

**AN EXPLORATION OF WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN SENIOR
MANAGEMENT IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY CAPE TOWN**

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The logo of the University of the Western Cape, featuring a classical building facade with columns and a pediment, with the text 'UNIVERSITY of the WESTERN CAPE' overlaid.

SUPERVISOR: PROFESSOR LINDSAY CLOWES

DECLARATION

DECLARATION

I DECLARE THAT “AN EXPLORATION OF THE WOMEN’S EXPERIENCES IN TOP MANAGEMENT IN THE PETROLEUM INDUSTRY IN THE WESTERN CAPE” IS MY OWN WORK, THAT IT HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED FOR ANY DEGREE OR EXAMINATION AT ANY OTHER UNIVERSITY, AND THAT ALL THE SOURCES I HAVE USED OR QUOTED HAVE BEEN INDICATED AND ACKNOWLEDGED BY COMPLETE REFERENCES.

ANTHEA NEFDT



30 MAY 2017

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FOR MY MOTHER YVONNE NAUDE, A STRONG PASSIONATE WOMEN WHO EMBODIED
FEMALE STRENGTH, INTELLIGENCE AND PERSEVERANCE

FOR MY MENTOR, MIZANA MATIWANA, WHO SPARKED THE FLAME OF FEMINISM IN ME
WITH HER QUEST TO UNLEASH THE POTENTIAL IN WOMEN

AND MARY NEWMAN, A WOMAN WITH INCREDIBLE INSIGHT, FOR HER
UNENDING SUPPORT AND BELIEF IN ME

Abstract

There are relatively few women in senior leadership or management positions in South African industry. The oil industry is no exception to this and could in fact be considered to exemplify the ways in which women are marginalised. This small-scale qualitative project aims to explore challenges and experiences women face when entering senior management positions in the Petroleum Industry in Cape Town. The main objective of the study is to explore how gender (and other relevant subject positions) impacts on women's career development and opportunities. I used a qualitative feminist methodological framework and conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews with women employed in upper management positions in the 8 oil companies in the greater Western Cape area including the South African Petroleum Industry Association and Department of Energy (SAPIA). A thematic data analysis was then utilised to interpret the data. My findings show that many women perceive the route to success as difficult yet possible suggesting that the popular "glass ceiling" conceptual scheme should be replaced by the "labyrinth of leadership" model discussed in Early and Carli 2007 with relation to the oil industry. Further findings suggest that although the oil industry provides unique challenges to women as a gendered organization, it also incorporates various progressive initiatives for their advancement.

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Key words: Petroleum-industry, gender, women, feminism, equality, glass-ceiling, management, gendered organisation, leadership, Western-Cape

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Introduction

My interest in women's leadership emerged while working at DELTA (Development Education Leadership Teams in Action) in the early 2000s, a progressive non-governmental organization based in Cape Town run by women for the empowerment of women. DELTA offered leadership programmes at the grassroots level targeting women at different levels of experience, education and skills. The first level focused on women in mainly rural areas, with no formal training, which was mainly about empowerment, while the second level dealt with women who intended to be or were already community leaders, and the third level aimed at women who were interested in becoming shop stewards at various companies. The rationale behind the latter was the notion that once women knew their rights, they could then mobilize other women and start a women's movement.

My time at DELTA started a trajectory towards thinking deeply about women's leadership in South Africa and the challenges that women face at every point in achieving empowerment. As described in Maseko (2013) and Nkomo (2015), many organisations in South Africa are predominantly male and gendered organisational cultures produce structures which hinder women's, and especially women of colour's, advancement. It is remarkably that after two decades of liberation, women in South Africa find themselves marginalised to this extent in the workplace.

It seemed clear to me that in order to empower women to succeed, it was necessary to look beyond the personal individual level and investigate the institutions and organisations which either promote women or hamper them. Not only would an exploration of gendered organisations (Acker 1990, Britton and Logan 2008) be necessary but also the actual experiences of women in these types of organisations.

According to Ivancevich and Matteson (1999) some definitions of leadership are linked to the characteristics or behaviour of leaders. They further add that an adequate definition of leadership needs to be broad enough to include different theories, models and approaches. Their definition extends to both the informal and formal contexts and positions of leadership and they define leadership as 'the process of influencing others to facilitate the attainment of organizationally relevant goals' (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1999:409).

Nkomo and Cook (2006) explore leadership within an African context, with the focus being on the business environment. African leadership is strongly linked to context and the understanding of the leaders and followers themselves. Its move away from the historically bureaucratic top-down Western models (Edoho, 2001) to more transformational practices (Nzelibe 1986, Dia 1996, Jaeger 1990, Edoho 2001), further adds that this philosophical underpinning of the African leadership is implicit in the management of a business. Moreover, it takes into account the economic and social aspects and realities of Africa (Nkomo and Cook, 2006: 90).

With the promulgation of the Employment Equity Act of 1998, there have been great strides in the advancement of women at occupational level, job categories and leadership in South Africa. However, for many women in leadership positions, it is almost natural to adopt male styles of leadership (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001). This is after all the leadership style that is known and respected, almost revered at times. These kinds of institutional perceptions can hinder the success of female leaders (Oakley, 2000).

After being at DELTA, I was myself thrust into leadership positions in various NGOs, and even in this arena where the notion of testing concepts and challenging stereotypes, male hegemony was still in place. While there were quite a number of women in leadership positions in this sector, males were still the chairpersons on many of these boards, including some of the major funders at that time. They still made all the important decisions in terms of funding and the direction the organisations would take. According to the Global Catalyst report, women only hold 14.7% of board seats (Credit Suisse 2015). Although there is a reported upward trend, the numbers are still very low.

I eventually moved into the Governmental sector with the City of Cape Town municipality. My perception of this organisation was that the structures were extremely patriarchal, rigid and unwelcoming to alternative cultures and gender perspectives. This experience further motivated my interest in studying similar organisations and how women can function successfully within these strict male-dominated structures. In addition, my interest in the possibility of transformation was further developed during this portion of my career. This led me to investigating the Petroleum industry as a conduit to representing and understanding women's advancement within masculine hegemonic cultures present in certain industries.

The further reason for focusing on the Petroleum industry is twofold. On the one hand, the industry has often been considered a success story in terms of women's advancement strategies etc. On the other hand, is it an industry invented and originated in terms of masculine "frontier" and "cowboy" mythology (Miller 2004). This makes it an interesting case study.

On a personal note, my career and work experience have largely been within the governmental and non-governmental sectors. I therefore thought the challenge of investigating women's leadership, obstacles and successes in the corporate world would be valuable and insightful. My "outsider" status would also allow me to be a non-obtrusive observer to the experiences of the strong women in this industry.

The women in the oil industry – the research participants that I interviewed - seemed resilient and focused on their careers. There could be many reasons for this impression. One reason could be that their earlier educational backgrounds prepared them in such a way as to be more 'resilient'. For example, most of the women studied science and became engineers, both extremely male-dominated spheres. For those who did not, they had finance backgrounds, another sphere which requires attention to detail and mathematical ability.

I interviewed women of three racial backgrounds, white, coloured and black. I acknowledge that these categories are relicts of the Apartheid classification system. However, many South Africans continue to identify themselves by these categories, as did my participants, and thus although they are social constructs and not essential human determinations (for instance, the concept of a "coloured" person is largely indigenous to the South African racial context), they do have an impact on the lived experiences of South Africans and therefore the participants of my study.

As a woman of colour (a term I take to include black women), educated during the Apartheid regime, I personally related to many of the women of colour in my study for whom it was even more difficult in terms of their early education during Apartheid, a system which deliberately gave a lesser education and opportunities to people of colour. And it is with this background that these women entered universities which at that time (and it may to a certain extent still be the case) did not take the gap in high school quality or fiscal background into consideration. Quite a number of

the women spoke about this period in their lives, still reliving some of the hurt and sometimes humiliation that they suffered during their tertiary education years.

For these women, entering into a competitive job market and on 'equal footing' with their white counterparts was especially difficult (see Kmec 2003 for the effects of racial inequality in the workplace). These challenges in the workplace are not always appreciated and known. The confidence level at which a woman of colour comes into the workplace is in most instances different from their white counterparts. These issues are sometimes hidden, then to still face a white male hegemonic force can be daunting.

However, my study did not focus exclusively on the intersection between race and gender.¹ And women in general, whether in disenfranchised communities or not, face serious challenges in rising within organisations. Specifically, many of the women in my study emerged from science backgrounds where researchers have found that men in science appear to be more confident than women (Becker, 1984, 1990; Sonnert & Holton, 1995; Etzkowitz et al., 2000). According to Berg and Ferber (1983: 631) "women appear more timid, tend to set lower goals for themselves, and are likely to be given less encouragement". This was not my impression of the women I interviewed.

While the past can be perilous, it did not deter these women, and their resilience and determination to succeed is evident in the way they take every opportunity to grow and advance in their personal lives and careers.

This research touches on issues related to women in the workplace, the obstacles of rising to top management, leadership and women in the corporate world. The oil industry provides a unique space to investigate the experiences of women which involves all of these aspects and more.

¹ It is often the case that term 'gender' is used to describe issues more closely related to sex than actual gender concerns. Below is a general definition of the distinction between the terms often used interchangeably in the leadership literature (but not in the feminist literature). Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men and girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization processes. They are context/time-specific and changeable¹ : (UN Women, 2013: Concepts and definitions)

1.1 Purpose of this Research

Women's advancement is an extremely important field of research in academia. Studies aimed at understanding how and why women succeed or do not succeed can help shape policy and unearth subtle barriers. The "glass ceiling" metaphor has been popular among feminist and organizational theorists alike (and will be discussed and developed in this thesis). The central idea being that there are invisible barriers preventing a certain higher level of success for female leaders and workers.

I myself preferred a labyrinth metaphor (Early and Carli (2007)) in which there is a mixture of visible and invisible barriers to success. But the challenges are not insurmountable and there are pathways that women can and have discovered to achieve great success. This is one of the central ideas of my thesis, that in order to understand how such women have emerged from the maze victorious (or broken the glass ceiling, if you insist) we need to delve into their experiences.

I have chosen a remarkable and diverse set of women who have pursued careers in one of the most challenging male-dominated organisational structures in South Africa and abroad, an industry at the intersection between science, engineering and business. I have recorded and analysed these women's experiences as a tool to understanding, and hopefully even developing a roadmap to women's success in challenging circumstances.

Even if such a roadmap is not feasible or clear from these observations, I think that the views and experiences of these women are valuable in and of themselves.

1.2 Aims of Study

The main aim of this study is to explore the experiences of a diverse group of women in senior management positions within a male-dominated industry in contemporary South Africa. These women represent most of the racial groups, socio-economic backgrounds and marital statuses in South Africa. I aim to add to the limited literature which investigates the intersection between women's leadership in business, industry and science.

Literature on women in management in the petroleum industry specifically is very limited. Only a few studies have been conducted in this area (Sephoti 2010, Miller 2004, Williams 2012). With the exception of Sephoti (2010), most of the research on women's experiences in the petroleum industry has been conducted in countries where there are large oil and gas companies such as the United States, Norway, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Uganda. Nevertheless, the issues of gender and management are largely neglected in this body of work.

In addition to adding to the feminist literature on women's experiences in the corporate world, my research also aims to investigate potential solutions to perceived problems facing women in the petroleum industry. While I acknowledge the constraints presented by a small scale qualitative study in terms of developing generalisations, I also hope to use the more in-depth nature of this sort of study to home in on the experiences of these women and the ways in which they have overcome various obstacles from their perspectives. I hope to suggest ways in which these successes can be translated to related fields and other male-dominated industries.

Lastly, my aim is to give a voice to the experiences of a few women who have succeeded in a challenging field beset by masculine cultures and patriarchal structures. These women occupy top management positions in the oil industry.

1.3 Outline of Chapters

In the next chapter, I present the current literature locating my study within feminist theory and specifically with relation to issues pertaining to women in the workplace. I look at both the global and local context of this issue. This chapter also delves into the theoretical debate related to women in leadership roles, their particular styles and strategies. Finally, I discuss the literature on women in the petroleum industry specifically.

In chapter 3, my research methodology is clearly outlined. I discuss feminist methods, general methodology within social science and issues of reflexivity particular to the feminist research. I describe my data collection methods, participant recruitment and ethical considerations.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 form the bulk of my data analysis. I have split these chapters in accordance with themes which emerged during my interviews. Chapter 4 focuses on perceptions of leadership and other roles within the oil industry. Chapter 5 discusses support structures for women, both formal and informal, and whether these structures are perceived as adequate. Chapter 6 investigates what the appropriate theoretical framework for the understanding of the challenges women face in the oil industry best captures the views and experiences of my participants.

I have a number of annexures to the text including my consent form, interview questions and documentation from the department of energy which follow my conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Feminist Theory

2.1 Introduction and Background

The following chapter will delve into some of the key issues identified by researchers regarding women's experiences in the global and local workplace. The theoretical background and concepts surrounding the obstacles that women face in the Petroleum industry and leadership positions in general will also be discussed.

Around the world women have enjoyed unprecedented inclusion in the labour market over the past few decades. Globally women now occupy positions of leadership which were previously reserved only for men. However, this inclusion is uneven and varies from country to country. In South Africa this progress has not always been systematic and very often women face unseen challenges in progressing between the different levels within organisations. In a recent article in the *Harvard Business Review*, it was stated that women occupy only 4% of CEO positions in Fortune's top 1000 companies (Flynn, Heath, & Holt, 2013). The situation becomes more dire as we move from the developed to the developing world and specifically South Africa. Dormehl (2012) describes the situation in this way:

Women make up 52.0% of the population in South Africa yet only 43.9% of working South Africans are women. Even more telling is that they constitute only 21.4% of all Executive Managers and as low as 17.1% of all Directors in the country. The 9.1% of women as CEO's (3.6%) and Chairpersons (5.5%) in South Africa remain a minority within a minority" (2012: 7).

The most pertinent of the issues related to gender in the workplace analyses the challenges faced by women in management and their advancement to the top structures of organisations. A related matter, which results from the specific field of management under discussion, is the role and advancement of women in science. Although this is not the focus of the present research, the latter concern will often affect women's perceptions of industries which culminate from scientific disciplines, a domain which has been notoriously resistant to the inclusion of women (see Faulkner

2009). With the focus on the Petroleum Industry, I plan to address and investigate mainly the related issues of women in corporate world.

There are many reasons why such research is important. One of the overarching reasons involve workplace diversity. For instance, on the global level, diversity has been linked with effectiveness of organisations. The so-call “value-in-diversity” hypothesis, which states that the inclusion of women and other marginalised groups actually improves the performance of organisations, is argued to be an essential component of the evolving global business landscape (Cox, Lobel, Macleod, 1991). Morally, the exclusion of women in the upper levels of management constitutes an issue of unjust discrimination (Berkovitch 1999; Cobble 2005). The international “Women in Management” (1998) labour report states that despite women occupying 40% of the global labour force, their inclusion at the top level remains problematically low. This discrimination need not be intentional but often presents itself institutionally. Schein (2001) argues that the globalisation of management often involves “sex role stereotypes” and the required managerial characteristics being associated with male characteristics on a global level.

South Africa is considered to be one of the more progressive countries in the world when it comes to employing women in senior level jobs (a survey conducted by the consulting firm, *Grant Thornton*, March 30, 2004). The latest results from the annual *Business Owners Survey* reveal that in South Africa 75% of businesses employ women in senior management positions as opposed to the global average of 59%. However, the situation is somewhat reversed in the case of the Petroleum industry (see ‘background’ section below).

A recent government report on the status of women in the South African economy states that although great strides have been made in improving the status of women, access to education and the labour market remains a challenge.

Lastly, the petroleum industry is complex. It has an effect on a number of issues ranging from the environment and health to politics and poverty. This industry serves to boost the economy of many countries, but it is often also used by corrupt government officials to further their militaristic aims as well as by superpowers to manipulate developing countries such as Sudan and Nigeria. The central question of *Debating Oil in Africa* (2002) is “can oil revenues be made to work for Africans

or will they profit only a corrupt few?” (Turshen, 2002: 3). This reality makes the petroleum industry a melting pot of developmental, social and gender issues globally and specifically in Africa.

Before discussing the rise of women in the work force and in the petroleum industry in general, it is necessary to discuss the Feminist and Womanist underpinnings of the issues surrounding women in the workplace.

2.2 Women in the South African Workplace

Although this section will deal primarily with women in the South African workplace, their experiences and difficulties, it is important to situate the South African perspective within a broader global context.

The challenge for women ascending from middle management to senior management has been contentious and much debated globally. The corporate sector has been singled out as one of the most difficult arenas for upward movement of women around the world (Reinhold 2005, Matsa and Miller 2011). In the 80’s researchers raised awareness of the barriers that women face in various employment under the term the “glass ceiling”. The term refers to the often invisible and pervasive barriers which prevent women from climbing the corporate ladder or receiving equal remuneration within it.

This concept has received overwhelming treatment in feminist literature and beyond (see Hymowitz and Schellhardt 1986, Morrison, White *et al.* 1987, Hesse-Biber and Carter 2005). The idea has been developed and redeveloped in light of the continuing struggle women face not only in the working world in general, but also in ascending to higher levels of management. Later (in chapter 4), I discuss an expansion of this metaphor in terms of the labyrinth of leadership that women face in business.

Women in the workplace is a particularly interesting topic given that it often marks a conflict between traditional roles and an emerging gender equitable labour force.

The challenges women face in attempting to penetrate successfully and persevere in historically male-dominated work environments emanate from traditional gender hierarchies and norms that prevail in the family and society” (Martin and Barnard, 2013: 1).

One issue is that men still occupy a dominant role in the traditional family structure which spills over into the workplace. Some scholars such (Bobbitt-Zeher, 2011; Davey, 2008; Prescott & Bogg, 2011) go as far as to claim that women and men have different experiences in the workplace such that what drives men (personal gain, status and power) is fundamentally different to what drives women (unity, overall organizational functioning etc.). I am skeptical about whether this claims amount to further stereotyping women in the workplace as many women also seek status and other “male-related” markers of success.

With the onset of movements aimed at women’s liberation and equitable inclusion in the labour force especially within leadership roles, the issue of gender difference has reached the fore. Another way of viewing the current research is as an exploration of the challenges that women face as leaders especially when ascending the corporate ladder (I will return to this issue below).²

Some of the challenges facing women globally, also face SA women. Researchers such as Booysen (2007) claim that South Africa is a society in crisis of identity. The movement from the Apartheid system to progressive legislation of gender and race has had a radical effect on the changing power dynamics. Pre-1994, “Power was thus almost exclusively in the white male domain, mainly due to race and sex discrimination and patriarchy; these men could almost be said to have held absolute power” (2007: 7). She notes that progress has been slow and the dominant societal identity is

² The literature on why women continue to be excluded from upper management is related in some ways to their perceived roles in society. For instance, social role theory suggests that male and female leaders are confronted with a different set of expectations based on their perceived gender or sex. “These roles are assumed to follow from perceivers’ observations of men and women as concentrated in different social roles in the family and paid employment” (Eagly and Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001:783).

defined in terms of race not gender which has effects on the workplace. Nkomo (2015) echoes the claim of slow progress but adds that women and especially black women have experienced little advancement.

For black women in particular the progress is dismal. A recent analysis I did, which has not yet been published, of black women's representation on companies listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, indicates that if present trends continue, it is impossible to even forecast when equity might be achieved. (Nkomo, 2015: 2).

This conclusion is supported by the Report on the Status of Women in South Africa (2015) which notes progress, but similarly claims that equity is still quite far off.

Despite education gains, women remain more likely to be employed in low-skilled occupations. This difference is driven by the large proportion of women working as domestic workers. Conversely, women are less likely to be employed in the informal sector. Within the formal sector, women are more likely to have written contracts and leave entitlements and are less likely to work excessively long hours. Women remain disadvantaged in terms of earnings and dominate lower earnings categories.

These statistics are troubling, and given recent economic prospects of the country, unlikely to change for the better in the near future. Hence the need to explore and research industries such as Petroleum in South Africa, which boasts progressive policy and a greater emphasis on the inclusion of women at top management levels.

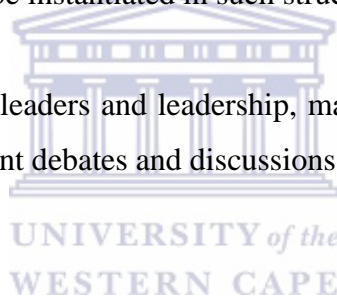
The issue of women in the workplace is a complex one. Bosch (2015) identifies five themes that contribute to the wage gap between men and women in South Africa which include skills development, school choices among young girls and the much discussed motherhood penalty. The latter concept refers to the difference in earnings between childless women and mothers in business. However, as Bosch notes, there is no parallel "fatherhood penalty". Instead, childless fathers tend to earn less than their parental counterparts (see Mistra and Strader 2013 for a study revealing this in the USA).

These issues, related to school choices, motherhood and the wage gap all touch directly on my research and were talking points among my participants. The Petroleum industry is a melting pot of gender paradigms, myths and stereotypes.

2.3 Women in Leadership

Globally researchers have generated a number of theories which aim at the identification of leaders in society in accordance with their defining traits and characteristics. I am however, concerned with the concept of leadership and how it is to be found in certain organisational structures. Towards this goal, it is often assumed to a certain extent that certain positions (managerial or otherwise) allow for leadership to be instantiated in such structures.

There is a range of definitions on leaders and leadership, management vs. leadership etc. I will provide a brief account of the current debates and discussions on the various aspects of leadership where they are relevant.³



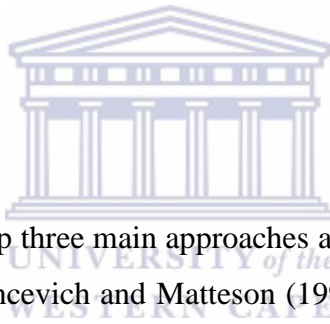
There is a well-known distinction to be found between managers and leaders. Managers are positioned within organisations for the preservation of order and structure often not imposed by the managers themselves. Leaders are people who do not necessarily occupy managerial positions, they go beyond the initial structures of organisations and develop novel strategies.

However, it is important to note that leaders can and do occupy management and vice versa. In other words, although there is a theoretical difference between managers and leaders, in practice they often overlap.

³ For instance, Crevani et al. (2009) define leadership as a process and not through specific people or leaders, “Going beyond dominating heroic conceptions of leadership as lodged in single individuals, the suggested perspective will enable us to gain new understanding of how leadership activities emerge in social interaction” (77).

The leadership literature which distinguishes certain leadership styles associated with gender differences has defined certain expectations with relation to men and women leaders.

The expectations have been described in terms of a social role theory which defines men and women according to roles which they occupy in different spheres of society and organisational structures. The underlying idea is that men tend to be more task-orientated while women express a leadership style which is described as interpersonally orientated. These styles are associated with further characteristics, namely agentic and communal (Eagly, Wood & Diekmann, 2000). Men are generally assumed to display the former while women display aspects of the latter. Agentic is defined as relating to assertiveness, dominance, confidence, independence and attention to detail. This tends to lend itself to a more autocratic style of leadership. On the other hand, women tend towards a more participatory, democratic style of leadership associated with sympathy, kindness, affection and other communal role expectations.



2.4 Theories of Leadership

In the global literature on leadership three main approaches are identified, Trait, Behavioural and Situational in accordance with Ivancevich and Matteson (1999). These are broad categories and are meant to guide thought of the nature of leadership, they do not exhaust the possibilities. In addition, in reality there are mixed varieties of these kinds of leadership especially with relation to women's leadership which often is a conflict between traditional roles and expectations and masculine cultures of leadership already present in organisations.

In the Trait approach, there is an underlying idea that there is a certain set of qualities both physical and non-physical (mental and personality) which are assumed to be connected to a successful leader.

The benefits of the trait leadership approach are many. Firstly, it captures the intuition that leaders are exceptional individuals who have a collection of valuable traits. It also serves as a yardstick against which the leadership traits of an individual can be assessed. In addition to this, it gives a detailed knowledge and understanding of the leader element in the leadership process.

The difficulty of this approach is that subjectivity is involved in choosing the appropriate traits for analysis. The list of possible traits can never be exhaustive since there is no complete list of the traits. There is also a disagreement over which traits are the most important for an effective leader.

The Behavioural approach is different to the traits approach, as behaviour is thought to determine the effectiveness of leaders. In addition to this, the impact and performance of the followers are correlated by the behaviour of the leader.

There are two distinct types of leadership styles with this framework, the “Job-Centred and Employee-Centred Leadership” (Ivancevich and Matteson, 1999: 413). The job-centred leader micro-manages the employees to ensure that the job is carried out according to predetermined specifications and adherence to procedures.⁴ The employee-centred leader uses participatory leadership which allows the employee to develop and grow in the organization. Female leadership has been associated with the latter and male with the former according to social role theory.⁵

The last approach, namely Situational theory, relies on the leader to reflect and analyse the behaviour of him/herself and that of the employee in order to determine the kind of leadership approach that must be taken. The leader in this instance should have the ability to be knowledgeable about human behaviour.

This approach suggests that there is no blue print for managing a situation, the responsibility is left to the leader to explore different ways to manage situations.

Most of this research has been conducted at the global, international level. In South Africa there are unique factors that can and should influence any discussion of leadership. However, I believe that the global perspective can be useful in the Petroleum Industry which is a multinational

⁴ The methods that this type of leader will employ include using power and other incentives to achieve the required goals and objectives.

⁵ There are mixed models of leadership such as the Integrated Model of Leader Traits, Behaviours, and Effectiveness (Derue et al., 2011), which combines traits and behaviours in predicting leader effectiveness and tested the mediation effect of leader behaviours on the relationship between leader traits and effectiveness. The authors also found that some types of leader behaviours mediated the effect between traits and leader effectiveness. The Hybrid model, is a combination of the Behavioural and Trait models.

corporation where global theories come into contact with local structures. Thus, these theories of leadership can have a limited impact on research which investigates international bodies such as this study.

2.5 Gender and Leadership

Another body of research emerging out of feminist scholarship globally, explores the topic of gender and leadership simultaneously. As illustrated in the previous sections, Walker et al. (1996), canonically discussed leadership in relation to behaviour which affects the way in which tasks are performed. The motivations for this study were to test the following assumptions, (1) “much of the literature on gender differences assumes that there are typical "female" and "male" behaviours (255), (2) these differences affect the way tasks are performed. The study shows that there are major differences in results of male and female roles within homogenous groups and mixed groups individually. Behavioural patterns in mixed-groups tend to conform to certain stereotypes.

More recently, Van Vugt and Spisak (2008) corroborate Walker (1996)’s findings with relation to change in gender leadership characteristics based on the change in group dynamics. Male leaders tended to emerge in situations in which groups were in direct competition with one another while intra-group competition brought out female leaders. “These findings suggest that particular group threats elicit specific gender-biased leader prototypes” (van Vugt and Spisak, 2008: 854). These findings show that societal roles, specifically gender based ones, are present in leadership situations.

Croson and Gneezy (2009) identify definite gender difference between men and women through investigating economic experiments. For instance, these experiments show that women are more risk-averse than men. However, importantly they show that women are not initially more or less socially orientated than men (contra social role theory) but women do tend to be more flexible in such social situations. In addition, women are identified as less competitive than men, a finding which is not qualified as it is in Walker (1996) or van Vugt and Spisak (2008) since they do not consider group dynamics.

Unlike Croson and Gneezy (2009), the classic paper by Dobbins and Platz (1986) cast doubt on “lab experiments” which identify the gender differences in leadership styles, especially ones that focus on initiating structure, consideration, subordinate satisfaction, and effectiveness is proposed. This is directly opposed to experiments designed to evaluate theories such as social role theory. They criticize such experiments based on the flawed methodology of investigating sex differences by assuming stereotypes about male and female leadership and then asking subjects of the studies to rate the effectiveness of these leadership styles.

They make the further claim that research which merely compares male and female leaders based on such criteria as effectiveness and initiating structure should be banned and “given the findings of the meta-analyses, the present authors urge a moratorium on research that simply compares male and female leaders on measures of initiating structure, consideration, and effectiveness” (Dobbins and Platz, 1986: 125). Although these are certainly good points, this research is quite dated and studies since the 80s research have become more sophisticated at extracting the right kind of information. For instance, feminist research does so by means of qualitative methodologies which aim to address gender issues directly and without artifice.

Another aspect of the difference between men and women in leadership positions is that of self-perception. According to Hamori-Ota (2007), there are differences between men and women’s self-appraisal of their leadership. Accurate self-perception has been linked to effective leadership in general. The study showed that there is no significant difference between male and female self-ratings on leadership abilities. But males tend to overestimate their leadership skills while females have a more balanced appraisal. The conclusion of the study is that gender differences in leadership style have more to do with complex interactions between leader and observer rank, age, gender than it does in terms of the leader’s gender.

The Petroleum Industry constitutes a gendered organisation (Acker 1990) and incorporates aspects relevant to women in the workplace, leadership and feminism generally. However, the literature on women’s leadership discussed in this section has limited impact on my study for various reasons. One thing is that it often ignores the intersections between race, gender, age, ethnicity and

other factors that play themselves out both globally and especially in a country such as South Africa. Traditional values have a large impact on the way in which black women are perceived in leadership roles outside of the pure gender role theories or ideas of leadership style.

What is useful and insightful for my research about the literature on gender and leadership, especially Walker (1996) and Van Vugt and Spisak (2008), is that leadership is not thought of as an individual idea but rather something that emerges from social groupings and specific tasks. This literature has informed my research questions to the extent that I did not focus on only how a participant considered herself as a leader (self-appraisal) but also how they interacted with their subordinates, rivals and mentees.

2.6 Women in the Petroleum industry

We will start this section with the global perspective and then move to the local South African context. Researchers within the academy, journalists, professional fora as well as government organisations and non-government organisations have conducted work on women's access to the petroleum industry. The main concern is that although women are entering the industry, they are not moving up the hierarchy. According to Catalyst (2002), crude oil and mining companies rate very low among different industries for its representation of women in officer positions (6.4%) (Turshen, 2002: 4). In a survey conducted in *NES Global talent*, it was found that while 75% of women do in fact feel welcome in the oil industry, almost half (45%) of them feel undervalued in comparison with their male colleagues (Dlouchy, 2014).

In terms of the global statistics:

[A]bout 12% of Exxonmobil executives are women, compared to 9% in 2000; women comprised 38% of the professional and management personnel hired by the company in 2007. The percentage of women executives at BP more than doubled between 2000 and 2007. Shell's Annual Review 2007 reported that women represented 31% of all professional hires and 20% of recruits for technical roles. Women in management actually increased from 8.9% in 2000 to

17.1% in 2007, while the percentage of women in senior positions rose from 7.2 to 12.1 during the same period toward the company's stated global goal of 20%. (Feltus: 72)

On the surface, it would appear that the SA petroleum industry is different. There has been extensive progressive legislation since 1994. The Broad BEE addresses questions of gender equality, while the constitution of 1996 makes it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of gender (as well as other signifiers of identity). There are furthermore several initiatives aiming to encourage young women to pursue careers in the engineering industry. For example, the various scholarships and initiatives of the South African Women in Science (SAWISE) association. South Africa also has a specific organisation, Women and Oil and Energy South Africa (WOESA), which lobbies for the participation of women in the oil industry and assists its 396 members in finding opportunities across the nine provinces.



In South Africa, there are seven major oil companies, BP Southern Africa, Chevron South Africa, Engen Petroleum, PETROSA, Sasol Oil, Shell South Africa and Total South Africa. Out of these, Engen has its head office in Cape Town, while although the other companies tend to be Johannesburg based, they do have a presence in the Western province as well. The Western province is the second largest consumer of petroleum in South Africa (after Gauteng).⁶

The statistics from SAPIA (South African Petroleum Industry Association) on women in top management, however, is concerning. Out of a total of 68 at top management level, only 4 are women. At the senior management level, this statistic is somewhat improved, with 72 out of the total of 376 being women (19%) while at the mid-management level women occupy 26% of the workforce. Compared to the global statistics, South Africa ranks quite low despite progressive legislation and various organisation and associations (SAWISE, WOESA etc.) For the advancement of women in this industry.

There is a substantial amount of information on the petroleum industry in South Africa and internationally, in terms of business and marketing as well as the effects of the industry on the

⁶ Data from the South Africa Petroleum Industry Association (SAPIA).

environment and health related issues. Research has been conducted in the petroleum industry in various countries, particularly countries where there are large oil and gas companies such as the United States, Norway, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia and Uganda. However, there are very few academic studies conducted on the subject of gender and management within this industry.

In South Africa, only one paper dealing with both gender and management in the Petroleum industry has been written thus far. Sephoti (2010) deals with the challenges facing women in business. The other research conducted in this industry was on the role of BEE in South Africa in relation to empowerment and transformation and Futter (2010) which focussed on the taxation of oil and gas exploration and production in South Africa.

Similarly, Dyaphu (2005) deals with the role of BEE in transforming the Petroleum industry in South Africa. He provides a very detailed and comprehensive account of the Petroleum industry in South Africa. The historical background of the industry and the transformation after 1994 is well-documented. Although the focus is mainly on legislation and entrepreneurship, it does suggest a clear picture of the challenges it was believed this industry faces, even though these did not include issues related to gender. The main challenge was understood to be the dissension between government, whose focus post-apartheid was on transformation and empowerment, and the Petroleum industry whose focus was to make a profit.

In terms of gender, the transformation charter of the Petroleum industry is mentioned as an internal barometer to guide advancement for women, while government initiatives are aimed at external empowerment initiatives and empowerment for women. However, Sephoti (2010) notes that despite the progressive legislation, women still experience discrimination in the workplace and advancement for women is slow.

Sephoti (2010) provides valuable insight into the petroleum industry from a management and gender perspective. Even though only four out of the seven petroleum companies in the Western Cape participated in the research, it does provide valuable information. Sephoti's research was conducted at a national level, Gauteng and Western Cape Province, my research will only focus on the Western Cape in order to delve into specific issues in more depth.

Some of the challenges that emerged from the work of others included ‘the old boys club’ dynamic, work life balance, perceptions and stigma regarding female managers among other more subtle barriers which will be discussed in more detail later. Sephoti (2010) also mentions that women experienced difficulty with entry into the petroleum industry.

Among many of the challenges that women face generally in the workplace and particularly in male-dominated industries is that of “work-life balance”, a term coined by Acker (1990) when she conducted research in the petroleum industry. This refers to the tension women experience when balancing the roles in their personal lives and that required by their work lives. De Villiers (2003), in her research of a South African division of a multi-national oil company in Cape Town, revealed in an opinion survey that only 45% of participants responded favourably to the issue of work life balance compared to an external benchmark, namely the Global High Performance Norm. Sprunt (2008) later argues that the importance of this issue cannot be underestimated and more creative working solutions should be explored to retain women. Key authors in the petroleum research concur with this statement (see Murray and Syed (2010)).

Another phenomenon, often highlighted in previously male-dominated organizations, is what is referred to as the ‘old boys club’ (Martin and Collinson, 2002, Sephoti, 2010). This environment hinders inclusion from other groups. Acker’s (1990: 146) theory contextualizes the masculine cultures and subcultures that permeate these male-dominated organizations, and discusses the coping strategies that women have employed to counter it (see also Gamba and Kleiner, 2001).

Acker (1990) additionally developed the concept that an organization is ‘gendered’ if there are contestations such as advantage and disadvantage, exploitation and control, and various other patterns in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. In other words, she moved gender from the individual to organizations - their structure for example, could have ‘gender’. In addition to this, Miller (2004) discusses the notions of hegemonic masculinity and what is known as ‘the cowboy myth’ - the romanticizing of the cowboy hero in the workplace, which is prevalent in previously male-dominated organizations such as the petroleum industry,

where the ‘cowboy’ is an individual who works alone and generally operates in a vacuum instead of a team.

Finally, one of the key issues with which women are still confronted is the myth and perception summed up by the credo ‘think manager, think male’. The term refers to a culture of associating management roles with traditional ‘male’ characteristics. I will explore this notion in greater detail as it emerged as a concern in the participants’ response to research conducted by key researchers, such as Scein (1996), and later Mulcahy and Linehan (2014) in the field. It is psychological barriers such as these that are more difficult to diagnose and therefore respond to, as it is not as overt as some of the other challenges that women face.

It would be interesting to see if any of the recent legislative reforms have impacted on the advancement of women and if some of the barriers highlighted by Sephoti (2010) have been eliminated or addressed in any way. Dyaphu (2005) mentions that the Petroleum industry was the first industry to draft and adopt a transformation charter which suggests that it should be far ahead of the other industries in South Africa in empowering and advancing women.

Sephoti’s research points out that the barriers to women moving upwards in this industry were identified and five themes were extracted in relation to the barriers. The barriers which were identified were associated with the culture of the organizations, or rather subcultures, as well as career advancement aspects and gender stereotyping and a range of management issues.

One of the issues that Sephoti (2010) mentions in looking at the areas for further research, is that no results for women’s behaviour in leadership roles in comparison to men were ‘tested’. Similarly, Dyaphu (2005), discusses the role of BEE in transforming the Petroleum industry in South Africa. This research provides a very detailed and comprehensive account of the Petroleum industry in South Africa.

A limitation with relation to the literature review was that only a few studies had been conducted in the petroleum industry on gender related matters and they were all quantitative. This means that the qualitative studies that I could draw from were based in America or Northern Europe. The main issue with this is that the workplaces in different geographical areas are culturally and

environmentally distinct. The petroleum industries of course include multinational companies with their head offices in America and France which also causes some class of cultures. These cultural differences can be a source of tension or an advantage in some cases.

Cultural differences remain persistent and present an array of challenges for multinational companies. Firms that manage adaptation effectively are able to achieve congruence in the various cultures where they operate while extending their main sources of advantage across borders, and in some cases even making cultural diversity itself a source of advantage (Ghemawat and Reiche, 2011: 11).

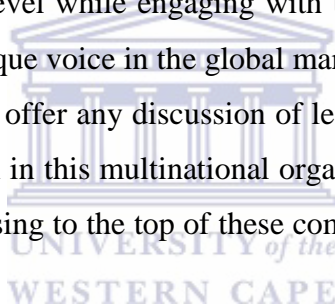
Hence the need for research such as this study which aims in some ways to bridge the gap on qualitative research conducted in South Africa. More specifically, in terms of locality, as much as I sourced literature of a more academic nature especially in preparation for my research proposal, it did not completely prepare me for the interviews with the women. My questions were drafted based on this literature I accessed, did not prepare myself for the South African context. As mentioned, most of the literature particularly about the petroleum industry, was about studies conducted with women in middle and senior management in America, Canada and in parts Norway and the Middle East. However, Christine Williams at the University of Texas at Austin provided useful insight into drawing out important aspects of the research through the questionnaire I developed.

A few had been conducted in South Africa on this industry, with only one of them focusing on women in management: Sephoti (2009). My reference point was academic research coming from America mainly about this industry. The studies worldwide, where women were the focal point, were mainly concentrated on the environmental and sustainable livelihoods impact, the medical impact on women in the petroleum industry. Some of the studies and one in South Africa focused on the work/life balance of women, an area which I touched on in my research in terms of flexi-time (see chapter 5). However, the nature of the work and the areas in which women in senior

management are working in the petroleum industry lend itself to different work/life balance issues and not the issues which are mostly written about in the literature.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has surveyed the literature on a number of topics. My focus was on women's leadership, their role in the workplace and how these aspects play themselves out in the Petroleum Industry. I discussed the fact that the Petroleum industry is a multinational and transnational business. Given this, there are many studies on the industry and even women in the industry globally which are useful and insightful. However, on the local level, there are fewer such studies despite the industry in South Africa being considered progressive and inclusive. My study aims to add to the literature on the local level while engaging with the international research as well. I believe that South Africa has a unique voice in the global market and South African women have a unique history and experience to offer any discussion of leadership and gender. My study will draw on the experiences of women in this multinational organisational structure with the goal of highlighting their perceptions of rising to the top of these complex types of organisations such as the Petroleum industry

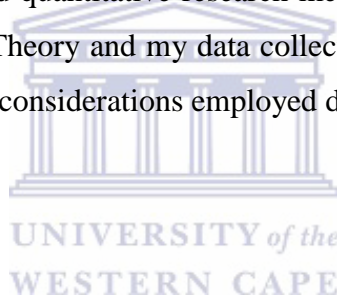


Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I outline and describe the main theoretical frameworks and methodological tools used in this research. The general approach is set in opposition to classical liberal feminism and draws from the intersections of gender, race and other factors relevant in a diverse society. In many ways, the South African context lends itself to this approach given its racial past and current socio-economic situation.

I start by explaining intersectionality and why it is relevant for my study. I then outline the differences between qualitative and quantitative research methodology within a Feminist lens. I then discuss Feminist Standpoint Theory and my data collection. Lastly, I describe my research participants and the special ethical considerations employed during the study.



3.2 Feminist Theory

Western Feminism emerged as a critique of historical and contemporary issues of sexism, misogyny and gender inequality in society. Feminism is a complex, varied discipline and philosophy and no short description will be sufficient to capture its many features. In addition, not all Feminists agree on some of the most fundamental aspects of the tradition. Therefore, instead of attempting to describe what Feminism is directly, I will discuss some related Feminist issues and contemporary debates surrounding them.

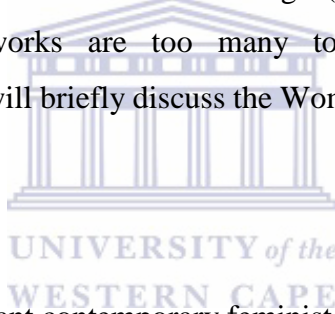
A good point to start with is an identification of a common thread throughout these debates is a statement by Dietz (2003: 399).

It posits a subject (women), identifies a problem (the subjection and objectification of women through gendered relations), and expresses various aims (e.g., overturning relations of domination;

ending sex discrimination; securing female sexual liberation; fighting for women's rights and interests, raising "consciousness," transforming institutional and legal structures; engendering democracy) in the name of specific principles (e.g., equality, rights, liberty, autonomy, dignity, self-realization, recognition, respect, justice, freedom).

Of course, this common thread can be said about many disciplines and what makes Feminism distinctive are the particular discussions and debates it considers and the methods it uses to arrive at conclusions.

Historically, Feminists were often split between "liberal", "socialist" and "radical" (Jagger 1983). The latter was a special brand of Feminism which aimed at eliminating all forms of gender inequality and patriarchy through radical societal change (Daly 1978, Thompson 2001). The contemporary theoretical frameworks are too many to mention. Feminist range from poststructuralist to neo-Marxist. I will briefly discuss the Womanism critique of traditional liberal Feminism in the next section.



Dietz (2003) claims that the dominant contemporary feminist debates concern (1) the controversy surrounding the concept of "gender" and "woman" and (2) the epistemological problem of identifying a collective group under the category of "women". There are disagreements among feminists on how to approach the question of the definition of gender. Feminists seem to be in agreement on the distinct nature of gender and biological/sexual difference but their candidate interpretations differ considerably. Dietz suggests that these answers fall into three larger categories, "difference feminism", "diversity feminism" and "deconstruction feminism".

Briefly, difference feminism emphasises the positive re-evaluation of the concept of "woman" against the backdrop of male dominance and oppression (see Haslanger 1995, 2000 for a defence of social constructivist accounts of the term "woman"). Diversity feminists, especially those of the intersectional persuasion (Crenshaw 1989), argue that the definition of "woman" is invariably tied up in race, class, ethnicity and other social and biological categories. Lastly, deconstruction

feminists reject the idea of a predefined concept of gender or sexual difference, the divide between male and female and any central concept of “woman” at the core of feminism (Butler 1990).

The relevant critique with relation to my research is the diversity feminist framework exemplified by the Womanist movement.

3.3 Womanism vs. Feminism

Alice Walker (1983) first drew attention to the notion of womanism, a concept which took into account the diverse issues experienced by African American women and which were not always included in the broad spectrum of feminism.

“Although at the start, the goal of feminism was to win equality and suffrage for women, already in the nineteenth century it became clear that there were two separate women’s movements since white women refused to support the struggle of black women for their rights” (Izgarjan and Markov, 2013: 304).

However, womanism is not only defined in terms of race. The liberal feminism movement was also a middle-class intellectual one. Thus, women of other socio-economic dispositions were not always included in the agenda. The concept of “womanism” emerged as a need rather than just a theoretical persuasion. Its roots can be traced to the Black Feminist movement.

Black Feminism is the acknowledgement that women of color have been oppressed by sexism and racism, that there was a failure to recognize and address these issues in the Feminist Movement and the Black Liberation Movement, and that women of color have their own agenda that neither movement can take on. Black Feminism focuses on the experiences, needs, and desires of women of color (Mojica, 2011).

Womanism (or Black Feminism) expands on this domain to include issues of men and other women but with a focus on women of colour. It is therefore more inclusion than some versions of feminism while being more flexible in its theoretical underpinnings. Another advantageous aspect of this concept is that it works well with the intersectional approach discussed above (see Research Methodology). Thus, womanism aims to cultivate a space for women of all colour, socio-economic

positions and ethnicity to discover and theorise about their roles in society at large, the family unit and the workplace. It is women's role in the latter space that the rest of this review will investigate.

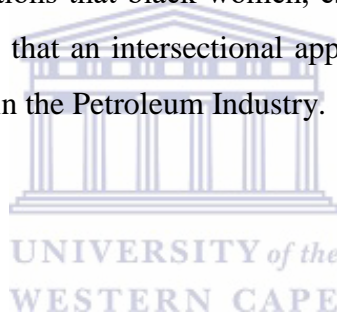
3.4 Intersectionality

As the term suggests, intersectionality takes a variety of variables such as gender, race, ethnicity, culture etc. as constituting a single diverse subject matter as opposed to viewing all of these aspects individually. More specifically, it looks at the intersections or relationships between these aspects of society and attempts to theorise in terms of this complex collection of phenomena. For instance, an intersectional feminist approach has emerged as a critique of traditional liberal feminism in which the experiences of women of colour were largely neglected (see Halvino 2008). The acceptance of alternative modalities into women's studies has been widespread, so much so that many theorists consider the move to have changed the nature of feminist research for the better. As McCall (2005) states, “[o]ne could even say that intersectionality is the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far” (1771).

The term originates from critical race theory and the seminal work of Crenshaw (1989). The idea was that there is no unique isolated notion of gender or feminism in which women's experiences can neatly be packed. Black women face both racial and gender discrimination. Members of the LGBTQ+ community can experience even more layered prejudice. Therefore, a single layered approach to the experiences of women would not begin to characterize these multifaceted cases. The work of Patricia Collins (1990) extended this idea to a discussion of domination and subordination. Collins (1990: 2) introduced the concept of “interlocking oppression” within a “matrix of domination”. Thus, the “interlocking nature of oppressions...are structured on multiple levels” and people might be “*both* a member of multiple dominant groups *and* a member of multiple subordinate groups” so any individual may be affected “in varying degrees on systemic versus interpersonal mechanisms of domination” (Collins, 1990: 6). This opens up a more nuanced

picture of gender, race and cultural relations. It is this picture that will be more appropriate for the topic of women in senior management and within the South African socio-political context.

As previously mentioned, within the South African context, intersectionality becomes an essential tool to the understanding of women's role in the labour market and society at large. Given the legacy of Apartheid, one cannot isolate gender as a distinct subject matter in terms of senior management. Race inevitably enters into any debate concerning women in these sectors and at these levels. The 2010 Employment Equity Commission report shows that white males are still represented at 62.9% in top management (Agenda 2012), even though a marked increase in the number of women in executive positions has taken place, the rise was from 18.6 % in 2009 to 19.3 % in 2010 and 21.6 % in 2011 (Mayer and Barnard, 2015, Van Wyk, 2012). However, as reported by Mayer and Barnard (2015: 33), "white women are said to be more privileged in terms of their access to senior management positions than black women, especially in the private sector" (see also Kinnear 2014). This indicates that an intersectional approach is needed in order to discuss gender in senior management within the Petroleum Industry.



3.5 Reasons for this Approach

There are many reasons for opting for an intersectional approach in Feminist research. For instance, I needed to consider issues of race, gender, ethnicity, language etc., when I interviewed the women as they came from diverse backgrounds. I also needed to be sensitive to the way in which I asked certain questions. For example, two of the interview questions were, 'Could you tell me about your career history?' 'How did you end up here?' These were interpreted by two of the participants of different racial groups as questions which suggested something else – namely, that they did not get to their current positions in the "honest way". Their response was a justification of their hard work, ability etc. The next question which was, 'What were your biggest achievements in getting here?' This question seemed to dispel the negative connotation that the women had of the first question. Another question related to legislation, 'How important has gender/race been in getting to where you are?' was also interpreted quite differently by quite a few of the research participants even though I contextualised the question in relation to the new legislation. It was for this reason that this approach was essential in order to provide the context

and the depth of how different our experiences are and how our perceptions and interpretations differ.

In the next section I show why I decided to employ a qualitative approach and discuss the differences between the quantitative alternative.

3.6 Quantitative versus qualitative research

There are two main approaches to social scientific research, qualitative and quantitative, although the division between the two can be blurred and there can often be overlaps between the different approaches. Oakley (1990) demonstrates the differences by using two examples. Qualitative research foregrounds an interpretive approach, focusing on the perceptions and understandings of the same object or experience by different people. In contrast, quantitative research foregrounds numerical, mathematical and statistical characteristics of a situation, and is often described as positivist while the qualitative approach is described as interpretivist (Lincoln, 2000). Broadly speaking, quantitative research is about numbers and statistics, while qualitative research is about interpretations, meaning and perspectives.

I employed a qualitative research methodological approach and used a thematic interpretative analysis to analyse and interpret the data. I chose this approach for a number of reasons.

In quantitative research, the researcher is not considered to influence the research process. Instead, the researcher is perceived to have an objective and clearly defined role of collecting and analysing research data and presenting the findings in relation to the hypothesis (Denzin & Lincoln 2000). As such, the researcher in quantitative research supposedly remains detached from the research participant. As a result of the apparent disconnect between the researcher and research participant there is an assertion that quantitative research is objective and value-free, while qualitative research is viewed as subjective and value-laden (Sechrest 1992). Qualitative research on the other hand uses smaller samples, without emphasis on replication and with a strong desire for depth and specificity, which is ideal for my research precisely because I explored the experiences of a few women in depth.

Interpretivists see measurement as being fallible when it comes to human behaviour and hence encourage a variety of data-sources and methods of analysis. Interpretivist researchers such as Stanley and Wise (1983), suggest that knowledge about the world is constructed not only by observable phenomena but also by qualitative descriptions of people's beliefs, values, attitudes, understandings and sense-making of particular contexts. Hence this approach is also referred to as a constructivist approach (where the research participants become the co-constructors of knowledge about the world). There is very little room for experiences and personal reflection in quantitative research methodology. However, this perspectival element is essential in a feminist study such as mine, as gender bias is not only present in statistics about the Petroleum Industry but personal experience of prejudice is an equally important datum.

3.7 Feminist research methodology

Feminist research, the methodology I employed in my research, falls under the broad category of qualitative research. A central tenet of feminist research methodology is that men and women are gendered beings and their differing experiences as gendered beings should be acknowledged. Flowing from this, it follows that feminist research should be committed to recognizing that 'truth' is contextual, multi-faceted and complex and aims at foregrounding the 'truths' of voices that are not heard. Ramazanoglu and Holland (2002), Ramazanoglu (1992) reject the notion of absolute truth and have challenged the accompanying androcentric biases and notions of objectivity as value-free, detached and the only recourse to absolute truth. In my study, rather than aiming to find an absolute truth, I explored the experiences of women in senior management in the petroleum industry in the Western Cape, in order to articulate their voices and to explore their understanding of their experiences.

Initially, many feminists agreed with the sentiment expressed by Hesse-Biber & Leavy (2006), that qualitative research is more flexible and process driven, while quantitative research tends to be more fixed and linear. Other feminists add different perspectives to the qualitative research process. Harding (1992) notes that the strength in this kind of research is that feminist researchers

are aware of their subjectivity, a concept known as ‘strong objectivity’, and the awareness of this leads to a greater degree of objectivity.

I used this research methodology precisely because it encourages and acknowledges the experiences that women have, and places these experiences at the centre of the research.

As my research question is based on the experiences of women, a qualitative research process through a feminist lens was most appropriate. Nielsen (1990) and Reinhardt (1983), suggest that feminist research is more experiential, involved and inclusive of emotions. This process allowed the research participants the opportunity to express themselves more freely. It also allowed direct and free discussion of the hindrances that women face in the advancement to the top levels of organisations, particularly the ‘invisible’ obstacles mentioned in much of the literature.

An aspect critical to the feminist research methodology is the concept of reflexivity (England, 1994). Feminist qualitative researchers rely heavily on the researcher to interpret the understandings, meanings, nuances and accounts of the research participants. It is therefore essential that the researcher is aware of how her own personal, historical and cultural experiences shape the ways in which she is able to interpret and make sense of a particular context during the research process. Adopting an interpretivist feminist epistemological approach requires delving into the lived experiences of women. Feminists such as Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall (1994), note that interpretation combined with the critical role that researchers play is a major component of qualitative research, and the role played by researchers in this process, is critical.

3.8 Feminist standpoint theory

I employed a Feminist Standpoint theory which acknowledges that among other things, each person has a valid perspective (Jagger, 2004). Feminist Standpoint Theory recognizes and acknowledges that knowledge is socially situated. Marginalized groups are socially situated in ways that may make it possible for them to be more aware of issues and pose questions than it is for non-marginalized groups (Collins (1986) and Hartsock (1983)). The principles of Feminist Standpoint Theory purports that research should focus on power relations and should begin with the lives of the marginalized groups (Harding, 1991). While the women in the Petroleum industry are highly skilled and educated, they may still be marginalized by the mere notion that they are female in what is still considered to be a largely male dominated environment (Cech, Blair-Loy, 2010). Some of my findings suggest that these women have made an impact in their respective oil companies and in the oil industry as a whole, and that many of the women interviewed did not see themselves as marginalised or disempowered (see data analysis).

The term 'standpoint' refers to more than a perspective, it indicates a starting point towards the joint pursuit of a political aim or objective. Feminist Standpoint theory places women as the starting point and focus of the research practice. The notion is that because women have experienced years of oppression and are at the receiving end of oppression, they will have a better understanding of the perspective of their female research participants (Cancian 1992: 626).

There are many debates around this theory among the feminist scholars as to what actually constitutes the theory. The result is that the theory is constantly evolving and additional concepts and perspectives are continuously being added to it. For example, I am not convinced that the researcher will always understand the perspectives of the research participant, despite her being oppressed in some way or another as well. However feminist research practices require of the researcher to practice self-reflexivity and this can be manifested or practiced in different ways.

Harding (1987) and Landman (2006) describe what is believed to be central to feminist standpoint theory. That is a concern for the relationship of power and knowledge. Its aim is to deconstruct the notion of 'knowing feminist' and rather acknowledge that the starting point is women's experience

in the research process. It also acknowledges the importance of diversity and the power relations between women.

Other aspects of Feminist standpoint theory are what are known as “double vision” or “double consciousness”. This states that women have an understanding of their own oppressor and often this proves to be an advantage (Hooks, 2004:156). This aspect stems from the Marxist tradition in which the mere experience of certain social relations can offer the marginalised person an advantage.

Finally, Smith (1987), a feminist sociologist, posits that the traditional theories and research practices were male-centred and did not relate to women’s experiences. It was important to develop alternative theories and knowledge production that would reflect and document women’s experiences more honestly.

3.9 Methods of data collection



I employed multiple methods of recruitment of the research participants. The initial method of recruitment was snowballing sampling, the second method I used was purposive sampling. The reasons, advantages and disadvantages of each is discussed below.

I used mainly semi-structured interviews, and in one instance used a teleconference at the participant’s request, as she was in another province. I emailed the questions to three research participants two who were in another location and one who completed the semi-structured interview. For two other participants, I emailed the questions to obtain additional data. Most of the research participants were in Cape Town and preferred the one-on-one interviews as it gave them an opportunity to ask questions, add information and have discussion on issues or aspects of the research area which was of interest to them.

3.10 Snowball Sampling

I initially used snowballing sampling, the reason being that snowballing sampling creates a chain reaction and allowed me as an ‘outsider’ to gain entry into an industry that I was not connected to, and unfamiliar with (Langridge, 2004). Snowballing is defined as “a technique for gathering research subjects through the identification of an initial subject who is used to provide the names of other actors” (Atkinson and Flint, 2011: 2). I was also fortunate to know someone (my supervisor) who knew someone in one of the petroleum companies who had not only been in the industry for many years but also occupied a specialist function and was well respected in the industry. Not only was it important for me to gain access into the petroleum industry, but also at the correct level (Pitt, 1997, Atkinson, Rowland and Flint, 2001).

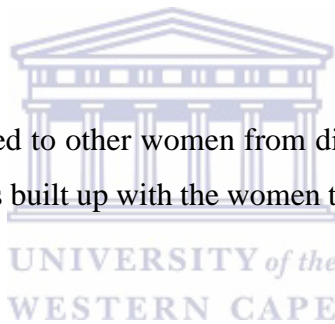
I chose this method of investigation mainly because I am an ‘outsider’ to the Petroleum industry, and it was easier for me to gain entry into this particular sector using this method which involved relying on the professional and social networks of the initial participants. The process also importantly relies on the women’s ‘judgement’ to refer me to other women. This meant that I had to articulate my research objectives very clearly in order for them to refer me to women who could give me the information needed. Nevertheless, if I had selected my own research participants, which I did much later with my interviewing, I would not know if I had selected women with the requisite experiences and information. This methodology however, mitigated this worry as the participants were aware of the expertise and experiences of some of the women within their own network.

After four interviews, I discovered that I was not reaching all the women at senior level, but at different operational areas of work and often within the same company. As many of the petroleum companies work with each other in certain areas on a very competitive basis, this means that the snowballing method worked well when women in one company referred me to women in the same company. In addition, this was useful for discovering patterns and replicating certain experiences. However, I was forced to consider using another method of recruitment of participants outside of

specific companies (Hesse-Biber, 2011). I will discuss this in greater detail later on in the next section. As Gerson and Horowitz (2002) caution, there may be some level of generalizability or transferability as people may recommend other people who have similar characteristics and perspectives on the phenomenon being investigated and may have similar interpretations and views (p34). While I agree with this notion and have experienced this to a certain extent, the snowballing sampling still proved beneficial in this particular case and allowed entry into a field which is not always accessible to outsiders.

As I was still considered to be an outsider in terms of the other petroleum companies, I asked one of the participants to refer me to particular women who met the research criteria in her company and if possible in the other petroleum companies. This was a bit of a challenge, as the petroleum is a highly competitive industry and data privacy is therefore a very important aspect of communication and negotiation.

Given this, I was eventually referred to other women from different petroleum companies partly due to the trust and rapport that was built up with the women that I had interviewed from the same company.⁷



In terms of disadvantages of this method, there were some delays in two of the companies when I was referred to the transformation and employment equity managers who did not respond, after several attempts were made to contact them. As per snowballing, the participants did not always have a direct line to areas outside of their specific job remit and thus could not always be referred to the appropriate individuals.

The reason for the need for these contacts was that it appeared that the human resource and employment equity policies were not known to some of women who I had interviewed. Alternatively, some participants did not engage with the policy directly within their specific areas of work, and some of my questions concerned the policies explicitly.

⁷ Rapport is often based on mutual respect and establishing a free flowing conversation. This is an important aspect of qualitative research as respect for the interviewee involves allowing them to express themselves in their own way (Johnson and Gubrain; 2002).

3.11 Purposive sampling

It was at this point that I introduced a purposive sampling technique midway through the interview process after I realised that I was interviewing women who were mainly in one area of operations and at a particular level (King and Little, 2007). Purposive or selective, or subjective sampling as it is also known, is the intentional sourcing of cases or subjects of a study which are thought to be relevant to the research objectives. This method aims to find ‘information-rich cases’ (Johnson and Waterfield, 2004: 124) that serve to enrich the study.

What assisted with adopting this strategy was the fact that some of the women had worked in various petroleum companies and were able to refer me to ex-colleagues in other companies. Even though I had moved to another method of recruitment, the women in the industry still provided me with the names of other women in other companies and I was able to judge, based on the profiles whether or not their expertise or experiences would be relevant to my study.

As mentioned, one of the advantages of using purposive sampling is that the researcher is able to select participants who will provide the necessary data potentially aligned to the research topic. Another useful element of this method is that it allows the researcher to mine data that might make some concepts or themes clearer, or as Petty, Thomson and Stew (2012) state “the researcher may also purposively seek out variation to deepen understanding” (380). This is a strategy that is used in grounded theory, although it is also used in other approaches as in the case of my research. I used purposive sampling in order to not only address the gaps of the research but also to ensure that the next round of interviews focused on the same operational areas (Corbin and Strauss, 2008).

I needed to switch at times between snowball sampling and purposive sampling in order to access women from different oil companies and in other areas of work.

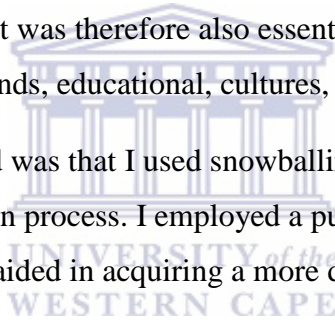
3.12 Selection Criteria

The decisions taken regarding the selection of appropriate participants were based and informed by the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing my study.

One of the necessary criteria involved in selecting the participants required that they occupy senior management positions in different oil companies. I also aimed for as much diversity in the various companies so as to ensure a diversity of views within the research.

Racial and ethnic diversity of the women was also an important aspect of my selection criteria given my intersectional approach. It was therefore also essential that I sourced women who were diverse in terms of social backgrounds, educational, cultures, race, ethnicity and language, etc.

One of the challenges in this regard was that I used snowballing sampling at first which did not ensure full control over the selection process. I employed a purposive sampling in order to mitigate this issue. This technique aided in acquiring a more diverse set of participant. More details below.



3.13 Research participants

The names of the research participants are not mentioned to protect their anonymity, and pseudonyms were used. I use pseudonyms throughout for identification purposes.

I interviewed 12 research participants from 6 different oil companies, Chevron, BP, ENGENOIL, Shell, TOTALGAZ, and the national oil company, PETROSA. The remaining two participants were from South African Petroleum Industry Association (SAPIA) and the Department of Energy respectively.

These women were from diverse racial, ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds as identified in the table below.

As I mentioned previously in the recruitment process, i.e., snowballing sampling, I had to extend my recruitment strategies in order to involve women from eight petroleum companies. Eventually I exceeded my initial sample size of eight women to twelve instead. However, four of the women were from the same company. Nevertheless, two of these four women had previously worked for the 2 other oil companies which assisted in shedding light on the experiences within those companies as well as provided an opportunity to expand my interviews. In addition to this, three of the other research participants have also worked for two other oil companies, which provided me with the information required for the companies not listed.

During this time, I received responses from SAPIA and the department of energy concerning the women's programmes as well as transformation data. However, since these are not oil companies per se, I asked a further four companies, not all of which were based in Cape Town

I discuss the challenges I experienced of the companies that relocated and whose head offices were now in Johannesburg later in this section. Also, there were time-constraints from some of the women and from myself. The women who were in the finance department were preparing for the financial year end and needed to prepare the forecasting for the next period, although they generously gave up their time during their busy period.

As mentioned previously, two of the four women interviewed, had previously worked for other oil companies who was also part of my selection. This was an advantage in itself because they could make comparisons, and discuss their experiences in both companies. We focused on some of the issues of concern which among others were advancement strategies for women and possible hindrances in the workplace. However, I felt that it would be in the interest of my research if I still tried to reach the other oil companies.

The other challenge that I had was that two of the oil companies relocated to Johannesburg and one of the oil companies' head office was in Johannesburg which meant that most of the senior employees were placed there. I later learnt that they were men, and at that point, I made several attempts to meet the most senior staff in the Cape Town office, but received no response.

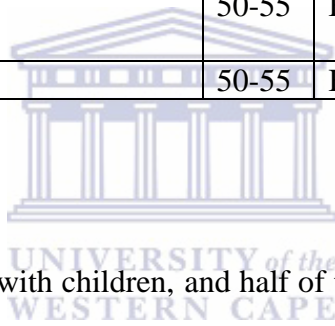
I will discuss more of these challenges in the section on methods.

My recruitment was purely based on my research objectives which involved women in senior management positions in eight petroleum countries. Other than that, I did not have a list of criteria in terms of age for example, as I was not sure what the general age of the women in these positions were within the petroleum industry. I hoped that, through the initial recruitment using the snowballing sampling, I would get a diverse section of women.

This strategy proved fruitful as I received a very diverse group of participants. I had a mixture of racial, religious and ethnic groups. In the South African context, all of the racial categories were represented: Black, White, Coloured, Asian, Indian, Asian and of European descent. The ages ranged from 35 to 55. The women were from different religious groupings, Muslim, Christian, Indian, Traditional, and Agnostic. Their regional backgrounds included the Eastern Cape, KZN, East London, Western Cape, and Northern Cape.

The diversity of languages ranged from Xhosa, English, Portuguese, Afrikaans, Zulu, Chinese, and other African languages such as Pedi and Tswana. See the table below.

Pseudonyms given to participants	Position	Age	Race	Status/Marital/Single/Divorced
Leanne	Environmental specialist	45-50	White	Married with 2 children
Thandaza	PR Manager	35-40	Black	In a relationship-1 child
Moefeeda	Strategic Manager	45-50	Indian-Muslim	Single-no children
Carol	Manager AMEP Planning and Pricing, Value Chain Optimization	25-30	Coloured	Single-no children
Fatima	Manager AMEP Planning and Pricing, Value Chain Optimization	45-50	Coloured-Muslim	Married-2 children
Tamara	Operational Accounting lead-Division	35-40	Coloured	Married-1 child
Babalwa	Manager-Sales and Support	35-40	Black-Zulu	Single-no children
Nombulelo	Head: Economic and Empowerment Head	45-50	Black	Married-2 children
Renata	Legal & Corporate Affairs Manager	25-30	White	Married-1 Child
Felicity	Finance-Deputy Controller	25-30	Coloured/Asian	Married -2 children
Asanda	Acting Vice -president	50-55	Black	Married-2 children
Thuli	Director	50-55	Black	Married



Some of the women were married with children, and half of the women were single. One or two of the women were in long term relationships.

The educational levels and professional status of the women included chemical engineers, chartered accountants, public relations and marketing backgrounds, and law degrees. This was to a large extent dependent on their respective areas of work. Three of the women had MBA's and two women were studying for their Master's degrees in Business Coaching. For the women who were not studying at present, there were plans to study further in the future. Two women wanted to start their own business. One of the women who had left one of the oil companies had already started her own business and was also the director at two companies at the time of the interviews.

In addition to prior qualifications, many of the participants, around 80% of the women, completed further studies while employed. These other qualifications or training opportunities were specific, available through the petroleum companies and in many cases were directed toward female employees (see more about the research participant's achievements in the section women in senior management).

The roles in the organization varied, a few of the research participants in finance did the pricing and forecasting for their respective oil companies. One of the research participants in the top management structure provided strategic direction on a local and international level. While another research participant ensured that the company remained compliant with international and South African environmental standards and safety regulations.

Various support structures will be discussed in the section dealing with programmes and courses offered internally, these are the Women's networks/initiatives which are mainly internal in 5 out of the 6 companies.

As this is more of an overview and profile of the women, a deeper look into who these women are, in terms of their history, schooling, aspirations etc., will be discussed in greater detail in more depth in the section on semi-structured interviews and research results.



3.14 Qualitative thematic analysis

Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall (1994) define a thematic analysis as “a clear way of organizing and structuring information in relation to specific research questions” (54). I will use a thematic approach/framework to analyse the data. One of the main advantages of the thematic analysis is its flexibility. It tends to provide various ways of determining themes and prevalence. This method of analysis makes it easier to identify themes and patterns from the data and produces rich, complex data about the research.

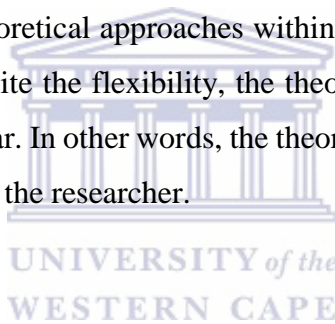
The main element of thematic analysis is that it organizes the data into themes which describe the data in substantial detail. In some situations, it extends to the interpretation of parts of the research topic, thereby creating subthemes which delve deeper into the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998).

Thematic analysis encompasses different theoretical approaches in its methods such as, an essentialist/realist method which examines the ways in which realities, events and experiences reflect the range of discourses embedded and operating in society. It also includes a ‘contextualist’

method, which looks at both the ways in which people make sense of their experiences and the ways in which the broader context impacts on those meaning.

These methods link with the feminist standpoint theory that I used as the epistemological positioning of my research as I further interpret the experiences of the research participants. In essence, thematic analysis can be used to either reflect reality or to unearth the surface of reality and women's lived experiences. Moreover, it is required, when conducting research using a thematic analysis, that there is continued reflexive dialogue by the researcher in relation to these issues. This means that this thread of reflexivity inherent in feminist research will continue in the analysis as well.

There are several steps within the analysis of the data, such as the process of transcription, identification, grouping, organizing and coding. The advantage of having flexibility in thematic analysis is that I used different theoretical approaches within my analysis. Holloway and Todres (2003), however, caution that despite the flexibility, the theoretical position of the researcher in relation to the analyses must be clear. In other words, the theoretical framework and methods must relate to the research questions and the researcher.



3.15 Limitations

As with any qualitative study, there are a number of limitations. One of the limitations I encountered before even beginning my interviews was that I could not go through the HR and EE or transformation departments first because of the ethical issues around confidentiality and anonymity. If I had been able to obtain the necessary data, such as the number of employees, both male and female, at which levels they are in the organization, I would have had more insight, which would have given me an advantage in terms of the way in which the questions could be drafted. I would also have had access to the different functional areas, would have given me a broader overview of the industry, for example, where women are placed and the kind of work that they do. If there were areas in which women did not work, I could have asked more questions about these areas and delved in the women's perspectives on why that was the case. This limitation proved surmountable as I was still able to interview twelve women at the various companies.

The other limitation was time. Although most of the women asked me how much time I needed, I was aware of some of the work pressures, and it seemed that the standard assumption was that research interviews would last approximately an hour. When I attempted to add or extend this time, as many of the women graciously allowed, it felt as though I was taking advantage.

The timing in some cases however had the effect of threatening the depth of the study. In qualitative research, you need time to build a rapport with your interviewees especially for the sake of building trust. Ryan and Dundon (2008) conducted a study on the effect of rapport on the quality of qualitative research data with 53 research participants. They found that building a genuine rapport resulted in superior research data and more meaningful findings. In my case, many of the participants are involved with highly competitive and lucrative business transactions and this can render their responses guarded. In addition, as argued in Thurnell-Read (2016), rapport is often based on gender, age and ethnicity. Therefore, I had to be especially aware of myself as a researcher and the positionality with which I approached my questions.

Another limitation was sample size. Although my sample size exceeds the number envisaged in my research proposal, two of the women are from SAPIA and the Department of Energy, which could influence my findings in terms of the thematic analysis, in which patterns and themes need to emerge.

Lastly, a challenge and limitation, presented itself in the post-interview reflection phase. This limitation was due in part to the conclusive nature of many of the interviews. As many of my participants had limited time to offer, I could not always return to them for follow up questions. This resulted in the early interviews gathering less rich data than the later ones. In many cases, this is a natural situation as I also grew as a researcher. In some cases, I was permitted to send supplementary questions via email. Of course, I was aware that the research participants knew each other, especially those from the same company and that if I did not gain their trust that they would not refer me to their colleagues. So the success of the early interviews was imperative. This is an effect of snowball sampling method, even though it was the only way in which I would have gained entry into this industry.

3.16 Ethics

Ethics constitutes an important aspect of any social scientific research. My goal throughout was to achieve the highest ethical standard which I believe I met. My proposal was accepted and obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Western Cape after which I drew up consent forms and recruited participants for my study based on the approved institutional ethical clearance.

In order to ensure the high standard of ethics required, I conducted a number of necessary steps.

Step 1. I drew up a consent form which ensured all of the above commitments would be honoured in terms of (1) anonymity, (2) voluntary withdrawal, (3) voluntary participation in (4) confidentiality and (5) approval of a portion of the research prior to submission.

Step 2. I reminded the participants that should they not wish to participate, that their contribution can be discarded depending on the point at which the person wishes to withdraw, in terms of confidentiality issues (Fontana and Frey, 1994, Hugman and Smith, 1995).

Step 3. I also informed the research participants that their participation in the study was completely voluntary. If they decided not to answer certain questions, or stop participating at any time there would be no negative consequences. If they had any questions or concerns about the study, or their rights as a research participant that they should feel free to ask me or the department at the University of the Western Cape.

Step 4. I made a special commitment to my participants that I would present them with a portion of my data analysis. This would allow them to verify that their identities were protected and that their comments were fairly reflected. In two cases, participants suggested some minor revisions which I performed subsequently.

Step 5. Lastly, given the competitive nature of the Oil Industry and the difficulties highlighted in this very research facing women's advancement, I had to take special care to ensure the anonymity of the process. I made every attempt to keep the confidentiality of the research participants, both in my script and in my communication with them.

3.17 Reflexivity

One of the challenges that I had was that I had no working experience in the corporate sector. My working knowledge although diverse, was mainly in the NGO, and government sectors. Thus, I was perceived as an “outsider” to their industry (see “insider-outsider” and positionality, Hartsock, 1987; di Stephano, 1990; Haraway, 1991; Harding, 1991; Code, 1996; Rose, 1997).

In the end, this outsider status actually seemed to be an advantage because it allowed many of the women to relax and confide in me as I was not involved with their industry.

I had some fears before the interviews. I thought that I needed to know more of the technical aspects of the industry as I would be speaking to engineers and the like. So in order to prepare for the interviews, I read all the annual reports of the various oil companies, and the latest information on them from different science and engineering sources.

However, what I found when conducting the interviews was that I did not need as much of the expert knowledge as I had initially thought. A lot of the information that I required was not specifically technical in nature. Rather it was more behavioral questions and other information with regard to race, transformation and gender that was needed. In order to get that information, it was important to gain the trust of the participants. It was here that I felt that they needed to know that they could trust me with personal and confidential information as well as that I had the necessary skills and qualifications to deal with the responses in a professional manner. One of the commitments that I made was that I would send them a draft of the first part of the analysis in order to check if they felt comfortable with the way that it was written and their anonymity ensured. I committed to it and sent the data analysis to them. Three women responded with positive comments.

3.18 Positionality

As I mentioned before, I did not have any corporate experience and I felt that in that respect, I was a complete outsider. This was even more evident at least for me, when I interviewed women in the financial section. Although most of the women that I interviewed were very clear in their responses

to my questions, where I felt that I could ‘connect’ with them is during discussions of their experiences with recruitment and selection processes, of which I had experience in both the NGO and government sector. As this issue of the women being passed over for men was significant for them, I felt good that I could participate in the discussion with knowledge and insight and even at times assist with things that needed to be clarified.

While I was in the NGO sector, I did not feel the overpowering presence of male authority or domination, as this was a sector that women gravitated to quite naturally as some of the issues were what they experienced or what they were passionate about.

As a middle aged, Coloured woman, I felt at times that there was a subtle barrier between myself and the participants from other racial groups and backgrounds. What I felt especially challenging was my cautiousness when I spoke to black women. I was very much aware of our divided background in South Africa. This was evidenced by two of the participants who misinterpreted one of my questions, ‘How did you get here?’ The question was meant to explore the reasons for choosing the petroleum industry over others. However, the question was interpreted as an inquiry as to whether or not their positions were affirmative action related or not. In retrospect, perhaps the question should have been phrased differently.

My educational background was also somewhat different to the women, although varied, my studies and careers was in the performing arts, adult education, and women and gender studies. My career was as diverse, government-municipality in the Employment Equity department, and it is this experience that I could use for the most part when discussing issues of employment, legislation and diversity.

In some cases, my role as a mother allowed me to relate to the participants on a more personal level. With participants who had children, I related as a fellow mother and with younger participants I acted as a mother figure. This, I believe, helped establish the much needed trust relationship.

As a student myself I felt reasonably confident that I would be able to relate to the women especially those who were studying at that time. While I was not in the Science field, I had previous

experience working in an NGO, REAP (Rural Education Access Programmed) who assisted students with access to tertiary institutions. During the mentorship assistance programmed I became aware of the problems that they encountered and some of these issues were particular and related to the Science and Engineering faculties. The function that I performed made it possible for me to have in depth knowledge to many of the faculties and disciplines within the University and Technikon structures. From a personal perspective, I had studied at various institutions and was familiar with study methods and being a student in different disciplines.

The other thing that I could relate to with many of the women was the fact I did not find one woman who did not want to make a difference, and add value. From the very first interview, I gained an immense respect for the women, their aim was to excel at what they were doing, even for a few of them that did not want to climb the corporate ladder for various reasons. I could relate to the latter, as I am now at an age and stage in my life where I do not want to advance to higher positions but rather to specialize and still bring our part and add the years of quality experience and learning to the workplace. From that point, I grew with each interview to respect and admire these women more, I also learned a lot from them during that time.

As a mother, wife (at the time) and student, the multiple roles that many of these women play, is something that I could identify with. I was not sure of the financial and other constraints that they had. Although during our discussions in the interviews, I touched on the expectations that are associated with playing these multiple roles and sometimes the consequences associated with that such as burnout and the kinds of tradeoffs that need to be made in these instances.

As a Coloured woman, with an Anglicized surname, I was a bit anxious when I first made contact with some of the participants. In some ways this was a limitation which not only separated me culturally from many of my participants but also linguistically. However, having a mixed racial background which involved socio-economic hardship and experiences as a woman proved to be a uniting factor. So in this sense I was not an outsider.

3.19 Conclusion

In this chapter, I distinguished between qualitative and quantitative research methodology and reflected on the features of both approaches. I also explained why I opted for a qualitative research methodology as I wanted to explore the experiences of my participants in depth. I did so by locating my study in terms of Feminist methodology, specifically Feminist Standpoint Theory. I then discussed Intersectional framework which I argued was preferable for various reasons pertaining to the nature of my participants and the Petroleum industry which involved a diverse set of women from various racial and cultural backgrounds. I moved on to a description of my sampling methods, namely snowballing which allowed me access and gain trust as an outsider to the industry. The structure of my interviews as well as the challenges and difficulties of this approach is discussed.

I discussed the special ethical considerations of conducting research on women in such a competitive global organisational structure and specified how I met the various ethical obligations that come with this.

In the subsequent chapter, I will delve into the data analysis. This chapter is split into themes and subthemes which emerged from my interviews. These themes include leadership, work-life balance, coaching and mentoring strategies and how women can rise to the top of the Petroleum industry.

Chapter 4: Data analysis

In this chapter, I explore the various themes that emerged from the interviews I conducted with the women in my study. I focus on their views on leadership, its nature, style and demands, as well as the difficulties and challenges that they faced in achieving success within a male dominated environment.

My findings show that despite the wealth of literature on the alleged differences between men and women's leadership, many of the respondents expressed ambivalence to the question of the distinction between male and female leadership. A few of the women interviewed were sceptical of making generalizations as they had both negative and positive experiences of male and female leadership. Although some of the examples were related to the oil companies that they worked in, many of the women used examples of women's and men's leadership in other work experiences as well. The leadership issue was therefore especially interesting from the perspective of the women who had entered the oil industry as their first work experience. The three subthemes which emerged from the experiences of the participants are authentic leadership, intersectionality and female leadership roles respectively.

4.1. Perceptions of Women and Men's leadership in the Oil Industry

In this section I explore the most significant themes that emerged from the interviews I conducted with the women in my study. I explore their views on leadership, its nature, style and demands, as well as the difficulties and challenges that they faced in achieving success within a male dominated environment.

My findings show that despite the wealth of literature on the topic to the contrary some women do not perceive a significant difference in men and women's leadership style. However, other women felt that there were some important differences in their experiences of men and women superiors although they hesitated to generalize from these experiences.

Leadership studies encompass elements of organisational theory, sociology, and gender studies. A central question within leadership in gender studies is naturally whether there are qualitative differences between men's and women's leadership styles and approaches.

The participants who tended to think that there is a difference between men and women's leadership described by one participant, Babalwa, in the following way:

Women tend to think of the collective...There is a difference between the way men and women lead. Yes, because we are different...women tend to think of the collective and tap into themselves, men would have to try harder.

The view about the collective was represented well among other participants. In another interview, the response to the question was similar, Moefeeda said

I think that women are concerned about the team as a whole, how they function and work together and if their individual needs are met. Individually if they are reaching their potential, so they are definitely different in that respect from men.

Tamara disagreed and said,

My superior is a woman and she is not like that at all, she leads like a man', not too concerned about the team, so I don't agree that all women in leadership positions are concerned about the collective.

Another participant said, "I am not sure if all the women lead like this, but the woman who is presently my superior, does care about the wellbeing of the team". Leanne affirmed this sentiment in stating that "I think that women tend to be more collaborative in their leadership styles, a bit more people centred. But I have also worked with men who are like that".

The research participants seem to feel strongly about aligning the attributes of caring for the team to women's leadership. Previously male dominated organizations such as the petroleum industry were initially thought to be gender neutral. However, various masculine centred myths and associations abound in the industry (Miller 2004). In the context of this research, the oil industry can be viewed as "gendered organization" which retains for the most part the institutional patriarchal and hegemonic male cultural practices (Smith 1979, Acker 1990, 1992, Martin and Collison 2002). The oil industry in South Africa has taken strides in its attempt at transforming the industry and yet many of my participants still mentioned the requirement to be "tough", "intense" and even "cut-throat". These traits are associated with the masculine leadership characters of the old oil industry. My participants claimed that thinking of the "collective" and tapping into their experiences was something men had trouble doing.

4.2. We lead, We Care

One of the most interesting and insightful discussions on women and men's leadership, was about what kind of women's leadership can exist in a male dominated environment. I asked a series of questions related to how women lead and the following represents the views of my participants.

Nombulelo: I was initially trained to emulate men, their leadership style, and had some difficulty in relating to members of my team, particularly as I am single as well.

Me: *Does the difficulty in relating to the team relate to male leadership?*

Nombulelo: Sometimes, so maybe I need to respond to the first question of the difference between women and male leadership. So I do think that because I was trained by two males who supported and encouraged me to advance, I adopted their leadership styles. The other part of being single was that I had to be taught or made aware that I needed to express interest in my team, especially those with families, I learnt this in the women's networks and programmes.

Me: *Yet these men showed an interest in you reaching a higher level in the organisation, and supported you, so men's leadership could incorporate these traits?*

Nombulelo: They were definitely the exception, most of the other males in leadership positions in this industry, do have a more dictatorial type of leadership.

The idea of "emulation" and the "dictatorial" nature of male leadership was represented in other participants' views.

Tamara described her experience in this way: "I think that some women may take on the kind of male leadership, which I think is mostly oppressive and domineering, if this was their first job. They may not have been exposed to other kinds of leadership."

Fatima expressed a similar sentiment:

I worked in other oil companies and I found that only one or two of the women in leadership positions who mirrored the kinds of male traits of leadership. For quite a number of the women in leadership positions, they are aware of the dictatorial leadership that many of the men display and have veered from that.

The word "dictatorial" surfaced again in the response. The idea that men lead like dictators without concern for the opinions of others that men are undemocratic is significant here. With Babalwa this view is expanded upon to reflect on the contrast with women's leadership styles.

I think that because this is such a competitive, high pressured environment, the male characteristics of leadership is known and respected and when women display a more participatory leadership, it is sometimes questioned by women themselves.

She continued by saying that this could be because the male type of leadership is the only one they know and maybe consciously or unconsciously this is the one that they emulate. This sentiment was expressed by Nombulelo as well as mentioned above.

Renata suggested that the style of women's leadership as "interpersonal" is an advantage of men's leadership.

I think that men get the job done, there is a deadline to meet, the interpersonal things are important, but we need to meet the objectives. That is what makes us more effective.

Fatima supported this idea, "sometimes dealing with all the personal stuff, diverts from what must be done".

A specific theme that emerged in terms of leadership was the idea that women's leadership is different, that women are moral leaders of a specific sort. Louise concurred with this thought but suggested that this alleged element of women's leadership was not necessarily exclusive to female leaders.

I think women tend to be more collaborative in their leadership styles, a bit more people centred. But I have also worked with men who are like that.

Wooley and Levy (2010) discuss the positive connection between leadership and follower psychological capital. Some of their findings suggest that the relationship between leaders and followers is often a result of the leader's influence on the work climate or environment. Thus, if males were inculcated into an environment or climate directed by a female leader, their subsequent leadership styles could be influenced. Wooley and Levy (2010) specifically explore how the characteristics such as age, gender and ethnicity can shape the leadership outcomes. For instance, they suggest that women in predominantly male work environments can have a less positive perception of the climate and thus be less receptive to authentic leadership because of the mismatch between the personal values of the leaders and their followers. Such as apparently the claim that "[f]or example, women have been shown to be more concerned with interpersonal treatment from authority figures, whereas men focus more on outcomes (Buttner, 2004)" (441). With relation to this latter point, Babalwa stated that:

I was initially trained to emulate men, their leadership style, and had some difficulty in relating to members of my team, particularly as I am single as well.

This reflects the notion which Buttner (2004) posits as women working in predominantly male environments sometimes follow the structural and cultural way in which things are done. In this way, the idea relates to the concept of system justification in sociology. System justification is a

cognitive bias which involves perpetuating the structure in which one finds oneself or with which one is familiar (Jost & Banaji, 1994) In gendered organisations such as the petroleum industry, this usually involves emulating men and their leadership styles, as Babalwa mentioned.

Again, the alternative is a kind of moral leadership which is brought out by both Moefeeda and Thandaza explicitly, the former stating that,

I can only think of leadership as a leader who discovers and identifies the skills and qualities of the people that she works with and then mentors, coaches, and unleashes that potential. I practice this kind of leadership, and for me for me this is surely what women's leadership should be about'

Thandaza said that women's leadership should take into account the subordination and oppression of women and uplift and promote women wherever possible, it is morally right to do this, men have had all the opportunities, and many years to achieve. She echoed Moefeeda's comments, in stating the need to identify the competencies that women have and to develop them further.

A few women said that they defined women's leadership as "doing the right thing" which is extremely interesting especially within a business context. Of course, the right thing could mean the correct course of action and not necessarily a moral action. But as Thandaza said in her interview,

I know that I was part of a highly politicised organisation and it did appear as if most of the men in senior positions loved to play politics, I am not interested in this. I prefer to look at the challenges that affect the growth and development of the employees.

Not wanting to play politics, which is often associated with self-promotion, and caring about the growth and development of those around you seem to be a distinctly moral ideal. As with Moefeeda previously, who also emphasised the focus on the workforce, and how important it was to be part of the growth and development of people, Thandaza expressed the goal of helping people to realise their "true potential". This seems to fit in with "authentic leadership" model, the notion of caring for others through workplace coaching and mentoring is one example (which will be developed below). This observation aligns with the literature on what is known as "authentic leadership". Authentic leadership is the understanding of leadership as involving essentially moral or ethical components, i.e. the "collective". "Authentic leaders place concern for others before their own self-interest, and this combines with their ability to manage moral and ethical issues to position them at the high end of full-range leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003)" (439).

4.3. Perceptions of Race and Gender in Leadership

Many of my participants believed that their gender had helped them in their careers. There were some mixed reactions to this subject. This aspect of the women's experiences came out when I asked the question of "Did your race and gender advantage or disadvantage you?"

Carol she said "definitely yes as a *coloured women* I don't think that I would have got this far, were it not for the Employment Equity legislation". Babalwa, in her response, said "Me, being a preferential candidate and race? Yes".

She went on to say:

When I got my promotion, my colleagues at work, said 'Just because I was *black* I got the promotion', that was said by mostly black women... There is a strong perception that black people support other black people. This is not always the case, she explained that it is different, now it's a different struggle, during Apartheid, it's was for the common good... Now it's a different struggle it's a competition to get opportunities.

She definitely saw her race and gender as being an advantage, although the response from her black colleagues was very interesting and complex. Solidarity is often assumed among the marginalised, yet this experience militates against this idea. Nombulelo, interpreted the question differently, she responded by saying that "I worked hard, blood, sweat and tears. My qualifications and skills got me here." I think that because this was a short telephonic interview followed by the questions being emailed to her, the context in which the question was asked was misinterpreted by her, and she made the assumption that I was suggesting that because she was black and a woman that this was the only reason why she was given opportunities. The past history of SA and the current legislation has created scenarios/feelings like this, and there is literature that are emerging which deals with this.

Renata, when asked the question, said "no it was not because I was *white*, it was because I came in with the qualifications and skills". For the other participants, the responses were mixed. For instance, Babalwa said "I have the qualifications and skills, but if it was not for the current

legislation, I would not have been considered”. Which is an interesting contrast from Renata’s perception.

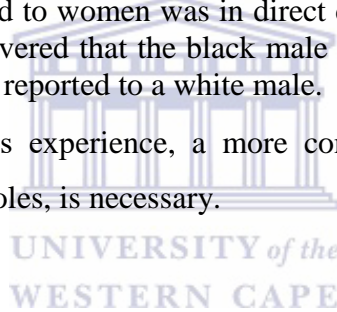
Babalwa’s view expressed difficulty with race relations in the workplace.

My race was at times an issue, especially with this one male employee, he clearly wanted to work with a white male or female. It annoyed me, as I was highly qualified for my job, had expertise in another area as well, and experience in the petroleum industry. I was not intimidated.

In terms of my questions on how race and other factors affected them, some participants were reluctant to embrace strict male-female or black-white dichotomies as the situation seemed invariably more complex. Thandaza, for instance, expressed the view in this way:

I struggle with generalizations, for example, I had a black male boss who was one of the worst bosses I ever had, and my best boss, was an American white male...I was very young and was constantly faced with the male black boss who expressed his views that the cultural expectations and roles assigned to women was in direct contrast to the work and industry in which I operated. I later discovered that the black male boss acted like that because he was insecure about his position, he reported to a white male.

In order to appreciate Thandaza’s experience, a more comprehensive understanding, which involves race, culture and gender roles, is necessary.



In South Africa, the issues of leadership are often complex as cultural and historical components enter into the equations and as relationships structured around race, gender, ethnicity and other aspects of identity play out in workplaces. As previously discussed “intersectionality” is the concept used to help think about the simultaneous and interacting effects of different combinations of social statuses (Zander et al, 2010: 457).

Zander et al (2010) claim that the intersectional approach is useful for development of managerial roles in multi-national corporations (such as the Petroleum industry). The “goal orientated” perspective is considered to be so ingrained that “[d]espite all efforts, business students are more interested in mechanical checklists than they are in each other, and therefore rarely learn to apply their social learning to the workplace” (Zander et al, 2010: 463). This trend can be seen as a resistance to the authentic leadership often exemplified by women (as we have seen in the previous section), discussed above, as future leaders can be resistant to what they perceive as “soft skills”. The intersectional approach, on the other hand, claim Zander et al., serves to raise awareness in

organisations “and supports practitioners in their day-to-day practice and attempts to develop an intersectionality informed management” (2010: 464).

Again, even when this participant who did not have female managers, she still considered individuals working beneath her holistically in terms of their different social roles and personas as per intersectionality.

I didn't have a female leader.....My leadership style is that I am interested in the person, as a whole...[I] will enquire about the family, understanding people- it's important for me to know this.

Some of my participants expressed that cultural appreciation was important. Whether the superior shared your race or ethnic group or not was not the determining factor. A white woman could understand the needs of a black women on occasion in contrast to a black man who might feel less sympathetic given that the person is of his own race. Gender and race are not clear determining factors in leadership roles and as many of my participants mentioned, female leaders tend to be concerned with a more “holistic” picture which takes various aspects of human life into consideration. Nevertheless, perceptions of race still received emphasis by my participants. Fatima felt as though the Oil Industry in South Africa:

Still seems to favour white Afrikaner men, with lesser qualifications and skills, including fewer years of relevant work experience above more experienced qualified women...It is a kind of racial favouritism, I believe.

If we take a broader perspective on gendered organisations such as the petroleum industry, we see that the inclusion of women at senior management level can mitigate some of the male dominated cultural issues. Another participant, Carol shared some aspects of the above experiences but claimed that she felt relief at the prospect of a more gender balanced organisation.

I was very young at the time, and I encountered quite a resistance to me as a woman, and a younger woman, in an area of work that was known to be more suited to men...I was happy when more women at senior management was employed.

A similar experience was mentioned by Louise in response to the questions related to the differing styles of male and female leadership.

I don't know if this is what you were asking for, but in my industry so many more women have come into the workplace since I started working... There are definitely women who are, or soon will be, the most suitable candidate to be the leader in their area of expertise.

The idea that a gender, and racially diverse management structure, can counteract the perceptions of racism and disregard for people "holistically" is shared by many of my participants. More female leaders not only affect the working experiences of female rising stars but also allow for other aspects of diversity to flourish in organisations, thus moving from the white male hegemony that characterises places like the Oil Industry.



4.4. Can I escape my traditional roles or can I use them?

The present topic was not included as one of the research questions. However, quite a number of women talked about the role transference from societal and personal roles as carers/nurturers and mother figures to the expectations in the workplace. Despite being in senior management positions, the expectation appeared to be that women would or rather *should* fulfill the traditional roles perceived by society. This issue emerged organically from the views of the participants and it evoked many responses which ranged from outrage and silent passive aggression to strategic acceptance.⁸

⁸ This theme relates to the topics of the previous chapters and in part concerns the nature of women's leadership in the Petroleum industry. A strong undercurrent in many of the senior managers' interviews, supported by the literature, is that women are "authentic leaders" which is meant to convey a moral dimension. However, some of

I start with a section of a dialogue I had with Felicity on her perceptions of the roles she plays in her organisation.

Felicity: I learnt on a women's leadership course that you don't have to do and know everything as a leader, the way to do it is to identify people with the competencies and skills that you don't have or have less of, and to include that in your leadership, and they may have skills that you don't have. The idea is to complement each other. We tend as women to want to do everything, we want to transfer our roles in society and the home so much, maybe subconsciously, into the workplace, where we have to know and do everything?

Me: *Do you think that this is what is expected of us in the workplace?*

Felicity: I think that because we are so conscious that if we make a mistake, that we would look incompetent, that we feel that we need to know everything. Obviously one has to have the skills and competencies required for the job, and it would be great to have a bit more over and above the job requirements, but to know and do everything is impossible.

Here the perception is that women are often required to perform the role of "knowing and doing everything" familiar from the domestic context. This occurrence is perceived as a double standard, not expected of their male counterparts.

Nombulelo described her experience in this way:

Women are natural nurturers and that will always be their advantage, the trick is to master when to release our softer side and when to be assertive.

She also mentioned that:

There's no need to prove a point by acting like men...Successful women act themselves and don't over compensate to try to match their male counter parts.

The idea of women as "nurturers" and other feminine roles was famously discussed in Kanter (1993). There she argues that there are "role traps" that women in senior leadership are prey to in male-dominated organisations. One of these roles traps is the "Mother" archetype. Babalwa

the characteristics of authentic leadership, such as the moral dimension and the focus on interaction and interpersonal abilities is similar to traditional roles in which women have been cast.

explicitly suggested that the difference between male and female leaderships is describable in terms of the differing parental roles.

[Women] could be mothering, caring part, men [are] like fathers –although not all the same-dictatorial.

A very interesting development of this idea came to the fore in Fatima's comments about the relationship between female leaders and their female subordinates, related to the mother-daughter relationship.

Females are much harder on female subordinates than on male subordinates...As women you need to prove yourself more to a women boss than a male boss.

Although the original paper describes these roles as mostly negative tools of subordination, Baxter (2012) reconceptualises them to be “gendered discursive resources” used by women to interact with male colleagues. Thus instead of viewing these roles as binding constraints imposed by a patriarchal system, they are seen as mechanisms women use in senior positions to assume conventional leadership roles temporarily and for their own advantage (not always consciously though). These roles can be the “mother”, the “seductress”, the “Iron Maiden” etc.

Leanne's comments were especially illuminating with relation to this concept when she stated that “men expect women to be charming”. Tamara discussed a related point in saying that she was aware of the expectations of some of the men with relation to Baxter's notion of “gendered resources”.

If I am expected to act like this, and it does not deter from my value that I bring to the organization and if it makes things easier to work with the men, I would, but within my work ethics.

Thandaza for instance noted this experiences of such roles:

Thandaza: when I started in the industry, I discovered that I needed to be what one male senior manager said, ‘charming’. He said that would endear me to everyone, especially the male staff, and they would do things much quicker for me’. I asked him what was wrong with being polite and just asking for things that need to be done? His response was that I could do that, but it doesn't mean that I would get them, the male staff, especially at senior level, to do what I asked’

Me: What did you do?

Thandaza: I was taken aback by this, I thought at a senior level that the whole feminine charms etc. didn't feature here, I was obviously wrong, but didn't feel like debating with him.

Me: And what happened?

Thandaza: I decided that if someone was really nice to me and did what I requested in the line of the work, I would reciprocate.

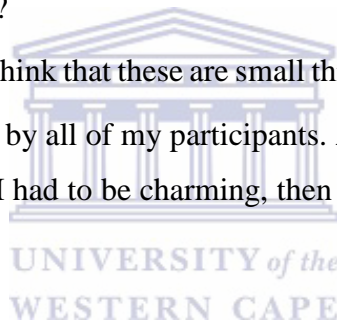
This exchange prompted me to ask questions related to this “charming” role in other interviews. Another participant mentioned similar experiences

Participant: Yes, I had a similar experience, but I thought, what have I to lose, I will be charming and get them to do the things I want them to do, I know that it's their work, they have to do it, but if they want to do more just because I am charming, that's fine. I can concentrate on the bigger things, I don't want to spend my time fighting men all the time'

Me: But do you think that by doing this, you would just support the notion that this is the way that women want to be treated?

Participant: Not really, I just think that these are small things, there are bigger battles to fight.

These experiences were not shared by all of my participants. Another participant claimed to have been “affronted by the notion that I had to be charming, then things would be fine, I was after all an engineer”.



Whether a role or expectation is considered “beneficial” is a matter of perspective and degree. My research did not contradict nor did it necessarily confirm the literature on gendered resources defined below.

“Thus, ‘gendered resources’ are associated with subject positions which senior women choose to take up, or positions in which they find themselves temporarily located, willingly or otherwise. These positions are provisional and shifting rather than fixed, and never define or contain a person permanently. They provide resources in the shape of discursive practices consistent with a particular gender stereotype such as the Iron Maiden or the Mother” (Baxter, 2012: 88).

Interestingly, both the “Mother” role and “Iron Maiden” stereotype were directly discussed by my participants who had clearly experienced these expectations. Below are two negative experiences of such expectations from Asanda, who had encountered both.

I dislike the ‘Mother’ role, I worked hard to get my qualifications, I am single, I don’t intend being a mother, and have never played that role-a nurturing role in my family or society. Sure I care about people and issues, but that does not make me a mother. So why should I be expected to emulate this role in my work?

At the same time, the Iron Maiden, forthright straight talking tough women leader also does not appeal to me. I expect people to do their job, like I do, to the best of their ability. In the oil industry and especially in the finance section, it’s what we do, our jobs, and we do it well. We form the backbone of the organisations, we do the forecasting and planning. Yet, when there are top level positions, they bring in a male. So what is it about women, that in spite of performing critical functions, they think we cannot lead? Could it be that if we don’t fit or display those particular characteristics we are not considered for leadership, or perhaps if we don’t display the masculine way of leading, we confuse them?

Notice a particular example of a trait associated with women presenting itself in the workplace and Renata’s discussion of this characteristic. This topic again emerged out of the leadership difference question.

I will give you an example of the differences between men and women’s leadership. This may not be true for everyone, but in some instances women can become quite emotional. One of the senior women became quite emotional, but she came back to apologise, whereas in the case of some male managers, they can have an outburst with you. They don’t come back to apologise. For them it happened and it’s over.

I found this to be very interesting. Renata, when describing the same behaviour, used different words to describe the actions of the males and the females. The woman became “emotional” and the man “had an outburst”. The juxtaposition of feminine “emotion” with male “aggression”. The feminisation of language is an important aspect of the value we place to describe the same or similar actions. Two other participants described male leadership as “more cut throat” and “men are hard-core- stick to their guns”. Both of these descriptions are intriguingly similar to the Frontier Cowboy myth perpetuated in the global oil industry. Miller (2004) discusses the symbolism in the industry in Canada and its origins in the old western frontier mythology.

The dominant, or hegemonic, masculinity in the oil industry is expressed through three major themes, or processes: *everyday interactions* are characterized by informalism and paternalism based on shared masculine interests that exclude women from power; individualistic competition is combined with a dominant engineering occupational culture effectively to *reinforce the division of work by gender*; and gendered interactions and occupations are embedded in a consciousness derived from the powerful *symbols* of the frontier myth and romanticized cowboy hero. The result of these processes and their underlying consciousness is a powerfully masculine culture (2004: 48).

Again, not all the participants felt that the gendered resources were advantageous and some seemed more in line with the original Kanter notion of “traps”. For instance, Carol showed some frustration with this and described her experiences with these gendered expectations in the following way:

I am sometimes placed in a situation where I am asked to arrange events and activities associated with women...the whole notion of the ethics of care...this even at my level of senior management.

I am single, no children and I am told to be concerned about child care facilities. Sure, that would be a concern for women with children, and we can discuss it in the women’s networks, but these are not my needs. We are not a homogenous group, just because we are all women. I don’t understand this, we are very proud in our women’s network to include the LGBTI issues and concerns, so the needs of single women who are not interested in childcare etc. should also be recognized. Yet, these are all the things I think women leaders embrace, this is what women’s leadership is about, the ideal would be for men to include these issues into their leadership too, as it is part of the work/life balance dynamics.

Nevertheless, despite the masculine culture and the “gendered resources”, or “traps” depending on your perspective, some participants claimed that women do in fact emerge from these roles and develop a more holistic style of leadership with has elements of both masculine and feminine roles.

Some authors such as Eagly and Carli (2003) argue that so-called “feminine” leadership attributes such “as cooperation, mentoring, and collaboration are important for leadership in contemporary organizations” are advantageous and some even claim the future of business (Toor and Ofori, 2011). But the participants I interviewed expressed a hybrid style of leadership, some learned from the dominant male culture and some from their own interpersonal perspective.

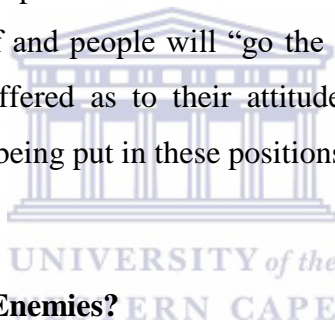
Moefeeda summed up her view in this way:

Women give up their female power... But you don't have to be a man to achieve or reach the top echelons of the organisation, my leadership style is that I am task orientated when it is necessary, and for me it is also about the person and the relationship.

Similarly, Nombulelo adds that one of her seniors said that she displays both the “iron lady” and having a softer side to helping people who seem to need more assistance. Renata had this to say about the different ways in which men and women in leadership achieve their goals.

In terms of teamwork and managing people, men get the job done, and this is good in terms of a shorter period, but in the case of women, they manage and sustain relationships, and the team works for a longer period because of their care and holistic approach, so people will go the extra mile for them.

This comment relates back to Wooley and Levy's (2010) theory about the relationship between leadership and the psychological capital of followers. Authentic leaders, such as some female leaders, can ask a lot of their staff and people will “go the extra mile for them”. Although the perceptions of my participants differed as to their attitudes towards being cast in so-called traditional roles, the experience of being put in these positions was ubiquitous.



4.5 Women as their Own Worst Enemies?

For many of the women interviewed, the issue of women's interaction with other women in their organisations was extremely important. Particularly the perceived problem of women putting other women down was most concerning. This latter perception was especially troubling in cases in which women were in a positions of authority and had decision making powers. According to the research participants, it is disappointing when women do not support other women, but when they deliberately stop other women from reaching their true potential and from reaching the top echelons of the organization, then it should be addressed. Here is what the research participants had to say about this issue.

Tamara said that “the problem with this is that there are so few women who reach the top levels of this industry and therefore the competition is really bad, so this could be one of the reasons that women do not want other women to succeed, they need to look good and they need to get an opportunity above other women, as there are so few opportunities for women at this level”.

Nombulelo had a similar opinion to that of Tamara, “I think that the women in the senior positions enjoy being the only women there. Another woman with maybe more ability or who is more competent would draw the attention to them. Comparisons would be made”.

Fatima had actual experiences of being hindered in her career in ways which she deemed inconsistent. “I went for several jobs at a higher level, and I was blocked by this woman who was the manager at the time on more than one occasion. In fact, she appointed men on three occasions. I had to train two of the men, and when I asked for feedback on not getting the jobs, she told me that I did not have enough experience for the job, but I had to train the new incumbents.”

Thandaza tried to explain why women might opt for hiring men as opposed to other women.

Women usually like to appoint or support men who are not too competent, they then get to always manage them, whereas if they had hired a competent woman, they would firstly not need to manage her as much and they may see her as competition.

Moefeeda’s opinion on this matter was slightly more charitable and positive.

I think that these women obviously lack confidence. We need to be taught how to support one another, this is something that women need to do. It is one of the most rewarding things to see other women flourish and know that you have been part of it, discovering their potential and developing them further.

Felicity added another aspect to how exactly women can be “taught how to support one another”.

As I said previously, the course that I was on taught me that as a leader you don’t have to have all the skills. Sure, you must have the core competencies for your job, but it would be great if more women are identified and their skills utilised. I did that in my team, so I can’t really understand why these women, who other women back, can’t see the advantage of bringing more women in and enhancing their abilities and skills.

Nombulelo supported this idea with her, “in an industry that is so male dominated it would be great to have more women supporting each other and working together”.

In listening to the women who had either experiences of this and the women who had seen and heard about it, I could personally relate to it. In my experience in the NGO sector, women tend to support one another, however in the government sector, women tend to support and promote men and find all kinds of reasons not to support women. There are a few women who do support other women, but they are in the minority in my experience.

There is a large literature on women as their own worst enemies in the workplace. These concepts emerged during my data analysis and interviews and they fall under the banner of the “Queen Bee Syndrome” and related topics.

I asked two of the research participants in separate interviews if they had heard of the Queen Bee Syndrome and they said that they had. For them, and in their department it was not so clear. Renata said “I applied for a job and was passed up for a man who had very little experience. My superior, who is a woman, preferred taking an unknown candidate. The men enter the organisation with a lot of hype, fabulous CV, maybe a few international assignments under their belt, and of course they can negotiate their salary and terms of employment very well, and this makes it difficult at first to see if this was the right candidate that a woman was passed up for. Much later, after we had trained him and discovered on which level he is at, and how much he must still learn, it is usually too late.”

“It is kind of sad” said Babalwa, “that a woman could virtually lie about the skills and expertise of the people which is in the instance usually men she appoints. I am not saying that all the male appointees lack skills. It is the ones that I have had to train and that some of my colleagues who are women had been passed up for, who had to show these men what and how they had to do their job”.

The Queen Bee syndrome is a controversial thesis that holds that women in power have a resistance to the promotion of other women. This phenomenon also shows itself in terms of women being harsher critics of other women in the workplace. “Some would argue life in the workplace imitates the hive in a syndrome named for this phenomenon: the Queen Bee Syndrome. One female rises to a level of authority and systematically works to keep other females from positions of power. That one reigning female, the Queen Bee, makes sure she stays on top” (Wrigley, 2005: 3). For Wrigley (2005), in the public relations workplace, women seem to add to their own lack of power.

This was reflected in an interview with Fatima, who said that “We have to work harder if a woman is in a management position and you are reporting to her. They can be very harsh and critical. Not to the men in team but to the women. It could also be that these women are concerned that they will be judged by the men who they report to”.

Tamara had similar experiences: “I found that these women will not be domineering or dictatorial in an overt manner like some of the men, but behind the scenes where it matters”.

Asanda explained: “I worked with a woman in one of the oil companies who had risen to the top quite rapidly. I thought of her as highly competent, but was taken by surprise when she did not appoint other women who were also highly skilled. Instead, it seemed as if she was appointing men and women who were not competent, and passed up the women who clearly were highly skilled. So I think that there is something even more problematic if a woman oppresses another woman. Then not only is this woman being oppressed by a man but also by a woman.

Fatima’s thought was that the consequence of this kind of behaviour is that “in the end this could erode anyone’s confidence and question their own abilities”.

Carol, on the other hand, had a more nuanced experience in which race played a significant role.

I have not experienced this kind of behaviour by women in my company. What I have experienced is something else. That women support women of the same race more than women of other racial groups.

As this was not part of the question that I asked, semi-structured interviews allow the research participants and researcher to digress. In many instances it could be something that is important to them and which was not covered by any questions. In this instance, given the racial background in South Africa, it was an interesting point that was raised. Despite there being women’s networks, women still network with each other in their racial groups aside from the main networking according to Carol’s perception.

There are various interpretations of this aspect of women’s experiences in the workplace (and yet others deny its existence completely). For instance, Litwin and O’Brien Hallstein’s (2007) suggest that the nature of the Queen-bee syndrome might have more to do with women internalising negative stereotypes of their own group for surviving in the male-dominated workforce. Place (2011) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between gender and power. The conclusion was that “gender and power exist in a push-pull or ever-changing system of simultaneous empowerment and oppression” (Place, 2011: 10).

I think this perception about women condemning other women in the workplace via ideas like the Queen Bee needs to be understood in terms of the larger feminist concepts of gendered organisations and male dominant cultures. There seems to be no evidence for intrinsic competition and oppression between women, and my own study reveals amazing cases of women supporting one another and taking pride in the networks that develop from such support. Some of my participants experienced negative interactions with other women. Others did not, or perceived more nuanced forms of negative experiences. My “networking” section, both formal and informal, show a very different picture of the relationships that women strive for with each other in the Oil industry, despite its highly competitive nature.

We have mostly focused on the nature of women’s leadership with relation to gendered organisations and masculine business culture. The experiences of the women with whom I spoke suggest that these issues are complex and not easy to categorise strictly. They have suggested that women are more akin to “authentic leaders” defined in the literature who considered other people and the interaction between them. But some participants were also reluctant to embrace generalisations and expressed opinions and reflections based more within an intersectional approach which takes race, gender, age and cultural factors into consideration. Lastly, the participants described experiences along the spectrum of gender roles in the industry as traps and those roles as resources for advancement.

4.6. Work/life balance and Multiple Roles

The issue of work-life balance has been one of the major challenges for women in almost every sector of the labour force. The “feminization” of the workforce (Casale 2004) involved many more women contributing to the global workplace in numbers. Whereas before, there were mostly men in various jobs and industries, more and more women started to be included in workplaces across the board. For many of the women I interviewed, the issue of work/life balance was something that they were aware of and were trying to cope with on a daily basis.

I start this section with a long quote from one of my participants, Felicity, who expressed a view that not only I could relate to personally, but that was also shared by my other participants.

I found it so difficult to juggle everything, I would start work at 7am, then pick up my child at 3pm at his school, then drop him at my mother's house on the days that I had to go to university, and then pick him up from my mother's house if my partner was working...In some cases when we were working towards a deadline, I would go back to work to finish work. This left one or two nights in the week to look at my studies, but the majority of work on my studies had to be done over weekends...This was exhausting, and what would have been nice if I could have worked from home for two days a week at least.

Thandaza also shared some of her challenges with relation to these issues.

I had transferred from another oil company and moved to Cape Town, I needed to work longer hours in the first year, I was studying part time and I had some family responsibilities. This was quite a difficult time for me, as I did not have the kind of network that I had where I lived before. What made it worse was that there was a small oil spill and my working hours increased at the time, as I had to engage with various stakeholders.

Fatima supported this idea and said that "I was at one time working long hours and this went on for quite a lengthy period. At the time I wasn't even aware of how exhausted I was, and I felt that I was not giving my children the attention that they deserved."

Asanda affirmed the specific pressures of the Petroleum industry in saying that "being in a senior management position makes it impossible not to work long hours at time, we work in a very competitive environment".

While Tamara expressed the difficulties of this level of engagement and maintaining a good family life;

You have this added pressure that you are a woman in a senior position and you always have to set the example. For most of the men working long hours is not a problem, they have someone to take care of the children and see to the needs of the family. Somehow you have to still perform these multiple roles if you are a woman.

The feminisation of the workplace however introduced further complexities. For instance, since many women were forced or chose to maintain their roles in the home, the balance between the home life and work life became a more pressing issue. As Asanda put it:

I find studying while keeping down a high pressured job is very difficult. What makes it even worse is when I need to travel. Fortunately, I don't do long periods, but I still feel guilty when I have to leave my family.

Then Babalwa expanded on this notion of "guilt" associated with leaving one's family.

I know how that feels. This continuous guilt is something that is so difficult to deal with. We are doing our best. I mean, I study, work hard, take care of my family, and I still don't have enough hours in the day. Even though my husband helps, a lot of the childcare still falls on me.

There is still a lot of resistance to accommodating women, especially in terms of child care vis-à-vis working hours. "Guilt" is a common side-effect of the forced balance between a successful career and a positive family life. In addition to this, many women have been skilling themselves and there is a significant amount of women who are studying and working, which leaves little time for them to devote to themselves and their families (Jones, Burke, & Westman, 2006, Judge, Ilies, Scott, 2006). These multiple roles can be difficult for women in senior management positions and eventually many women suffer burnout and are either forced to resign from high pressured jobs or seek other entrepreneurial alternatives (see Winstanley and Whittington 2002, De Sousa 2013).

Multiple roles and work-life balance need not involve children or an extended family, these pressures can be felt among single career women as well. Carol, a young single woman, agreed with the challenges that managing all these tasks was difficult. She is not married and does not have children, but has other responsibilities,

I leave work at 5pm, then go to university, and my class ends at 8pm. When I arrive home, I still have work from the office. This happens if there are urgent deadlines or work that has to be done and can't wait for the next day. My study commitments then get shifted to the weekend, at which point I have to attend the Saturday class, and then go back to the office. When I travel I cannot attend classes, so I do a lot of catch up when I get back.

Nombulelo supported this aforementioned idea with a specific example: “I also attend Saturday class, and this effectively means that my weekend is shortened, and this is also the time that I have with my family”.

Notions such as “pressure” is not unrelated to the difficulties of balancing work and home life. Moefeeda, a senior manager, described her experiences of work pressures in depth.

When I transferred from one oil company to another, I was not familiar with the downstream operations, and I needed to learn a few things, even though I was qualified for the job. My role in the new company was at a much more senior level, so working late was not an option, but a given. It was not my qualifications or skills that was the issue, but working with a new team, and the company was undergoing a restructuring process, so I felt the pressure.

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The historical imbalance between labour division in the home, and the societal expectations and socialisation of women, have left women with the challenge of fulfilling multiple roles. Initially, women were already battling to juggle work and family life, and further pressures on women who wanted to advance in the industries has meant that further study was required. Furthermore, Casale and Posel (2002) suggest that South Africa is unique in that women enter the workforce out of

need. “Unlike other countries where women workers are being *drawn* into the labour market because of demand for female labour, in South Africa women are being forced to join the workforce, out of sheer economic need” (Patel, Govender and Ramgoon, 2006: 39). Many of these jobs are at the lower levels of income. Thus, mechanisms for the facilitation of work-life balance at the senior management level have not been sufficiently developed.

Work-life balance is a concept related to the equilibrium between employment and home life.

“In everyday life, individuals and households struggle in particular ways to combine the activities of production and reproduction, work and home, in an attempt to achieve what in contemporary parlance has become known as work/life balance (McDowell, 2004: 148).”

Naturally, there is a gender component to this concept as women are still considered to be the primary caregivers in the household. Thus, balancing work and home life becomes particularly difficult. This is a narrow definition. In many cases, as with many of my research participants, the balance between work and home is not one of family life versus job requirements but between study and work or various other activities outside of the workplace.

Thandaza, for instance expressed her view in the following way:

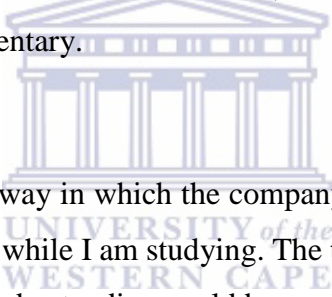
When I was on a long assignment, the break from my children was very difficult. I was still studying for my MBA during one such assignment. I always felt that my role as a mother was questioned, although my husband was very supportive. There were still those unspoken things of not being there for the everyday things that my children needed. That somehow I needed to be there.

Fatima even decided to postpone her further studies when she mentioned that “I am thinking of studying further, but I want to wait until my children are older”.

Although family life and work life are often at the centre of most debates around work-life balance, my study revealed that there are other competing factors that can affect this balance and in some cases this can be seen as a benefit as opposed to a conflict. The idea that the personal roles of women come into conflict with their work functions is due to a “role scarcity” argument. This

argument states that there is a limit to the amount of energy or effort which people can afford to their tasks. “A metaphorical pie is often used to illustrate; the time and energy represented by one “slice” of activity deplete the amount of “pie” left for the other roles” (Ruderman et al., 2002, 370).

Thus, when a woman expends efforts in her work life, then she is out of sync with her personal or family life. An alternative conception involves what is known as “role accumulation” in which it is argued that multiple roles can positively affect work. Under this argument, there is no conflict between work and home life but rather home life and the roles which it requires that can enhance work. This is consistent with many of the ideas of the leadership section of this research in which women are often expected to perform certain roles such as the “mother” role or others under more nuanced theories of leadership (such as authentic leadership). This idea emerged from one of my participants who did not see the conflict between studies, work and family as essential but rather suggested that it could be complementary.



Carol: I wish that there was a way in which the company could see that what I am studying will benefit the company, even while I am studying. The things that I am learning I can apply in my work. Surely a mutual understanding could be reached whereby I am given time off to attend to my studies and my family.

Nombulelo had similar hopes “Although we get days off for our studies, we are aware that taking time off when there are deadlines is not possible, yet these studies do add value to the work that we do.”

Tamara, expressed her feelings about the various roles that women play and also her anger at the double standards applied even when women do manage, against the odds, to establish a balance between work and home life.

Our studies are mostly at post graduate level, and most of us came into the industry with our degrees and some even with postgrad degrees. For example, if you are in finance, most of us were chartered accountants when we entered the industry like the chemical engineers. What we are doing now is post graduate studies, Honours for a few, more Masters and MBAs which

is heavy if you are doing it part time and have a very responsible job, and in a leadership role, and with that our family commitments, it can become too much at times... Then you do all this, and you still don't get easily promoted and passed up for a man who does not even have these qualifications and skills.

As the term "balance" suggests, the idea is that a balance or medium is required for both job satisfaction and home life fulfilment. If the scales are tipped in either direction, the other suffers. One problem is that this has led to the so-called "equal opportunities" discourse in the literature. In other words, policies aimed at including women in the workforce have centred around "levelling the playing field" instead of addressing the root causes of gender imbalance. As Smithson and Stokoe (2005) put it.

The language of equal opportunities typically reflects this ideal, and conveys as its main purpose the facilitation of a level playing field so that individual potentials can be realized within a system (Hughes, 2002). Equal opportunities discourse of women being the 'same as men' have, however, been criticized for silencing women: they cannot speak out about their difficulties, as this highlights their difference and their lack of suitability for the work, or need for special 'help' (148).

My participants also reflected on the fact that in their views, men should be more sensitive to the difficulties faced by women in the organisation. Babalwa was especially reflective on this matter.

For example, we almost appear weak, when we speak about women's health issues which may affect them in the workplace at certain times and some of the challenges related to it. So we keep quiet about it. It is only in the women's network that these issues are raised. It is a pity that men are not invited to these sessions or we cannot discuss these issues more openly.

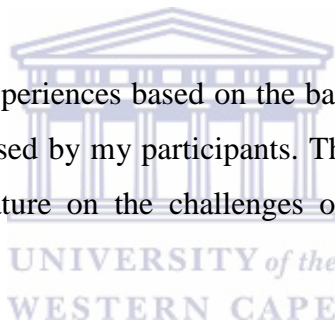
Nombulelo expressed a similar view: "You would think that it is known. Surely men they have partners, wives or girlfriends who experience these challenges."

According to the literature, in some extreme cases women have been forced to conceal their pregnancies and childbirth as reported in (Blair-Loy, 2001; Martin 1990). One of my participants mentioned exactly this phenomenon in her experience.

Carol: I know of some women, who know that they are pregnant but hide it because they don't want to be discriminated against, and then only reveal it later... The problem with this is that when women are afraid to speak about their needs even to the extent of their pregnancies, it makes it more difficult to plan. I am not sure why this is such an issue, it takes nine months to have a baby, during that time contingency planning can be made without embarking on any discriminatory practices.

This is the result of the organisational culture being predominantly male. Like many of the issues discussed in this research, the concept of gendered organisations becomes important and it is on to this topic that we move next.

In this section, many views and experiences based on the balance between studies, families and the pressures of work were expressed by my participants. The views were not uniform yet they reflect many aspects of the literature on the challenges of work/life balance which women specifically face.



4.7. Work-life balance and Travel

In the previous piece on the work/life balance and the challenges associated with it, a general perspective on the various challenges was discussed. However, another aspect of this balance emerged from my interviews, namely related to travel. Working at high levels in the Petroleum industry often involves both local and international travel. This presents a specific dimension of difficulty in the equation between balancing work and home life. Given that many of my participants chose to specifically focus on this aspect, it requires its own section as it produces its own challenges to women.

Specifically, Fatima discussed the difference between men and women in her workplace in the following way.

It is expected that it is the women's role to take care of the home and the children, so if we are working long hours, it is something that we need to organize...whereas with men, especially those who are married and with children, their wives take care of the family and children...We are then measured against the men who have a similar status, married with children, and expected to perform at the same level, whilst we perform multiple roles. There are no other working options which accommodate the multiple role that women have. For example, men can travel easier when it is required because their wives are at home with the children.

One of the other research participants, from a different oil company, Babalwa, had similar reflections to those of Fatima:

I can do more at home. When I work from home, there is more flexibility. This kind of working option will also accommodate my studies. I will be able to *travel* much easier to the university and for work, if I had a flexible working option.

Surprisingly, many studies on work-life balance neglect gender. For instance, as reported by Emslie and Hunt (2009: 152) “[o]ne example is Clark’s (2000) work-family border theory that aims to explain how people ‘manage and negotiate the work and family spheres and the borders between them in order to attain balance’ (p. 750).” However, as previously mentioned, the petroleum industry has a marked male organisational culture. This comes to the fore especially with relation to gender roles and work-life balance. One of my participants cited a “double standard for men” when it comes to working hours, flexibility and travel. Issues of childcare especially relevant with relation to this double standard (see next section). “Compared to married men with children, women advance more slowly in organizations (Tharenou, Latimer, & Conroy 1994)” (Ruderman et al., 2002: 369). Yet the ability to travel for work is a distinct advantage in this industry. As Carol affirmed, even though she was single with no children, that “travelling once a month locally, was a bit taxing, but she realized that to get ahead in this industry, that it came with the job”.

In the last few decades, women wanting to advance had few options of accessing internal training, which often meant after hours work such as assignments and additional travel etc. Naturally, such activities would take away some of the time with their families and generally involve travelling.

In many cases, development opportunities required more academic studies which can also be intensive and time consuming. As one of my participants, Fatima, noted again, “the travelling and heavy work pressure interrupts my time with my children and overall family life”. In a more extreme instance, one of the participants, Asanda from another oil company, said “I had to make a huge sacrifice and leave my husband and family for a period of over a year while on assignment in another country”.

Another participant, Thuli, from yet a different oil company was also given a very prestigious international assignment and she was also the first woman to hold such a position, said that “I missed being away from my family and friends for such a long period. Also the cultural differences made this kind of long term international assignments quite challenging”.

Such travel added more pressure, as for most women in these multiple roles (see next subsection), it has become extremely difficult to continue in this manner if the employer did not try to accommodate their needs. In addition, the whole issue about child care facilities has been a major challenge and much discussed in the literature (see White 2001, Diaz & Rodriguez-Chamussy 2013, Overseas Development Institute Report 2016). Although related, this will be discussed in the next section.

After the birth of her first child, Felicity started to question her role and career choices. Specifically, she said “[w]hen I had my son, at the time, I kept asking myself: Was it the industry or me? I was also that time trying to build my credibility”. Again, the balance between building credibility and devotion to family seem to be at odds.

The research participants of this study have worked in areas such as finance, strategic management, procurement, logistics and occupied top management positions in which critical decisions were

made and thus many of their challenges are relevant to a larger debate concerning work-life balance in industry. Thus, many of their experiences lie at the intersection of other fields or industries in which these skills are used. Some more specific issues related to the difficulties of establishing a balance between work and other aspects of life in the oil industry are beyond the scope of the present work. For instance, the potentially unique challenges faced by women on the off shore oil rigs are not included in my study. Nevertheless, most of the women interviewed had to regularly travel locally and for a few women, internationally for long periods at a time, and this impacted on them and their families.

Thus, for women in the oil industry, travel added another dimension to the already challenging work life balance issues discussed in the literature. My research has brought this dimension to the fore as the voices of the women in my study were expressed around this issue.

4.8 Lack of child care facilities

A number of research participants raised the problem of lack of child care facilities in relation to the work/life balance topic. For the research participants with children, child-care facilities at the workplace would have meant less travelling often at very early times in the mornings and in peak traffic, and having their children close by would definitely have relieved some of these pressures.

One of my participants, Tamara, mentioned a curious incident of policy change with relation to the issue of child care facilities at her company.

Our company used to be okay about children coming to the offices after school to wait for their mothers, but now it is not allowed anymore. I am not sure why this has happened. I asked if there were perhaps dangerous or hazardous substances that could be harmful to them, and [someone] responded that there were none. This was purely in the office environment.

Inexplicable changes like these can serve to make life difficult for women in this industry. Fatima had an appreciation for issues surrounding childcare despite her situation being somewhat different,

I was fortunate that I had family that looked after my children when they were very young, so I cannot imagine what it must be like to drop very young children off at a crèche early in the

morning and collect them late in the afternoon. I think that a lot of women and men with children would be more at ease if their children are close by and they can check on them. For the children it would be very comforting to be able to see their parents during the day.

Babalwa had specific problems with transport: “Our roads are so full, we really have a huge traffic congestion problem, and it is becoming so dangerous. Imagine we are on the road with our small children taking them in my case in the opposite direction to my work. It would have been much better if we made one journey.”

As my participants mentioned, one of the more common and challenging obstacles for women in this industry is the lack of childcare facilities. While this was not discussed in much depth in the interviews, as my focus was primarily the challenge of race and gender in advancement in a male dominated environment, it certainly was an issue which women feel strongly enough about to mention independently. Only two of the participants had children under the age of five, but three of the other women interviewed, had children over that age, and even for them an after-school facility at the workplace would have been beneficial.

Thandaza: I sometimes have to leave early, just to be in time to collect my child from the after care, they close earlier than the other after care facilities. It would have been great if we had one at our work. In some instances, when I have extra work, I have to take my child home and then his father takes care of him, but then I go back to work.

Nombulelo suggested “these are the things that we have to fight for in the women’s networks.” Thus, the women in my study felt very strongly about this issue.

This shift or new policy is not particular to the petroleum industry, or in one of the petroleum companies mentioned in the interview, it is a standard policy in most organisations. The question is where do the children of women in senior management go after school if the school is not in the same area as their parents? This has implications for transport and home care which becomes another challenge. Aftercare facilities would have addressed this issue.

Carol supported the idea of childcare to such an extent that she sympathised with women particularly in the South African context “I don’t have children, but with the high crime rate, it is essential to know that your children are safe”. This suggests that childcare is a significant enough issue that even women who are not directly affected would like to see changes made to benefit those who are.

Felicity had a similar perspective in her interview “If our companies had after care, we would have that peace of mind to know that they are safe, and near us, and I know that I would have worked much better knowing that my children are safe and close to me”.

Osborn and Kleiner (2005: 24) report on the discriminatory practices and policies of the oil industry. They attribute much of this to the culture of the organisation.

“The oil industry has faced many problems with discriminatory behaviour to its ethnic and female employees in the past. In fact, it holds a “macho industry” perception among general public opinion. In order to overcome this perception from maintaining a reality, corporations operating in the oil industry should take the necessary precautions above and beyond the laws to avoid such discriminatory behaviour that has cost the industry millions of dollars and emotional stress to its employees.”

The case of childcare is one in which these companies can go “above and beyond the laws” to prevent discriminatory and undue stress of female employees.

The need for women to balance their work and personal lives, especially when they have children, becomes quite stressful (as discussed in previous sections). In a few instances if it is possible, they opt for part-time employment (which one of the research participants chose). The information that I gauged from the research participants did not clearly give an indication if this was possible for everyone who applied. I could not confirm the policy related to part-time employment as I received no response from the human resource departments whom I contacted at the time.

Childcare has been on the feminist agenda for as long as women joined the labour force, and is more significant for women in the corporate sector who work long hours in male-dominated

environments. A substantial amount of information and literature is available on this topic and it is still something gender networks and policy formulation should be created for.

Thuli believed that this issue should and is something which needs to be addressed by women's networks. However, she noted the difficulty with a particular interpretation of addressing these kinds of issues in women's networks which was very intriguing.

Our women's network was working on a policy which included childcare, the only problem with these policies is that they insert these 'issues' which everyone then sees as a special gender or women's issue and it is then not taken seriously or implemented, rather than write the policies with all these issues in mind so that it is not an afterthought or special consideration.

The Lack of childcare facilities is a significant challenge in the Petroleum industry according to most of my participants. The strength of this issue was brought out by the urgency with which my research participants attempted to bring this to my attention and put these issues on the agenda even if it was not specifically asked in the questions I presented to them. Most of the women felt that onsite childcare facilities would lift the burden of traffic, transport problems and safety concerns.

4.9 Facilities for women in the workplace

Much of the conversation thus far has been about very high positions in organisations, but in many cases, the issues women face is at a very basic level. For instance, one of the research participants said in her interview that during her 20-year tenure in the petroleum industry, she has witnessed many changes including the relatively recent development of facilities for women. One would assume that basic amenities such as toilets for women would be a given in any organisation, but the lack of such facilities is evidence of the uphill struggle women face.

Leanne, one of the research participants from one of the major oil companies described the industry when she started in the following way,

When I started 20 years ago, there were very few women in my organisation. I worked at night. One of the things that we had to do to go to the bathroom was to get the key from one of the men. This may have been quite difficult as women have different needs at different times and the point was that there were no facilities for women at that time.

It seems that men held the keys to the success and the bathroom. However, since then, according to most of the women interviewed, there has been a major improvement in the petroleum industries in terms of facilities for women. My research does not extend to women working on oil rigs or who are doing shift work however.

Carol added that in her company, through the establishment of women's networks, "there are even breast-feeding facilities for women now". This is marked progress from the lack of bathrooms to breast-feeding facilities.



Flexible working options vs Flexi-time

In most of the interviews, the research participants said that it was up to the discretion of the managers to grant flexible working hours. Research participants from three different oil companies, Renata, Fatima and Tamara, defined flexible working hours in this way respectively, "if you arrive an hour early, you can leave an hour early and vice versa", "It also depends on the trust of your superiors in terms of your work and if they trust you as a person, then you can ask for this" and "There is also flexi-time with lunch time, you can either have it earlier in the day, or later in the day". This was what most of the research participants understood as flexi-time. In a few of the oil companies, as Tamara explained, "there is an understanding for mothers whose children are sick, her phone will always be on, and that she would respond, should the call from the office come through, unless it is a medical emergency that we experience, then we do not have to respond". In another oil company, the use of technological communication systems such as *Lync* is used when staff need to work from home. Leanne said that "I sign on and off using *Lync* and when we have meetings we use SKYPE sometimes or teleconferencing." Although as Babalwa mentioned that

this system came with a caveat “you should be able to respond within minutes otherwise you would not be trusted to work from home again.”

The request for different working options appeared to be something that could only be obtained if the women were working for a long period for the company. Leanne, for example, in her interview said, “I am now working in a 2/3 capacity after giving birth to my second child...I would like to devote more time to my family, I could negotiate 2/3 although it is not across the board”. Thandaza mentioned that “in some specialised areas of work, you can arrange your time. For example, if you have a 24-hour shift work, this is less likely, but in projects it is possible.” Felicity said that she had Fridays off, “I worked 80% but I had to ask for two years before that to make this happen.” Felicity was also at the top level of management. Babalwa, on the other hand, said that “it was not possible for me to even make this request as my manager was against women working in an oil company”. Thus, the experiences with flexible working hours were varied.

It appears that having the option to have different working hours is quite difficult to attain. A contributing factor is that this is dependent on the area in which you work. For the research participants interviewed in finance, different working options were something that they would welcome, especially women with children. Tamara’s expressed reservations at the situation with relation to remote accessibility in asking the question “Why do we have the communication technology if we don’t use it?” Fortunately, in three of the oil companies, there is the option to work one day at home, but with certain conditions according to my participants. For instance, there is an expectation that there should be a response time no longer than 30 minutes for all work related issues.

As one of the participants, Thuli, put it,

I think that we need to look at a completely different way of understanding what flexi-time is, or better still, do some research and look at what other companies are doing. There must be other working options, like maybe a half day off midweek, or a day off every second week.

Thandaza added further “I don’t think that there is anyone of us who only works a forty hour week, we always go way over the forty hours, but it’s not right, our families suffer.”⁹

The idea of flexible working hours for women in the Petroleum industry was something that almost all of my participants reflected on. The experiences differed in some cases, across different companies and management levels, but on the whole there was overwhelming support for the possibility of more flexibility in working hours and remote accessibility.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the multiple roles that women are expected to fulfil in both work and home life. With relation to this, many of my participants felt a sense of overwhelming pressure and even guilt for not being “there” for their families. The data showed that the notion of work-life balance goes far beyond merely juggling family life and work life, and includes studies, travel and other factors.

The discussion moved toward other roles and stereotypes, besides the “mother” role, that women are often forced to display in the workplace. There were mixed reactions to this phenomenon among my participants. Some of them saw these roles as resources to achieving success and others saw them as traps which insulted their qualifications and actual job competencies.

Lastly, the question of flexi-time and alternative working structures were discussed and the women’s views on how these structures could ameliorate the difficulties related to work-life balance came out strongly in favour.

⁹ One of the possible recommendations that could be considered would be to start a consultative forum for women which look at different working options and taking into consideration the different areas of work and which links it directly with the human resource practices. In this way, policies developed for women with different needs could be implemented, rather than to accommodate women in existing policies, which may only benefit a few women. It would also eliminate the need for management, which in many instances are men, to apply their discretion which may be biased.

Chapter 5. Support structures for women

5.1. Introduction: Women's networks and initiatives

In this chapter I explore the topics of women's networks and initiatives from the perspectives of my participants. For most of the research participants in my study, the women's networks and initiatives were places where they could obtain information and network with other women. As noted on many occasions in the previous sections, these networks went beyond the scope of merely exchanging information and touched on policy changes and the expression of frustrations with the male dominated environment that still exists in the industry.

The women's networks in the petroleum companies which were included in my study were for the most part informal although it was during working hours. The networks that were more formal in structure included programmes such as mentoring and coaching, as well as discussions on pertinent issues. The difference is described by Felicity in her experience as "the way in which our women's forum is made up is a bit of both, informal and formal, so in the formal there is more of a focus on work related issues, and with the informal which is mostly external, we get to engage with other companies and not necessarily oil companies".

Babalwa described her experience with these networks as follows: "In our company, our women's forum focusses on women's health and other issues related to women, and we have guest speakers and celebrate women's events". Another research participant, Asanda, said that "our women's initiative was very structured and formal, its more about HR matters and we looked at women's advancement in the company, but now with the restructuring I am not sure what's happening with it." Thuli also had the latter experience, "Our Human Resources department deals with most of the legislative issues and our focus is mainly external when it comes to compliance and transformation". Thus, each company has their own set of procedures and issues on the agenda for these forums.

The intended focus for this section is a discussion of the perception of these networks and initiatives, especially at senior management level.

Most of the research participants with the exception of one, said that the programmes/courses that they attended were really outstanding and served as tools for further development and advancement, and that made an impact on them, whether it was to give them more confidence, skills etc. Leanne, Thandaza, Fatima and Tamara, in separate interviews responded that the programmes were of a high standard, Tamara said specifically that “We don’t have any advancement strategies for women, but our programmes for women are excellent”. Fatima mentioned that “The programmes/courses are external and internal, either way, it is really beneficial for the workplace.”

On the whole, the impressions seemed very positive. For instance, Felicity had very positive comments regarding these initiatives “I found it so useful for my learning to have mentors and coaches as part of the women’s initiatives, there were so much exchange of ideas and support, it was really great.” Moefeeda echoed this sentiment “I think that we have a very progressive women’s network, we engage with other companies on issues that are relevant for women. In this way an exchange of ideas and networking happens”.

Given that my study is about the experiences of women in the oil industry, it was important to mention these programmes which I will discuss in more depth subsequently. Yet other participants discussed the various women’s networks and how useful this was for networking, mentoring and coaching.

I will first, very briefly, discuss the women’s networks, in response to the question of advancement strategies and later the programmes and courses which had a great impact on the research participants who attended these courses, but did still not serve as an advancement strategy.

5.2 Formal Women’s Networks

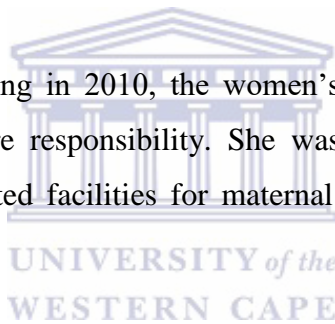
Networking emerged as a significant factor involved in the perceived success of women in the oil industry. Many of my participants were hopeful but critical of the formal women’s networks on offer in their industry. Formal networks are those that are over created across different companies with institutionalised structures, membership fees and agendas. Moefeeda, had this to say about

the women's network in her company, "it would be great if our network was linked to and could address some of the formal employment equity initiatives, and human resource policies." She went on to say "It should be more substantial, and monitor and track the progress of women". Her view addressed the perceived lack of support which women provide for one another as opposed to men. "The women's networks need another vehicle, as women do not always support each other, even in these networks".

Thandaza, from the same company, said that, "it's good to have OYA [a particular network] ...one of the oil companies, women's networks. We are made aware of health and social issues, but we should speed up the networking, it doesn't help you to advance your career though".

Another research participant, Carol, who is a leader of one of the women's networks said that,

Initially before the restructuring in 2010, the women's network changed from a cultural perspective and took on more responsibility. She was proud that the network included LGBTBI issues and had created facilities for maternal needs for women, for example to express their breast milk.



Babalwa said that "it is sponsored by one of the General Managers. The GM, reports to the CEO, So, they do things like awareness raising, events, taking visitors around and they organize events for them. The activities need to be supported, there is a committee...due to my work pressure, I cannot always attend the meetings."

Another research participant, Fatima, from a different oil company said that they have a women's forum. It promotes women, but suggested that I speak to the transformation manager to learn more about it. Despite several emails and telephonic attempts, there was no response.

Tamara, however, added another aspect of some of these networks, especially those of a more international nature. She said "Our women's networks are run by our overseas company, in the United Kingdom. I tried to read some of the information, but it gets busy here. If something is that remote rather than right here where you can participate, it becomes a challenge."

One of my research participants, who preferred her comments not to be attributed to her, was more negative concerning initiatives which were not locally based, “I don’t trust these women’s networks. I need to be physically engaged and see the people who organise it and know their agenda”.

The attitudes and impressions of the research participants were not homogenous as with many issues. However, many of the participants found merit in women’s networks and expressed caution about those networks which do not have local physical relatability.

5.3 Informal Networks

There are other informal networks which include women who attended the *Sunrise programme*, an internal coaching course for women. Informal networks are offered on a more local and immediate basis; they tend to be smaller and more intimate initiatives. In contrast to the formal networks, many participants felt as though the informal networks provided much needed support. Felicity, one of the research participants in top management, reflected on her experience with the women’s network in her company,

Ours is a mentoring circle, run by men and women who mentor, you learn a lot. Women start to support each other. All the structures are there and women can connect with one another. I think that men are missing out.

Babalwa emphasised the importance of informal networks.

Informal networks are sometimes where the real issues emerge, so we have a kind of support and networking called ‘snaking’ and this is just for women to keep up to date with the latest information, provide support. So let’s say we have a presentation to do in a meeting where we

might get some opposition or we know of a few males who would just criticize before we can even explain our concept, we use snaking to gain support and prepare our agenda.

Thus, informal networks present an opportunity to gauge support for ideas and garner advice on how to confront the male dominance of particular settings. As Moefeeda has said in her interviews with me, “It is always important to prepare well before a meeting, especially if you want buy in from some people who you know are difficult to convince”. Informal networks can provide an opportunity through “snaking” and other methods to prepare well for these meetings.

Asanda, supported this notion and added her voice to the experience of being “attacked” by men during meetings and other such gatherings.

At a senior management level this is almost a given, you cannot go into any forum whether it be a strategic meeting or anything else without preparing well. However, there is still a little bit of the ‘old boys club’ thinking when it comes to women and this is more apparent in meetings where they need to assert themselves. So we strategize beforehand. It makes it difficult for the men to attack us collectively as they sometimes do in meetings especially.



All of these experiences seemed positive and advantageous for women. However, Nombulelo brought out a limitation with informal networks. “Only problem with this [networking] is that there are so few women in top management, so with all the strategizing and caucusing we, in most cases, especially in our company, end up at times as the only woman in these meetings”.

I have linked the informal women’s initiatives and the internal programmes together because the internal programmes/customised courses are sometimes as a result of the internal forums and women’s networks where the gaps in learning or information is discovered.

The informal initiatives as Nombulelo said, “ is also a way of discussing issues which arise, which can be placed on the agenda much faster than in a formal network where forward planning takes place and consultation is needed to change or insert other topics earlier”.

And Fatima added of the relationship between informal and formal initiatives “that the one can feed into the other. This makes things sometimes more relevant, you hearing from the women themselves, if the General Manager coordinates it, it is usually his agenda that is followed.”

Moefeeda, cautioned that “These initiatives, such as informal initiatives, can also exist alongside a formal structure. A separation between what is entirely workplace issues and what are other issues, for example health awareness and topic such as this, although relevant and which can affect the workplace, can be placed in the one category”.

In an article in the *Harvard Business Review* 2013, it is posited that informal networks play an important role as a resource for women in leadership positions. It further notes that due to structural differences in women and men’s roles in the organization, along with the differences in career prospects, and in addition to the tendency to engage with the same gender, results in these networks could be of lesser value.

Asanda was insightful in her characterisation of the reverse situation involving men in saying that “men support men, after all when a promotion happens. It is in most instances a man signing the contract for another man, even if it is for a junior level man rather than a woman”.

Two of the research participants from different oil companies had different perspectives about the women’s informal networks and initiatives. Tamara, said that “sometimes in an open forum like that there may be repercussions for something that was raised”, and that she would not totally trust these initiatives. While Renata, said in her response to my question about advancement strategies that “people come in with their qualifications, and that the courses were too expensive”. She also mentioned that it was up to the managing director, but that “luckily he is very progressive”. Special emphasis on the concept of *luck* here and not design. So if you are lucky to have a progressive managing director then these initiatives are prioritised, if not they are not.

In conclusion, most of the research participants expressed various aspects of the role and effectiveness of informal networks. The salient aspect of these networks were that they provided an opportunity to counteract the male dominance of certain professional settings by allowing women to garner support for ideas and initiatives. However, as we noted by other participants, the low numbers of women at this level presented a problem for the full efficacy of these networks.

5.4 Women's programmes and courses

The courses or women's programmes mentioned in the interviews are offered through various institutions such as SAPIA (South African Petroleum Association), as well as internal customized programmes, such as the *Sunshine* programme, and courses attached to some of the Graduate Business schools and universities in South Africa. SAPIA conducted an evaluation of one of the leadership courses in 2015 and one of their recommendations was to add petroleum specific topics to the course. As a response to my enquiry about the courses mentioned in this section, SAPIA provided me with the outline and objective of these courses which I will list later in this section.

In an attempt to advance women, leadership courses are offered to middle and senior managers in almost all of the major oil companies in South Africa. These are external and internal courses which I will outline in this section which provide leadership, coaching, mentoring skills and technical knowledge related to the industry.

In terms of the SAPIA programmes, several initiatives emerged in terms of transformation in the petroleum industry, (see SAPIA presentation), however it was difficult to ascertain from the SAPIA presentation how many women graduated and more importantly, how many women, as a result of the leadership courses, occupy senior and top management positions. As one of the research participants, Nombulelo noted,

My current organisation is fairly small but from the industry perspective there are no mechanism in place that I believe are effective to advance women...The industry has initiatives like Women in leadership courses but many of the candidates don't end up in leadership positions.

Moefeeda also had experience with this course and expressed the same questions as Nombulelo, "I think that an evaluation was conducted on the Women in Leadership programme, I am not sure what the outcome of that was. It would be interesting to see how many women who attended the course actually ended up in senior management positions."

The SAPIA (South African Petroleum Industry Association) programme brochures which I received included two programmes: SAPIA's Programme (Advanced Certificate Programme in Management for Oil and Gas) 2017 which "focuses on real business challenges that Senior Managers face within the petroleum industry and uses a multi-modal approach to learning where we combine feedback, Integrated Group Projects, classroom experiences and methodologies, etc. To create a rich experience for candidates". The SAPIA WLP Programme (Women in Leadership) 2017, which "focuses on real business challenges that Senior Managers face within the petroleum industry and uses a multi-modal approach to learning, combining feedback, and classroom based learnings to create a diverse experience for candidates".

Tamara and Babalwa spoke with much enthusiasm about the leadership programme for women 'Conversations that matter'. Both of them attended the course and they are from two different oil companies.

Tamara: "I did Conversations that matter. I think that this was such an excellent course, very powerful. Taught me a lot and gave me the motivation to apply for higher positions in my company"

Babalwa: "It is a leadership coaching for women, with the intention to advance women or develop skills laterally...Run by a coaching person, and by women...Combination of senior and middle management...Was a clear pathing...use programme, mastery, coach, one on one and personal life...really inspirational!"

The Leadership in oil programme drew comments from the women such as this one by one of my participants.

Carol: It opened a lot of doors for me. Around 80% of the presenters were women which made a huge difference. In addition, they were excellent and highly skilled. The programme is meant to transform the industry. So how can we equip women to become leaders?

The 'women in oil' programme, according to Felicity, was "not as powerful as the leadership in oil programme, but it included valuable components such as finance, marketing, project management, networking and practical skills." She added that "There are exciting programmes in the oil industry. I travelled to Mozambique". Moefeeda mentioned that "the leadership in oil

programme was very powerful, it covered all the critical areas of the petroleum industry”. Asanda added of the same programme that “this programme prepared me for my overseas assignments”.

These reflections touched on the differences in the experiences of what some of the women’s companies were willing to contribute fiscally toward their development. Babalwa said that her company sent her on an amazing executive leadership development programme at an American University in Cairo. “I discovered that a leader is not someone who can do everything. Where I can develop, or someone else in my team can do it, it was incredibly freeing, very illuminating”.

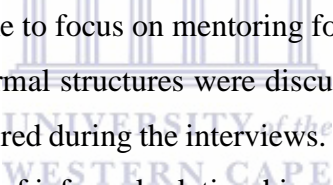
Fatima said, “my company paid for my Master’s degree in Economics. They walk the talk”. Moefeeda did not unfortunately share this experience, “Coming into the industry as a chemical engineer and completing the Leadership in oil programme, and later an MBA, I wanted to continue to coaching as this formed a major component of my job, and which I was passionate about. My company did not want to pay for my studies which was unfortunate, but I enrolled and I am studying business coaching and am learning so much. I am not disappointed that I did this”.

The women that she worked with had high regard for her and said that her mentoring and coaching was something that she excelled at, and that they all benefitted from. One participant said this about her: “As I have come to realise, the women in this industry, do not give up easily. She started with the business coaching and is paying for it herself.” This is a sentiment I shared of many of the women in my study. Their resilience was clear in the face of various obstacles.

5.5. An Interesting Discussion on Mentoring and Informal Networking

In response to questions about transformation in the oil industry, advancement of women as leaders and the women's experiences in the industry generally, aspects related to mentoring, coaching and networking were viewed as critical by the research participants. Many of the views expressed have far-reaching relevance for women working in other industries dominated by men.

The concepts of coaching and mentoring are related and generally refer to the formal and informal practice of support within organisations from an individual or group structure. Although there are no objective definitions of these concepts, the difference between the two concepts is that mentoring is usually conducted within organisations and on a more informal, individual basis while coaching is often done by outside service providers.¹⁰



In this small subsection, I would like to focus on mentoring for two main reasons. The first is that coaching mechanisms and more formal structures were discussed previously. The second reason is that something fascinating transpired during the interviews. In addition, some of the participants specifically emphasised the benefit of informal relationships of support. The relevant relationship here is the “mentor-mentee” dynamic which involves among other things individual support, advice and strategies for coping with work-life balance, advancement and other work related issues.

As Moefeeda explained:

There are aspects to mentoring and coaching which are personal to that person, the one you are coaching, and sometimes you realise that some of the personal issues that people are struggling with are proving to be barriers in their work. A generic mentoring and coaching programme does not always take this into account.

¹⁰ In some organisations coaching is provided internally as well. However, this still tends to be offered as formal structured events.

Felicity: For me with the mentoring and coaching aspect of programmes, it sometimes gave me the affirmation in terms of my work that I needed. Being in a high pressured environment and wanting always to do your best, you sometimes get ‘bogged down’ by small setbacks. Coaching does give you that perspective that you need, and if your mentor is good, they will focus on your achievements, the things that you do or did well.

The literature supports the role of mentoring in organisations.

“Mentoring is an important career development mechanism for both men and women, and a recent study shows that both male and female protégés valued the psychosocial functions such as acceptance, friendship, coaching and counselling rather more than the career development functions of sponsorship and exposure provider (Singh et al., 2002) (Vinnicombe and Singh, 2003: 304).

Vinnicombe and Singh (2003) go on to argue that “women only” mentoring and coaching schemes are necessary to combat the “old boys club” and male networking structures are prevalent in many companies. Thandaza’s experiences suggest the importance of female support similarly.

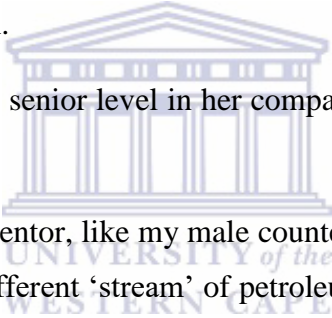
I had so much opposition from one of my male managers that it was important to network with other women, and gain their support...To find other ways, other than my own to deal with issues. It is good to be in a formal networking structure, but sometimes due to work pressures, one can’t always attend the meetings, activities or events, so it is good to network with other women in the organisation, so that they know what one is up against, and we can support each other.

Babalwa supported this perception,

At one stage, when I took over from a man, I was scrutinized and always reminded how he did things. I needed to convince the women in my team to give me an opportunity to prove myself and share my way of doing things. This was not always easy, as some of these women were older women and had worked with this man for years. The coaching really helped to cross this hurdle, and bring the team with me.

There was also a perceived need to receive gender sensitive mentoring. As the lived experiences of women in various male dominated industries are in some respects similar, it is natural to assume that women would have a unique role to play in the mentoring of other women. In a radical paper by Baileys, Scott and Sealey-Ruiz (2015), it is argued that black women, due to their life experiences, have a distinctive mentoring style. Drawing from Womanism and the black liberation movement, the experiences of black women is seen as providing a unique insight and understanding. Their qualitative study, involving Black female academics in the US, claimed the following: “In this study on Black women in the academy, we are suggesting that the mentoring that Black women give and receive is a form of literacy that is particularly understood and executed by them” (Baileys et al. 2015). By “forms of literacy” they mean particular understandings of the world through particular experiences. Whether or not we agree with this conclusion, the idea that women are uniquely placed to mentor other women seems to be valid and supports the importance of taking an intersectional approach.

Again, another participant at a very senior level in her company described her views on the need for mentoring in this way,



I would have liked to have a mentor, like my male counterpart did, just to bounce things off. For example, I come from a different ‘stream’ of petroleum, and it would have been great to have a mentor who was knowledgeable about the particular ‘stream’ to check with.... Having a demanding, high pressured job, and still having to do a lot of research took a lot of my time.

The interesting occurrence happened between three different participants whom I shall refer to as participant 1, 2 and 3 to further ensure that no one can be identified.

Participant 1 discussed the other side of the mentoring relationship as the mentor in a beautiful way.

I worked with a woman once who was a really brilliant engineer, she didn’t seem to have much confidence in herself. As the manager at the time, it was my role to encourage support, and make her believe in herself in her abilities...This is one of the things that drive me, being part of the growth of someone else, especially women who don’t realize their own

potential... When I left the place of work, I am proud to say that she was flourishing, reaching great heights.

There is a lot of literature on the benefits of the mentee in organisations etc., but very little is discussed with relation to the positive effects on the mentors themselves. To my surprise, participant 1's excellent role as a mentor was attested to by two other participants in my study.

In the interviews of participant 2 and 3, they spoke about participant 1. They praised her for her commitment, dedication and as one of them put it, "taking the team along with her and moving them forward".

The other mentioned that "She [participant 1] is an example of the kind of role models which we need. We should see more of them at top management levels."

The positive impression of participant 1 was repeated by two further research participants from different oil companies, one of whom said,

We got so used to seeing men at the top. We are not happy with it, but we get used to it, until a woman like [participant 1] comes along and shows that a more facilitative, holistic and participatory leadership is possible with the same results and even better at times.

Participant 1 is continuing with her studies in coaching and mentoring.¹¹

¹¹ During our discussions, my participants came up with most of the solutions. One of the things that they suggested was that women network with other women and men internally to support them and to share knowledge and information. One of the research participants who was at the receiving end of ongoing aggressive behaviour stated she deliberately looked for men or women in senior management who could 'vouch for her' for the work ethic and quality.

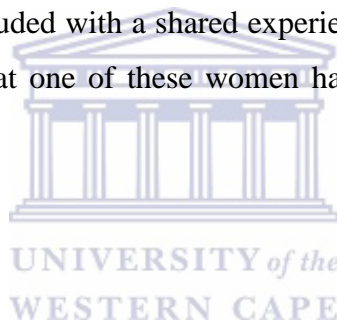
In other words, surround yourself (where possible) with people in the organisation who know your worth. This is also beneficial when you need a promotion. The other thing is to belong to the women's networks so that other women are aware of what is going on.

In addition to this, networking externally is also a good thing, perhaps not with colleagues in the different companies because of the competitive nature of the industry, but with other women in other industries, some which are similar to yours and other industries as well. This may produce different solutions and innovative ideas for your own situation.

Summary

This chapter delved into the networking tools of the petroleum industry. My research participants drew distinctions between the formal programmes offered by overarching bodies such as SAPIA and the informal company specific tools at their disposal for informal networking needs. They were largely supportive of the latter and believed that the former needs to be improved upon. However, many difficulties were expressed and challenged and the views of my participants were mixed on the usefulness of certain kinds of networking forums, especially of the international variety.

One formal structure which received high praise was the coaching and mentoring aspects of networking. My section was concluded with a shared experience between three participants who highlighted the significant role that one of these women had played in their careers and lives through her mentoring abilities.



Chapter 6: Labyrinths and Leaders

6.1 Discrimination, Recruitment and Selection

In my study, my participants spoke about what they perceived as discrepancies in some of the processes in at least six petroleum companies in terms of recruitment and selection. Two of the participants mentioned that their respective companies preferred external expatriates and white males for the top positions, rather than South Africans even for the local branches.

Tamara, at mid-to-senior level management levels said that

“Top management is in most instances recruited from outside. At our company they took a white male, 54 from Gauteng, with 26 year’s work experience, but not a Chartered Accountant. I asked if this qualification was needed in the job that he had to perform, and she responded by saying that it was in finance and the people that reported to him including her were all Chartered Accountants.”

Fatima expressed a similar sentiment in her interview, and said that there was a similar pattern of recruitment and selection processes at her company.

“They still seem to favour white Afrikaner men, with lesser qualifications and skills, including fewer years of relevant work experience above more experienced qualified women...It is a kind of racial favouritism, I believe.”

The experiences were numerous, as another research participant mentioned,

A white male who was given the job with only a diploma, with only a few years’ industry experience and is paid R350 000, above myself, a Chartered accountant with a Master’s degree in finance and years of experience in a which requires high level decision making and projection.

She went on to say

I am not sure if there is any compliance to the current legislation or how they do this, or get away with it. Who monitors these situations?’ said another research participant from another petro company. If they couldn’t find a white male, they would take expatriates and people from other countries above South Africans who have moved through the ranks of the organisation.

This phenomenon is discussed at length in Nkomo (2015). She describes two aspects of the Apartheid culture of corporations in South Africa aimed at reinstating the gender and race hierarchy that allows white men to occupy the top positions.

The everyday practices and cultures of too many companies are not conducive to attracting, developing and retaining existing black and women talent. Organisational cultures are not neutral spaces and are typically formed and shaped by the values of the dominant group. Research has documented two particular phenomena that can slow the advancement of black people and women: opportunity hoarding and social closure (Nkomo, 2015: 3).

“Opportunity hoarding” is precisely the phenomenon which my research participants have been experienced. It happens when the dominant group in an organisation keeps top positions and opportunities for other members of that group. Given that women, of all races, are generally not part of this group, they suffer when it comes to recruitment and also promotion opportunities.

“Social closure” on the other hand, is when tricks of the trade, not always visible in job specifications, are kept to members of the dominant group. The lack of information sharing results in a disadvantage for minority groups as they are left out of the loop when it comes to performing certain job functions. Or they make easily avoidable mistakes. In previous sections, the practice of coaching and mentoring can help alleviate this culture of social closure.

Again, Tamara, referenced an experience related to both opportunity hoarding and social closure.

I had to do an assessment. Did very well. Had the relevant experience and qualifications and yet I was passed up on two occasions for men, both not having the requisite skills and knowledge. The feedback I received from the Human Resources department and my manager

at the time was very confusing which made it difficult for me to know what or which area to improve on. Also there is little recourse if one is not satisfied with the outcome”.

In terms of promotion, one of my research participants was passed over for a position below her current level.

I was in level 5. To get to level 4...Level 4 manager left who was a male. I applied for his job, which incidentally I trained him in one of the critical aspects of the job that he did not have the knowledge and skills for. Yet, I was not successful, another male was selected.

These accounts suggest a pervasive picture of discrimination on the basis of gender and race. They also indicate the culture of gendered organisations and the subtle (certainly not invisible) mechanisms used to recruit, promote and support the dominant group in the oil industry. Nevertheless, the women interviewed in my study, have achieved many successes and promotions. This suggests that like in a labyrinth, the pathway to success is difficult, complex and frustrating, but many women value the chance to achieve success and manage to find innovative and creative ways of getting there.

One of the issues, pointed out by Eagly and Carli, concerning the inadequacy of the glass ceiling idea is that “it erroneously implies that women have equal access to entry level positions” (2007: 7). Before women can even travel through the challenges to fight for senior management, they have to get in. Both at the entry level and the higher levels, recruitment and selection processes bar many women from inclusion. In many cases, these procedures contravene employment equity and remind us of the “old boys club” aspects of industries such as Petroleum. This naturally leads us into a question of whether my participants believed that they could become the CEO of their various companies.

6.2. Can you be the CEO?

After all the interview questions and discussions, I asked the research participants, the question, “Can you be the CEO if you wanted to be?” It was a question that took some of the research participants by surprise. For others, it made them pause and think and for three women it was a definite yes. In other cases, there was uncertainty.

Moefeeda's response to the question was, "You could say after my international assignment and the position I held there, which one could say was at the level of the CEO here, I could easily do the job of CEO here, but there are lots of politics. So one is never certain that it will happen".

In this section, the factors preventing women from reaching top positions in the organisation will be explored. An important datum emerged from the interviews I conducted with many of the women in this study. One thing was that many of these women had achieved top management positions, and the other matter was that although they believed that there were implicit and explicit challenges, they did think such progress was possible for other women in the industry.

During the interview process, five out of the 12 women interviewed, were in top management positions, and my sense of this was that many of them felt that other women could also reach their level. Although they expressed concern that moving from senior management to top management was extremely difficult. This view was not shared by all of the participants however, and suggests that even an extended theory will not necessarily capture all of the diverse experiences of women in senior management.

Felicity responded to the question of can you be the CEO by saying:

Yes, it was a possibility. My position at the time, was one position below the CEO. There was also a woman in a top level position in the oil company that I worked for and she was practically running the company. She was considered by both male and female, including the board members, to be highly effective. She resigned when the company relocated to Johannesburg.

Asanda also had a positive response although she was guarded about the "politics" involved. This sentiment about politics was expressed before and is often seen as an obstacle given that women are either not interested in male politics or not well-versed in it.

The company that I am with complies with the Employment Equity legislation. We also had a very effective women's initiative which was formalized to an extent. They monitored the advancement of women...We have quite a number of women in top positions, and in

boardroom, and that this was definitely a possibility. I could be the CEO, as my international assignments and national exposure along with years of experience in the petroleum industry along with my skills and qualifications would make me a candidate for CEO. Unlike other oil companies, the number of women in top level positions would support the motion if I wished to aspire to be the CEO. There was only one problem, the politics at that level was extreme, and this was the arena in which the politicians played a role. So nothing is a surety.

Tamara and Fatima, however, when asked the question in their respective interviews, had categorically negative responses. The former said “It would first go to Afrikaner males, then expatriates or foreign nationals. We are last on the list, if at all. Also, we have to reach general manager level first, which is in itself a major advancement, how many women are there in the industry even at that level?”

One participant, Fatima, said that:

There is definitely a glass ceiling. Few women can reach senior and top management positions, but it is a slow process...The processes are complex, just trying to advance from one position to another can be difficult and fraught with many obstacles which are sometimes quite subtle and complex...the selection and recruitment process is still problematic and favour white males, even in the face of Employment equity.”

While another participant Tamara shared similar views, she also added that other dimensions in the recruitment process also play a role is the appointment of expats and the “moving of the goalposts”. “Moving the goalposts”, “complex processes” and “subtle obstacles” point to the need to analyse the experiences of these women in a more nuanced manner than the traditional glass ceiling approach which assumes invisible barriers that prevent all women from reaching the top.

The experiences of my participants are mixed and thus in contrast to the popular and familiar “glass ceiling” metaphor often used in research conducted on women’s leadership and progress in the workplace. I will argue that based the experiences of the women interviewed in this study, the more appropriate analogy is the “labyrinth” of Early and Carli (2007). Again, this metaphor is not

perfect and did not cover all the experiences of my participants, some of whom believed that there was an invisible barrier preventing women from rising to the very top.

In fact, many of the research participants said that even reaching the level before CEO, that of general manager, was precarious. A number of reasons were given, although there was no definitive reason why women found it difficult to reach even the general manager level. Again, I believe that this is in line with the notion of a labyrinth developed by Feminist thinkers recently. A myriad of obstacles was discussed during the interviews, which included gender parity, human resource recruitment, selection processes, the favouring of males and male dominance in the boardroom to more subtle hindrances such as the women selecting men instead of other women for promotion or selection and hostile working environment. But the central question is whether or not there is a perception that women in the oil industry in South Africa can reach the very top of their respective organisations.

Felicity in her interview referred to a “psychological glass ceiling” when she was asked the question, “Can you be the CEO?” When probed about this, she said that one of the women rose to top management in her company and managed a large section of the operations of the company very well. So women can reach top management level. Again, talk of a psychological glass ceiling seems more in line with the labyrinth symbol of Early and Carli (2007).

Her exact response was that “Because there are so few women in senior management, out of that only one or two women reach the very top management levels”. The word “psychological” here seems to indicate that with mental strength, women can rise to the top, again not the idea of a “glass ceiling” which suggested an actual (invisible) institutional barrier to promotion.

The labyrinth of leadership points to a range of issues both overt and subtle in gendered organisations. In Eagly and Carli (2007: 3) the metaphor of a glass ceiling is replaced with that of a labyrinth.

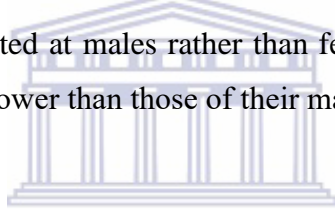
“A better metaphor for what confronts women in their professional endeavours is the labyrinth. It’s an image with a long and varied history in ancient Greece, India, Nepal, native North and South America, medieval Europe, and elsewhere. As a contemporary symbol, it conveys the idea of a complex journey toward a goal worth striving for. Passage through a labyrinth is not simple

or direct, but requires persistence, awareness of one's progress, and a careful analysis of the puzzles that lie ahead".

In their book, they go on to describe seven ways in which the "glass ceiling" metaphor is misleading, three of which are especially significant for my study. The idea of an invisible barrier at some high level of organisation through which women cannot rise, i.e. glass ceiling, suggests that there is some specific level of obstruction that this barrier is always hard to see or confront and that women cannot find creative solutions to breaking it.

However, Nombulelo had a slightly opposing view on whether women can progress even with creative solutions.

The industry is still very much male-dominated and women are not taken seriously as men. And promotions are still directed at males rather than females, regardless of how hard you work... Women's salaries are lower than those of their male counterparts.



This experience does not fit entirely with the labyrinth idea as there will be barriers to the success of women no matter what they do according to Nombulelo. The labyrinth metaphor represents the complex nature of the hindrances women face in reaching top management. But it also has a positive message, i.e. that there are pathways to achieving the goal of promotion and women have the tools to succeed. It is clear that some of my participants did not share this optimism.

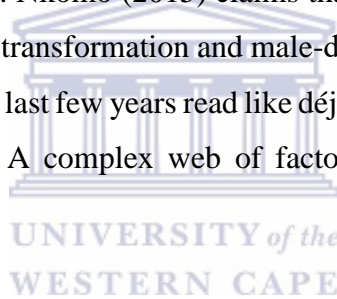
The idea is that unlike the glass ceiling which implies an invisible barrier to senior management, the pathways to success do exist for women but they are extremely complex and require perseverance, diligence and awareness. This metaphor supposedly aims to capture why there are some women who do make it to these positions but their number is few. But as I have shown, this metaphor is even limited in scope and does not capture all of the experiences women in top management encounter.

A sentiment expressed by Tamara and Asanda, was "You can count the women." which suggests that there are women who have overcome the challenges. Thus, the goal is to better understand the

barriers that women face in reaching senior management such as prejudice, resistance to women's leadership, issues with leadership style (what people prefer in women's leadership vs. what is needed) and family demands.

This view is supported by Oakley (2000: 321) who, states "Auster (1993), points out, that the glass ceiling is not one ceiling or wall in one spot, but rather many varied and pervasive forms of gender bias that occur frequently in both overt and covert ways." Oakley examines a number of reasons for why there are so few women at the CEO level in corporations. She suggests that promotion policies, training, and compensation all contribute to this problem.¹²

To South African readers familiar with the Apartheid system, the idea of a labyrinth might ring especially true. There were certain cases in which people of colour could rise beyond circumscribed positions. These cases were, however, rare and usually involved complex negotiation and strategy to achieve. Nkomo (2015) claims that new subtle barriers have replaced these Apartheid laws in preventing transformation and male-dominance. "The pace is so slow that employment equity reports over the last few years read like *déjà vu*. Why is this? Research suggests there is not a single explanation. A complex web of factors contributes to the slow pace of transformation."



Summary

In this chapter, the focus was on perceptions of upward mobility within organisations, particularly within male-dominated environments. While some participants felt that taking the top job was within reach for women. Others believed more obstacles to be in their ways, some hidden some more apparent. Much of what the women said corresponded to the literature of hidden barriers within a metaphorical maze or labyrinth of leadership (as opposed to the "glass ceiling" notion). This idea expands on the glass ceiling concept while leaving the possibility of success at the very top management level open, a claim which I think better captures the views of my participants.

¹² Of course, on the other side are definite clear barriers to women's inclusion. For instance, Bolton (2015) discusses "glass walls" or actual barriers in certain countries in which women require permission from their husbands to work and "occupational segregation" prevents them from employment in high-paying roles.

7. Conclusion

The motivation for my study emerged out of my own history in the non-governmental and governmental sectors, my role as a single mother and a woman of colour. I reflected on my interest in women's leadership which started in a women's organisation, an NGO based in Cape Town which served the rural and urban areas of two provinces, the Western Cape and Eastern Province. This experience of leadership leads into the government sector as well, where the structures were very rigid, and male-hierarchy firmly in place and respected. As my knowledge and understanding of women's leadership grew through the academy and work experience with women, I wanted to explore women's leadership in another sector, a section often lauded for its successes in gender equality. Through my work experience in progressive NGOs mainly focused on women's empowerment at the grassroots level, I started to see the immense barriers and challenges that women face in the workplace.

In many instances, particularly in South Africa, where the Apartheid system segregated and discriminated against people on the basis of mainly race, gender oppression was not explicitly discussed or researched. Nevertheless, the experiences of women of colour presented additional challenges at the time and the experiences of many of my participants suggested an intersectional approach was necessary.

In this study, I employed a qualitative feminist methodology to explore some of the experiences of a small group of women in a male dominated industry. I took a closer look at the obstacles that women encounter, such as lack of child care facilities, work-life balance issues and obstacles from senior to top management. My data showed that many of the women were optimistic of their chances of rising to the very top but they were also guarded as they understood the various obstacles related to hiring, recruitment and selection processes which still represented male favouritism.

A feminist intersectional analysis allows for a more nuanced approach to the experiences of women in industries such as this one. The issue of diversity is of great importance and difficulties in acknowledging and understanding all the aspects and nuances that come into play in diversity is

discussed. I draw on the women's diverse experiences to show how important it is to understand divisions structured around class and race. I show that that women's experiences are not homogenous nor are they predictable along purely racial or gender lines. Some women in my study had very positive support from superiors who were male and not of the same race, others experienced difficulties when their immediate superiors were of a similar cultural background. I showed how overt and invisible barriers, such as the glass ceiling are experienced by my participants. However, some of my participants were already in senior management positions and believed that promotion to CEO for instance was possible. The complexity of success suggested a labyrinth metaphor was more appropriate for these women than the glass ceiling.

In addition to this, the notion that the roles that women fulfill in the home are also be transposed into the workplace. For instance, in my data analysis, my interviews with the research participants revealed that some of the women felt as though despite fulfilling critical roles in the organisation, they needed to do tasks which were typical of the nurturing and organising in the domestic setting.

The issue of women of colour, with particular reference to Black women lagging far behind their White, Coloured and Indian counterparts was also addressed, this despite the progressive legislation implemented in the workplace. One of the questions in the interviews refers to the Employment Equity Act of 1987 as a means of advancing women of colour. As women are part of the designated group as per the Constitution of 1996, it is almost a given that women would be in a better position twenty years later. However, this is not the case, and I discuss the barriers which prevent women from reaching senior and top level management. A few women are progressing, but given the large numbers of women in the workforce the numbers of women moving up are few.

In order to gain a better understanding of industries such as the petroleum industry, different leadership models are discussed. As this industry is still very male dominated, it is interesting to see the kinds of leadership styles women have to employ in order to survive, and work in this industry.

The difference between male and female leadership is important as the notion of a purely women's leadership model needed to be delineated. The notion of women needing to emulate the male traits of leadership came up in the interviews, where women felt that this was the only type of leadership that they were familiar with as most of the women entered the petroleum industry as their first work experience. In my data analysis, I investigated whether the experiences of my participants suggested an "authentic leadership" model was appropriate for women in the oil industries. For others, it was more a question of survival and a need to be respected, and for a few women who were able to explore other ways of leading it proved to be a worthwhile experience as it included the mentoring and coaching of other women.

My research methodology also detailed the theoretical underpinnings of intersectionality and the importance of acknowledging all the aspects of oppression in terms of not only race and gender, but also socio-economic, ethnic, language, age, educational backgrounds, etc.

My data analysis covered various feminist motifs and theories which emerged from my discussions with the women. I discussed leadership, the Queen-bee syndrome, survival and success strategies employed by women. My overarching narrative was framed by the idea of the Petroleum industry not representing a glass ceiling but a labyrinth to success (Early and Carli 2007). The idea is that the path to success is precarious, hindering and confusing but there are ways of emerging from the many obstacles placed in front of women and the women represented in my study are evidence of the fact that progress and achievement are possible. However, the labyrinth metaphor also helps to explain why so few women are at the top level of organisations as these strategies of success are not commonly known and in some cases individually determined.

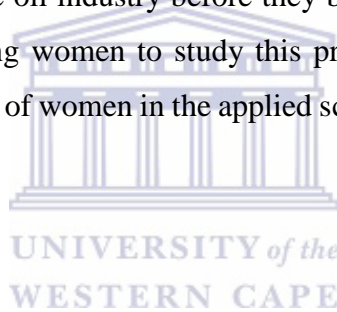
Of course, one limitation of qualitative research of this sort is that determinate conclusions cannot be drawn and recommendations are based on perceptions and experiences (see Appendix 1). However, on the other hand, quantitative research often hides or neglects the qualitative dimension of women's experiences within the structures and can therefore not present the full picture for the sake of understanding or progress.

It is my hope that women in other industries can learn from the experiences and successes of the remarkable women I interviewed within one of the much pervasively masculine organisational structures in society.

Future Work

This study leaves open a number of avenues for future research. One uncharted aspect involves a more detailed comparison between women's perceptions within the oil industry and other related engineering industries. What lessons can be applied to other kinds of gendered organisations and what special challenges do they face?

Another possible route for further study involves women in science. Many of the participants of this study reflected on the path before entering the field. More work can be done on grooming female engineers for success in the oil industry before they become members of the work-force. Then of course, encouraging young women to study this profession in the first place can also benefit from a better understanding of women in the applied sciences and industries such as the oil industry.



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Annexure A: Consent form



University of the Western Cape

Faculty of Arts

Women's and Gender Studies Programme

Private Bag X17, Bellville, 7535

South Africa



CONSENT FORM

Project: An exploration of women's experiences in top management in the Petroleum industry in the Cape Town

Researcher: Anthea Nefdt

Supervisor: Professor Lindsay Clowes

This small scale qualitative project aims to explore challenges and experiences women face when entering senior management positions in the Petroleum Industry in Cape Town. The main objective of the study is to explore how gender (and other relevant subject positions) impacts on women's career development and opportunities. I use a qualitative feminist methodological framework and plan to conduct a total of 8 semi-structured interviews with women employed in upper management positions in the 8 oil companies in the greater Western Cape area. A thematic data analysis will then be utilised to interpret the data.

The research study is for academic purposes and any data will be used toward the completion of the degree (unless otherwise stated).

The records of this study will be kept strictly confidential. Research records will be kept in a locked file and all electronic information will be coded and secured using a password protected file. In order to guarantee confidentiality of the interview sessions, only the researcher and her supervisor

Copies: Each participant will receive a copy of the signed and dated version of the consent form and information sheet. A copy of these forms will be filed and kept in a secure location for research purposes only.



Researcher:

Anthea Nefdt
Department of Women's
and Gender Studies,
University of the Western
Cape.

Supervisor:

Professor Lindsay
Clowes
Department of
Women's and Gender
Studies,
University of the
Western Cape.

HOD:

Prof. Lindsay Clowes
Department of
Women and Gender
Studies,
University of the
Western Cape.

or Interview

Topic of research: An exploration of women's experiences in senior management in the Petroleum industry in the Western Cape

Questions for participants

Past Experience and History

1. What did you want to be when you were little /growing up?
2. Could you tell me about your career history?
3. How did you end up here?
4. What were your biggest accomplishments/achievements in terms of getting here?
5. How important has gender / race been in getting to where you are?

Present

6. How long have you been in this position?
7. What are your main duties?
8. Does the current legislation assist in advancing women?
9. Are there internal mechanisms in your organization to advance women? If so, what kind of mechanisms are they?
10. Do you see yourself contributing to the strategic direction of the company?
11. What do you believe are the main challenges or obstacles White / Black/ Coloured / Indian women face in this industry?
12. Do you perceive any advantages of being Black / Coloured / White/ Indian in this field?

Future

13. Where do you see yourself in 5 /10 years' time?
14. What do you think will be the challenges in getting there?
15. How do you anticipate addressing those challenges (if any)?

16. Do you think women employ different leadership styles to men? If so, could you describe the difference? If not, why not?
17. How important do you think it is to have more women in senior leadership positions?
18. Do you have anything which you want to add which we did not cover?
19. Do you have any questions for me?

Thank you for taking the time to be part of this research.

Annexure C-Department of Energy



Transformation in
the Petroleum Indus

Annexure D-SAPIA



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