the lived experiences of Black women business leaders in South Africa.

Chapter 3: Intersectionality

3.1 Introduction

It is important to provide depth and breadth to understanding the lived experiences of women in South Africa. For these reasons I turn to theories of intersectionality which underpin this research. It is significant to point that my research is not intrinsically about different styles of leadership or about women in leadership. The focus is also not on the outcomes or benefits to organisations or the impact my selected interviewees may have. We frequently find psychology based studies that treat women as a variable and thus are being essentialist. My entire thesis about intersectionality is suggesting that women are not an homogeneous group and 'intersectional sensibilities' (Healy et al, 2011) are required to understand the situation of women in South Africa. However, I find it significant enough to also augment my theoretical approach with gender and leadership studies. I believe this tactical inclusion has merit and can undeniably help to understand some of the barriers to progression, although the studies are often western-centric and thus not always particularly useful to understand the specifics about South Africa.

In the previous chapter, following Acker (1990; 2006), I discussed inequality regimes in gendered organisations and how they are sustained. Moreover, organisations and their practices need to be viewed through an intersectional lens to understand the 'interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that

result in and maintain class, gender and racial inequalities' (Healy et al, 2011:468). In South Africa these dimensions can be expanded and refers to class, age, religion, sexuality, culture and other components, part of the diverse citizenship within the population.

If, one of the most common form of inequality such as gender is minimised, this may still as an example, leave black women oppressed and dehumanised (Healy et al, 2011). Crenshaw (1991) shows how structural intersectionality means that women of colour can face qualitatively different experiences than those of white women. A re-iteration is once again made that intersectional sensibility is important. Gender, class and race are enmeshed, and different intersections can produce specific effects. The bases of inequality and the shape and degree of inequality are contextual and as well as manifesting in organisations reflect wider patterns in society (Healy et al, 2011:470).

3.2 What is intersectionality?

Intersectionality is not just one “analytical tool” among many at the disposal of academics, but rather a paradigm shifting intervention that promises transformation (Cline, 2020:2). The term intersectionality was first used by Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) to denote the experience of Black women's employment experiences. Further:

“Intersectionality has been developing since its emergence from critical

race feminism in the 1980s when it was used to conceptualise the inter-relationship of race and gender and, particularly, the experiences of discrimination and marginalisation of black women in employment” (McBride, et al: 2014:1).

The term Intersectionality was founded by Crenshaw’s analogy of traffic intersections, where multiple streets intersect at a crossroads, similarly various factors of oppression can affect an individual simultaneously (Crenshaw, 1991: 1241-1299). Intersectionality has been defined as “the interaction of multiple identities and experiences of exclusion and subordination” (Davis, 2008:67). The concept of intersectionality serves to specifically highlight, how identified groups can be exposed to compounded sites of oppression, thus increasing the combination of oppressions they are exposed to. This can be evident in the combination of racism and sexism that can both affect a Black woman concurrently.

Crenshaw’s (2013) article shows that the espousal and adoption of intersectionality, stems from her belief that society is stratified along lines of race, gender, sexuality and other cultural dimensions. She states that anti-discrimination law examines race and gender separately, which is referred to as single-axis thinking, to the detriment of women of color and others who inhabit the intersection of two or more dominated classes. As a result, compounded discrimination due to interlocking oppressions is not addressed by the law. Crenshaw purports that courts and legislatures simply do not think about

discrimination appropriately. She criticises the law's preoccupation with "color-blindness and equal process, labelled as procedural fairness", but her contention is not so much that adequate legal solutions have not or do not exist, it is that a certain mindset or awareness is lacking in their demonstration and application. Crenshaw (2013) states that this alleged blind spot in the law has effectuated the "erasure" of women of colour (Crenshaw, 2013:7-8).

Intersectionality is also about activism as well as used in analysis. Cline (2020:4) uses the example of the US Presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren, who states that:

"All policy issues are disability policy issues, which must be approached with a "disability rights lens, from criminal justice reform to ensuring a high-quality public education for all, to strengthening our democracy. Proposals for empowering indigenous peoples become proposals for empowering female, gender-non-conforming, sexual minority indigenous peoples".

Intersectionality is thus not simply a method, tool, framework or a sensibility that was "appropriated" by Crenshaw. It provided emancipation from unnecessary constraints and hegemonic domination, where "both the dominant and the dominated classes believe the existing order is satisfactory" (Cline,2020:5).

Mophosho (2013) comments on intersectional identity being seen through multifaceted identity lenses, whilst Nash (2008) states that Intersectionality allows for an acknowledgement of diversity within categories, by directing the spotlight on the various identities that can challenge these categories (Nash,2008:89). The priority is to give voice to those who have been left out of feminist or anti- racist movements, thereby contesting “essentialism and exclusion” (Nash, 2008:89).

Cline (2020), highlights the all-encompassing nature of intersectional sensibility that should apply to “all aspects of our lives, not just our movements.” and that it must dictate not only public policy formation and voting choices, but school curriculum, corporate practices, and even our private conversations and personal relationships. Thus intersectional sensibility is a guide to life (Cline:2020:6).

In her critical view of the concept of cohesion, Anzaldua (1999) suggested that in societies in which people co-exist, (different genders, races, classes, and so on) they become so entrenched in each other’s lives that it becomes difficult to differentiate between insiders or outsiders. Raising the notion of intersectionality, Anzaldua (2015) considers the interconnectedness of people’s lived experiences. Intersectionality refers to the ‘overlapping’ of social attributes such as gender, race, class, ability, religion and sexual orientation. This ‘structure’ can be used to appreciate how systemic injustices and social inequalities occur on multifaceted levels Anzaldua (2015:74).

Feminist scholars from all races have argued for over three decades that most of

the academic work, with regard to gender, was mainly about white middle class women. The gender category moreover, is deeply complicated by adding the intersections of 'class, race/ethnicity, and the multitude of other differences' (see Davis 1981; Hooks 1984; Joseph 1981). Acker states that race captures 'multiple social realities' that are often transformed through gender and class differences. Similarly, 'Class', is also 'convoluted by multiple gendered and racialised differences.

Nash (2008:2), for example, writes that Intersectionality has become the primary analytic tool that feminist and anti-racist scholars deploy for theorising identity and oppression. She states in her paper on "re-thinking Intersectionality", that:

"Intersectionality, the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class and sexuality, has emerged as the primary, theoretical tool designed to combat feminist hierarchy, hegemony and exclusivity".

One prominent line of research within the paradigm of intersectionality has focused on relationships of inequality among categorically-based social groups, examining in particular the ways in which these relationships are changing over time and across contexts. Intersectionality is there to critique and alter the ways in which disciplines are framed, how relevant questions are asked, and how practitioners approach and frame their own subject matter (Crenshaw, 2013:7).

This frame can include further sites of oppression and exclusion, such as class, ageism, and also include social frames such as disability and sexuality (McBride et al, 2014:332).

In discussing the ever-broadening field of intersectionality theory in her article, (Crenshaw, 2013:8-9) states:

“Intersectionality is best framed as an analytic sensibility. If intersectionality is an analytic disposition, a way of thinking about and conducting analyses, then what makes an analysis intersectional is not its use of the term ‘intersectionality,’ nor its being situated in a familiar genealogy, nor its drawing on lists of standard citations. Rather, what makes an analysis intersectional...is its adoption of an intersectional way of thinking about the problem of sameness and difference and its relation to power.”

3.3 From gender studies to intersectionality

McBride et al draw on Crenshaw’s work (1989:140) and state that it is important to studies of work and employment relations that we appreciate that without intersectional analysis, conceptions may become grounded in ‘experiences that actually represent only a subset of a much more complex phenomenon’ (McBride et al, 2014:338).

(Kiguwa 2004) states that this type of theoretical practice is not only misleading in its representation of gender as universal, but also serves to further silence many women that are already marginalised by their race, class and sexuality. An example of “triple oppression” can be used to describe the lives of Black female domestic workers in South Africa. These women are portrayed as poor and lacking in education and are oppressed at the levels of their race, gender and class (Kiguwa 2004:7-16).

While women are now perceived as insiders (being allowed to attain education, enter the workplaces, etc.), their lived experiences render many of them as simultaneously insiders and outsiders, as the spaces that many of them now occupy as “full citizens” continue to be unwelcoming and non-accommodating. So although post the apartheid era, South African women are now allowed to enter certain previously male dominated spheres of society, work and education. The dichotomy is that although they have access to entry, they are still deemed ‘outsiders’ to the male circles within the various spheres.

There are feminist empiricist or liberal feminist views that also have an essentialist and binary outlook - men and women are the same but women lack access to resources. This response comes under the ‘women need fixing’ to be as successful as men such as focussed training. Standpoint feminist perspectives view women as uniquely different from men and this categorization leads to calls

to address structures which might oppress and disadvantage women - again an essentialist and binary approach. West and Zimmerman (1987) illustrate gender as being performed – ‘doing gender’ according to the normative ways that a sex category (in other words a socialised being) is considered appropriate, proposing a sociological understanding of ‘gender as a routine, methodical, and recurring accomplishment’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987:126). Similarly, Butler (1990) looked to counter presumptions that ‘restricted the meaning of gender to received notions of masculinity and femininity’. a critique of assuming a coherent and unified subject with common biology meaning shared experiences and thus the same political interests in overthrowing male power (Aldred,2004). The ‘category of women’, (Butler,1990:19) stresses is normative and exclusionary and is invoked with the ‘unmarked dimensions of class and racial privilege intact’. She argues that gender exists only in the performance of it creating a fiction of gendered behaviour.

Braidotti (1994:4) advises:

In feminist theory one speaks as a woman, although the subject ‘woman’ is not a monolithic essence, defined once and for all but rather the site of multiple, complex and potentially contradictory sets of experiences defined by overlapping variables such as class, race, age, lifestyle, sexual preferences and others

Doing gender thus ‘furnishes the interactional scaffolding of social structure, along with a built-in mechanism of social control’ (West and Zimmerman, 1987:147). They point out that institutional forces maintain distinctions between men and women and interactional validation of these distinctions ‘confers on

them their sense of ‘naturalness’ and ‘rightness” (West and Zimmerman, 1987:147).

Feminist approaches need to be crucially attentive to difference, highlighting heterogeneity in experiences based on collective rather than individual identity distinctions with age, class, socio-economic status, ethnicity and so on, as specific cultural, structural and relational identification of ‘difference’. Cerulo (1997:392) for example states that ‘the existence of these multiple categories alerts us to the flaws of binary gender conceptualizations focusing instead on the ways in which multiple identity affiliations qualitatively change the nature of human experience’. Patricia Hill Collins (1990) perhaps made the most significant contribution to feminist theory in terms of theorizing gender and individual difference – in her ‘matrix of domination’ she theorizes the intersections of class, race, global location, sexual preference and age and how these impact on ‘being a woman’. Thus gender can’t be separated out from the political and cultural intersections such as ‘racial, class, ethic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities’ (Butler, 1990:4).

3.4 Examples of research utilising intersectionality and intersectional sensibility

In this section I have selected two pieces of research to illustrate how intersectionality and intersectional sensibility has been applied in practice. In research funded by the UK Equal Opportunities Commission with regard to the

experiences of Caribbean, Bangladeshi and Pakistani (CBP) women workers, Healy et al (2011:469) noted a central theme of the 'invisibility of black women in studies of gender'. CBP women were the focus of the investigation given their high levels of unemployment but also position in organisations, largely being at the bottom of any hierarchy. Black Caribbean women in the UK have a strong attachment to public sector employment such as nursing and education. Pakistani and Bangladeshi women have the lowest employment activity rates of the three groups despite younger women particularly committed to gaining qualifications. However Pakistani women graduates are five times as likely to be unemployed than their white counterparts (2011:470). The interviews revealed that lack of English language skills featured as an explanation of obstacles to career advancement regardless of what level these were. Employers also dismissed the multiple languages spoken by many of the women who contributed their knowledge freely when the organisation required them. These language skills were taken for granted and there was 'racialised undervaluing' evident (2011:472). Likewise gendered administrative skills were down valued in comparison to perceived valued quantitative skills apparently utilised by men. Organisational practices such as a pub culture often excluded CBP women and sensitivity to different cultural practices that would have indicated intersectional sensibility – such as arranging alcohol free activities – was not experienced by many of the women interviewed. For women with the Muslim faith their clothing was a 'symbol of difference' and they were more likely to face stereotypes and bias. Women cited many instances of bias in promotion practices for example 'you are not qualified enough' and after further diploma's are achieved 'you don't smile enough' or 'you don't have the right attitude' (2011:474). Flexibility to be

given time to pray did not feature and there was a lack of understanding of the realities of life for some CBP women, one stating 'our needs are completely different from white people' (2011:476). Black female managers felt like outsiders with a view that CBP women had to downplay their identities. Generally the research found that there was 'intersectional disempowerment resulting from the struggle to reconcile racialized and gendered daily interactions' (2011:484). As (Acker 2006:441-453) has shown white people in hierarchies are often unaware of their 'ethnized class privilege'.

The second piece of research concerns Black women school principals in the UK, US and South Africa (Moorosi et al, 2018). The researchers utilising intersectional sensibility aimed to analyse how Black women leaders constructed success and successful leadership in education. As Crenshaw (1991) showed women can face multi-layered forms of discrimination whilst being Black and that if race and gender are considered separately the legal framework tend to ignore issues for Black women. Like this thesis research, Moorosi et al (2018) used intersectionality as a method of analysis and research design wanting to study the lives of the three Black women leaders through life-history interviews. Emerging themes were that all three women took a pupil-centred approach to education leadership and valued holistic development of children as well as providing positive role models (2018:154). Nicola grew up in a deprived White area where there were limited resources and is a Black British child of immigrant parents. Molly is a Black woman growing up in the heart of the apartheid era where life opportunities were limited for Black people. Kay, an African American

woman grew up in foster homes when her parents succumbed to a life of drugs, crime and prison. The three women have individual stories but also collective experiences. All came from working class families which has impacted on careers and cultural, financial and social capital access (2018:156). For all of them leadership success is defined as trying to serve pupils in 'socially just ways'. Although they now enjoy privileged lifestyles their gender, race and class experiences are still defined by their workplace environment – working in schools in deprived areas – and still facing oppression as Black women. This understanding of both privilege and oppression, the researchers highlight is made possible through research underpinned by intersectional sensibility.

3.5 Intersectionality in SA

When exploring the impact of race and gender on gender role stereotypes, it is critical to look at the different perspectives of white male, black male, black female and white female managers in South Africa. These views can be compared through complex intersectional analysis, and not singularly (Booyesen et al, 2010:286), through a historical analysis of South Africa, discussed how race category, class and gender have intersected over particular socio-historic periods. Through this he explores the “danger” in the assumption of essence, showing how the constructs of “race”, class and gender have been unstable, despite being accepted as given. The shifts and changes in these constructs, their meaning, and the resultant segregation of society along them, show how they are indeed not essential or static. The concept of intersectionality acknowledges the socially constructed nature of these constructs, understanding

identity as multiple and shifting.

(Distiller and Steyn, 2004:1-11) speak to the necessity of an intersectional perspective of identity, particularly in the South African context. This is as South Africa's past created a society that is segregated along not only racial lines but also along class, gender and others as well. It is important to not look at these constructs separately but as intricately connected and linked in people's positions and identities in South African society. This is significantly so, with the position of black women in society due to the "triple oppression". There is a flawed assumption that all women share the same experiences of oppression and gender by virtue of being women (Kiguwa, 2004:7-16).

In a study done by Whitehead (2013) on social inequality in South Africa, he concludes that South Africa represents an important site for the investigation and understanding of intersectional changes, as the collapse of the apartheid system gave rise to a dynamic period with respect to the country's previously rigidly racialised class structure. He writes that this is reflected in a substantial body of post-apartheid research that has investigated post-apartheid race-class intersections as they are conceptualised in official policies and realised in aggregate societal patterns, (Whitehead, 2013:2). Whitehead (2013) notes that under the apartheid system, race and class in South Africa almost completely overlapped with one another. This overlapping of race and class was a result of the efforts of the architects of apartheid to establish a rigid and totalising system that affected every aspect of people's lives and prevented any form of inter-racial

interaction under potentially egalitarian circumstances, (Whitehead, 2013:2).

This system was implemented through the passage of literally hundreds of laws, which were enforced by state-sanctioned violence on a broad scale. These laws included those designed to implement “grand apartheid” policies such as “separate development,” “Bantu Education,” and “job reservation,” which ensured that whites had privileged access to the most desirable land, educational qualifications, and professions, while reducing blacks to a ready supply of cheap semi-skilled and unskilled labor. In addition, a range of “petty apartheid” laws were designed to institutionalise racial segregation and privilege in informal everyday settings by mandating superior “whites only” amenities including buses, railway cars, ambulances, libraries, swimming pools and beaches (Whitehead, 2013:4).

Post apartheid, Moolman (2015) from the Department of Human and Social Development, suggests an important question arises on what citizenship means in a more multicultural and heterogenous society. This speaks to the citizens and the diverse cultures that are representative of South African society. It enhances the point of there being common South African citizens within a specific area or region, that can have a multitude of social structures with varying degrees of policies attached to it, that separates them socially. It also raises the question of how can there be full and equal integration of citizens when there is unequal societal representation. This is also applicable to the present South African condition where the distribution of wealth continues to favour a few at the expense

of the majority of citizens. South Africa is perceived as one of the most unequal countries in the world, it is therefore not uncommon for sectors to rebel and demand better working conditions and equality of opportunity and remuneration (Moolman, 2015: 22-28).

A leading and sought-after African mind, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng (Vice-Chancellor at the University of Cape Town), states that:

“people make assumptions about each other such as political ideologies and what they believe in, based merely on gender, race, class and culture” (Phakeng, 2019).

This impacts on women in the South African Labour market. The racialised nature of South African politics is concerning, and this is indicative of acute polarisation in the South African labour market. Phakeng (2019) states that people no longer ask questions, they just make assumptions and stop learning from people they do not know or have never had conversations with. An example is if your Bank Manager is a young black woman, it does not always mean that she is an Employment Equity appointee and does not know what she is doing. Professor Phakeng (2019) further states that labour markets have become ignorant by sticking to labels that it has put onto people, especially females in the work environment.

Mophosho, (2013) reviews that historically, economic development in South Africa largely benefited the White minority with the goal to ensure and sustain its supremacy and this legacy has remained. Almost two decades after the end of the apartheid regime South Africa's national census in 2011 found White people's income to be six times more than that of the majority of Black people's (Statistics South Africa, 2011).

Mophosho (2013:2) states that:

“parallel to this is that black women continue to be located at the bottom of social hierarchies as they strive for economic, racial and gender-based equality”

According to Statistics SA, Black women struggle the most, economically, in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2011), this further indicates that the historical differences instituted by apartheid are still evident. The racial subjugation of the apartheid regime, in addition to its patriarchal nature, served to place black women in “second class citizenship” (Mabokela & Mawila, 2004:397). Due to these anomalies, the integration that is then achieved can easily become a one-way course, with the whites doing all the talking and the blacks the listening. Biko (2004) cautions that the claims of segregation is not necessarily the natural order, however he states that factually and situationally, “where a group experiences privilege at the expense of others, then it becomes obvious that a hastily arranged integration cannot be the solution to the problem” (Biko 2004: 21-22).

3.6 Summary and conclusion

McBride et al (2014) provided the motive for this research, as they state that the use of intersectionality as a research methodology still remains relatively limited within studies of work and employment relations. They argue that this field of study would benefit from greater engagement with and understanding of an intersectional approach to both the design and interpretation of research (McBride et al, 2014:1).

I have chosen to approach the research with an intersectional lens, which I ascertained to be a clear choice to outline the intersectional sensibilities that prevail in the South African gendered labour market. I have combined intersectionality theory with general prevalent theories of the gendered labour market.

An understanding and conceptualisation of the intersectional experiences of females, predominantly Black females, within South African organisations may serve to facilitate greater insight into practical business-related strategies for implementation. From a theoretical aspect, it will allow me to develop a deeper understanding of intersectionality theory and its impact on women in leadership and in the South African gendered labor market. I am enthusiastic about discovering the rich tapestry of intersectional sensibilities that permeate the South African labor market, seemingly unbeknown to many of the people that have and are experiencing it.

The concept of Intersectionality will play an important role in shaping my research, as there are limited studies on the factors influencing South African women, especially Black women to Leadership. The importance of evaluating how gender and race category intersect has been raised as crucial for the liberation of black women. Theorists state that the direction of feminist thought was shifted by a paradigm interlocking gender, race category and class. The use of Intersectionality theory will assist in uncovering the multi-faceted experiences of Black South African females.

In this Chapter, I have covered the theoretical framework of Intersectionality and justified the choice of Intersectionality from a uniquely South African perspective. I have also emphasised the importance of Intersectional Sensibilities as a guiding light in terms of 'reform interventions', and how the two (Intersectionality and Sensibilities) cannot be separated.

Chapter 4: Research Methods

4.1 Introduction

Having embarked on the International Doctorate Programme, confusion reigned in terms of the ontological and epistemological position I would take. There was a proneness to changing the meta philosophical stance after every new reading or discussion with colleagues. However my knowledge and understanding was increasing to the extent of deeper questioning arising and not mere absorption of literature. The journey of discovery was similar to that of the pioneers who discovered new continents and sailed the seas in search of new knowledge. Reflexivity has also become more prominent, with a reflexive cycle being implemented.

I aim to gather further insight into the intersectional experiences of women leaders in a South African context. The vast majority of research conducted on similar topics to date have utilised mainly quantitative methods and has produced statistics to highlight the dire state of employment equity in South Africa. This has resulted in a multitude of variables for one to choose from and has only served to further functional pursuits of generalisation. I aim to provide qualitative analysis with a subjective perspective that is not generalist or predictable. I also aim to highlight further insights and understanding of actual intersectional experiences in its natural setting, and as experienced by the interviewees.

My research goal is to provide new knowledge and insights on intersectionality and career progression in the South African labour market, through the lived experiences of a diverse group of women. These women start their journey as strangers, but share one thing in common, they are all female and subject to gender biases. Further there are class, languages and other challenges. This is where the path diverges, as the women of colour often have a different journey and more obstacles to face. Women of colour face more than one battle in the corporate arena and in their personal spaces. The aim is to uncover what these battles are and link this to the literature and theory on this subject matter, with the professed aim of adding to the body of knowledge on the subject.

4.2 Philosophical Positioning

Moon et al (2014:1167), state that it is important to have an understanding of philosophy, because social science research can only be meaningfully interpreted when there is clarity about the decisions that were taken that affect the research outcomes. They further state that some of these decisions are based, sometimes unknowingly, on some key philosophical principles. Philosophy provides the general principles of theoretical thinking, a method of cognition, perspective and self-awareness, all of which are used to obtain knowledge of reality and to design, conduct, analyze and interpret research and its outcomes.

An understanding of research philosophy has assisted in helping me (the researcher) form a clearer picture about how and why research is implemented. Easterby-Smith et al., (2002) state that researchers must be able to use their own judgement and learn to work efficiently and independently with the uncertainty and risk of research, and indicate that consideration of the philosophy of research can help researchers to see their research from a broader perspective, and to define more clearly the purpose of their specific project within the wider context. also explain how important it is to understand philosophical issues. They claim it can help researchers clarify their research design and identify whether it will work or not (Easterby-Smith et al.,2002:16-18).

Management researchers have been criticised for being unaware of their own epistemological position (Johnson & Duberley, 2000:125), however, the situation is changing. Researchers are expected to demonstrate their own ontology, and epistemology has highlighted the importance of acquiring an understanding of research philosophy. It has been argued that, by recognising these epistemological presuppositions, researchers are more likely to make a conscious choice of the research approach. The argument goes that this will make results more valid and we will learn more about the process of research itself. (Johnson and Duberley, 2000:125) also indicate that commitment to a particular research philosophy is 'a key feature of our pre-understandings which influence how we make things intelligible'.

My meta philosophical stance speaks to a subjectivist epistemology. Subjectivist

epistemology relates to the idea that reality can be expressed in a range of symbol and language systems, and is stretched and shaped to fit the purposes of individuals such that people impose meaning on the world and interpret it in a way that makes sense to them. The value of subjectivist research is in revealing how an individual's experience shapes their perception of the world (Moon et al, 2014: 1167-1177).

Subjectivists state that the involvement of the researcher should be actively encouraged – “phenomenologists attempt to minimise the distance between the researcher and that which is being researched” (Hussey, 1997: 49). In contrast to the objectivists, subjectivists focus on the meaning of social phenomena rather than its measurement. Their goal is to understand and to explain a problem in its contextual setting; they do not perceive that it is a question of causality but rather it is a question of the meaning individuals attach to a given situation. Subjectivists believe that it is pointless to categorise phenomena into causes and effects because “phenomena are engaged in a process of continuous creation” (Hirschman 1986: 238).

Ontology can be regarded as the researcher's world view, whether a real world exists. I view that there is a real world outside of my own consciousness but that this real world is subject to everyone's own social sense making. My ontological position is thus one of realism.

Taking into account my own philosophical position and the distinctive features of the South African Business landscape, the view taken here is that there is no such thing as permanent truth, waiting to be found, meaning is therefore not to be discovered but is constructed. Interaction allows humans to understand and subsequently direct their actions. These meanings could also be different for each individual. The role of the 'truth-teller' is to present an interpretation of social reality that will be accepted by the research subjects (Tien,2009:241).

4.3 Research approach and methods

At this point it is worth revisiting my research questions in my aim to investigating the factors influencing the career progression of women to senior leadership roles in South Africa. The questions arising are:

1. What specific challenges impact on women's progress to leadership positions in South Africa?
2. What strategies have been employed to overcome these challenges?
3. How is intersectionality manifest in the lived experiences of women in leadership positions in South Africa?
4. What policies and practices could be employed to shape positive change for women in leadership in South Africa?

In the following sections I explain and justify my choice of who I questioned, how and why and the processes involved in order to explore answers to these

research questions.

Qualitative research methods are particularly effective for examining and developing theories that deal with the role of meanings and interpretations. It is these perspectives and readings that have strongly influenced my stance and choice of an interpretive approach to research. A subjectivist's goal is to understand and explain a problem in its contextual setting, not perceived as a question of causality but rather it is a question of the meaning individuals attach to a given situation. Understanding a problem can only be comprehended through investigating the problem in its entirety. (Holden et al, 2004:8).

From investigation of the various research methods available, I made an informed decision to use the storytelling method, with the life histories method as a subset for two main reasons:

- a) The success of this type of qualitative research is strongly dependent on the researcher's personal attributes and communication skills, which is required to get interviewees to a level of comfort with the researcher in order to elaborate and expand on their life experiences.
- b) It is also important to encourage them to share their journey with as much depth and detail as possible.

I shall deploy Storytelling and Life Histories methods to fulfill my aim of identifying

the challenges faced by women progressing to Leadership roles in South Africa. Stories are important because they comprise a primary medium through which members make sense of, account for, enact and affect the organisations they work for (Whittle et al, 2009:426). The Life Histories approach provides insight into the lived realities of specific lives and the history of a person's experiences. Cassell & Symon describe the process of life history collecting as a form of understanding the prevalent culture in organisations through various member accounts of their experiences within organisations. There will be emphasis on the individuals in the organisation that have experienced the change. (Cassell & Symon, 2004:10). This method also attempts to avoid pre-judgement by the researcher. All of these may well contribute to 'what can be done' to make positive changes to business practice in South Africa for corporate, social and economic benefit.

Life history interviewing is a qualitative method of data collection where people are asked to document a personal account of their life events (Ssali et al, 2015:1). A life history calendar is a separate document that allows for collection of life event histories such as birth, marriage, work or migration history. This is a convenient way to record a sequence of events (Freedman et al,1998:40). A life history calendar can produce a rich set of variables for the analysis of life course events and can serve as a 'visual aid for the interviewees', as it jogs their memories and allows for more co-operation (Freedman et al,1998:66).

The life history interviews can become the conduit for storytelling, whereby

interviewees can be prompted for recollection and discussion of their significant lived experiences, on the personal front and in the workplace. An assumption by Abu Bakar & Abdullah (2008), state that the significant social and economic situations that these women found themselves in could have served to shape their lived experiences and perceptions and outlook on their personal and professional lives. Through open-ended techniques of questioning, with minimal direction from the researcher, the interviewees can be encouraged to reflect on past experiences and share their stories (Abu Bakar & Abdullah, 2008:5)

From a practical point of view, Life History calendars serve to refresh the interviewee's memory and as a reminder of the life events and critical moments. These could be the life changing moments or experiences that helped to shape the path of the interviewee. As a Researcher, it can assist me in steering the conversation to these life events in order to ensure the required outcomes. The outcomes will be to extract and document the life and corporate journeys of the interviewees.

4.4 Storytelling

Boje (1991) refers to organisations as storytelling systems and the 'sense-making currency of human relationships among internal and external stakeholders. An interesting point to note is that storytelling is done in conversation and so involves the listener in various ways and the listeners are co-producers of the

performance. Stories are 'contextually embedded' and so their meaning unfolds through 'the storytelling performance event'. It is critical for the researcher to be able to understand the story in-situ to grasp the stories' meaning (Boje,1991:106-109).

Stories are subjective and can vary over time and are influenced by environments, social situations, changing perspectives, the audience, the purpose of telling the story (East et al, 2010:19). They can make hidden experiences visible and are personal accounts of experiences achieving greater understanding by the researcher, they can educate, inform and share and provide insights. Stories bring meaning into lives and convey values and emotions. They can reaffirm or validate lives and experiences, validating personal stories as a legitimate research method (East et al, 2010:17). Cassell & Symon (2004) state that organisational theory has been late in taking an interest in stories that people tell in and about organisations. Storytelling is seen as an important organisational phenomenon in its own right and which merits research attention Cassell and Symon (2204:10).

Collinson et al (1999:38) state that stories characterise the organisation's culture, help simplify complexity and draw meaning from history. They refer to 3 types of storytelling:

1. Anecdotal or biographical - to create or reinforce feelings and

assumptions about an organisation

2. Creative characterisation - to see a problem in a new light
3. Story as metaphor - transformation of analytical thinking on a more imaginative level

The merging and adaptation of East et al (2010) and Collinson et al (1991) storytelling framework in the table below covers the key aspects of organisational storytelling:

Why storytelling	Applied to my research
The context of the stories	Organisational context formed the basis of the stories, however this was also intertwined with personal context. The support required was on both levels, from work and at home. Almost a balancing act. The stories were rich in organisational culture and history, often woven together by the thread of inequality and discrimination.
Educating and informing the participants and researcher (Personal reflection)	The Life Histories calendar provided deep reflection and insight into almost forgotten experiences, and the recollection of these experiences

	<p>morphed into stories that had subconsciously, and sometimes consciously altered the behaviour and responses of the women. Their lived experiences served the purpose of educating and enlightening them on their journey.</p> <p>As a Researcher, it showed me how different people handled adversity. It taught me that resilience and courage came at a price, often in the personal space of their lives. Personal stories can also teach the listener to overcome adversity.</p>
Affirming and validating lived experiences	<p>Some of the lived experiences of the interviewees bordered on the inhumane. The negative stories told by these women seem to be an attempt at dehumanising their spirit and self through control and power mechanisms.</p> <p>On the flip side there are some beautiful, positive encounters with bosses that have lifted people up and</p>

	<p>helped them to become a success. By telling their stories helped to make the invisible visible (Acker, 2006) and validated experiences.</p>
<p>Acknowledging and celebrating strength and resilience</p>	<p>Jody's example of having to walk away from an Executive role and high profile organisation that was in the media spotlight and start afresh was a bold and courageous move. Her resilience in bearing the gender injustice done to her before the move brings to the fore her strong character and her authentic power. Her motto is "No apology for my success".</p> <p>The Black women that I interviewed need to be celebrated for their valour in entering a battlefield that they had no experience in. They all display deep personal resilience. Some of them rose through the adversity to become successful, whilst some succumbed to the battle as the price to be paid was too high. All of these women need to be commended and</p>

	<p>acknowledged as their efforts have paved the way for transformation. Their storytelling facilitated this.</p>
<p>Characterising organisational culture and drawing meaning from history</p> <p>(Collinson et al:1999)</p>	<p>Collinson et al (1999) state that stories characterise the organisation's culture, help simplify complexity and draw meaning from history. This emerged in the stories told.</p> <p>As a researcher, I could identify the unique character of each organisation that was discussed, and the historical journey that had been traversed. I also discovered a commonality in that Patriarchy was highly evident in the stories. This seemed to not be about the people, but a system of historical injustice that was propagated by both men and women. Men for introducing and nurturing it and women for supporting and accepting it. Once again, the past history has played a key role in paving the way for future transformation.</p>

Enabling researcher to understand how intersectionality was manifest in their lives and personal experiences	<p>As a Researcher, I could finally experience how Intersectionality impacted the work and personal lives of the women in South Africa. The process of interpretation always strived to reflect the women's perspective. White women experienced mainly gender bias, with some cultural bias.</p> <p>The women of colour provided such a rich sample of how intersectionality manifested itself in both their work and personal spaces. Many came from traditional backgrounds, where women were not allowed to work or study at a tertiary level. It was humbling to document the many levels of bias faced, if it were not for an Intersectional approach, these biases would have been looked at as singular experiences and the impact minimised. Intersectionality provided a holistic view of the experiences of</p>

	each person and the process of interpretation will always attempt to reflect the actors' perspective
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Table 5 (adapted from East et al (2010) and Collinson and MacKenzie (1999) and the researcher)

Andiswa Maqutu, a Black female writer states that the way to get a nuanced story about any person, is for those persons to tell their authentic stories themselves. These nuances can often be slight variations in meaning, feeling or tone and even experiencing the same thing differently. She is convinced that even in stories that are purely from the imagination and may never take place in this realm, an authenticity needs to be tapped into. Storytelling involves venturing into the experiences of another person and conducting the relevant research to explore, authenticate and draw common themes from the stories. These themes equate to a recurring or varying pattern that new knowledge can be drawn from, and requisite solutions suggested for implementation. (Maqutu, 2014:10).

4.5 Research sample

I chose to interview 15 female leaders in South African organisations, as they have already experienced the journey to the top and were well positioned to share their trials and tribulations. Interviewees were initially selected from Business

Unity SA membership to allow for ease of access. The Johannesburg Stock Exchange top 40 listed companies were also approached. I had to map out a list of the various sectors on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, as I planned to interview females from the different sectors. This was a deliberate plan to understand if their journey to the top was a generic one or if certain sectors were healthier for women leaders and indicates my choice of my research sample and that I avoided assuming a norm. This choice would show the impact and influence on my research and how the different and intersecting identities can vary in respect of time and places. There were fifteen concluded interviews (11 face to face interviews, 2 skype and 2 telephonic).

The research plan was to send Life Histories Calendar (see appendix), to the selected women for completion 2 weeks before their interviews. This allowed them to record the milestones in their journey and to document their career changing events. Freedman et al (1988) state, a life history calendar can be advantageous for collecting retrospective survey data. It also serves to improve the quality of the data collected by helping the respondents to recollect and relate to the timing of several events (Freedman et al, 1988:41). The next step involved developing relevant questions from both the literature and Life History Calendars. Further, the interview guidelines and interview questions were informed by the research literature, the interviewer's own personal knowledge and experience of the area being researched, and preliminary work such as informal discussions with people who have personal experience of the research area.

The outline of the 15 women selected are found in the table below. Names have been changed to ensure anonymity. Also, little detailed information about the workplaces of the women have been provided throughout the thesis – again, these women are senior leaders and may be known in many circles. Their varied social, cultural, class and ethnic backgrounds impacts on their intersectional experiences and stories regarding the social and structural factors that have influenced their career progression.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jody – white, middle class, divorced, overlooked for promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sara – Indian, middle aged, mother struggled to raise her, white male mentor helped her career
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kate – white, middle aged, Afrikaans, lesbian, religious and sectoral bias (IT sector)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nora – black woman, royal Princess, rich, power relations at work vary with her interactions with black male trade unionists and white men in the boardroom
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vera – older black woman, husband a different nationality, disabled child, entrepreneur

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bella - Young, black woman, single parent, faced gender pay discrimination
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paula – middle aged, coloured woman, from low-income family, has white female boss who is bias, vindictive and discriminates against her e.g. refusing her maternity leave
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nelly – black woman, from middle income family, faced gender and racial bias
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lily – black female, faced difficulties in a male dominated environment, seriously ill.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dina – Indian brought up to be servile and docile, faced gender and racial bias, sexual harassment and even physical violence at work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leti – white, Afrikaans, lesbian facing lots of difficulties as a result. Bullied by men at work and overlooked for promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penny – young Indian woman, supported by caregiving husband at home. Faced many biases at work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gigi – middle aged, black woman from a township. Faced gender and racial bias from all white male and female team
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lara – young white woman from a wealthy family. Bullied or ignored at work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lisa – middle aged black woman, middle class. Job in all white environment led to gender and racial discrimination

Table 6: brief outline of the 15 women interviewed

4.6 Interview themes

From Ahuja (2002), I had a meta-frame in which to shape my questioning – namely the social and structural factors that impact on career progression including recruitment, organisational culture and practices and support available. The basic themes enabled me to provide a semi-structure to my interviews and raise issues also discovered through the reading of relevant literature. Examples of the questions set are found in the following table:

Example theme	Example issue	Example questions
Examples of social factors		
Gender Bias	Outdated business leadership stereotypes Traditional perceptions of male versus female role types	Have you experienced Gender bias? If so, has it had a negative or positive effect and why? How are you viewed at work as a senior female leader?
Family Responsibilities	Women's domestic responsibilities exceed that of men Childcare issues	How have you reconciled family and work responsibilities? How have issues at work e.g. having to travel impacted on your family life? Have your family supported your career ambitions?
Examples of structural factors		

Equality of Remuneration	Non enforcement of equal pay laws in South Africa	Have you achieved pay parity at work? Based on your experience, how would you advise women to handle remuneration policy discussions?
Educational Attainment	Contributor to wage differentials? Gendered policies	Tell me about how education has helped you in your leadership journey. Have you had access to educational opportunities?
Complexity & Variety of Obstacles	Challenging organisational culture	What advice can you give to women who find themselves the “only” in an Executive Team? Have you faced a supportive culture at work?
Organisational Support	Challenge for Organisations to develop, retain and promote talented	What must businesses do in order to ease barriers and provide support?

	women	How have you experienced mentoring and sponsorship initiatives?
Individual Development	Reinforcing leadership identity	What has been your experience of developing individually and as a team?

Table 7: Themes arising from Ahuja (2002) and the literature and the questions and issues raised.

The one to two hour interviews with the female leaders were conducted either at the offices of the interviewees; were pre-arranged meeting rooms paid for by interviewer; conducted in coffee shops or via skype or telephone.

My observation was that the various meeting sites did not impact the quality of the interview in terms of the interviewees being comfortable and willing to speak (on and off recording). The coffee shop interviews did have a higher noise level, which impacted the sound quality of the recording, and the telephonic and skype interviews were of a decent quality. I also took notes to ensure that key points were captured. The Life History calendars also provided important background information on each interviewee, and I was strongly guided by this as preparation for the interviews, and valuable insight into the lives of the interviewees. Informed

consent was obtained in advance of conducting any research and I assured the participants of their rights to anonymity, confidentiality and to withdraw from the study at any point without repercussions.

I also found that the women became comfortable when they started reflecting on the challenges and drivers they encountered on their journey, and did not need much prompting to start telling their stories. As a researcher, I guided the conversation with the semi-structured interview questions to ensure that they were answered. An interesting shift happened during 5 of the interviews as we were reaching the end of the scheduled time, the women requested for their subsequent meetings to be moved or rescheduled to a later time. They wanted to continue sharing their experiences, each interviewee was fully involved in answering the interview questions and narrating their stories. This showed the eagerness of interviewees to participate, to reflect on their journey and to empower other females through sharing their drivers and barriers to female empowerment.

4.7 Thematic Data Analysis

Thematic Analysis was used to identify themes (Braun and Clark, 2013). These emergent themes are patterns in the data that are important or interesting and these themes will be used to address the research or say something about an issue. Thematic Analysis offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach

to analysing qualitative data. This method was chosen for its effectiveness in identifying and analyzing patterns within data sets. It was time consuming and required a constant movement between patterns identified, however it was interesting to see the patterns emerge from the data.

Braun & Clarke (2015) refer to Holloway et al (2003:347) to identify “thematizing meanings” as one of a few shared generic skills across qualitative analysis, and characterises it not as a specific method but as a tool. (Braun & Clarke 2015:7) explain that thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail.

It is important for researchers to acknowledge our own theoretical positions and values in relation to qualitative research. Braun & Clarke (2015) profess to not have a naïve realist view of qualitative research where the researcher can simply ‘give voice’ to their participants, which involves selecting and editing as narrative evidence (Braun & Clarke, 2015:7).

Clarke (2015) states that the “keyness” of a theme is not necessarily dependent on quantifiable measures, rather in terms of whether it captures something important in relation to the overall research question. Part of the flexibility of thematic analysis is that it allows you to determine themes (and prevalence) in a number of ways. The important thing is that one must be consistent with how you

do this within any particular analysis in an inductive or “top down” way or theoretical, deductive or “top down” way. An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves and as such, this form of thematic analysis bears some similarity to grounded theory with perhaps little relationship to the specific question that were asked of the participants (Braun & Clarke, 2015:10-11) .

Some of the phases of thematic analysis are similar to the phases of other qualitative research, so these stages are not necessarily all unique to thematic analysis. The process starts when the analyst begins to notice, and look for, patterns of meaning and issues of potential interest in the data, this may be during data collection. The endpoint is the reporting of the content and meaning of patterns (themes) in the data, where “themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs the investigators identify before, during, and after analysis” (Ryan & Bernard, 2000: 780).

Analysis involves a constant moving back and forward through the entire data set, the coded extracts of data that you are analysing, and the analysis of the data that you are producing. Writing is an integral part of analysis, not something that takes place at the end, as it does with statistical analyses. Therefore, writing should begin in phase one, with the jotting down of ideas and potential coding schemes and continue right through the entire coding/analysis process (Braun & Clarke, 2015:15). Analysis is not a linear process where you simply move from one phase to the next. Instead, it is more recursive process, where you move

back and forth as needed, throughout the phases. It is also a process that develops over time (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17).

4.8 Practical Phases of thematic analysis:

The steps outlined below shows the phases of the thematic process observed in collating, organizing, analysing, and finding meaning from the interview data. There were six phases observed and the breakdown of the basic steps followed are captured in the each of the six steps.

Step 1: familiarising myself with the data

- a) I engaged myself in analysis of the data once it was collected and coupled this with the notes and observations I had captured. I arrived at this stage with an understanding of the data, and through the notes and observations I had written down. My objective at this stage was to be investigative and analytical.

- b) I proceeded to 'immerse' myself in the reading of the data to become familiar with the content. I understood from Braun & Clarke's (2015) method that this could only be achieved through "repeated reading" of the

data files. I repeatedly read through the data in an active way, searching for meaning and patterns. I also actively listened to the recordings to further familiarize myself with the content.

- c) As suggested by Braun & Clarke (2015), it is ideal to read through the entire data set at least once before coding begins. I followed this by reading through the entire data set 3 times to familiarize myself before I began the manual coding sequence. This was important to me as a Researcher, as ideas and identification of possible patterns were being shaped as I read through the data. It was a constant flow of reading and searching for patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17).

Step 2: Generating initial codes

- a) After reading and familiarising myself with the data, I then proceeded to generate a list of ideas about what was in the data and why it was of interest.
- b) I then had to work on producing initial codes from the data. Boyatzis (1998) notes that codes identify a feature of the data that appears interesting and refers to “the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon” (Boyatzis, 1998: 63)
- c) The process of coding is a strong part of the analysis and serves to organize the data into meaningful groups. Themes are where the interpretative analysis of the data occurs, to code the content of the entire

data set, or coding to identify particular features of the data set. Coding in this case was a manual intervention.

This is how I went from the questions asked, to the transcripts and then the major areas that came out of the interviews.

Step 3: searching for themes

- a) I used the tabling method with different coloured sticky notes and ended up with a long list of the different codes identified across the data set. I then proceeded to re-focus the analysis at the broader level of themes by sorting the different codes into potential themes and collating all the relevant coded data extracts within the identified themes, as suggested by Braun & Clarke (2015).
- b) I then started to organize and analyse all the relevant codes and took into consideration how the different codes can combine to produce an overarching theme (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17- 28).

There were two main areas that were eventually identified and mapped during the coding and collating of the information. These were the Social and Structural factors.

Step 4: reviewing themes

- a) The next step was to refine these themes. This brought to the fore three key points:

- certain themes did not qualify as a theme (either there was not enough data to support these themes, or the data was too broad)
 - some themes could be merged into one theme
 - other themes could be broken down into separate themes.
- a) The data within the remaining themes can then come together meaningfully. Braun & Clarke state that there should be clear and identifiable distinctions between themes, which I noted. (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17-28).

Step 5: defining and naming themes

- a) Once I ended up with an acceptable thematic map of the data, I continued to identify the core of what each theme was about. I was then able to understand which aspects of the data each theme related to. I followed a simple, focused approach and avoided going too wide in identifying the themes.
- b) As noted by Braun & Clarke, I kept going back to the collated data extracts for each theme and started to arrange them into clear and dependable sets, together with the related narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17-28).

Within each major theme there were different aspects identified. I attach a table of the major themes and sub themes identified and mapped.

Major area identified: Social Factors

Emergent theme	Sub themes
Gender Bias and stereotyping	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identity; Clothes• Being Ignored• Black & Pink Tax
Family roles and responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support Structure / Husbands• Guilt• Roles & Work life balance• Societal Culture

Major area identified: Structural Factors

Emergent theme	Sub themes
Organisational Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Culture• Policies• Support
Organisational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• gendered organizations

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • male dominated / braai / bullying
Organisational Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pay and mobility • ageism • career (theory)
Organisational Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mentoring • Network • Education

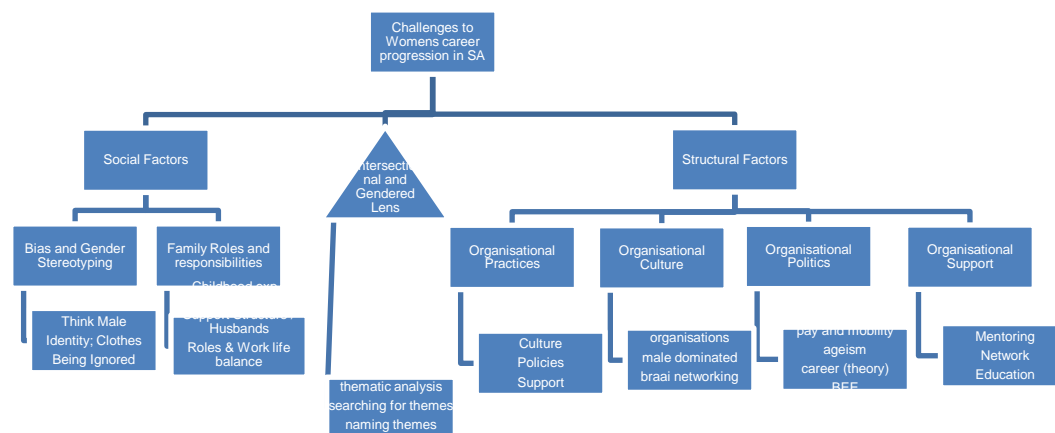
Table 8: Major areas and Meta Themes identified: Social and Structural Factors

Step 6: writing the report

- a) the final analysis and writing of the report from the thematic analysis, involved documenting the complex story of the data. The objective was to convince the reader of the merit and validity of my analysis. It was also important for the analysis to provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tells, within and across themes (Braun & Clarke, 2015). The report should provide enough evidence of the themes within the data, which means enough data extracts to demonstrate the prevalence of the theme. Extracts must capture the complexity and should be easily identifiable as an example of the issue.

These extracts also have to be embedded within an investigative narrative that captivatingly illustrates the story that I am telling about the data. This investigative narrative needed to reach beyond a mere description of the data and make an argument in relation to my research question. (Braun & Clarke, 2015:17-28).

The thematic mapping diagram is outlined below:



An example:

from the transcripts, I highlighted everything to do with family life and noted commonality eg. quite a few respondents talked about observing their Mum's and also their guilt about spending little time with their kids, etc. Eventually, a main theme of Family, Roles & Responsibilities emerged within social factors / meta theme

4.9 Role of the researcher

As a qualitative researcher, I have been involved in a continuous, cyclical process of acknowledging my role in the research. I am a part of the research process

and have always been conscious that my existing beliefs and experiences could influence the research.

A self-critical reflective stance is necessary when acknowledging intersectionality as the importance of position is indicated. Davis (2008) states that the researcher must account for her own intersectional position as this serves the deconstruction process. This, as well as an acknowledgement of the situated nature of knowledge and its construction, is important particularly for feminist inquisition. In identity research, intersectionality allows for a necessary interrogation of the researchers own “blind spots” and uses them for critical analysis. The researcher must consider what aspects of her subjectivity cause an overlooking of certain material found. It is stated that including insight into this allows for better understanding of research participants experiences as well as a higher propensity for empowerment by giving voice to the silent or silenced (Davis, 2008: 67-85).

I consciously acknowledged my assumptions and preconceptions by noting them down and continuously examining the process I followed. The relationship between researcher and interviewee often has strong power dynamics. It was important for me to acknowledge the way I was perceived and experienced by others, and to also understand how others perceive and experience, whether it is similar or different to me. As a researcher, it was very important for me to ensure that I am flexible enough to allow for change in my existing beliefs and deeply held way of being. To maintain as reflexive approach as possible, I followed the following protocol during the field work:

- Putting my presuppositions down in writing at the start of the study and consulting this list at each stage of the research process.
- Keeping a research diary in which I record my own feelings about the process.
- To review some of the taped interviews with a focus on my performance as an interviewer.

My research process involved transcribing through a dual process to ensure that the interview outcomes were captured correctly. Firstly, I used the program Otter.ai to convert the recordings to text and then I also used Livescribe to digitise handwritten notes. Data was managed by creating a file for each interviewee, with a copy of their Life History calendar and further interviewer background research on achievements, connections and required elements. Tape recorded interviews were systematically categorised and linked to the extra field notes, as a lot of important information is remembered and gets shared 'after the recorder is switched off and coats are being put on'. These notes and files were privately and securely kept according to the data management and ethics advice from Sheffield Hallam University.

I focused on making notes about interviewee comments and my thoughts during the interviews, and continually developing and excising through self-insight. It resulted in a higher quality of knowledge and information gathered, an integrity rich research process and ethical treatment of interviewees. As a researcher, it allowed for personal growth and for evaluation of the influence I could have had by being conscious of my beliefs making me predisposed towards a particular

conclusion. The objective was to uncover the true lived experiences of the interviewees and not to have pre-determined concepts influence their stories.

A key drawback of the qualitative research interview method is the nature of the relationship between interviewer and interviewee. The researcher's concern is to obtain accurate information from the interviewee, untainted by relationship factors. The interviewer therefore tries to minimise the impact of inter-personal processes on the course of the interview. Indeed the relationship is part of the research process, not a distraction from it. The interviewee is seen as a 'participant' in the research, actively shaping the course of the interview rather than passively responding to the interviewer's pre-set questions.

4.10 Summary and Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined my philosophical position and research approach and methods chosen. From a South African aspect, the diversity in terms of racial and ethnic composition of the demographics is best suited to the qualitative approach chosen. It is important for the experiences of the interviewees to be unearthed and for their stories to be told. Storytelling allows one to reach the source of information, and in this case, the beginning of that which needs to be discovered. It has proved to be a stellar choice, as the interviewees welcomed the semi-structured conversations and appeared reluctant to end the conversations. Using Life History Calendars and storytelling also served as a

refresher of their beginnings and I often heard the comment “I had forgotten about that, thank you for allowing me to remember”.

The thematic analysis of the transcribed interviews has yielded critical information and transcribing and thematically analysing what each interviewee has said confirms that the chosen approach and methods was best suited to the diverse paradigms in the South African context. This chapter has briefly introduced the 15 participants and in the next chapter their thoughts and stories are presented in detail.

Chapter 5: Data Analysis

5.1 Introduction

In the introductory chapter I introduced the framework from Holgate et al (2006) that suggested a methodology recognising intersectionality, accounting for material and cultural explanations and a research process that is reflexive. Chapter 3 provided an in-depth discussion of the underpinning theories of intersectionality that resonates so strongly with experiences of citizens in post-apartheid South Africa. In the final chapter I shall reflect on my research journey and the process of reflexivity throughout. This chapter hears from women in South Africa who have progressed to leadership positions.

Firstly the women tell their life story. Shamir et al (2005:17) suggests that life stories are 'the important missing link' in leadership research. As discussed in chapter 4, stories can provide an important message about identity, traits, values and beliefs. In 'becoming leaders', Shamir et al (2005) cites four common leadership development experiences from personal accounts, becoming leaders as a result of fate, after a struggle and coping with difficulties, through self-improvement and learning and finding a cause. These steps are clear in the vignettes presented below. Following the vignettes, I follow the career progression framework from Ahuja (2002) in order to offer evidence from my interviews.

5.2 Participant Vignettes

In this section I provide detailed vignettes. In each case, I recount their story as told to me and then reflect on the intersectional issues arising from their experiences:

Interviewee 1 - Jody

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Jody	CEO	Jody's office	1.5 hours

Brief Life History:

Jody is a white middle-aged female and the oldest of five children in a white Afrikaans speaking family. Her Father was a Farmer and Mother an ex-schoolteacher (who had to give up her career when she married). Jody was an A student in a public school (government funded), and her parents played an important role in her formative years, encouraging her to achieve academic honours. She was eight years old, when she heard her Mother ask her Father for money to buy Jody a new dress, and she wrote in her journal that night (still in possession of the journal), that she would never ask a man for money. She made it a deliberate point to only date men that earned less than her.

She went on to graduate in Maths & Statistics and started as a junior analyst at a leading investment Company, she got married and a few years later resigned and divorced simultaneously, moving to another city. Jody is re-married to an Entrepreneur and does not have children. She has since focused fully on her marriage and career, having to find a way to balance the two. Jody was fortunate in that she has never applied for any role, but was approached with offers. She climbed up the Corporate ladder to eventually become CEO of a leading Financial Business and Deputy CEO of the Global organisation. She was led to believe that she was in line for the CEO role in her previous business for 4 years, however realised this would not materialise as she did not fill the 'required fit', which was white male from a specific school, university and consulting background.

Jody was interviewed as she is a rising business star and is featured in all the Business Publications as a 'strong woman' and one of the most senior women in her industry.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Jody is a white Afrikaans female that experienced cultural bias within her traditional Afrikaans community just by belonging to that specific community. She commented on the strict belief and viewpoint of the Afrikaans community that considered the male as being the breadwinner and head of the household and

that his word was the law. This discrimination was further evident in her Mother's situation of having to give up her career as a teacher and become a housewife. Her career did not fit the stereotypical profile of a married Afrikaans woman of her era. Jody stated that culturally it portrayed the male as being unable to care for his spouse if she was seen to be a working woman, and this was a slight on the male as head of the household. This type of cultural bias is very prominent across most cultures in South Africa and is known to be the first type of bias that most women experience from their birth onwards.

Jody's experienced gender bias in the work environment where she had to compete with her male counterparts, who were also very traditional in their views and beliefs about the role of a woman and that a 'woman's place' was not at the boardroom table. She was made to feel incompetent and inferior. She made reference to being asked to 'serve the tea', as she was the only female present in the boardroom. She also commented on having to cover up her legs with appropriate clothing, and often having to downplay or hide her femininity in order to be taken seriously in the work environment. The Executive Board (all English male clique) she reported into felt that she was 'earning enough' for a woman, and that she should be grateful to be earning that amount.

Jody experienced class bias by not belonging to a 'specific' group of white people. Jody was Afrikaans and was discriminated upon by white males of a different class and religion, that deemed themselves to be superior. She was told on many occasions that she should be happy with where she has reached for someone

from her class, regardless of the promises she was made of being promoted to a higher role.

There have been many intersectional issues that Jody has experienced simultaneously and at every facet of her life. Her intersectional experiences have included cultural, class and gender at the same time. She also commented that she has had to work ten times harder than her male counterparts to receive the same reward and recognition. These intersectional issues has served to make Jody more resilient and driven to achieve what she has set out to do, however the pain and abject discrimination will always cloud the success.

As a researcher, my reflections on the intersectional issues that Jody has experienced forces me to question the sustainability of always having to be in a state of 'war', and the impact on the individual as a person.

Interviewee 2

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Sara	CEO	Meeting Room	1.5 hours

Brief Life History:

Sara is an Indian middle aged female, the second of 4 children in a single parent household. Her Father was deceased during her early years and she watched her Mother work 2 jobs to take care of the immediate and extended family (grandparents). Sara's Mother was intelligent and in school (matric) when she had to leave to care for her brother's family as his wife had passed away due to illness. Sara's uncle was a schoolteacher, and as a male in the family, his career took precedence over Sara's mother's studies. Sara is very bitter about this bias. Her mother worked a full day job, came home in the evening, did the chores while cooking Indian food to sell at her night shift job.

Sara was also taught the value of education and the power it holds in uplifting one's circumstances. She was told that education would lift them out of poverty and middle income. Sara and her siblings attended public schools and University, and all of them have formal qualifications. Sara is a re-married mother of two children and ensures that her Mother is well taken care of in her old age.

Sara worked hard at her job in client services and was soon promoted, and continued to excel, being promoted a few times. She also had a white male mentor, that assisted in recommending and linking Sara to a Senior Management opportunity that became available. She has faced many challenges in her workplace and personal life but rose above these to become CEO within a major

Financial Services organisation. She has been achieving success and is a highly sought-after individual in the business world.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Sara's first experience of gender bias was witnessing the plight of her mother. Sara's mother was compelled to relinquish her studies in order to give precedence to the male sibling in the family to study. Indian society dictated that male siblings should be preferentially allowed to study, as the education and career benefits would stay within the family.

Sara personally experienced gender bias in the boardroom as the 'only' female at the Executive table and was silenced or disregarded in many instances. Sara was not taken seriously, as she was seen as a 'checkbox appointment', under the Black Employment Equity policy. This meant that the relevant box had been ticked with the authorities by appointing a black female into the role, however it was not necessary to allow her any decision-making power or to even listen to her suggestions. She would always be asked to take minutes of the meetings and serve the refreshments.

Sara's situation only improved when 2 more females joined the Executive team, and they formed a 'bond of sisterhood' to support and elevate each other.

Sara stated that she experienced bias in school. The females were offered

subjects such as home economics and typing. The male students were offered subjects such as woodwork and technical drawing. This was a direct stereotyping of the societal roles that were expected of males and females and Sara saw this as one of the strongest levels of discrimination she experienced.

Sara was an Indian female, and she experienced racial bias in the workplace. She was employed in the service centre, where most females of colour were employed. The Management were all white, with only 1 being a white female. Sara put in more effort than was required and started to excel in her role, as she was committed to improving her life and making solid use of the education her mother had worked so hard to provide her with. The barrier of racial bias was broken down when she earned the mentorship of a white male Manager, which resulted in her being promoted to a junior Management role. However, she was ostracised by her peers and colleagues, but also by the white staff members that were reporting in to her. They told her they would not 'take orders' from a 'coolie' (this was a derogatory term used to describe people of Indian origin).

It is evident that Sara experienced intersectional issues throughout her life and career, it is interesting to note that some of her experiences and biases resonate with that of Jody (an example is being asked to serve the refreshments). The conclusion that can be drawn here is that being a white female or a female of colour does not always provide separate experiences, but rather similar ones.

Interviewee 3

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Kate	Executive Head	Meeting Room	1.5 hours

Brief History:

Kate is a White middle-aged female from an Afrikaans family. She is the oldest of 2 daughters. Kate attended the local public school. Both her parents were in Public Sector employment and Kate followed the same path, working in the local Post Office for many years before venturing into Private Sector employment. Kate was eventually promoted to Senior Management in the male dominated Information Technology sector.

Kate is a lesbian female, who recently lost her partner to terminal illness. She suffered episodes of victimisation and ostracisation. She continued amidst all these challenges to rise above and become the Executive Head, still facing further religious and sectoral bias. Her Director was of a different religion and would ignore Kate in favour of her colleague who was of the same faith as him.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Kate faced discrimination based on her sexuality as a lesbian. Kate's relationship was considered 'taboo', and her partner and her were ostracised and labelled as 'queer'. Kate talks of a very painful time in her life when her partner was terminally ill and their relationship was not recognised, so she did not qualify for compassionate leave in order to be able to take care of her partner during the end of life stage. She appealed to her Manager and CEO, all to no avail. She remembers it as being 'heartless' conversations, with no empathy or compassion for her situation or her feelings. She had to bear sneers and snide remarks from colleagues. Kate states that she often used to hide in the bathroom and cry or escape to the safety of her car during lunch breaks. She tried to avoid social contact with Managers, peers and staff and only focused on work interaction. Her self-confidence and self-esteem took a beating and she started to doubt her ability, especially after the loss of her partner.

Kate was also a Christian and her Manager and CEO belonged to another religious faith. There were other colleagues who belonged to the same religious faith as the CEO, and Kate was blatantly shown that they were part of an intimate 'clique'. They often openly spoke of their religious denomination being superior and there was one inept colleague on the same level as Kate that received preferential treatment due to this.

Interviewee 4

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Nora	CEO	Meeting Room	1.5 hours

Brief History:

Nora is a Black female that hails from a Traditional Royal Family. Her Father was the Royal Chief (King) and she is a Princess. She led a very sheltered life, attending a girls only private convent school in another city. The school had mainly international students of all races, and in her formative years Nora was unaware of the apartheid policies and issues. Her first experience of apartheid was on an outing with the school to a mall, where she was asked to use a different toilet to that of her white classmates. This experience was heightened when she attended University and realised the full impact of apartheid and what people had been subjected to. Nora is divorced with no children and is currently in a live-in relationship.

Nora is CEO of a Business that is involved with strong male dominated labour organisations and unions, and most of her interactions are with Black males in the labour and union meetings and with white males in the boardroom. She has

experienced an interesting array of biases in the various echelons. Nora is a firm believer that every female should have a mentor to educate and guide them on the upward path. Nora has been featured on the list of the Top 100 South Africans to have lunch with, she has also faced many challenges specific to her role.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Nora faced Gender bias at work. The Black male Union leaders that she dealt with every day disrespected her for being a female and trying to 'play' in a man's world. Nora was not allowed to voice her opinions and had to eventually take a white male colleague along to the meetings.

Nora experienced racial bias in the boardroom, she was the only Black person in the Corporate boardroom, and she had a seat at the table, but not a say at the table. The white males, and females barely acknowledged her presence, and she said that she was treated like an 'airhead', and a 'token' appointment.

Nora also had to bear the brunt of being an ascendant of the African Royal family but had no authority or role in the Royal unit - this 'privilege' of serving the people was solely reserved for the male family members. She was also ostracised by the Black females she worked with. She said that she was referred to as the 'Queen Bee' in her workplace. Her hard work and sacrifices were all forgotten as she had to carry the crown of 'entitlement' because of her family background.

Interviewee 5

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Vera	CEO	Meeting Room	1.5 hours

Brief History:

Vera is an older Black female and is a wife and mother to 3 young children (one child is disabled with special needs). Her husband is from a different African country and nationality. She faced challenges both with her family and work colleagues as a result of this. She comes from a traditional Black family, with many siblings and extended family. Vera started her career in a leading Banking institution during the apartheid years. She faced many challenges, especially with gender pay parity and promotional aspects. There was no room for raising questions with Management.

Vera eventually left the Corporate world due to being frustrated and reaching a stalemate. She founded her Enterprise Development Company, even this still had its challenges, with procurement and suppliers. She is now CEO of a successful entrepreneurial business.

Reflections on intersectionality:

Vera was selected for the interview as she has suffered a sad fate in the corporate world, eventually having to resign from her job and start her own Company. This exit from the Corporate sector was cited as being due to the continuous non-appointment of Vera to many Senior roles during her time in the organisation. She was always overlooked for promotion, and white colleagues with lesser work experience and years of service would get appointed.

Vera was also entering middle age, and her CEO raised his concern that the organisation would invest its resources and time on Vera, when she would soon reach retirement age. He preferred to invest in and promote someone younger and groom them for more Senior roles. This was a tough blow for Vera, as she was in her prime and not anywhere near retirement age. She had to accept the CEO's decision and explanation.

Interviewee 6

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Bella	CEO	Meeting Room	2 hours

Bella is a young Black female. She is a single parent with two minor children, and completed her Actuarial Degree amidst many sacrifices, often having to study in her office till midnight to avoid distractions. She started working for a business organisation that had many challenges, and her first job ensured that she could take care of her extended family (which she still does to this day).

Bella was appointed to the Deputy CEO role within a leading business organisation. She was told that she was being groomed for the CEO Role and started working hard to learn the ropes. She was eventually appointed as CEO, only to find out that her salary was seventy five percent of what the previous CEO had been earning.

Bella was then faced with the decision of having to confront the white male dominated Board or accept the reduced offer. She was selected for the interview as she is the first Black female to be appointed in this role and is reported to be a leading propagator of transformation and empowerment in the country.

Reflections on intersectionality:

Bella was offered a lower salary than her predecessor, who was a Black male. This was confirmed by a white female Board member who alerted Bella to the huge gap in pay and asked her to not settle for less.

Bella was just so grateful to be offered the position of CEO and all she could think of was how much the raise in pay would assist her in taking care of her children and extended family. She was financially responsible for the educational care of her siblings, grandmother and other relatives. This is referred to as 'Black Tax', that many Black people have to pay when they are earning a decent salary. Their families expect to be taken care of by the 'salary earners' in the family. It is a 'cultural expectation' that many Black people have to manage. To digress from this means cultural disrespect.

Interviewee 7

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Paula	CEO	Coffee Shop alcove	1.5 hours

Paula is a middle aged Coloured female, a single parent with 1 child. Paula is the third of 6 children and was raised in a low-income family. Her Mother was White and Father was Coloured, and in terms of the group areas act in South Africa in the apartheid years, her parents could not live together. Paula was brought up in an abject poverty environment, with her Mother relying on social grant for survival.

She left the city of her birth at 18 years of age and moved to live with an Aunt, where she started working in sales, to help support her family. She refers to the tough work environment and the white female boss that she reported to. She was required to do whatever she was told with no questions asked and was often threatened with dismissal if she disobeyed. She states that she was looked down upon as she was a Coloured woman, and her employers knew of her family situation and that she desperately needed the job. She often had her pay cut, if she arrived a few minutes late due to using public transport. She was not registered as an employee, and had no pension and labour benefits, although she was in formal permanent employment.

Paula was refused maternity leave and returned to work with her three-day old baby. Paula has been on a journey fraught with racial and ethnic bias and has since risen to become the CEO of a successful organisation, however Paula states that not much has changed. The biasness and challenges are still being experienced, however in the context of wearing a more expensive suit and sitting in a leather chair.

Reflections on Intersectionality

a) Racial bias

Paula has experienced by far the most degrading and inhumane racial bias by the white female owner of the business she worked in. The story of her being refused maternity leave and having no recourse in the labour courts as she was not a registered employee. She was later used as a 'token appointment' so her employer could capitalise on the highest Black economic empowerment (BEE) status. Organisations with a Level 1 BEE status receive skills development funding and preferred compensation from Government to focus on developing Black skillsets. The Company financial records showed her as having a shareholding in the business and receiving the requisite compensation, however this was a sham.

She also stated that gender had nothing to do with her sad treatment, as there were also Black males employed in the organisation, and they were also treated

shockingly. It was a strong racial bias, and the employer only employed people of colour. The pain and degradation that she suffered made her vow to change the path of future women of colour, she was also mother to a daughter, and she wanted a better life for her daughter. She stated that the days of being a 'doormat', to be trodden upon was over, however not forgotten.

Interviewee 8

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Nelly	Senior Manager and Portfolio Head	Coffee Shop	1.5 hours

Nelly is a Black female, with 3 children. She was a single parent for many years and remarried three years ago. She also lost her oldest child in a motor vehicle accident two years ago. Nelly was born into a middle-income Black family with her Father holding a low paying government job. The family received a housing subsidy as part of the job benefits, so they could afford a home in a good area, and a solid university education.

Nelly worked for a few corporates in support roles and due to her dedicated work ethic, was moved to a new management role. She then moved to an administrative role in Public Sector employment, rising to Senior Management

and holding a strong portfolio that looks after social issues in the provinces. She has encountered personal biases and many cases of gender and racial bias through her work.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Nelly's role in social services made her an enemy of the very people she was tasked with looking after. She permitted me to edit and share a very brutal story of cultural bias that young females experience in some of the very traditional Black tribes (she said that we cannot call these communities, as they are conservative tribes that refuse to be educated). Nelly recounts the 'physical torture' cases of young township ladies that step out of the circle of tradition and dare to achieve academically and professionally. They are brutally punished by the men in the community for wanting to 'uplift themselves' and forge a better life.

Nelly was verbally and physically threatened many times, as she was bound to report social atrocities to the authorities. To compound the problem, she was also a Black female, and was seen as 'stepping out of her boundaries'. She was often left out of meetings, was given zero decision making authority and ignored most of the time. Her resilience and will to improve and transform has led to her overcoming these challenges and succeeding.

Interviewee 9

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Lily	CEO	Meeting Room	1.5 hours

Lily is a Black female, that is CEO of a major Financial business and she is responsible for various business units. She was born to a young, teenage mother and was brought up by her grandparents (school principal and shopkeeper). The need for educational qualifications was drilled into her from an early age. She is a single parent, with two young children. She had her first child at 23 and could not cope with being a single parent. She enlisted the help of an Aunt who served as the 'mother' figure.

She has worked in both public and private sectors and spent time in a strong male dominated environment, which helped to shape her. The negative experiences she had at a specific organisation left her in a state of shock as it was an eye opener. In her previous roles, she was always protected by a mentor or person in power. Lily is battling a serious illness, however she is determined to deliver on her mandate and make a success of her career.

Reflections on Intersectionality

Lily has faced many challenges in her life, battling a serious illness whilst trying to be successful in her role. She stated that her biggest challenges came from

dealing with the Black males. The hate and prejudice she experienced during these meetings shocked her, as it was the opposite of what she was experiencing in the boardroom. Her White male colleagues were treating her with respect and courtesy, as they valued her professional and business contribution.

She also experienced bias from her Black female colleagues, who excluded her from social gatherings and networking. They often mistook her commitment to succeed as 'showing off'.

Interviewee 10

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Dina	Senior Manager & Portfolio Head	Telephonic	1 hour

Dina is an Indian Female, in her second marriage with two children. Her first marriage was arranged by her parents at an early age. She is the middle child and hails from a traditional farming community where women are expected to be subservient and docile. Female education was not a priority, however she fought her Father for the right to study and complete a BA degree.

Dina had to work twice as hard as her male colleagues, going into work earlier than them and leaving later. She prepared three times more than the other

Managers and worked on strategically raising her profile. She completed the MBA programme and moved cities to become a Senior Manager in the Media industry, deemed to be one of the toughest for women. She has experienced gender and racial bias, sexual harassment and even workplace physical violence. She was physically assaulted by a male she was interviewing for a media story, and her Management did not protect or support her.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Dina is by far the most vocal and liberal of the interviewees, and her mission is to break barriers and transcend boundaries. Dina belongs to a very conservative farming community, that often married their daughters off at a young age to close relatives in order to preserve the land ownership within the family or community. She fought with her father to be enrolled for a Bachelor of Arts degree at the only University in the City that Indians were allowed into. She recalls her Father calling it the “Bugger All” (BA) degree, because she was a female and would be getting married, thus it was a waste of his money to educate her. Her education would not benefit him or his family.

Dina also faced bias was at work, in her role as a female journalist. She is one of the first female journalists of colour and has risen to become hugely successful in the Broadcasting world. Her entry into a National investigative show is where she faced the serious gender and racial bias. Her white male anchor on the show (without any journalism qualification), was handed the major news stories and he was given an investigative team for his groundwork and a full camera crew. Dina was given the ‘lesser’ stories and had to be out in the field with a cameraman,

conducting her own research and chasing ‘crooks’ by herself. The producer of the show said that she should be grateful to be in that role and that she was replaceable. However, Dina started to make plans for her exit. She is now the successful key anchor of her own show!

Interviewee 11

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Leti	CFO	Coffee Shop	1.5 hours

Leti is a White, Afrikaans female. She is a lesbian, with a female spouse and they live together in a outlying farming estate, away from mainstream suburban life. She has experienced ostracisation and prejudice in the workplace and community.

Leti is the oldest of 3 children. Leti’s parents were ridiculed and tormented, even after Leti moved away from the suburb her parents still lived in. Her Father had a strange relationship with her, he hated her being a lesbian, yet he needed her financial help. This dependency on his lesbian daughter affected him psychologically, and he became alcohol dependent. Leti’s Mother turned to pain medication and drug abuse.

Leti has an accounting degree and a chartered actuary qualification and is well

positioned to lead the Company as CEO, however she has been overlooked for promotion many times. She has remained in the financial role for over 9 years, (and through 3 male CEO's), with little hope of moving up the corporate ladder. Leti is a soft spoken, introverted and shy person, and she confesses to often being overwhelmed by her male colleagues. She has experienced them being rude and speaking down to her, in a bullying manner.

Leti has since chosen her battles wisely and has moved to another Business Unit where she is in a similar role. Her current CEO is a young white gay male, and what Leti describes as a fair and transparent person lacking bias towards anyone.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Leti is an intelligent woman, with strong business acumen and she comments on how different her life would have been if she had bowed to the pressure to become what others wanted her to become. In spite of all the problems in her personal life, she is happy with her spouse, who she says is her 'soulmate', and believes they were meant to walk this path together. She solemnly states that her organisation has done very little to recognise talent, and a lot to recognise those that are 'different'. Sexism, gender, cultural and race biases intersect at the same time and have contributed to Leti's current situation.

The gender bias that Leti experiences at work comes mainly from white males, but there is a specific Indian male on the Executive Team who deliberately 'targets' Leti and always looks for 'faults' in her financial projections and recommendations. Leti says that she is always courteous and respectful to her

team members and cannot come to terms with how strongly she is disrespected and undermined. Leti has experienced open and conscious bias on many levels.

Interviewee 12

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Penny	CFO	Coffee Shop alcove	1.5 hours

Penny is a young Indian female that hails from a rural farming community. Her parents instilled the value of education. She is a wife and mother to two young children. Her husband provides a strong support system, as the demands of her role is stronger, with more travel and out of normal office hours. He is happy to help and take on the role of caregiver to the family. She studied for her Chartered qualification and moved cities to become one of the leading CFO's in the Financial industry.

She has experienced various biases, however is well grounded and spiritual, which has helped her to overcome the challenges. She belongs to an Executive team with integrity, and they work together in a supportive work environment.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Penny is a well-grounded, empathetic woman whose tenacity and resilience seem to emanate from her core values. She is a high achiever in the world of Finance and is calm and collected, oozing confidence. Penny has buried a lot of the discrimination she faced in her earlier years. She experienced cycles of gender and racial bias in her workplace, and culture bias during her early childhood.

Penny's main challenge was being a high academic achiever entering the white male domain of Corporate finance. She was often the 'only' female in the Boardroom and being a female of colour compounded the adversities that she faced. So she focused on delivery and high performance and her results spoke for themselves. This is Penny's secret weapon in her arsenal, to observe, listen and reflect. This has allowed her to understand her Executive colleagues and to make her life easier. There is a huge difference in 'being silenced' and choosing to remain silent as a strategy.

Interviewee 13

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Gigi	Business Owner	Telephonic	1 hour

Gigi is a middle aged Black female that hails from a local Black township. She attended the local schools and started work at an early age. She was initially

raised by her grandparents in the rural area, as her parents worked in the city. She is married to a foreign national with 2 children. She does not have a formal education, yet worked her way up into higher level roles.

She rose to become CEO of a leading business organisation, which is when her problems started. She experienced extreme levels of gender and racial biasness from her all White male and female team. This bordered on low and non-delivery, lack of respect and accountability, which eventually forced her to resign, as it was difficult to deliver on her mandate. She is now a successful Business Owner.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Gigi was faced with cultural bias and racism from an early age, as she was a victim of the apartheid era, which discriminated against Black people. She was also raised by grandparents, which was a very conservative upbringing, and girls were taught their place in society

She was always a champion of the people and prepared to work very hard to be more than a 'township girl' whose identity was to become the wife of a 'township boy' and to raise his family. She married a foreign national man (unheard of in her culture), to the consternation of her family. The marrying within 'one's own culture' is ingrained on many men and women from an early age.

Gigi faced the most bias in her role as CEO of a Business Organisation. Her appointment as CEO came with an all-white team of people, that were not happy

with reporting into a Black woman. The deputy CEO was an older white male and he was not happy at Gigi's appointment. He had the support of the all-white administration team, and they made Gigi's life a nightmare in a very open way. She had to take tough action, eventually having to appoint new people in administration and releasing some of the existing team (she had gathered evidence of some of the deliberate sabotage, which she took to the Board).

Gigi was referred to as the 'township girl' behind her back, and the conversations about her were deliberately meant to be 'overheard' by her and her team. She was made fun of and thought only fit for cleaning and ironing, even a maid's overall was left in her office, which nobody 'had any knowledge of'.

Interviewee 14 Lara

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Lara	International Director	Skype interview	1 hour

Lara is a young white female who was an only child. She was raised in a wealthy English family and studied locally and internationally. She is married with two children. Lara holds a Harvard MBA with distinctions and a Financial qualification. She was appointed as CEO of a leading digital business that was rapidly growing and was poised for great success. She was the only female on the Executive

team, the youngest and reported into the group CEO, who was a White Afrikaans male. Lara endured a dichotomy of experiences, with friendliness at times and bullying at other times. Her input was often disregarded, and business decisions were made by the group CEO and white male team that impacted her business.

Lara and her business started to make major losses. She was held solely accountable and was forced to resign. Families were affected and it was a tough time for the organisation. Lara was the 'scapegoat', she was forced to emigrate with her family or bear the 'shame and blame'. She is now a Director of International Operations in a leading global organisation but cannot forget the 'injustice' done to her.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Lara experienced gender bias by her White Afrikaans's speaking male colleagues, who were a clique, all attending the same church. The organisation was rife with nepotism, and many family members worked in the same business units or throughout the organisation, and they looked after each other's interests. Lara was an outsider to this group, she was not of Afrikaans origin, so her culture was different to theirs. Both her children were ostracised in their school and were tormented by classmates for having a Mother who was a 'thief' and were told that she had stolen money and should be jailed for fraud and theft. This was the last straw for Lara, and she had to protect her children from her nightmare. It was the prime of her career, and she eventually had to make the painful decision to

emigrate with her family. She is now a highly successful International Leader.

Lara's intersectional experiences show the depth and breadth of toxic discrimination that women face in south Africa, just by being a woman. The start of women's discrimination in the workplace is based on two factors, by simply being a woman and do you 'fit'. This determines if you are in or out!

Interviewee 15

Name	Title	Interview Location	Interview duration
Lisa	Business Manager	Telephonic	1 hour

Lisa is a middle-aged Black female, divorced with no children. She comes from a the oldest of 4 children and was always expected to be a role model to her siblings. Lisa was raised by her grandparents, which is a common scenario in the Black community.

Lisa studied and went to College, obtaining a Diploma, and eventually a Degree. She started formal employment in a full white family business and experienced strong gender and racial bias. Although she was employed in an administrative role and was well qualified, she was asked to prepare the tea tray for

Management twice a day - two other white females, the same age as her - were never asked to prepare the tea tray. A few times, when the cleaner failed to show up for her duties, Lisa was asked to clean the bathrooms and perform the cleaning tasks, while the white females continued with admin duties.

She eventually resigned and moved to another organisation. Lisa worked hard and was promoted a few times. She now manages a large team of diverse individuals and makes sure that each member of her team is treated equally. Lisa proudly pays 'Black Tax'.

Reflections on Intersectionality:

Lisa experienced strong racial and gender bias in her workplace. She was treated in an inferior manner compared to the treatment of her white female colleagues. Lisa's discrimination was more racial than gender, as even the Black male staff were discriminated against, for example, they were not allowed to use the inside bathrooms.

Lisa had a strong work ethic and the white staff often palmed off their work to her and blamed mistakes on her, knowing that she would not speak up. She was told by her employer to be grateful that she had a job at a desk, and that the educational institution she studied at was for 'poor Blacks' and that their standards were lowered, so that the Black people could pass.

Lisa also faced a 'backlash' from the Black males that worked as labourers and operational logistics staff in the business. They commented on her trying to become like the 'white people', and she was often 'leered' at whilst walking to the bus or taxi station. Lisa feared for her safety, as she was almost sexually assaulted in the outside staff bathrooms by a Black male labourer. She could not even get support from the Black male staff in the organisation, and this was a breaking point for Lisa.

She went on to join a larger organisation and is now part of a group of Black women that still have discriminatory experiences, but can support each other, so it is easier and more bearable.

The chapter progresses by following the career path framework offered by Ahuja (2002) in chapter 2 and considers the social and structural factors that have impacted on their leadership journeys. This aims to highlight material and cultural explanations and also to let silent and silenced voices be heard (Bowen and Blackman, 2003).

5.3 Social Factors

There are many instances of social factors such as bias, stereotyping, roles and family life that impacted on the women leaders.

5.3.1 Gender Bias and stereotyping

The Grant Thornton IBR report on Women in Business 2015 state that women in

Africa are by far the most likely to cite gender bias (44%), as a significant barrier on the path to leadership. The report cites Global Head of Diversity & Inclusion at Barclays, Mark McLane:

‘style, gravitas, all of the subjective leadership qualities that we do not tend to define still exist as biases against women today’ (Grant Thornton, IBR Report, 2015).

Gender and racial bias have been experienced at some stage of their careers by all the interviewees. Some have gone through extreme episodes of bias that has left ‘indelible’ marks on them and their resumes. A handful have chosen to fight back and conquer, with the rest choosing to exit and ‘salvage’ what they could of their self-respect and professional lives.

“I don't think that gender bias is necessarily able to stop my progression in my career. But I can absolutely say that I've been experiencing it over and over and over. And that it was something that I needed to recognise early on. And I needed to find ways in which to overcome it. I had to always protect my identity (gender) by coming up with strategies to counter the negativity and gender bias. I needed them (males) to focus on my value add and not my gender” (Jody).

Many participants felt they needed to not repeat the experiences of their mothers:

“My Mother had lost her identity, she went from a professional woman to being my Father's wife and our Mother. She had no money or identity of her own. It made me angry to see the pride she took in this” (Dina).

“My Mother once worked as a domestic for a White family, and often brought home leftovers from their family meal. It was food and we were forced to eat it to survive, although it made me feel like I was inferior and this resulted in me striving to uplift myself and prove that I was equal, and I continue to do that to this very day” (Lisa).

“My Mother was an educated White woman with a career, when she married my Father who was a Farmer and very traditional in his views, she had to give up her career and become his wife, she had no freedom and no money of her own. Hearing my Mother ask my Father for money made me a very sad eight year old, I vowed to never ask a man for money and I wrote this in my journal that night. Three years ago, my mother was minimalising and she found my journal and gave it to me. I had unconsciously lived my life by this mantra, as I had only dated men that earned less than me” (Jody).

“Why did my Mother have to forsake her studies to go and take care of her brother’s family (he was a teacher), was his job more important than my Mother’s future? This is a common occurrence in Indian homes, where women’s careers are perceived as less important than the men’. I told myself that I will pursue my dreams and shatter all barriers, especially those relating to males” (Sara).

Sara attained her dream and went on to become CEO, but still fights everyday gender battles.

Yet lessons were learned and situations understood:

“My mother’s identity was being my father’s wife, my identity was not to be spoiled and put on a pedestal, it was to go and conquer the world and be strong, independent and successful” (Jody).

“My mother had me at 14 years old, she always lived a life of gratitude. Every Friday we had music in the house, and lots of dancing and friends and family. She passed on, but I still remember to be grateful for what I have in life” (Lily).

5.3.2 Family roles and responsibilities

de Lange et al (2018) focused their studies on the South African working mothers and they identified professional commitment as the key factor in the marginalisation of women in the professional sector. They state this stems from the concept that work is a way of life and personal and family interests should fit around this philosophy. There is also evidence of a prevalent work culture that bases commitment to work as being demonstrated by working longer hours.

This often brings its own stresses and feelings of guilt:

“There’s only one first rugby game or soccer game and if you’ve missed that it’s gone forever. You can never get it back. But it also doesn’t help that you stand there and you’re not focusing and you’re not present. So presence for me is really important. I have found that by being truly present, I get away with not being there the rest of the time” (Lara).

“I really feel so guilty every time I leave on a business trip, I feel like I am the worst mother in the world for leaving my children and having to travel so often” (Gigi).

“My three-year-old once asked me ‘when is Dad going to be the Dad and you the Mom’” (Lara).

“I am a young Black single Mother and a rising Executive at work. Professionally, I am making a success of my career, personally I suck as a Mother. My fourteen-year-old daughter has all the gadgets and clothes she needs, but she has just been diagnosed as suffering from ‘teenage depression’. The counsellor reported that ‘she does not need the stuff my money can buy, she needs me. She needs me to be at home in the evenings, loving and holding her’. I feel so guilty and I have some tough decisions to make” (Nelly).

Nelly lost her teenage son in a motor vehicle accident 2 years ago, and carries a double burden of guilt due to the limited time she spends with her family. She has a hectic travelling schedule and has tried to speak to her line Management to reduce her amount of travel.

Respondents have confirmed that having a strong and reliable support structure for family members is vital to the process of finding work-life balance and progressing in a career.

“I am a wife and mother of 3 children (1 with special needs) so, having a good, solid support structure is key” (Vera).

However, not all families and husbands are supportive:

“My husband will not help with the children, he has to be at work every day and work a full day. He is a Black male CEO, and I am a Senior Manager, so my career is not as important as his. Even though I have aspirations to progress my career, I have put it on hold. Yes, and helping with the kids is not a ‘manly’ task, that’s my job” (Dina).

“I watched women in my community get beaten up by their husbands because they were late in getting back home from work, although they relied on public transport, and often had to walk long distances” (Gigi).

The Interviewees with young families seem to be the most impacted, as the needs and demands are stronger. The female respondents cited that infants and younger children required more attention, guidance and caregiving:

“When I am with my Family, I try to not answer my phone and just enjoy the time with them, but I sometimes feel like an outsider, as I am away so often. I battle to follow what they talk about in respect of school and their friends, as I am not fully involved (not even partially, in fact, I am exempt)” (Lily).

“I try to juggle all my responsibilities and find ways to balance my life. I am responsible for my children, and I want to cook for them and eat dinner with them, even if it puts pressure on me. I find a way to handle it all. Me Superwoman!” (Sara)

In terms of employment breaks, 37 percent of professional women voluntarily dropped out of employment at some point in their lives as opposed to 24 percent of men (Hewlett & Luce, 2005:21).

“I made a personal choice to step down twice during my career, as my family needed me. My Dad was diagnosed with a terminal illness and had to start chemotherapy. I saw my Dad through his treatment and was grateful for the time with him. Getting back into the mainstream workplace was a nightmare as I had to start in a lower role and work up again” (Gigi).

It was Lisa who mentioned that Gender bias is felt by every woman at some stage of their lives. Whether it is through family, school, work or social settings, the female gender has heard, felt, experienced and seen the bias in action at during their lifetime.

The impact of social factors such as culture obligations, family responsibility and work-life balance bear heavily on most of the women. Being a woman means many things to different households, it can mean the role of daughter, sister, wife, mother, daughter-in-law, aunt and cousin. Often it means being all of this at the same time, whilst still having a career. Vera’s experience of having a child with special needs and feeling the burden of guilt for being a working mother resonates with all the women that have children. Dina has a husband that will not assist, as it is her duty to care for the children. Yet, these women are also expected to be successful career women, they sound more like a description of Superwoman.

Nelly's guilt after the passing of her child, and the ongoing guilt when she leaves for a business trip is ever present. The stories all bear resemblances to each other's social obligations and biases. Majority of the women have experienced culture biases from their societies, as these are the women that have stepped out of the mould and are creating a new path for themselves and for the future generation, with stereotypes of what they should be. As Dina so eloquently says, *"Being a girl, I was always told what I couldn't do, not what I could do. Girls don't behave like that, you are a girl, you can't be out till late"* (Dina).

Societal stereotyping is the first construct that women have to deal with, then it is compounded by all the other factors such as work and life, that add to the stereotyping biases. At the beginning of the section on social factors, I wrote that there are many instances of social factors such as bias, stereotyping, roles and family life that impacted on the women leaders. Through the stories told, we have been able to relive some of their experiences and to feel the impact in some way. As a researcher, I have been able to identify their intersecting experiences and relate this to what the literature in Chapter two and Intersectionality theory in Chapter three has shown. The women's stories have a rich body of intersectional experiences, that have compounded to shape who they have become today,

5.4 Structural Factors

The organisations that the women worked for and their practices, policies and culture as well as means of support impacted on the leadership stories.

5.4.1 Organisational Practices

According to Grant Thornton IBR (2015), gender bias can range from the questions asked in interviews and men presenting women's ideas as their own in meetings, to making sexist remarks or subtly undermining women's abilities by calling them 'girls'. "Bias is subtle at the beginning of a career but causes a clear separation of career paths". In a recent study, more women (38%) cited an 'unsupportive work environment' as their biggest career challenge, than anything else which the report states, amounts to "covert gender bias."

Gender bias is particularly important with respect to hiring processes and women's ability to move along the path into senior roles given long-held masculine stereotypes of leadership (Grant Thornton IBR, 2015). However, our participants endeavoured to change how things were:

"The words that used to often resonate in my new offices are 'this is how we have always done things, and it works'. As a newcomer, I asked my teams to forget the old practices and to apply logic and thinking to what they do and we have saved cost and improved efficiencies just by thinking about the effects of our actions and how we can improve" (Jody)

"I often heard the staff in the call centre say that they do not know who implemented the policies and rules, they just enforce them. I found that half of the rules were ridiculous and irrelevant in an era of technological advancement and our clients were being prejudiced as a result of nobody challenging the rules for efficiency and improvement" (Sara).

In line with a push to increase gender diversity on boards, a number of multinational companies have committed to publicly reporting on their gender pay gap. Large insurance companies such as AIG and Prudential, and international professional services firms such as Deloitte and PwC have committed to gender-based pay disclosures (BWASA, 2019:62). This transparency should result in more equitable pay for equal work. Many of the world's 50 largest banks, insurers, asset managers and professional services firms surveyed by the Financial Times already conduct an internal audit to examine the gender pay gap within their respective organisations. Although statistics vary greatly across sectors and countries, the gender pay gap between men and women ranges from approximately 10% to 25% (BWASA Census, 2019:62).

In terms of pay, salary secrets and disparity in the way salaries were awarded often meant a gender pay gap for our participants. Belgorodskiy et al, (2012:9), state there are long term impacts of women starting at a lower position in the salary range for the same jobs - with average gaps of 3 to 5 per cent. An explanation for the lower starting pay rates is that women are less inclined than men to negotiate and face differential treatment when they do (Belgorodskiy et al, 2012:9).

"I find it really embarrassing to have to ask for more money, even though I know I deserve better. I start the conversation, but can never get to the 'please sir, may I have more?'" (Paula).

"I find having to negotiate money the most demoralising, negative, emotional state for myself because I truly believe that I should be paid my worth, and if

someone is hiring me for an Executive or Senior role, they should know my worth and not embarrass me” (Jody).

“I find it really embarrassing to have to ask for more money, even though I know I deserve better. I start the conversation, but can never get to the ‘please sir, may I have more?’” (Paula).

This can have consequences:

“As Deputy CEO, I was next in line for the CEO role. When it eventually came, I faced a full male Board and was offered a remuneration package that equated to seventy five percent of the previous CEO’s package. I gleefully accepted, until I was ‘enlightened’ about the anomaly” (Bella).

“There was a group of us (eight) that were appointed into the same job roles with the exact same function and reporting into the exact same White male manager at the beginning of the year, I was the only female in the group. We carried out our functions for a year and in that year, I had been assisting a Senior Executive with a special project. Our manager then resigned for another job and the Senior Executive was overseeing the team. A week later, I was called into his office to say that I was getting an increase, and a substantial one, because he found out that I was the lowest paid from the team, and he knew my capabilities and thought it was a totally unfair practice” (Nelly).

However, some managed to overcome this tendency to pay women less than men:

“I was the first Black female CEO that was being appointed in the Company and as part of the pre-appointment process had to face a Board (all male) that asked me what I expected to get paid. I answered ‘whatever you will pay the best person for the job’ is what I expect to get paid. I got the job and a little more than the salary I was expecting” (Lily).

There are often negative consequences if women step out of their gender role and are more aggressive in asking for higher pay. Many women have learned that perceived aggression, loudness and over-confidence are not what society expects from women (Belgorodskiy et al, 2012:9)

This CEO has experienced similar gender stereotyping many times, she was often told, “why don’t you act like a lady”, when she was assertive (Lara).

5.4.2 Organisational Culture

The ‘think-manager-think-male’ culture pervaded the workplaces of our participants and a male-dominated ethos and views of what was deemed appropriate. Interviewees have shown consensus on the demographic composition at the top and senior management levels in all of their businesses being White male dominated:

“Pale, male & middle aged is what I found when I joined the organisation, it is what the culture had produced over the years” (Jody).

“Being the only female in the Boardroom was very daunting, I had no choice but

to agree with what I was told and execute on it. I had no backup or support and experienced extreme bias. I would hide in the bathroom and cry after every Executive meeting” (Lara).

“It was definitely better when we became three females in the Team, we could support and lift each other up. We made a pact to always re-raise a point if one of us got suppressed with what we wanted to say” (Sara)

Metz et al (2014) raise the notion of unsupportive organisational cultures that can contribute to women’s lack of advancement. They state that direct discriminatory behaviour towards women can be replaced with more covert forms to mask the lack of tolerance. There may or may not be a complicit culture in place or the intention to evolve (Kumra et al, 2014:175).

“I was bullied verbally many times in the boardroom by a particular colleague, and my leader did nothing to support me or address it with the one doing the bullying, I eventually stopped saying anything and just blended in. I became a “wallflower”, which is what they wanted. It made me feel sick, but I was a powerless white female amidst all the strong white males. My leader and the bullying colleague were of the same religious denomination, they had a tight knit bond” (Kate).

Jody was blatantly refused the role of CEO after having an expectation created over three years that she was being groomed for the role with two others. She is a leading figure in the finance sector and the first female Director of Retail at a leading financial institution. Her exit from that particular organisation was widely

publicised in the local media.

“I was told for three years that I was in the running for the CEO role, and that I was one of three people earmarked for that role. One of them resigned in the period. So, it was me and another guy left. That guy actually checked out. He had some personal issues and he physically came back and said, I checked out of the process. So I was the only one left, then we got to them having to make good on the promise. Suddenly, the conversation shifted to: Can you just hold back? Then I would say, what does that mean? My magic is who I am. My magic is my drive, my energy, the fact that I challenge. That is why I am here. That is why you picked me in the first place. But now that you need to make good on that promise, suddenly you want me to be a different person, you want me to hold back, you want me to go slower. You want me to not challenge anything. Now, if you do that you're going to kill my magic because I'm not that person. If you want someone that's going to come in and that is never going to challenge your decisions, that is always going to fall in line with whatever you say. I'm the wrong person for the job”.

“The Board were all white English males coming from very, very well to do connected families in the Province, all had gone to the same private school, literally five or six of them, a little band of brothers, all had gone to the same Executive institution to do an MBA, they all worked with McKinsey at some point. I don't fit that picture at all. None of me fits any of that picture! Not one of them had a mother who's ever worked a day in her life, not one of them has a wife that works. That's evil, and everything I do screams against that. Do you know how many times they have said to me, we don't understand, why can't you just

continue? You are earning good money, just keep on earning the money and doing the job you do. Why are you so ambitious? Why do you want to be the CEO? Yeah, we know we promised you but now that we're not going to give it to you, why can't you just stay where you are?"

"It was a very, very, very tough process for me to make peace with because the expectation was created that I was the right person, so it was not a blind ambition expectation. It was an open conversation, and then when it came to delivering on the promise, I was suddenly too strong, too hard. They told me 'You are too challenging and too progressive in your thinking' "(Jody).

Jody exited from that organisation and is currently CEO of a leading investments business and Deputy CEO of the group business.

Lily commented that it was:

"difficult for men to accept that a Black woman was sitting at a Union meeting table as part of the negotiating team, and not to take meeting notes. This was a man's domain, mainly a Black male domain" (Lily).

This entrenched view can begin at business school as Jody realised:

There was a case study done at business school with two groups of MBA students to rate a male and female leader's attributes on exactly the same case study (just the names were changed). The group with the review of the female leader came back to state that "we do not like Sarah, she is too strong, too tough"

and had only negative words to describe Sarah. The group reviewing the male leader stated that “James is an amazing leader. James is ambitious, James is strong. James is driven”, all positive words spoken about James (Jody).

However, Kate was able to convince other managers of the benefits of a mix in the team:

“we have realised that we need more women on the team, they bring a different dynamic to the problem solving, their thinking is different from the men, we found that problems get solved easier and quicker if there is a mixed team (Kate)

A recurring issue was finding a voice, at work and in meetings. Bowen and Blackmon (2003:394) suggest that an individual whose demographic attributes, social or personal identity differ from the group norm may not feel able to talk about important aspects of their personal identity. This may initiate an individual spiral of silence, where they feel inhibited in making meaningful contributions to the group and in turn the organisation. Small personal silences are thus reinforced and subsequently escalate to inhibit voice on wider organisational issues. People who differ in ‘invisible’ ways such as sexual orientation must choose whether to speak out or remain silent about their difference. Thus, in this second spiral of silence, employees who initially remain silent about their personal identities may fail to exercise organisational voice even if they have valuable contributions that they could make.

This resonates with the experience of Leti, before she was appointed to the Executive Team.

Leti is a white, lesbian female and recalls her extreme silence, as she felt that her manager (male) looked for opportunities to mock or embarrass her if she said the wrong thing. She was not sure if this was because of her gender or sexual orientation, but he was condescending in his attitude toward her. She later found out that he had been through a bitter divorce when his wife realised that she had 'lesbian' tendencies. Leti believes that he projected his anger on her and was personally biased, because of her sexual orientation. She was forced to eventually move out of the team.

"I had all the suggestions, and they were solid, well thought out suggestions that could solve the problems, but I was too afraid to speak up. I cried inwardly when male colleagues later put up their hands and spoke from 'my head with my words', and were commended" The expletives in my brain to describe my disappointment were so colourful!" (Leti).

"As a middle Manager, I was a 'wallflower', I never spoke up in meetings, but took lots of notes. In follow up meetings, I was the only one that had all the previous discussions noted, so I slowly started to speak, still afraid, but I took 'baby steps'. Nowadays, they battle to keep me quiet, I make sure I have my say! That's having confidence in my abilities!" (Bella)

This research came across various incidents of women 'being ignored' whilst in a room full of people (mainly males):

"I experienced gender bias among Black male colleagues in the external environment, I was leered at and sexually harassed. In the boardroom with White

male and female colleagues, I experienced racial bias. The White female colleagues were included in discussions, while I was ignored. It made me feel like a Black female was on a lower level than the White females” (Nora).

“You know that exclusionary thing they practice, when they start talking amongst themselves (boys), and you just sit there and grin and nod like you understand what they are saying. The worst feeling is when you try to join the conversation, and they ignore you” (Lily).

Sometimes language was used to exclude but at other times colleagues could be supportive and inclusive:

“Some of my white male colleagues are really awesome, they include me and are conscious of speaking in Afrikaans when I am in the room. There are two that specifically make an attempt, often reminding others when they switch to their native language. This makes me feel part of the team” (Sara).

The notion of becoming ‘genderless’ or as Adam et al (2006) refer to becoming an “it”, is something that this research has also unearthed from the interviews. There appears to be a common pattern of becoming a ‘genderless’ being at work, in order to function effectively, almost as if the feminine form is a hindrance. The majority of the interview respondents have commented on how they have changed their style of dressing to a more androgynous version, appearing less feminine at work, in order to be taken seriously Adam et al (2006:8).

“I often get ‘lewd’ comments when I wear a skirt to meetings. I also stopped

wearing red or bright coloured nail polish because of the comments passed. (Nora).

"I always wear clothes that cover my legs, not because I have bad legs, I actually have really great legs, but I don't want them (males) looking at my legs, I want them to listen to my brain" (Jody).

"I save my short skirts and high heels for personal party time, and always dress demurely to the office, which is a pity, as I should be wearing what I enjoy without the fear of getting labelled" (Bella).

"Men hold the power, they know this and they use it to extract their revenge, especially on Black females, I have experienced the degradation they throw at me, almost like I am an 'outsider' in their world" (Lisa).

"I bought these stunning six inch heels overseas, and it made me feel so good and sexy wearing them. I made the mistake of wearing them to work. One of my male colleagues was looking for me and asked a co-worker, 'have you seen the hooker?'" (Dina).

"I learned from the first day, no girly clothing to the office, if you want to be taken seriously, then you have to dress the part. I am in Finance, and it is a serious business. If you want to be seen as smart and intelligent, then no colourful clothes and accessories. Save that for weekends and holidays. There is a perception that 'image is everything', so I always try to maintain the required image, and it has helped me to slowly move up the ladder. This was always my strategy, and the

opportunity cost was that I had to create an 'office version' of myself. My mantra is 'adapt' or 'leave' (Penny).

The 'black' and 'pink' tax issues were raised by the participants. Five of the interview respondents are currently paying 'black tax' and this impacts on the quality of life for their immediate family; opportunity for advancement through individual development and education and creates a 'sandwich effect'. One of the respondents cited that her family stopped speaking to her when she could not sustain payment of the required amount of "black tax" to support them:

"I cannot compare myself with my white colleagues, as I am always short of money, I can never save and barely survive financially. I want to help my immediate family and my extended family, but I need to study and upskill myself in order to enter a higher level. Studying costs money, so it is a stalemate situation" (Lisa).

"I always have to be well groomed, as I am in a public and media domain as CEO, this becomes a costly affair, it is not just the clothing, but the grooming and upkeep costs. My male colleagues never go to the lengths I do, or spend what I do" (Jody)

"A decent 'eyeshadow kit' by a leading global brand costs R1 500, a lipstick R600 and mascara, R550, looking decent is becoming very expensive. I have a responsibility to uphold as an ambassador for my organisation" (Nelly)

"I have a strong aversion to debt, instilled by my Father, we both hate debt, unless

*it is used to create wealth, but I have a weakness for good shoes and handbags!
It can become a very expensive weakness” (Jody)*

“An idea is for organisations to offer Top and Senior Management a grooming allowance.....ha ha ha....shareholder nightmares begin” (Nora)

“I am a role model to aspiring females in the industry, they need to know that hard work and dedication is what brings in the Moola (South African term for money). I am blessed to have what I have, but it is hard work and commitment to delivery that has made me a success and looking successful after all that hard work is the easy, fun part” (Jody).

5.4.3 Organisational Policies

The Employment Equity (EE) legislation was promulgated to advance women into the workforce, however many organisations believe they have achieved egalitarian status as they have diversity and inclusion programmes in place. An unpacking and understanding of the legislation is critical for effective transformation of the workforce in South Africa. The lack of understanding is reflected in these comments:

“My organisation has diversity and inclusion programs in place, so they believe that they are complying with legislation” (Nelly).

“I have experienced Black women in my team getting upset with me for not promoting them into EE roles. They felt entitled as the law was for the promotion

of Black women. There are many perceptions and a sense of entitlement by many Black women that do not understand the legislation” (Leti).

“Many of the White males in Senior Management are worried that they will be replaced with Black males and females, because EE is about fast tracking Blacks into Management roles. They do not understand the purpose of EE legislation and the criteria for Black appointments into roles” (Sara).

“I find that White males do not believe that Black males and females are capable of delivery, they (White males) have been with the organisation for many years and most are not delivering, as the world has evolved and they have remained in their ‘protected spaces’. How then can a Black person that just enters the organisation, deliver?” (Lily).

“There should be more sharing and even educating on gender legislation from Top Management and throughout the organisation so that everyone understands the legislation, knows their rights and does not feel threatened” (Sara).

“My colleagues are worried that there is no place for them in this organisation and in this country, as Blacks will get all the Top roles, it is written in the legislation” (Lily).

The current scenario in South Africa is the non-enforcement of equal pay laws and affirmative action programs to ensure that qualified women are treated fairly in recruitment, remuneration and retention processes (Millennium Development Goals Report 2015). This is reflected by some of the participant comments:

“My company is an International IT company, and the South African branch doesn’t adhere to the South African BEE standards. We have told Government that we have to run a business, serious business and if we have to follow your standards, we might not have the best people in house. So, we would agree with government to say that, to be a level two BEE, we would do something different. We would take small businesses and black owned businesses and take them in as business partners, however we can’t just act here in employing black people and making sure that we have them because of legislation, because then as a business, we would not deliver, as it would be token roles. So in that regard, I never felt that there was anything against me, as we only employed the best qualified people for the job” (Kate).

“I work with many small BEE businesses, and recently found out that 5 White owned businesses had their domestic worker, gardener and driver registered as Directors in order to achieve a triple BEE rating, so they could take advantage of procurement policies to gain contracts” (Vera).

Gigi has a clear view of what is needed:

“Employment Equity is a tool, and we must use it to fix the problems of the past” (Gigi).

5.4.4 Organisational Support

The participants highlighted education and training, mentoring and networking as key to provide support for career development for women:

“In our IT company, we have started many programs for women specifically. And then even outside we've got things called Digi girls, where we would go and educate the young ones and say, please come and join our world and see how cool it is. We try and make it cool and say, Mom, you can work from home. You know, if your kid is sick, you can stay at home with your sick child, because you can work from anywhere” (Kate).

Numerous empirical studies find education to be the single most important factor contributing to the differing wage deferrals around the world. Educational attainment is cited as being critical to the progression of women that are following a leadership path. It is seen as an ‘essential building block’ for all business leaders. Education forms the foundation of the journey and serves as the base from which most leaders draw their confidence from. (Grant Thornton IBR, Women in business: 2015).

“Education is the key to your success, make sure you study and become a professional accountant. This will guarantee you success” (Leti).

“My parents instilled the need for obtaining a degree, as it was the only way out of the poverty we were faced with” (Bella).

“My Father was the one that spurred me on to attain the highest marks in school, he told me I could achieve anything as long as I wanted it badly enough. His words were, ‘where there’s a will, there’s a way and where there is no way, I will make one’ This wisdom became my mantra and I teach it to my children as well”

(Vera).

“You achieved the BA degree (my Dad called it the Bugger All Degree), what is the next step? You always have to think about the next step, always remember that” (Dina).

“People can take everything away from you, but not your education, so work hard to attain it and grow it. Never stop learning, about people, the world and everything around you” (Vera)

The concept of homosociality seems to aptly describe the association with ‘similar’. This research has the term ‘boys club’ reverberate through most of the interviews, as it appears to be a reality in South African organisations.

“It was a cultural binding, to braai (South African term for barbecue), every Friday with the boys, I had just joined the team, a smart young Black female with a Degree. I was not invited to the braai and was told that I would not fit in and would be uncomfortable, as I was Vegan and did not drink beer. I felt the all-White male team could have let me make the decision if I wanted to attend or not” (Nora).

“Why would I even take the trouble to negotiate better pay, I know it is done around the braai or at the local bar where the ‘boys’ meet every Friday. I will not be invited to the braai or ‘boys meet’, so there will be no opportunity to ask” (Leti)

Mentors can expose their protégées to opportunities for career advancement by providing exposure, visibility, coaching and challenging assignments (Andersen,

2005). Mentors can also help the protégées increase job satisfaction and enhance their personal growth by building their self-confidence (Andersen, 2005:8).

“Mentorship is what helped me to move up the Corporate ladder, or else I would still be stuck in the call centre” (Sara).

“My sponsor worked with me and helped me to grow and think strategically. I became visible and my abilities were brought to the fore through my sponsor. Every woman in Leadership should have a sponsor and every woman in business should have a mentor” (Nora).

“Every woman has the right to mentorship, however critical is getting the right mentor /sponsor that is willing to invest in you”(Bella).

Not all mentoring experiences were positive however:

“My mentor made sexual advances on me, while we were working late in his office. He was promising to help me get promoted, while making his move on me. It is important to always be aware of the nuances and to never trust someone completely” (Lisa).

“My company put me on a leadership program for twelve months, with the sponsor as part of the program. I met my sponsor once; he was too busy for the next eleven months” (Vera).

“I do not have much time for networking or social engagements after hours, I have work, family and study commitments to juggle. I am also responsible for my ailing Mother, who lives with us” (Dina).

Human Capital practitioners have a critical role to play as they are the conduit between the organisation and its employees. Human capital has a strategic obligation to ensure the alignment between organisational and individual goals. Organisational effectiveness is the responsibility of every individual within the organisation., however Human capital have a special role and that is their ethical roles in the balance of organisations.

Keeping it fair and balanced with policies and processes will eliminate a lot of what Leti, Kate, Vera, Nelly and Lara experienced in corporate organisations. An organisation’s obligation does not just end with employing a woman, this obligation needs to ensure a fair and transparent working environment, with a clear avenue for reporting of transgressions. Backing this with consequence management for behaviour that does not fit in with the company policies and practices, would ensure that effective employment is achieved. At the beginning of the section on structural factors, I wrote that the organisations that the women worked for and their practices, policies and culture as well as means of support impacted on the leadership stories. The above stories and experiences have shown the magnitude of the impact on these women’s lives. Some may not recover in this lifetime; others have used it as a ‘springboard for their successes. Whatever the impact, it has been shown to change lives through the stories told.

5.5 Intersectional sensibility in my data analysis

I reflect on how the different interviewees deal with their battles. Some go 'head on' and challenge the norms and prejudices, often calling out the 'perpetrators', whilst some choose a more discreet route, such as resignation. The interviewees that suffered so many avenues of discrimination did not choose the legal route, despite the labour laws being in place. Vera did consider taking legal action, as this was the only recourse left to her, however she was not confident that a Black woman facing multiple levels of discrimination would have the Law's understanding and support. Crenshaw (1991) discussed the issue of compounded discrimination due to interlocking oppressions not being addressed appropriately by the law, and in South Africa and through the interviews and stories it is clear that this is the case particularly for women of colour. South African society, like most societies are layered around gender, race, sexuality and other factors and 'anti-discrimination' laws examines race and gender separately on a single axis basis, whereas women face multiple axis's of discrimination. Crenshaw (1991:1241-1291) suggests that if legislature is more focused on procedural fairness, this equates to colour-blindness. This is often detrimental to women of colour and others who experience the intersection of more than one dominating group, which is clearly evident in the stories of the women interviewees.

None of the interviewees (women of colour and others) have faced only one single bias, they all have two or more dominating intersections of bias. These challenges have to be carried by the women throughout their lives. Many of them may have forgiven, but they have not forgotten their painful experiences. The

majority of the women started to face the culture and gender bias from early childhood. Women of colour also faced racism bias added to their early childhood experiences, then other challenges come into play during their work and adult life, often ending with the ageism bias towards the ending of their work life. An interesting issue also emerged from the interviews, that of religious bias that some of the women faced. It is not clearly evident if this is unique to South Africa, and this could be a point for future researchers to investigate.

The next reflection is on the conscious bias that the women have all faced. Many workplace manuals speak of unconscious bias; however, we have been given examples of blatant bias running rife in organisations. Sadly, these are actions happen without consequences. Paula's and Leti's experiences were so blatantly unjust and often in full view of others in the Organisation, with no consequence management. This is a major shortcoming of organisational policy and smacks of 'sheer bullying', that can be verbal and non-verbal. Employees need to be held accountable for their actions, and a Code of Conduct redrawn that includes basic human decency. In Paula's case, she was at the mercy of her employer (sadly it was a female boss), and Paula said that *"she died a thousand deaths every time she was humiliated or mistreated because she was a Coloured woman and of an inferior class"*. Her employer *'consciously broke her spirit and seemed to enjoy wielding power over her Black employees'*.

In Leti's case, she was openly tormented in the Boardroom by male Executives, because she was a female and a lesbian, and sadly this sick behaviour was backed up by peers. Such behaviour was introduced and perpetuated by leaders of the organisation and so this organisation can never be progressive and

transformative in nature.

Diversity and Inclusion are not strongly evident from the women's stories and accounts of their intersectional experiences within their organisations. Having a Diversity and Inclusion program could serve to educate and inform perpetrators that their actions and behaviour is not conducive to organisational policies and practices.

I reflect on the difference in Leti's, Kate's, Lara's and Penny's experiences, and feel a powerful thought. Silence as a strategic weapon and can serve to unnerve the toughest opponent - the wise always preach the power of listening skills. 'Chosen silence' can sometimes therefore be as effective as giving voice. Leti, Kate and Lara were silenced because they were female, and this was a type of domination by males. Penny's strategy was to give her colleagues a voice and be the listener. Listening to someone allows for interpretation of that person's thoughts and insight into their character and behaviour. Often in organisations, some people love the sound of their own voices, and feel that the more they are heard, the more powerful they appear to others.

5.6 Summary and Conclusion

My objective of investigating, unpacking and framing how intersections of gender, race, class and other intersecting factors impact and affect the lives of Black women and others is a solid commitment to acknowledging that the true beneficiaries of this work are future generations that include policymakers and leaders. I make the distinction that through this work, I am disrupting traditional and long held assumptions, beliefs and views about Black women leaders and

others. I am also unearthing new manners of support for these women leaders, whilst the greatest benefit being derived from the research is valuable insight into the unique viewpoints and perspectives they bring to leadership in South Africa and in general.

It has been a true journey of discovery for me as a Researcher, and life changing as a female. Almost, invariably, as I partnered with the women in unravelling all that had taken place and was still happening, there was this magnificent dawning of new understanding about who they truly are, where they have come from and what they have been through. Very important for me was to understand what they are positioned to do, learn and see within their organisations, so transformation can take place. Who they are being called to be and become in Leadership, the lives they will inspire and impact is truly profound for the future. The data analysis chapter brings an end to an amazing journey of purpose and 'running with the runners'. It has been a privilege to run with these women of valor that are working the field, planting the seeds and being patient. They were each ready to stand up for something in particular and to present new nuanced ideas and thoughts to influence new outcomes. These influential women who agreed to show up, stand up and speak their truth have awarded me the honour and opportunity to bring their stories into a whole new dimension of visibility. I thank each of them and I celebrate their strength and courage, which has the potential to empower and transform.

In the next and final chapter, I evaluate and reflect on my research and doctoral journey and suggest changes to policy and business practice that can make a difference to the lives of women leaders in South Africa.

Chapter 6: Interpretation of Findings and Conclusions

This final chapter will address emerging strategies and contributions to knowledge, method and practice that could make a positive difference to the situation of women leaders and their corporate progression in South Africa. I draw on the work of Healy et al (2011:470) that refers to the manifestation of organisational inequalities as being contextual and also serving as a reflection of the wider patterns of societal inequality that the women have to bear. Holgate et al (2006:314) suggests that 'difference matters' and sensibility to this, needs to be evident in understanding how race, gender, class, age and other social and cultural dimensions are enmeshed and intersect influencing individual experiences at work, home and in the complex post-apartheid society.

The aim of this thesis research was to investigate factors influencing women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa. My objectives and research questions were thus to:

- Investigate factors in society and in corporate organisations that influence women's progression to senior leadership in South Africa
- Develop an understanding of the role intersectionality plays in creating and sustaining disparity in the workplace
- To reflect on policies that could impact positively for women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa.

Research questions arising were

1. What specific challenges impact on women's progress to leadership positions in South Africa?
2. What strategies have been employed to overcome these challenges?
3. How is intersectionality manifest in the lived experiences of women in

leadership positions in South Africa?

4. What policies and practices could be employed to shape positive change for women in leadership in South Africa?

McBride et al (2014) stressed that this field of work and employment studies would be helped by understanding intersectionality as an underpinning theoretical position when designing and interpreting research. Intersectionality clearly resonated in the lived experiences of women leaders in post-apartheid South Africa. White Afrikaans women, for example faced different experiences from White men. Black women faced different experiences compared to other race and ethnic groupings. Sometimes discrimination was overt, such as exclusion from bathroom facilities or deliberate difference in remuneration for the same work. At other times disparity manifested itself in more subtle and perhaps unconscious ways such as exclusion from braai events and assumptions about women leader's ability to travel for work.

This interpretive and quality enquiry drew on storytelling and Life History calendars to capture the lived experience of the women leaders and their unique and different encounters within organisational culture and society seeped in a history of embedded inequality and discrimination that has now emerged from the apartheid regime. I applied a framework from my experiences and also drawing on East et al (2010) and Collinson et al (1991) to draw meaning to this history and understanding of the experiences being told to me by the participants.

To consider the challenges for women's progression it was valuable to structure the literature review drawing on Ahuja (2002) and her outlining of the social and

structural factors that impact on career progression. As well as intersectional sensibility it was also useful to draw on gender and leadership theory to understand the issues that women face in recruitment, advancement, work and family influences and aspects of organisational culture that have a bearing on the experiences of women leaders in South Africa. Gender and leadership research that discussed the experiences of women facing drivers and barriers to progression helped raise questions to be put to my participants. Thus it was useful to appreciate women leaders facing a labyrinth (Eagly and Carli, 2007) - complex organisational pathways that sometimes resulted in dead-ends and at other times facilitated opportunities.

To meet the objectives and answer my research questions I adapted a framework that shaped my questioning, positionality and analysis throughout this thesis. Holgate et al (2006:314) suggested three feminist methodological approaches to analyse gender at work namely: recognising intersectionality; accounting for both material and cultural explanations and a research process that is reflexive. This focused approach has allowed me to evaluate my research.

6.1 Methodological Approaches

1. Recognizing intersectionality

Intersectionality theory has played a key role in helping me to focus and understand difference and intersecting identities and the influence of time and place. Gender is not a fixed and essentialist binary but dynamic and fluid relations impacted by complex and uneven inequality regimes (Acker, 1990; 2006). I focused on gaining insight and gathering knowledge through the women's stories into how intersecting identities can vary and how important the basis of gender is

as a dynamic of power relations. Thus I deliberately chose the research sample of interviewees and did not assume a norm.

The women's struggle for self-definition and the attempt to extricate themselves from the cultural and social bind was palpable. Women in South Africa often feel culturally and socially obliged to behave in a certain manner and there are enormous challenges in stepping out of the boundaries of these obligations. As stated by Jody, "we deserve to be independent". This includes being financially independent - a relatively new concept for women in South Africa; a country where women have only been permitted to take out their own mortgages since 1982. The literature review has eloquently and strongly spoken of inequality regimes and uneven spaces being the 'playing fields' of these women. They have become accustomed to living and working in volatile and biased environments. This is their reality. This study has unearthed the various 'uneven spaces' within their social settings, that include the cultural, class and religious biases that the women have faced and continue to face. Thus recognizing intersectionality has shown the influence and impact of intersectional experiences on the women's lives. My documented experiences from interviewing the South African women, is that many of these women noted their experiences singularly and had not thought about the multiplicity of these experiences or of the compounded effect of the various levels of biases experienced on their lives.

Some of the concluding remarks from the women help us to attain a perspective of their stories at a glance:

"Each individual needs space and support to be authentically themselves" (Jody)

"Vulnerability is something I value yet cannot practice. I will be seen as weak; I have to appear tough" (Lily)

“The importance of team rituals (sharing) creates a rewarding culture” (Nora)

*“Our connections are the fuel that has helped us navigate the difficult times”
(Sara)*

“Sometimes, you think we forget that for our goals, dreams and desires, there is a process, a set time, many times of solitude, of self-discovery and gratitude. We want it all now! Like instant coffee!. We forget it is the process and the journey that not only helps us get there, or to achieve, but most importantly to become what we are needed to be. Be grateful for everything and everyone, appreciate the delay, it is what builds your true character!” (Penny).

I have included these primary comments by the women, as I find these remarks encapsulating the very essence of these women’s characters and their daily struggles. Objective 2 and Research Questions 1 and 3 have thus been examined.

2. Identifying and unpacking material structures and cultural meanings

This part of the strategy to research factors impacting on female leader progression in South Africa has helped me to focus on the lived, continuously shifting and multiple experiences of the women. I concentrated on giving voices to the interviewees by capturing and documenting their authentic life stories and providing nuance and meaning to their experiences. I was in a position to ‘enable silent and silenced voices to be heard’ (Bowen & Blockmon, 2003), through the use of Life History calendars and interviews. This enabled me to gain insight and understanding of the public and private contexts of the intersectional experiences of the women. Some were similar, the majority of the experiences differed, but generally all had multiple compounded intersectional experiences. Collinson et al (1999) state that stories characterise the organisation’s culture, help simplify

complexity and draw meaning from history. This emerged in the stories told by the women:

“Our full lives are not just about our Corporate roles, sharing personal priorities is as crucial as sharing business priorities” (Lara)

“We all need to be in spaces where we can feel like we belong, where we can cry, laugh, be sad, be real, celebrate and be unsure” (Gigi)

Thus objectives 1 and 2 and Research Questions 1 and 3 have been considered here.

3. Reflexivity and positionality

Maintaining a reflexive stance throughout the research process and being aware of my positionality as a researcher has allowed for critical (self-) reflection on the research process. It was important for me to understand my role as a researcher. During analysis and interpretation, I always strived (as a researcher), to reflect the women’s perspective, (Collinson et al, 1999). Keeping a research diary, returning to theory, reflecting on practice, critically reviewing what I was reading in relation to the lived experienced of the participants and trying to exercise intersectional sensibility throughout, helped to ground my research and consider my positionality. A personal honour for me as a Researcher was Lisa’s concluding remarks to me:

“Doing life alone is tough. I find that by letting you (as a researcher) into my personal space (mental and heart) enables me to experience the power of the collective. I am confident and I trust you to tell my story in my words, and it may become someone else’s survival kit” (Lisa).

This dimension of the framework contributed to each objective and research question.

The research journey, literature and the unpacking of the intersectional experiences of the women throughout have provided me with the richest insight of how important an understanding of intersectionality is to the South African labour market and its sustained disparity.

In the literature review and interviews. I have also addressed factors and policies that shape women's experiences. What appears to be quite radical ideas such as the Black Economic Empowerment codes of 2007, I have shown to be implemented often in a tokenistic way or not at all. The policies have sometimes added additional burdens and challenges for the women leaders affecting relationships in the board rooms and within diverse workforces. In this thesis, I have reflected on the many policies in place, and on their effectiveness. I also consider new policies that could help to leapfrog women into spaces where they can advance into leadership roles. I use the words of Sara that states "Diversity is a program, Inclusion is a state of mind!". Sara did not feel included although there were diversity and inclusion programs in place within the organisation. Nelly's employer also had such a program in place, with questionable effectiveness.

I am now in a position to understand the factors that influence women's progression to leadership roles in South Africa and what strategies have been put in place to overcome these barriers. I also have a deeper insight into the effectiveness of these strategies. Some of the women interviewed have also shared the key drivers that assisted them in progressing.

Most of the women interviewed said the life history calendars and the sharing of their lived experiences served as a deep check in on where they were as

individuals, and it also allowed them to reflect and relook at their hopes, plans, priorities and fears for the years ahead. They shared their words, limiting beliefs and personal and professional experiences in order to motivate, encourage and support others that were on similar paths. The findings presented from this research provide empirical evidence that the challenges and barriers faced by female managers in South Africa and globally might be similar since women across the world have also reported gender stereotypes and gender discrimination in leadership roles (Agars, 2004).

A common conclusion shows that most women interviewed had embedded childhood memories that served as a springboard to their current success. Sara and Jody are strong examples of this. Jody commented on her resolve to never ask a man for money:

Money challenges are not really about the money, but the meaning and power it gives us and that we give to it. This is often a mirror reflection of what is going on in our life or has gone on in our childhood, it is how we feel about ourselves".
(Jody)

In reference to other studies, for example Muhr (2011), hard work, intelligence and ambition were also identified as key factors for career advancement by most of the interview respondents and this together with their childhood experiences, served to spur them to higher levels of achievement. This is evidenced by the following statements:

"I want to make an impact, develop a strong professional reputation, and grow my career" (Lara)

"I want to be a positive role model to the women of South Africa, they need to

know how to take control of their personal brand” (Jody)

“There is nothing wrong with being ambitious, nothing will get in my way” (Lily)

The conclusions further support the views that female managers valued education as many of them had earned a master’s degree and had childhood memories instilled in them on the positive value of education in their lives. Penny and Sara both showed strong evidence of having the value of education drilled into them by their families.

“They can take everything from me, but not my education, that is the only thing that is truly mine” (Dina)

6.2 Major Areas of concern

Reflecting on the stories told and in relation to literature on inequality regimes, intersectionality and gender and leadership, there have been four major areas of concern that need to be addressed, namely gender bias and stereotyping; intersectional issues including ageism; workplace culture and attitudes arising and the challenge of balancing a pressurized home and work life. These were discussed throughout in relation to understanding of gendered careers from Ahuja (2002) and are briefly summarized below.

1. Gender Bias and Stereotyping

This research has shown that the foundation for the majority of women’s biases often starts with their gender. White women experienced mainly gender bias, with some evidence of social and cultural bias that includes factors of religion and sexuality. They appear to have a stronger disposition to break away from the

'clutches' of societal bondage, however they, together with their families, also suffer the impact of such decisions. This was richly evident in Lisa's and Kate's stories. Jody also experienced strong gender and class bias, whilst Lara experienced the full brunt of gender bias, with some culture bias.

Gender Stereotyping is one of the strongest barrier's that women face when advancing into leadership roles. Stereotypical views and actions act as blocks to women's progress, fuels doubts about women's leadership abilities and also infuses self-doubts (Eagly and Carli, 2007). As a result, women are often found at the bottom of hierarchies or 'tokens at the top' with the image of managers being a masculine ethic of rationality and reason (Acker, 1990:144). However often only women who do not deviate from traditional dominating and leadership patterns of the organisation are successful, and women and men have to become more stereotypically 'men-like' within male dominated groups (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014). This is evident in Dina's and Jody's case, where they had to adapt to the 'male' environment. Jody stopped wearing skirts to work and Dina was successful because she projected this 'tough' exterior. To Dina, Jody and Lily, being perceived as tough and genderless was the only way to succeed.

2. Intersectional dimensions including ageism

One surprising result from my research is finding ageism manifest in the workplace. Age is rarely included in the equation, and this means many employee cultures are not learning how age bias and discrimination show up in the workplace. Some of the women interviewed feel that they could be overlooked for promotions and career progression at work due to gendered ageism. It seems to be a growing problem that needs to be processed, and this can be the basis for future research.

Vera experienced promotional bias and her age was cited as a deciding factor. Many of the women interviewed are in their middle age, with some approaching retirement (often aged 60 for men and women in South Africa):

“Age is just a number, I will be in my prime at age 60, with a combination of experience, knowledge and wisdom, and this is when I will be expected to retire”(Lily).

Some of the women also commented on the varying retirement age of some South African organisations, as being earlier for females as opposed to males. In addition, the women of colour provided such a rich and diverse sample of how intersectionality manifested itself in both their work and personal spaces. Many came from traditional backgrounds, where women were not allowed to work or study at a tertiary level. Sara’s experience of her mother having to give up her tertiary education in favour of the male sibling is a prime example. It was humbling to document the many levels of bias faced. I re-iterate that had it not been for an Intersectional approach, these biases would have been looked at as singular experiences and the impact minimised. Intersectionality provided a holistic view of the experiences of each person and the process of interpretation has attempted to reflect this in its purest form, by always attempting to reflect the women’s perspective.

3. Workplace attitudes

Workplace attitudes towards women show that organisations are not fully aware of the specific challenges women leaders face with attitudes, experiences and actions in the workplace. Inequality regimes (Acker, 2006) has previously shown that the playing field is not a level one, however the full extent and specificity of this ‘uneven terrain’ has still not been determined. As an example, religious

denomination as a factor is highlighted in the experiences of Kate and Jody being discriminated against for belonging to a different faith than their CEO's.

The stories presented in Chapter 5 reflect that the women's experiences in South African workplaces are not only shaped by their gender and many intersectional factors impact on progression. Women of colour experienced more pronounced barriers in the labour market - in the case of Nora, who faced gender and race bias; are in more precarious employment - in the case of Paula, who was denied maternity leave and threatened with dismissal and sabotage to her career; and face a gender pay gap compared to others - in the case of Bella who was offered a lower salary for the exact same role as her male predecessor.

None of the culturally diverse sample of women felt that their leadership traits were recognized or respected in their workplaces, for example in the case of Jody who was denied a CEO position. Cultural barriers in the workplace also contributed to their confidence being shaken, for example with Lisa who was asked to prepare tea and clean the bathrooms or Lara who was of a different culture to her peers and was excluded and targeted.

Lesbian women faced challenges gaining and keeping employment, due to discrimination or a lack of tolerance for their sexuality, for example Leti who had to leave her business unit and change her role as a result of discrimination by her CEO. The women and their identities are thus diverse and are not simply "one entity". If you are a Black woman who is a lesbian and you also have a disability, then it is clearly evident that your challenges can be compounded by overlapping forms of discrimination and structural barriers with many negative attitudes to overcome.

4. The double burden of societal and work pressure.

This research has shown that there are informal rules that impose expectations about behaviour that are dependent on gender, for example in the case of Penny who accepted these informal rules and 'knew her place' and stayed within her imposed limits. Expected roles and ways of behaving can also be held internally by women and how individual women think of themselves and their self-expectations (Ahuja, 2002). This is evidenced by Penny's and Sara's mother's experiences of adopting what was socially acceptable. Penny went on to behave in a manner acceptable by her peers and chose to not challenge their expectations.

Motherhood ideologies, as described in the literature review, is rooted in cultural and historical contexts, with its many languages and deep racial and socio-economic divisions that play an important part in South Africa's expectations of a mother's role. Most mothers succumb to these ideologies or possibly face ostracisation by their communities and families for not fitting into society's mold of motherhood. This was the case with Jody's mother who had to give up her teaching career to be a full-time housewife and mother. Being a 'working or career' woman was not acceptable in their community. Family responsibilities has been cited as a recurring barrier to women progression (Due Billing and Alvesson, 2014). Women reported the pressures of taking care of children, the home and supporting other family members as well as working long hours in pressurized jobs. Often there was a lack of assistance from other family members leading to feelings of guilt and further pressure. Competing roles often impacted on ability to network out of hours and also to take further studies necessary for progression.

Contributions of this research

My view as a researcher is that South Africa can improve workplace gender equality. I believe that two specific changes are required to progress this. The first refers to the annual reports on gender statistics that South African organisations currently submit to the South African Department of Labour. These reports currently consist of high-level statistics of the number of male and female employees and management level. In future, the reported data must also include the pay levels for males and females in the same roles, together with the attrition rates. This level of data will serve to highlight some of the discrepancies in organisations and help the policy makers and regulators to understand some of the challenges facing women in the workplace and to further unpack the attrition rates and reasons for women leaving the workforce. The mandate to organisations must be amended to entail the reporting of pay levels, through an intersectional lens.

The second change that is required is to find an approach that helps to understand how the challenges and barriers at work impact diverse groups of women in different ways. As an example, the stories and experiences of the Black women and their daily workplace challenges and structural barriers are different and more pronounced from what the other women face. The research clearly highlights the impact of the marginalization of culturally diverse women in the workplace. This means that an intersectional approach is required. The mandate to organisations must be amended to necessitate employers to report on data by adopting an intersectional lens that includes women, people with disability, non-English/Afrikaans speaking backgrounds, Black people, diverse sexuality and religious denomination.

In this research I have documented the intersectional experiences of women leaders and considered the factors that impact on women's progression in leadership roles within South Africa. The contribution of storytelling and using Life History calendars has enabled a rich picture of challenges faced. There are also contributions to be made in influencing change to business practice that is needed to make a difference for future generations of women leaders. I outline the two major recommendations of action required namely addressing gender diversity in organisations and a cultural shift with regard to inclusion.

The prioritising of gender diversity by the Executive Management should be the first step towards driving greater gender balance. From reviewing current policy and the experiences of senior women leaders, it is clear that a transformation strategy is required to address the imbalances that exist. Challenging limiting attitudes towards women in organisations and understanding what the specific trials and encounters are could lead to transformation deliverables being achieved.

Organisations also need to understand the importance of creating a cultural shift with regard to gender diversity and inclusion. Gender diversity is more about getting the numbers right - it is more quantitative. Inclusion on the other hand, is more of a qualitative consideration - true inclusion is when all individuals truly believe that gender diversity is a strength and act in an inclusive manner. Thus, gender balance means having an equal number of women and men in the boardroom and inclusion means hearing these women's voices and making sure they are being listened to. It also means their opinions carrying the same weight as the men's. As Sara stated, "Diversity is a program and inclusion is a state of

mind". A lot of time, funding and resources go into setting up Diversity programs, with the objective of addressing bias and mind set beliefs in order to create a more inclusive, diverse and equal workspace. There are expectations that if you do this, then the desired outcome will automatically materialise. However, this research has evidenced that this does not always happen.

A recommendation is therefore not to isolate gender equality and make it a 'women's issue' but find a way for everyone to succeed. Recruitment can be a starting point, as this is often where the bias starts in the organisation and where the first impression is created. This impression can be based on hearing the person's name for the first time, finding out if it is a male or female and what their ethnicity or religion is. Unconsciously the first impression can be created, without any thought to the capabilities or personality of the person. This is an unjust process, as the demographics speak louder than the person. Gender and race often cast aspersions on the skills and responsibilities of a person and assumptions are made during the recruitment and hiring process (CEE Report, 2006).

Changing the framework in organisations and society is important for changing behaviours - governments and regulators (policy makers), need to look at parameters where there are interdependencies. Some of the frameworks could include tax environments, childcare, schooling systems and legislation to counter gender pay disparity. Within society and communities, gender discrimination is still rife and sometimes fraught with violence and abuse. Organisations are inequality regimes but attitudinal behaviour has origins elsewhere in society as a whole. Societal perceptions that women's tasks and abilities differ from that of

men's, creates perceptions that women are not able to perform equally in tasks, These are the types of societal patterns or framework that needs to change. Inclusive and diverse societies can be created through better access to education but changes at work can also be reflected back to create a mind-set for changes in other spheres.

Organisational policy frameworks must not leave room for ambiguity and clearly define that discrimination will not be tolerated or accepted. As Nelly stated, "diversity is about embracing difference, and people should not be taught to behave like the majority does, but the majority should be educated to include differences". Understanding dimensions of inclusion is an important way forward.

So in summary, changes to business practice means intervention by government and policy makers to also address societal attitudes; action within organisations to counter discrimination and encourage inclusion for all diverse groups – this means addressing specifics of the gender pay gap, networking norms, transparency in recruitment and promotion practice and dealing with discriminatory behaviour wherever it manifests and action by individuals at work and at home to question and critique and have the courage to change. Hamner et al (2015), refer to employment - paid work - as increasing women's agency by expanding their life choices and their capacity to better support their families and more actively participate in communities and societies. Equally, significant constraints on women's agency can pose major barriers to women's work and assists in explaining the persistence of gender disparity. Women can exercise agency in many different ways, as individuals and collectively within the family, through their participation in markets, politics, and other formal and informal

networks. It is also owning the feeling of control over actions and their consequences.

There is further research that needs to be carried out to address the changes required. In my view these include research to enable:

- A better understanding of Intersectionality in South Africa, and how characteristics like race, class, ethnicity, national origin, ability, sexual orientation, religion, and gender identity affect the impacts of policies and programs will further improve our understanding of how to enhance women's agency and leadership within society and in the workplace.
- Further research is needed to understand and implement approaches, processes and policies that are designed to shift individual and collective gender norms that perpetuate inequality. This should be a priority for policymakers and practitioners seeking to achieve gender equality.
- An understanding of how ageism manifests, its impact and how to address it requires more insight and research. There are many references to ageism as a personal concern for the women.
- The study of Women's Agency and its impact on the empowerment of women by giving them a voice and the power of choice that can lead to transformation.

Reflections on my DBA journey

Whenever I am uncertain about how to discuss a new concept or pronounce a certain word in the readings, it makes my brain stutter each time I come across it. This serves as a 'jarring from the immediacy of the moment'. I have learned to

condition myself throughout this journey to not become stuck in the immediacy of the moment. I have come across thought provoking concepts and terms, discovered new theorists, authors and worlds. I have experienced global travel to all corners of the world, feeling the plight and misery of the disadvantaged women in China with no access to education or labour, forced to become prostitutes to earn a living, or feeling pride and honour through the all-female ministerial cabinet appointed in Finland.

Analysing the statistics and indexes of the United Nations Human Development Programme's efforts to raise the quality of life of women and children made me want to immediately join the UNDP as a volunteer. The view of the state of the world from the stage upon where I stand forces one to question the purpose of our very existence on this earth. The responsibility as a researcher to every living being whose life can get impacted by the findings and recommendations is a critical one. We often find ourselves living in a 'cocoon' or a 'cushioned, protected bubble', with our only entry into other worlds being what we read in the media or watch on television, and this is mostly fictional.

It is only when one reads what has been researched, evidenced and documented by fine, strong academic minds that these worlds or environments become a living reality. Does this not speak to the importance and relevance of why one would spend seven years of their life or lifetimes even in the pursuit of a way/s to improve our existence and ultimately the plight of mankind? I have developed a deeper respect and appreciation for the great academic minds, and even the not so great ones, as they force us to debate and question further. I have read that which is described as 'putting a thought down here, changing a word there' and

the infinitesimal changes being sought, start to happen. On the flip side, I have also read that which is described as ‘masterpieces of condescension and superciliousness’, which is excellent for the application of critiquing and challenging to produce brilliant outcomes.

The DBA journey has been a life changing experience for me, both as an individual and as a researcher. As an individual, I have developed a deep insight into the pain and suffering of other females. I have acquired a tolerance that has improved my listening skills and allowed for expansion of my empathetic nature. I was never a self-involved individual; however I was also not a propagator of righteousness, I thought I had balance. I took a conscious decision to adopt a reflexive approach throughout the DBA journey, in order to provide an effective and impartial analysis.

I feel a new sense of maturity, calmness, confidence and locus of control that only comes with having gained new knowledge. I know that I now have insight into the ‘toolkit’ required to start ‘repairs’ on that which is broken, and I know which tools can work where.

I have carried this insight and knowledge into the workplace, where I have become more conscious of the nuances between men and women, and have started working with women that have become ‘wallflowers’, to identify their strengths and understand the immense value they add to the organization. I have found that confidence in oneself, in one’s abilities to deliver and progress and to stand up to ‘wrongfulness’ is largely fed by knowledge. Knowledge of the world and how it operates, of society and the dynamics at play, of individuals and what

drives or inhibits them, of organizations and their practices, yes, it is knowledge that propels one to great heights. However, I must add that through experience, I have learned that it is knowledge coupled with action that delivers a success story. Having all the knowledge in the world will not be effective if action is not taken to share this knowledge and to use it to help and uplift others, and to improve the world around us.

I am proud to have reached this stage of submitting my final paper, there were moments when I felt like I would not reach the finish line, and in those very moments, I reached in, dug down and rose up again full of energy. I experienced deep personal grief with the loss of my dear Mother a few months ago, however this loss helped to channel my energy and focus on finalizing this thesis, also as a tribute to one of the strongest women in my life. My Mother experienced many avenues of bias during her working career, which she did not share with her family. It is only upon her passing and having to sort through her personal belongings that I found evidence of her struggles in the work environment as an Indian female during the apartheid era. I also found pictures of my Mother and her female colleagues taking part in 'strike action' to improve pay parity, and with all her Indian, Black & Coloured colleagues to improve their working conditions.

I find it propitious that I was not aware of the extent of my Mother's work life struggles as a woman of colour, yet I was drawn to taking up the mantle of researching the challenges to women's career progression in South Africa. Indeed, I now understand the reason for my Mother always championing me to finalise my thesis and use the knowledge gained to make the working world a 'better, safer and friendlier' place for the women of South Africa. My deep regret is that I could not document my Mother's workplace struggles through her story,

as with many South African women of colour, they keep the past and its atrocities and biases towards them hidden from their families, with the mindset that these intersectional experiences are their burdens to bear. I pray that this research has the power to aid in improving the lives of women through positive change.

My greatest learnings and growth were through my interaction with my Director of Studies, her profound knowledge, experience, guidance and unwavering patience on the second half of this journey is what propelled me to this culmination. She simplified the complex, encouraged reflection and assisted throughout the evolution of the study. She fostered in me the confidence to persevere and progress, knowing that I could add value, and a belief that my research was valuable for the progress of individuals, organizations, government and my country.

Appendix 1: Life History Calendar

Date: 5 July 2019	Time: 2pm	Place: Sandton	Interviewee: Gigi	Date Transcribed: 8 July 2019
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Year	Age	Jan-March	Apr-June	Jul-Sept	Oct-Dec	Historical Context
1983	18				Completed Matric	Rhodesia/Zimbabwe Civil War starts 1 st Mario brothers game released China population reached 1 billion Motorola – 1 st mobile phones released
1984	19	1st job - receptionist				1 st apple Mac launched.
1986	20			Married (arranged) No funds for further studies.		Chernobyl nuclear reactor exploded Oprah Winfrey talk show debut Phantom of the Opera debut in London.
1987	21	2 nd job – property sales				The Simpsons debut

1989	23		3 rd job – property sales Sold 200% of target	Bought First Car	Local holiday	Hillsborough disaster in UK
1991	25	4 th job – financial sales		Husband started new job		South African apartheid – dismantled Mandela released from 27 years in prison in Feb 1990.
1992	26	5 th job - admin				

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