

## **CHAPTER 3: GENDER AND MANAGEMENT IN THE WORKPLACE**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

One of the most persistent observations found in literature on gender and management in the workplace is that women continue to face barriers to entering senior and top management positions. The interface between gender and management is examined in this chapter, with specific reference to women in general and Indian women in particular.

It seems that South Africa is faring far better than many of its global counterparts in women's representation at the director and executive management levels, according to the Business Women's Association of South Africa's Women in Leadership Census for 2011 (BWASA, 2011). The Census for 2011 indicates that women's representation at the executive management level in South Africa is 21.6 per cent, while the percentages in Australia (8 per cent), Canada (17.7 per cent), the United States (14.4 per cent) and the United Kingdom (12.2 per cent) are much lower (BWASA, 2011). The representation of women at the level of director for 2011 is 15.8 per cent for South Africa, whereas the percentages in Australia (8.4 per cent), Canada (14.0 per cent) and the United Kingdom (9 per cent) are lower overall, although the statistics from the United States (15.7 per cent) are comparable to those from South Africa.

There has been a steady increase in the number of women directors from 2004 – from 7.1 per cent in 2004 to 15.8 per cent in 2011. Women in South African organisations comprised 4.4 per cent of the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) and Managing Directors (MDs), 5.3 per cent of chairpersons, 15.8 per cent of directors, and 21.6 per cent of executives, while the rest of these positions are occupied by males in 2011 (BWASA, 2011). In 2010, the Department of Labour compiled the 10<sup>th</sup> Commission of Employment Equity Report, which indicated that Indian females constituted 1.3 per cent of top

management in 2010, while white males, white females and Indian males comprised 54.5 per cent, 9.3 per cent and 5.6 per cent respectively (Department of Labour, 2010). In terms of gender, white males still constitute the highest percentage in top management and white women take the lead in women's representation in top managerial positions. Indian women have the lowest representation in top managerial positions. In terms of senior management positions, Indian women comprised 2.5 per cent, while white males, white females and Indian males constituted 46.3 per cent, 15.6 per cent and 6.6 per cent of the incumbents respectively (Department of Labour, 2010). These figures once again point to the poor representation of Indian women in senior and top managerial positions. This implies that while Indian women may have easy access to middle management posts, they still encounter a glass ceiling in reaching top managerial positions.

The purpose of this chapter is to review the literature on gender and management in the workplace. There have been a number of theoretical explanations for the general underrepresentation of women executives in management positions. These theoretical perspectives are focused on first, with an emphasis on the women's life context perspective, which is especially relevant to the current study.

I begin with a discussion of the theoretical perspectives explaining the status of women in leadership and management.

### **3.2 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES**

Several theories have been developed to explain the dearth of women in managerial positions. These theories are discussed to enable me to indicate why they are not able to account fully for the experiences of Indian women in management.

### 3.2.1 Person- or gender-centred approaches

#### 3.2.1.1 *Theories relating to a masculine and/or feminine traits approach*

The person- or gender-centred perspective was first promoted by Horner (1972) in her study of the low achievement of women in organisations, and later by Hennig and Jardim (1977) in their book on successful women in management.

The gender-centred or person-centred perspective claims that women possess certain skills and abilities, but also a number of traits – for example, submissiveness, fear of success, unwillingness to take risks and a failure to develop executive skills – which are unsuitable for management (Akande, 1994; Fagenson, 1990; Hall-Taylor, 1997; Kanter, 1977). Men, by contrast, possess suitable qualities for managerial positions (Kanter, 1977), such as aggression, forcefulness, competitiveness, self-confidence and independence (Schein, 1975; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). These skills are believed to determine different outcomes for males and females in managerial positions (Schein, 1973).

The basic premise of this approach is that women have acquired skills through socialisation which clash with managerial role requirements (Fagenson, 1990). Another perception is that women have been socialised to prioritise their families and personal lives rather than their careers, which is incommensurate with managerial role requirements (Kanter, 1977; Fagenson, 1990).

Calás and Smircich (1992) argue that the male norm becomes the standard of how women are judged, thus not acknowledging that women also belong in organisations. Masculinity (or a lack of it) has therefore been identified as the most pervasive element that has been a barrier in women's advancement in management. Male managers today still believe that men possess the traits, skills and knowledge to be in management (Davidson & Burke, 2000).

Cubillo and Brown (2003) argue that women's qualities should not be regarded as weaknesses, but as strengths that women can use in managerial positions. Women's purported lack of ability is due to being in unfamiliar surroundings rather than to their not knowing their job. Also, since male managers perceive women to fail, women are not chosen for assignments that require dealing with risk or working in unfamiliar areas of business. A fear of failure diminishes as women come to know what to do (Ruderman & Ohlott, 1992).

Ely and Padavic (2007) have analysed empirical research conducted over a 21-year period and found that the stereotypical male and female traits that scholars used in the 1970s are still referred to in current studies, implying that gender is a given personality trait of women, rather than socially constructed.

Many researchers have used masculine and feminine traits to illustrate the under-representation of women in management. I provide a few examples of these studies in the next section.

### *3.2.1.2 Studies related to a masculine and feminine traits approach*

Research using a person- or gender-centred perspective has been conducted since the 1970s. Goktepe and Schneier (1989) requested college students to conduct gender-neutral tasks during a semester. The aim of the study was to measure the effects of sex and gender role on leader emergence. The results of the study revealed that males tended to emerge as leaders more than women did.

Kent and Moss (1994) conducted a study on undergraduate business students in the United States. The researchers wanted to ascertain the effects of sex and gender-role perceptions relating to leader emergence. Their study revealed that males and women who were androgynous emerged as leaders and were perceived by fellow-students as leaders.

Schein (1994) conducted a study on samples from the United States, Britain, Japan, Germany and China on perceptions of traits required in management. The results indicated that women were rated lower on traits perceived to be essential in managerial positions. Men were still seen as having the qualities needed in managerial positions.

More recently, Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) conducted a study on male and female managers in a large insurance organisation in Britain. The study focused on examining the perceptions of managers regarding what constitutes successful managerial traits. The results of the study revealed women still attribute managerial success to possessing masculine traits, and regarded this as a barrier to their upward mobility.

Hayes, Allinson, and Armstrong (2003) conducted a study on three samples of managers and three samples of non-managers in Britain. The study aimed to measure the difference in intuition between males and females. The results of the study indicated that there was no difference in the intuition between male and female samples. Their study revealed that women managers are as intuitive as male managers.

While some researchers have focused on masculine and feminine traits as barriers to advancement, others have focused on the female advantage to women's career advancement into managerial positions.

### *3.2.1.3 The female advantage approach*

Another alternative to the gender-centred approach to management is that "women have different and even better skills compared to men in managing the demands in the global workplace" (Hartl, 2003, p. 17). Calás and Smircich (2001) point out that the literature relating to the psychology of women has always praised the qualities associated with men and undervalued those related to women. By contrast, the female advantage perspective regards women as potentially better managers than men because women have better

skills than men relating to interpersonal relations, women believe in sharing power, nurturing followers and including employees in decision-making (Davidson & Burke, 2000; Vecchio, 2003).

Rosener (1990) points out that the first generation of women managers adopted male managers' way of managing. The second generation of women managers have different skills and attitudes which they adopted from their experiences with other women and they prove that managing in a different way to the accepted male norm also achieves success.

Eagly (2005) suggests that management roles are undergoing changes as hierarchical workplaces are replaced by flatter structures. Male command and control behaviours are no longer favoured, as these are replaced by women's transformational and androgynous leadership styles (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These days, women leaders are transformational, and since leadership roles are more flexible, women are able to operate more effectively in these roles (Eagly, 2005).

Peters and Kabacoff (2002) believe that women in executive roles are willing to take risks, just like men, and that they are oriented to strategic thinking. The effectiveness of men and women executives might be measured using different standards. The problem lies with the sexes being judged according to such different criteria. Men may be judged on assertiveness and action-orientation and women on maintaining positive interpersonal relationships.

One of the reasons for women's not advancing in managerial positions, in spite of having a female advantage, is that they face a double bind regarding their roles as leaders. Women have to choose between being assertive on the one hand, and being likeable and feminine on the other (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2001; MacCorquodale & Jensen, 1993; Vinnicombe & Singh, 2003). Eagly (2007) claims that leaders are expected to be agentic and not communal. Men are believed to possess agentic qualities, while women tend to be seen as more communal. However, these days more

women are displaying agentic behaviour, even though they still possess elements of communal behaviour. When women display agentic traits, they are often viewed in a negative light, but men displaying the same traits are regarded positively (Cooper Jackson, 2001). In the past, women were expected to adjust and become “one of the boys”. However, there is a trend away from that, especially with attention now being paid to women’s leadership styles (Cooper Jackson, 2001).

Many studies have been conducted relating to the female advantage. In the next section, I discuss a few of the studies researchers conducted relating to this advantage.

#### *3.2.1.4 Studies relating to the female advantage approach*

The majority of studies conducted on women’s managerial skills aimed to prove women have superior managerial skills compared to men. For example, Helgesen (1990) interviewed four women executives and found that women have a unique perspective relating to organisational structure, compared to men. The women executives in her study had a more caring approach toward people. They were more concerned about relationships; they did not like complex rules and structures, and focused on the process and not the product or task. The women executives’ styles resulted in better relationships with employees.

Rosener (1990) conducted interviews with women leaders on how they perceived themselves as leaders and how their style differed from the control-and-command style of male managers. She labelled the women executives’ managerial style as interactive, as these women shared power and information with subordinates, supported participation and enhanced their employees’ self-worth. This style is regarded as being better than the control-and-command style that men employ toward employees.

Burke and Collins (2001) conducted a study on 1 031 female accountants relating to their most preferred management style. The findings of the study indicated that women accountants are transformational in their leadership styles compared to male managers. Another finding of the study was that transformational leadership skills are more effective than transactional managerial skills. Therefore, women accountants were found to be more effective in communicating and mentoring subordinates than males.

Powell, Butterfield, and Bartol (2008) conducted a study on 459 male and female MBA students. The students had to read a vignette of either a male or female transformational or transactional leader and evaluate the leader's style. The results of the study indicated that female evaluators rated women transformational leaders as more effective than male transformational leaders.

While some researchers believed women had superior management styles compared to male management styles, other researchers support the claim that there are no differences between the management styles of men and women.

#### *3.2.1.5 The “no difference in gender in management style” approach*

The idea that there are no substantial gender differences in management styles was first introduced by Adler and Izraeli (1988) and is based on the belief that women should think, act and dress like men and be assimilated into management. The premise of no differences between male and female leadership styles implies that both genders are equally effective managers (Adler, 1994; Powell, 1990). Proponents of the “no gender differences” approach advocate that women receive managerial training and equal opportunities in order to avoid tokenism, so that they are on an equal footing to men when they enter organisations. The “no gender differences” approach does not take into account that women with their unique approach, like men, can make a contribution in the management arena as well (Adler, 1994).



During the 1980s and 1990s, many researchers, including Bass (1981), Dobbins and Platz (1986), Bass (1990) and Powell (1993) subscribed to the notion that there are no gender differences in management styles. However, Rosener (1990) questioned the notion that no gender differences between male and female managers' styles exist.

Many studies have been conducted showing that there is no difference between male and female managers' styles. The next section provides a few examples of studies relating to the “no gender differences” in management styles argument.

### *3.2.1.5 Studies relating to a “no difference in gender in management style” approach*

Kabacoff (2000) conducted a study on 13 male and 13 female CEOs and 73 male and 73 female senior vice-presidents in various private organisations in the United States. The results of the study indicated that leaders differed in very few leadership traits. Moreover, both male and female managers were perceived as equally effective by their employees.

Van Engen, Van der Leeden, and Willemsen (2001) conducted a study in four department stores in the Netherlands. The aim of their study was to ascertain where gender-typing relating to the workplace setting influenced the behaviour of male and female managers. Shop assistants working in female-led and male-led departments were asked to rate their managers in terms of being task-oriented, of being people-oriented and of transformational leadership styles. No gender differences were found in leadership styles.

Oshagbemi and Gill (2003) conducted a survey of 1 440 leaders and managers in the United Kingdom relating to their leadership styles. The findings of the study indicated that women managers delegate less than male managers do, but the study also indicated there were no substantial differences between the management styles of male and female managers.

Hopkins and Bilimoria (2008) conducted a study on 130 male and female managers in senior positions in a financial institution in the United States. The findings of the study indicate that there is no difference between male and female managers in terms of emotional and social intelligence. The study also reveals that male and female managers are equally competent. However, male managers were regarded as more successful than female managers.

The person- or gender-centred perspective has been criticised by many scholars, which I discuss in the next section.

#### *3.2.1.6 Critique of a person- or gender-centred approach*

The person- or gender-centred approach is not enough to explain why there are so few women in management positions – research findings indicate that women’s progress in organisations to senior management positions has remained slow, even when women are as qualified as men (Cleveland, Stockdale, & Murphy, 2000). Men are perceived as leaders in organisations, while women are seen as followers. Women in male-dominated organisations are less inclined to regard themselves as leaders and they do not actively search for leadership roles (Davidson & Cooper, 1986).

Recently, the person- or gender-centred perspective has been heavily criticised. Ely and Padavic (2007) have attacked this perspective because they believe that when studied individually, studies using this perspective make a contribution, but that as a collective, the literature, theoretical assumptions and research implications limit a researcher’s capacity to make sense of how gender functions in companies, limiting this area of gender research and preventing real strides in the field.

Research related to this perspective does not take into account how companies as socio-cultural environments shape differences between males and females. By contrast, such explanations can be found in feminist literature, which focuses to a great extent on the social embeddedness of

gender. While feminist social psychologists have paid attention to gender identity as a “process negotiated in context” relating to organisational aspects such as recruitment, for example, they do not regard organisations as contexts and focus on inequality rather than differences between the genders (Ely & Padavic, 2007, p. 1121).

Ely and Padavic (2007) also found studies in which sex differences were attributed to socialisation during childhood, holding on to societal sex roles, or differences in power between men and women in society. These studies emphasise that childhood socialisation affects male and female behaviour in the workplace, implying that adults are static and completely socialised, ignoring the fact that social organisations and relations at work enforce gender-appropriate behaviour. These studies do not take into account how organisations can either support or upset cultural norms of what is deemed appropriate behaviour by members of each gender, and when this leads to conformity, it is sometimes regarded as indicative of either sex differences or resistance.

Ely and Padavic (2007) also found that some studies reported on the findings regarding their null hypotheses that workplaces were gender neutral or that gender had no effect. Some researchers’ null hypotheses indicated that organisations were putting in place measures to improve the situation for women. Very few studies noted that similarities may be due to men and women “conforming to male-centred work expectations, rather than that expectations regarding gendered behaviour have diminished” (Ely & Padavic, 2007, p. 1124).

Ely and Padavic (2007) discovered that some studies showed that other factors (for example, confidence or work level) may explain the differences between men and women. Researchers using a person- or gender-centred perspective ignored the fact that these alternative factors could also be gendered.

A gender-centred perspective does not take into account organisational and societal factors which may affect women's ability to reach top management positions (Yukongdi & Benson, 2006). There are a few shortcomings of this perspective, as expounded by Hartl (2003). The first is that this perspective presumes that women are identical. Secondly, this perspective encourages stereotyped beliefs about women's capabilities, which give males sufficient reason for not placing women in managerial positions and perpetuating the glass ceiling. This perspective regards women who have broken through the glass ceiling as exceptional and suggests that they have reached top managerial positions due to luck, their potential and/or drive. Thirdly, by focusing on individual women managers, this perspective does not take into account organisational factors that are responsible for women not progressing in their careers.

Vecchio (2003) points out that referring to the female advantage implies that women have superior qualities compared to men. The female advantage perspective tends to focus on women's soft skills, and not hard skills such as the ability to negotiate effectively. The various work settings in which managers find themselves are also not accounted for. Thus, context is neglected in research conducted on male and female managers, and the female advantage therefore only refers to differences in gender attributes.

The person- or gender-centred perspective is an excellent theoretical base for conducting research dealing with men and women's personality traits and management styles. However, the gender-centred perspective is not used as the lens through which the current study is conducted, as it provides a very narrow view of women in management. This perspective does not allow a researcher to take into account the work setting the women managers find themselves in. Also, this perspective blames women for behaving differently from male managers and overlooks the unique perspectives women bring to the workplace.

Next, I review the literature on the situation- or organisation-structured perspective.

### **3.2.2 A situation-centred or organisation-structured approach**

#### *3.2.2.1 Theory relating to a situation-centred or organisation-centred approach*

A situation-centred perspective was promoted by Kanter (1977) and was also advocated by researchers such as Fagenson (1986) and Mainiero (1986). More recently, researchers adopting a situation-centred approach have argued that the culture and characteristics of an organisation, such as structural factors (Kelly & Mavin, 1998), influence differences in beliefs, perceptions, behaviour and attitudes (S. Valentine, 2001) and have in the past limited women's participation in the organisation and provided greater opportunities for men (Crow, 1998; Fagenson, 1990; Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003; Simpson, Sturges, Woods, & Altman, 2004).

Palermo (2005) maintains that structural factors include recruitment, women's late entry into middle management (Hall-Taylor, 1997), work assignments, relationships between formal and informal groups and training and promotion. Thus, women are seldom found in top management positions and they do not have much power (P. E. B. Valentine, 2001). Calás, Smircich, and Bourne (2007) have identified negotiation situations, belonging to same-sex networks, the proximity and centrality of networks and the extent of cross-sex contact as structural factors that impede women's progress in organisations.

Hartl (2003) posits that horizontal and vertical factors such as blocked opportunities, tokenism and balancing work and family result in women's not progressing in their careers. Blocked opportunities occur when males are placed in positions which could lead to advancement and women are placed in positions which are unlikely to accelerate their careers. Alvesson and Due Billing (2009, p. 119) claim that the "gendered nature of organisations"

approach posits that gender is not introduced into workplaces, but is created through the actual job itself. Gender identities are shaped in the workplace by which workplace practices are regarded as masculine or as feminine. Gender becomes less significant when equal opportunities between men and women are promoted in the workplace.

Acker (2006, p. 443) posits that workplaces consist of “inequality regimes” which are “interrelated practices, processes, actions and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations”. The presence of inequality is present throughout organisations where managers, supervisors and line managers have more power than clerks, personal assistants and personnel officers. Even when workplaces have egalitarian goals, they tend to adopt inequality regimes over time.

Patel, Govender, Paruk, and Ramgoon (2006) argue that women’s positions in organisations can be comprehended in terms of organisational structures and the clustering of women in lower power roles rather than as a function of individual gender differences (Kanter, 1977). Lower level positions offer little power to individuals, making them more dependent on others (Basu, 2007). Kanter (1977) believes that advantageous positions offering employees power and opportunities are held mainly by males and that disadvantageous positions offering fewer opportunities and power are held by females. People in advantageous positions also acquire attitudes and behaviour that lead to their promotion, while those in disadvantageous positions acquire attitudes and behaviour which do not lead to advancement. Women’s aspirations and expectations are thus low because they do not have opportunities as a result of the work structure and stereotypical attitudes towards them (Bielby, 2000).

Strachan, Burgess, and Henderson (2007) posit that if men and women are to be treated equally, than women are expected to adhere to male-centred norms and patterns, and this leads women’s differences to result in disadvantages. Equal treatment also means that structural barriers such as child care and employment are ignored.

Many scholars have researched a situation-centred perspective relating to the under-representation of women in management. In the next section, I discuss a few studies related to the situation-centred approach.

### *3.2.2.2 Research relating to a situation-centred approach*

A study by Freeman (1990) shows that women tend to down-play their femininity in order to be seen as managers first and as women second, and tend to adopt traits that are more masculine, such as being more task-oriented than considerate, or being more ambitious at work. Therefore, Freeman (1990) maintains that personality traits (or the behaviours that express personality) change according to the situation.

Ibarra (1992) conducted a study relating to the informal same-sex networks that males and females in a New England advertising and public relations agency belonged to. The sample in the study consisted of 73 professional and six secretarial/clerical male and female staff. The majority of women (44) in the study occupied lower level positions. The results indicated that forming networks with other women did not advance the women's careers.

Metz (2005) conducted a study on 1 183 female employees with and without children in the Australian banking industry. The focus of the study was on whether situation-centred factors such as internal networks, support from mentors and encouragement from managers relating to careers were barriers to women's advancement. The results of the study indicated that women with children had fewer internal networks and mentors, because they spent fewer hours at work. Also, women with children were not encouraged to advance in their careers, as they are perceived as being more committed to their homes and children than to their careers.

Simpson et al. (2004) conducted a study on 221 MBA graduates in the United Kingdom and 225 MBA graduates in Canada. The women from the Canadian sample mentioned that they did not receive any career guidance, workplace

networks did not include them, they did not receive proper training, and they experienced rigid work practices. The sample of women from the United Kingdom mentioned they had experienced workplace networks that did not include them. The women from both Canada and the United Kingdom identified structural barriers to career advancement.

The situation-centred perspective has been criticised by many researchers, which I discuss in the next section.

### *3.2.2.3 Critique of a situation-centred approach*

Ely and Padavic (2007) found in their analysis of studies relating to gender and situational factors (for example, power, characteristics of negotiation positions, having same-sex networks, formal workplace roles, importance and closeness of networks, extent of cross-sex contact and income and occupational levels) that if situational factors are the focus, gender is discounted, and if gender is salient, then the complex nature of organisations is overlooked. These authors give the example of power and gender. They argue that when studies focus on the management levels at which men and women operate, and remove the influence of power and separate the influence of gender, such studies do not take into account that gender and power are joined.

Ely and Padavic (2007) also argue that since gender is part of these situational factors, men and women do not react in the same manner, as they are confronted with different elements in these situations. Researchers also often fail to notice that processes in organisations are not gender-neutral.

Hartl (2003) highlights the contribution and shortcomings of this perspective. Some contributions of this perspective are that attention is drawn to why women have not advanced in their careers, the high turnover of women and the problems women come across due to their minority status. Some scholars



believe that women will no longer have problems due to their minority status once more women enter managerial positions (Adler, 1994; Kanter, 1997).

Hartl (2003) highlights shortcomings of this perspective, such as that the roles of factors outside the organisation that have an impact on women are disregarded. While the situation-centred perspective focuses on structural factors within the organisation, it does not explicitly examine power. Thus, this perspective is inadequate in explaining sex segregation. Hartl's (2003) arguments imply that an organisation-structured perspective is also limited in respect of enabling a full understanding of the broader societal context. However, an organisation-structured perspective is useful to scholars who are interested in focusing on structural impediments to women's upward mobility.

The next section discusses the gender-organisation-system perspective.

### **3.2.3 A gender-organisation-system approach (GOS)**

#### *3.2.3.1 Theory relating to a gender-organisation-system approach*

According to Fagenson (1993), the gender-organisation-system (GOS) perspective operates on two assumptions. These are, firstly, that organisations or individuals cannot be understood apart from the culture or society in which they are embedded (Crow, 1998; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). Secondly, a change in individuals, organisations and systems leads to simultaneous change in other aspects, such as sex-role stereotypes, expectations, ideologies and values (Crow, 1998; Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). Individuals, organisations and social systems change at different rates in response to environmental changes, and therefore, women in different countries have not progressed into managerial positions at the same pace (Yukongdi & Benson, 2005). The focus is on the status and experiences of women and men in organisations, together with the organisational and social systems in which they function (S. Valentine, 2001).

The gender-organisation-system perspective builds on gender-centred and structural approaches by assuming that situations influence people's behaviour, but that people differ from each other due to gender (Rindfleish & Sheridan, 2003). Rowley and Yukongdi (2009) posit there are three reasons, according to this perspective, for women's slow progress toward top managerial positions. The first lies with women themselves; the second is organisational factors and the third is a result of community and family influences on a woman.

Hartl (2003) suggests that women have to abide by male norms for being promoted if they want to advance in their careers, as career paths are designed according to male career progression. Also, managers have to prove their worth by the time they reach the age of thirty. They have to be the last to leave the workplace in the evenings and they are also not allowed to take career breaks to take care of their families, because if they do so, they are perceived to be less committed to the organisation. These arrangements suit men better than women, because men do not have the same levels of family responsibility. Women still have the greater burden of the home and children because of societal gender role assumptions.

Additionally, there are many other factors that reinforce gender inequality in organisations, including formal and informal structures, economic, social and individual practices. Women also lack opportunities because they are tokens, they lack access to mentors and coaches, and are deprived of developmental training such as exposure to challenging assignments (Davidson & Burke, 1994; Dellinger, 2002). Even when men and women are doing the same work, the requirements which organisations place on them are different. Thus, workers and organisations actively construct, perpetuate and resist systems of gender inequality (Dellinger, 2002). Benschop and Doorewaard (1998) refer to this as gender subtexts in workplaces, where a perception of equality exists, but gender inequality still prevails. Progress occurs as a result of the interaction of social forces, including political and legal activity, societal beliefs and values and organisational and individual action. Equality should be a

strategic aspect if organisations want to compete on a global level (Davidson & Burke, 1994).

A lot of research relating to the gender-organisation-system perspective has been conducted. I provide a few examples of such research in the next section.

### *3.2.3.2 Research relating to a gender-organisation-system approach*

Vinnicombe and Singh (2002) conducted a study with 12 male and female directors of a large international telecommunications organisation. The aim of the study was to ascertain the barriers to the directors' career advancement. The study found that women identified a lack of human capital, such as a lack of qualifications, individual factors such as aggressive behaviour, interpersonal skills relating to organisational politics and family responsibilities as barriers to career advancement.

Rindfleish and Sheridan (2003) conducted two studies relating to gender inequality within organisations, arguing that as more women enter senior managerial positions, organisations will become more inclusive. The first study focused on women in senior managerial positions in private organisations in Australia. The second study looked at women on boards of publicly listed organisations in Australia. The results of the study indicated that women in senior management positions tend not to use their authority to challenge gendered organisational structures, and as a result the status quo is maintained.

Rowley and Yukongdi's (2009) study of married women managers in Singapore found that women stopped working due to their household responsibilities and organisational factors such as negative perceptions of women that played a significant role in impeding these women's upward mobility.

Cross and Linehan (2006) conducted a study on 20 females in junior and middle management positions in a high-tech sector in Ireland to gain an understanding of the reasons for the underrepresentation of women in senior management positions. The findings indicated that formal and informal organisational policies and procedures such as a lack of mentors, being part of informal workplace networks, and individual factors of balancing home and careers played a role in these women not advancing in their careers.

The gender-organisation-system perspective has been criticised and lauded by several scholars, as discussed in the next section.

### *3.2.3.3 Critique of a gender-organisation-system approach*

Before discussing the criticism of the gender-organisation-system theory, I would like to mention the contribution of this theory. Hartl (2003) argues that this theory highlights entrenched beliefs relating to gender in the manner in which organisations are viewed in research and practice. The gender-organisation-system perspective confronts these definitions of reality and highlights that many of them are a result of gendered assumptions of the wider social context, rather than being objective descriptions of management.

One critique of person-centred, situation-centred and gender-organisation-system perspectives is that they neglect the intersection of race and gender in organisational studies (Bell & Nkomo, 2001; Booysen & Nkomo, 2010; Essed, 1991; Greenman & Xie, 2008; Holvino, 2010). The assumption is that gender is the same across all groups of women. However, race, class and gender are experienced differently by ethnic minority women than by their white female counterparts in organisations. A better understanding of power is needed in order to grasp the role of senior managers in reinforcing or shattering the glass ceiling.

Hartl (2003) claims that the organisation and private spheres are often regarded as separate entities which compete against each other and that the

aim is to find a balance between the two instead of integrating the two different arenas. How the two sexes experience their work in the public and private spheres is therefore frequently ignored.

One of the limitations of the gender-organisation-system perspective is its neglect of the historical influences on the lives of women managers, and therefore it was not used as the main lens through which the current study was conducted, although the gender-organisation-system perspective is a useful lens for research relating to structural and individual factors impeding women's progress in organisations.

### **3.2.4 Intergroup perspective**

#### *3.2.4.1 Theory relating to the intergroup perspective*

Ragins (1997) points out that from a sociological perspective the term "minority" is defined in terms of power relations between groups and not necessarily numerical representation. Thus, in South Africa, although blacks are in the majority, if they do not have power in organisations – despite their greater numbers, they are still regarded as a minority group. The intergroup perspective provides a basic lens for understanding race and gender dynamics within an organisation. In relation to this point, Alderfer (1987) posits that the extent of power that different cultural groups wield within organisations and the macro-environment determines how people behave, think and act in organisations.

According to the intergroup perspective, two types of groups exist within organisations, namely identity groups and organisation groups (Alderfer & Smith, 1982). Identity groups are based on gender, age, race, ethnicity and family. An organisation group is when members share approximately common organisational positions, take part in equivalent work experiences and have similar organisational views (Akande, 1994). When a person enters an

organisation, he or she brings along an identity group. Membership in identity groups is not independent of membership in organisational groups.

The intergroup perspective focuses on the significance of identity groups and embedded-intergroup relations in comprehending the status and experience of women in management. The theory focuses on relationships of power and subordination between groups, behavioural patterns, language that indicates group memberships, processes of inclusion and exclusion and pluralism versus assimilation (Clegg, 2006).

According to the intergroup perspective, people and organisations are always trying to manage potential conflicts arising from the border between identity and organisation group memberships. The manner in which these conflicts are managed depends on many factors, the most vital of which is how the groups are embedded in the organisation (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988).

Embeddedness refers to how intergroup relations are shaped by the larger environment (Alderfer & Thomas, 1988). Embeddedness can be congruent or incongruent. Congruent embeddedness occurs when power relations among groups at a particular level are reinforced by power relations at the supra- and subsystem levels (Clegg, Hardy, & Nord, 1999). Tensions arise when the organisation group changes, but there is no change in the identity group, and women, for example, are placed at the lower end of the hierarchy, while white males are placed in managerial positions (Akande, 1994). Thus, one will encounter congruent embeddedness in which white males are found predominantly in top management positions, while women and minorities predominate in low power positions (Gurjao, 2007; Peace, 1991). This basically mirrors the power dynamics in the bigger society or environment. Incongruent embeddedness, by contrast, refers to a situation where power relationships would not be in line with supra-system dynamics (Bell, Denton, & Nkomo, 1993), for example, an Indian South African female supervising a department consisting mainly of white males.

The intergroup perspective can be used from various viewpoints, such as

- the effects of group membership on individuals,
- the consequences for subgroups within groups as the groups deal with each other,
- the outcomes for groups as a whole when they relate to significant other groups, and
- the impact of supra-system forces on the intergroup relationship regarding the question relating to race (Bell, 1993).

The intergroup perspective also focuses on minorities having to use different strategies from those used by the majority group in order to reach the same outcomes (Ibarra, 1995).

Many studies have been conducted relating to the intergroup perspective. In the next section I provide a few examples of such studies.

#### *3.2.4.2 Studies relating to the intergroup perspective*

A study conducted by Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) focused on gender and ethnic/racial differences in the diversity perceptions of 2 686 male and female employees in an electronics organisation in the United States. The results of the study indicated that white males found the organisational culture fair and inclusive, unlike the white women and minority employees. White women and minority employees embraced diversity, whereas this was not the case with white males.

Syed and Pio (2010) studied 25 Muslim women of Indian and Arab origin employed in Australian organisations. The women reported that they were stereotyped due to their ethnicity and religion by their colleagues and that they experienced subtle forms of discrimination from co-workers. For example, the women found that their colleagues would not communicate much with them and passed comments on their Islamic traditional attire and appearance.

Ornstein (2008) focused on understanding the experiences of 20 white women managers at middle level positions relating to embedded intergroup relations. The results of the study revealed that the participants felt closer to the groups above and below them than to their own group.

Thus, the intergroup theory suggests that a study of ethnic minority women in organisations must consider the dynamic interaction of race and gender embedded in organisations. This was a useful perspective for the current study, but the present study adopted a life story approach which requires a theoretical frame that accounts for the childhood experiences and early lives of the women managers, as well as the organisational issues.

In the next section I discuss the bicultural framework.

### **3.2.5 The bicultural framework**

#### *3.2.5.1 Theory related to the bicultural framework*

The bicultural model focuses on the stress that an individual experiences from participation in both a minority group culture and a dominant group culture (Bell, 1990). Alfred (2001) and Bell (1990) have used biculturalism to understand the lives of black professional women in white male-dominated organisation cultures.

A bicultural transition takes place when a woman moves from one cultural context to another. In the process, she accepts different cultural patterns and enacts different roles. Forming a bicultural life structure leads a person to a position of marginality, which implies living on the boundary between two distinct cultures. The one culture is more powerful than the other, but the person does not have the ancestry, belief system or social skills to be a fully-fledged member of the dominant culture (Alfred, 2001).

Biculturalism leads to heightened identity conflict for black women, because it leads to emotional commitment to two distinct aspects of their lives. A



bicultural life structure requires an ethnic minority female manager, for example, to shape her professional world in a male-dominated white culture, while her personal world usually remains embedded in her racial or ethnic community (Bouvier James-Hughes, 2002). This implies that there is a separation between her professional and personal lives.

Racial or ethnic minorities are generally expected by other members of their culture to be loyal to their own culture, while at the same time participating in their adopted culture (Willgerodt, Miller, & McElmurry, 2002). Bell, Denton, and Nkomo (1993) argue that for women of colour to be successful managers, they have to adopt a new identity and forsake commitment to their old culture. This may lead to stress, especially when their communities regard them as traitors when they try to fit into the dominant white culture.

At the workplace, an ethnic minority female may be forced to give up her racial or ethnic part of her identity in favour of what is “normal” in the dominant culture. She may suppress her identity in a superficial way in terms of her dress, hairstyle and communication patterns. At a more substantive level, it may require her to suppress her social, personal and political values (Allen, 1995; Bell & Nkomo, 2001). Women who move into management positions that are reserved for white males also move into an alien culture (Betters-Reed & Moore, 1992). The bicultural life structure is the basis from which black women obtain the power to contest their marginal location, to articulate their worldview and to continuously renegotiate their culture and identity to meet career expectations in white-dominated institutions (Alfred, 2001).

Biculturalism is a vital concept in the workplace, because of the notion of assimilation. This is because assimilation is a one-way process in which the culture of the dominant group becomes the standard of behaviour for all (Cox, 1993).

Bell (1990) points out, that black women managers are usually the first of their race and gender who are in managerial positions and there are no black

females they can emulate and turn to for support. They find it difficult to find mentors who will guide them to move up the corporate ladder and sponsors who will provide new opportunities. These women are left out of critical organisational networks and are isolated from individuals who can sharpen their professional skills. They have to find their own ways of fulfilling their career goals. These women are faced with the challenge of transforming stereotypical images, at the same time creating new professional roles. In many cases, a black woman encounters additional problems when pursuing advancements in her career. For example, her husband may tell her she is becoming too aggressive, or she should pay more attention to family responsibilities.

### *3.2.5.2 Studies relating to the bicultural framework*

It is important to note that the bicultural model has primarily been used to explain the experiences of African-American women in management. Bell (1990) conducted a study on 71 black females relating to their life experiences. The results of the study indicated that black women were living between two cultural worlds, the one white and the other black. In order to manage their bicultural worlds, the women grouped different elements of their lives. The results indicated that in order to be comfortable in both worlds the women had to deal with complex life structures.

Alfred (2001) used a bicultural framework to study the professional development of five African-American women academics in a white university. The aim of the study was to explore how ethnic minority women develop expertise to meet career expectations in a white organisational culture. The findings indicate that race, identity and culture play an important role in the career development of minority women. By using certain strategies and tools, the women successfully navigated the dominant workplace culture. At the same time, they did not compromise their ethnic identities.

Dawson (2006) conducted a study on 10 African-American women managers and professionals and their lived experiences in corporate America relating to partial inclusion and biculturalism. The findings of the study indicated that as a result of partial inclusion, the participants had to work harder, because they were excluded from social networks and obtained less information. This led to their being dissatisfied in the workplace and to their not feeling a sense of belonging, which in turn resulted in their separating their professional and personal lives.

Barrett, Cervero, and Johnson-Bailey (2003) conducted a study on 10 black human resource development professionals in the United States to gain an understanding of their career experiences. The findings indicated that the participants experienced racial prejudice and discrimination, and therefore adopted a range of bicultural strategies that would assist them in coping with the different spheres of their lives.

In the next section, I discuss feminist theories on women in organisations.

### **3.2.6 Feminist theories on women in organisations**

According to Usar (2010), prior to the 1980s, feminist theories and research in organisations operated in distinct spheres. While the focus of organisational research dealt with solving the problems of males in organisations, feminist theories focused on patriarchal forces in the social lives of women (Calás & Smircich, 2003). This has changed in recent years.

Feminists regard gender as a socially constructed category and focus on understanding the dynamics of gender relations by addressing race, class, sexual orientation, language and the practices and politics of educational systems facing marginalised groups (Howell, Carter, & Schied, 2002). Gender creates social differences between men and women that go beyond physiological differences (Browne & Misra, 2003).

Calás and Smircich (2003) maintain that, although much progress has been made in improving women's political, social and economic situation, occupations are still sex-segregated, and, in general, men still earn more than women. These authors believe that including feminist theories in organisational studies can provide researchers with a more comprehensive perspective that not only includes women's point of view, but that of other minorities as well.

In the next few paragraphs, I provide an overview of several feminist theories and show how they are applicable to women's career advancement in organisations. Each of these theories has its own focus and provides a limited understanding of gender (Tong, 1998). I start with the liberal feminist theory.

#### *3.2.6.1 Liberal feminist theory*

Liberal feminist theory suggests that the key to address gender inequality in organisations is to speed up the slow advancement of women (Marlow & Patton, 2005) but this theory does not consider how other facets of society negatively impact women (Alvesson & Due Billing, 2009). According to Fischer, Reuber, and Dyke (2003) women are disadvantaged, compared to men, due to drawbacks they experience in gaining business experience. The argument is that women are constrained from reaching top managerial positions, for example, because of the glass ceiling, sexual harassment, a lack of mentors and networking opportunities (Calás & Smircich, 2003), sex-discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping (Thomas & Davies, 2005).

Research in this area focuses on gender roles, transformational leadership and sex-type occupations (Calás & Smircich, 2003). For example, a study conducted by Gallhofer, Paisey, Roberts, and Tarbert (2011) on female accountants in Scotland focused on the lifestyle choices women accountants make in order to balance their work and private lives. The results of the study revealed that, although structural factors were barriers to women's

advancement, the women also paid more attention to their children and roles as mothers.

Oakley (2000) states that the main failure of the liberal feminist approach is these theorists do not address the main causes of gender inequality in organisations and therefore men still control organisations. Kark (2004) also notes that researchers using this theory tend to use established models and methods and do not take into account the deeper, more complex elements of gender. Nevertheless, some scholars have made some contributions to theoretical elements of this framework, for example (Thomas & Davies, 2005). Liberal feminist theories also do not take into account how minority women (including Indian women) conceptualise patriarchy, work and reproduction, as these theories treat women as a homogeneous group (Code, 2004; Holmes, 2007).

### *3.2.6.2 Radical feminist theory*

Unlike in liberal feminist theory, the subordination of women due to patriarchy is the focus of radical feminist theory (Oakley, 2000). The differences between men and women are positioned in such a way that men have more control socially, economically, politically and in the workplace, while women possess less power (Greer & Greene, 2003).

Radical feminists have tried to change the legal and political structures of patriarchy, as well as cultural and social institutions (Alvesson & Due Billing, 2009). Not being promoted is seen to be a result, not of personal or organisational factors, but of males being privileged in a society where men set the norm (Tong, 1998). Some radical feminists propound the notion of androgyny to advance women in the workplace, but not even all proponents of the radical approach agree on its efficacy, as some argue that it will encourage sex stereotyping (Calás & Smircich, 2003).

An example of a study using the radical feminist theory was conducted in the United Kingdom by Panteli and Pen (2008), relating to women who returned to work after taking a break for a few years. The results of the study indicate that diverse organisational schemes, together with the opportunity to exchange and explore ideas, experiences and concerns, empowered the women and allowed them the opportunity to return to work.

The radical feminist theory has been criticised. One criticism of this perspective is that it looks at gender as a static trait, because these scholars do not take into account that behaviour changes from one situation to another. Women are seen as a homogeneous group and their differences are not considered. Broader issues, for example, educational, social or organisational factors that influence women's life choices are not considered and only work or family choices are taken into account (Panteli & Pen, 2008).

According to Browne and Misra (2003), when radical feminist state that men oppress women, they do not take into account economic factors between particular groups of men and women in organisations, where in some workplaces white women earn more than minority males. Holvino (2001) points out that black feminists question men's universal domination as portrayed by this perspective, and also interrogate images of femininity and masculinity based on whiteness. Black feminists have also questioned the emphasis placed on gender by radical feminists.

### *3.2.6.3 A psychoanalytic feminist approach*

Malach-Pines and Schwartz (2006) contend that psychological gender differences such as men's competitive nature and women's desire to be communal are due to different childhood experiences and the tasks that girls and boys engage in. Women are raised to be subservient, to perceive themselves as victims, are unsure regarding their careers and do not have the desire for mastery that men have. These differences in behaviours between men and women stem from Calás and Smircich's (2003) claim that because

children view their mothers as a source of pleasure and pain, girls adopt behaviours that are mirror images of their mothers'. Nancy Chodorow (1978) adopts and adapts Freudian theory, postulating that boys perceive their mothers as being different to them and do not identify with their mothers. Girls, on the other hand, feel a connection with their mothers and regard themselves as extensions of their mothers. Since girls never lose the connection with their mothers, they tend to develop a sense of relatedness, unlike boys.

Women that identify more with their mothers are often not successful, as the corporate cultures reflect the developmental experiences of men (Calás & Smircich, 2003). Women who have an atypical relationships with fathers compared to their mothers tend to be more successful in the workplace. However, in recent years, women's leadership styles (for, example, being supportive, sensitive, expressing emotions) have been noted as being advantageous in the corporate environment (Kark, 2004).

The aim of the current research is not to explore the deeper relationships between fathers and daughters and how this has influenced the career advancement of the women. However, the psychoanalytic theory and some of its ramifications has some relevance to a general understanding of the early childhood experiences of the women in this study.

#### *3.2.6.4 A Marxist feminist theory*

Marxist feminists study society in order to introduce radical changes in gender relations (Alvesson & Due Billing, 2009). Gender is compared to class, which is characterised by forces of power and subjugation. Marxist feminists believe that women are treated as property and are oppressed according to the class to which they belong (Beasley, 1999). Patriarchy and capitalism intersect to produce sex/gender inequality in the workplace. According to a Marxist feminist framework, if economic injustices are removed and the capitalist

system is overthrown, then social injustices such as oppression relating to gender and race will also be eradicated (Greer & Greene, 2003).

An example of the Marxist feminist theory applied in research is a study conducted by Howell et al. (2002) on women's workplace learning as a result of the human resource development initiatives at a manufacturing plant and an educational services agency in the United States. Their findings indicate that many human resource development practices in the two organisations were not aligned with Marxist feminist thinking and that these practices were, in most cases, not democratic. According to Beasley (1999), since the demise of socialism, very few researchers use Marxist feminist theory.

#### *3.2.6.5 Socialist feminist theory*

According to the socialist feminist theory, gender forms part of social relations and point to differences and power relations between men and women (Calás & Smircich, 2003). Fischer et al. (2003) maintain that, men and women are different due to their early socialisation, but that it does not mean women are inferior to men. What it implies is that women have cultivated different traits that are as important as the skills men have developed (Calás & Smircich, 2003, p. 232).

Both capitalism and patriarchy are regarded as forms of oppression of women as they place women in different jobs, different industries, with different salaries (Holvino, 2001). The position of women depends on their roles, which are determined through production, reproduction, sexuality and rearing children. Women have to stand up against capitalism and patriarchy because they are oppressed in the workplace by being underpaid, and they are overworked at home where they bear the brunt of the burden of the responsibilities for the home (Calás & Smircich, 2003).

Maynard (1995) argues that while some scholars do not distinguish between Marxist and socialist feminism, others believe there is a clear distinction. An



example of socialist feminism research is a study conducted by Kim (2006) relating to the career advancement of female journalists in Korea, which shows that female journalists are excluded from important decisions that take place in bars or on golf courses, and their competence is devalued, compared to that of their male counterparts. The study suggests that women feel alienated from the masculine workplace culture, as they do not obtain information by using bribery and do not visit places of pleasure. The women also do not exercise as much authority in obtaining information from sources as their male counterparts do.

Beasley (1999) points out that since the demise of socialism, socialist feminist theory is used by very few researchers. Holvino (2001) also claims that the problem with using intersectionality in socialist feminist theory is that the category “class” is not regarded as leading to oppression in social feminism. Another problem is that women of colour and working class women are studied without there being a conceptual integration of gender, class and race. The advantage of the social feminist theory is that researchers who use the theory study the experiences of working class women of different races in organisations. Secondly, they regard class as a means of structural power and as a dimension of difference.

#### *3.2.6.6 Poststructuralist/postmodern feminist theory*

Postmodernists focus on intersections between intricate relationships, differences between men and women, and within the sexes (Taylor, 1997). Knowledge is regarded as the basis of power relations in workplaces and a lack of knowledge leads women, minorities and older employees to be excluded.

Differences are regarded as being due to historical and social differences (Baber & Murray, 2001). Differences such as gender are constructed in language and social practices (Holvino, 2001). For example, organisational traditions lead males and females to adopt certain management styles (Syed

& Murray, 2008). Postmodernists also examine sexuality, self-actualisation and globalisation by looking at gender as one of the relevant categories, in addition to class, ethnicity, race and age (Calás & Smircich, 2003).

An example of a study using poststructuralist theory was conducted by Rodriguez (2010), on 27 women and 13 men from three organisations in the public sector in the Dominican Republic. The aim of the study was to ascertain how gender construction was perceived in the public sector in the Dominican Republic. The results of the study indicate that the culture within these organisations was paternalistic – men were perceived as having superiority and women were seen as having an inferior status. The outcome was that men were authoritarian and women adopted passive behaviour styles.

The critics of this theory argue that poststructuralist analyses are difficult to comprehend and interpret (Calás & Smircich, 2003). Holvino (2001) argues that these theorists are criticised because deconstruction is not enough to analyse the intersections of class, gender, ethnicity and race.

### *3.2.6.7 Post-colonial feminism/Third World feminism*

Post-colonial/Third World feminism came about as a result of Third World women researchers noting that studies relating to women were being conducted mainly on white, middle-class women in western societies (Mohanty, 1990). Post-colonial feminism focuses on women in Third World developing countries in a post-colonial period, where women are oppressed due to their social and political marginality, which stems from racism, imperialism and the control the State imposes on their lives. Another aspect post-colonial feminism addresses is the struggles and tensions that women in Third World countries experience relating to their organisations and communities (Mohanty, 2002).

An example of post-colonial feminist research is a study conducted by Pio (2007) on 45 Indian migrant women's reasons for pursuing entrepreneurship

and their work experiences. The women indicated that they were unable to gain employment in post-colonial New Zealand because of the remnants of colonialism still present in the minds of employers in the host country.

Young (2001) argues that post-colonial theory does not follow a specific theoretical framework or methodology, and can therefore not be regarded as a theory. However, post-colonial theory has been shown to be useful in organisational studies when “dominant-group/marginal-group dynamics” that produce “otherness” in organisations are studied (Prasad & Prasad, 2002, p. 61). Dryland and Syed (2011) also posit that a post-colonialist approach allows for multiple voices to be heard.

### **3.2.7 The woman’s life context framework**

#### *3.2.7.1 Theory related to the woman’s life context framework*

The woman’s life context framework incorporates the psychoanalytic and sociological gender socialisation theories, which emphasise early life experiences and continuous development and learning of cultural values, for example, through school and the family respectively. Women managers learn certain gender roles when they are growing up. For example, women are socialised to be selfless, to care for others, and to connect to others, and this is then reflected in their managerial styles and interactions with others in the workplace (Lämsä, Säkkinen, & Turjanmaa, 2000).

According to the woman’s life context framework, a woman’s life structure consists of five main domains:

- early life experiences and identity development;
- education, motivation and aspirations;
- early adult experiences – career choice, entry and socialisation;
- public world – career development, goals and professional affiliations; and

- private world – significant relationships, family, leisure, spirituality and sexuality.

All the above-mentioned life domains interact dynamically and mould a female manager's career and life experiences (Bell et al., 1993). The focus of the woman's life context framework is to understand a female manager's entire life structure and the interdependence among the different aspects. The framework avoids assuming that a woman manager's professional life exists apart from other life spheres (Bhavnani & Phoenix, 1994).

Contextual forces of culture, race or ethnicity, socio-political history, and class are also important. These forces represent the areas in which females develop and they can best be explained as moderating variables. They can therefore influence each of the five main domains. For example, a woman's self-identity and ensuing self-esteem may be strongly influenced by her race or ethnicity. The woman's life context framework can be used to study women managers in a holistic manner, recognising the significance of multiple forces in shaping women's life and career experiences (Bell et al., 1993).

Gender role stereotyping is also a significant factor in the careers that women choose and plan. Values and expectations in society maintain gender role stereotypes in a culture and guide women toward femininity (Dovidio, Hewstone, Glick, & Esses, 2010). Both male employees and students have a greater stereotypical view of women in management than their female counterparts (Cortis & Cassar, 2005; Litzky & Greenhaus, 2007). Hence, in the workplace, these stereotypes exaggerate within-group similarities while maximising between-group differences (Akande, 1994; Palermo, 2005).

Women's positions and experiences within organisations are influenced by their experiences during their childhood and young adulthood and are a reflection of their life stories. The factors in the five main domains that affect women's careers are too numerous to list here. One domain is religious beliefs, which are part of a woman's identity in the workplace. Women who

subscribe to conservative religious views also tend to have traditional gender role attitudes, which influence their career choices and their upward mobility towards managerial positions (Bartkowski & Read, 2003; Hardcare, 1997; Hartman & Hartman, 1996; Read, 2003).

Indian women often feel marginalised or invisible due to their minority status, and are oppressed and discriminated against in organisations. They are invisible due to their lack of power, but are visible as token appointees. These are some of the factors that mould women managers and their experiences at work, but there are several other aspects that affect their lives as well (Denmark & Paludi, 2008).

### *3.2.7.2 Studies relating to the woman's life context framework*

Most studies conducted on women managers do not take into account all five main domains in a single study. Instead, most of this kind of research focuses on the work-life balance aspects and how these influence women managers' advancement in the workplace (Darcy & McCarthy, 2007; Kargwell, 2008; Kossek & Lambert, 2006). In addition to focusing on women's work-life balance, Warren (2004) also takes into account their financial security and leisure time and shows that when these factors are taken into account it reveals that women are less able to balance their work and home lives compared to men.

Some researchers have focused exclusively on women's career transitions (Marshall, 2000). Other research focuses on how women learn to become managers (Bryans & Mavin, 2003). Rutherford (2001) focuses on the long-hours culture in British organisations and how this becomes a means of excluding women from top managerial positions.

A study by Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, and King (2002) found that the multiple roles that women play in their personal lives have a psychological benefit for women managers. Hite (2007) conducted research on Hispanic women in the

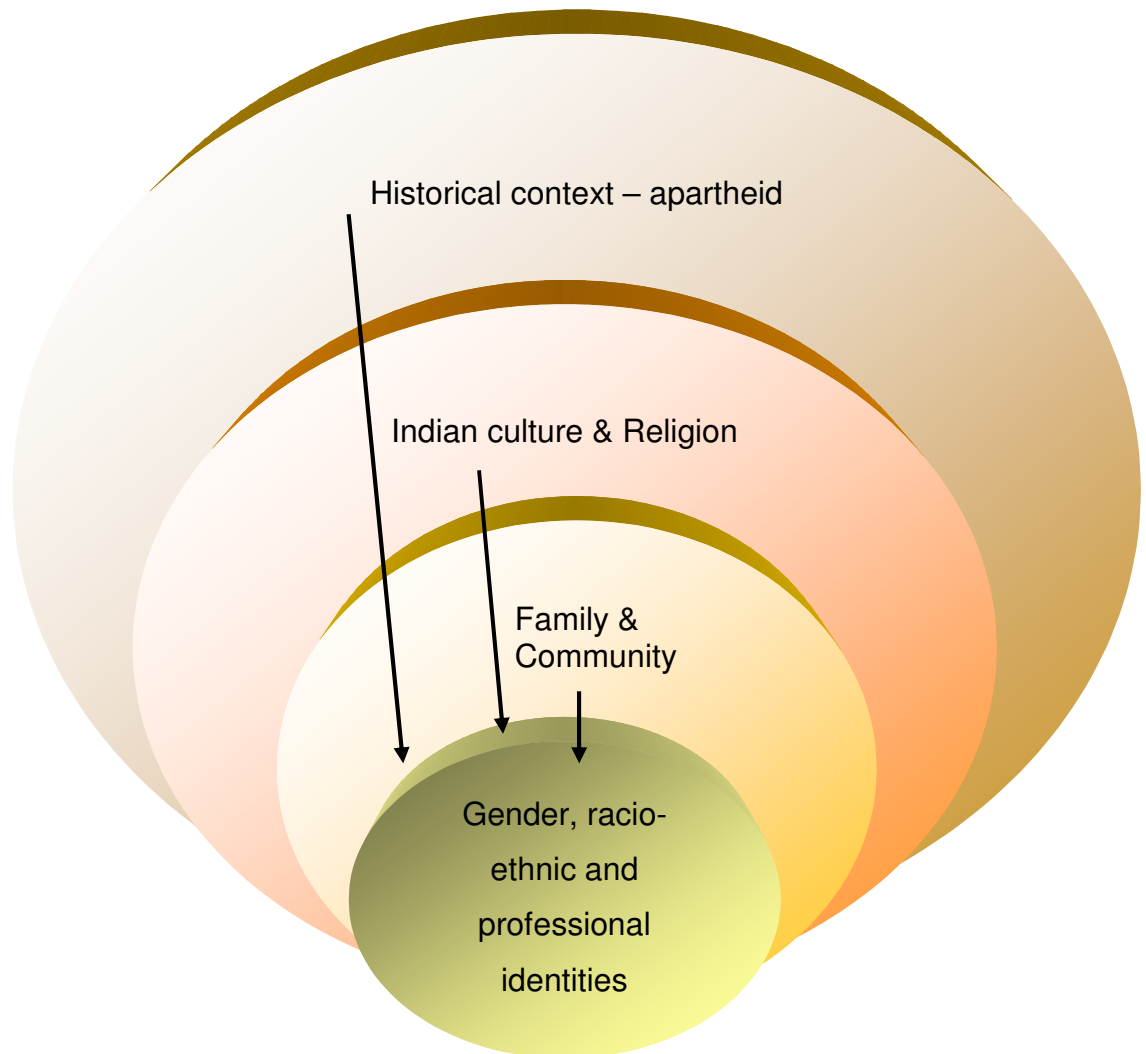
United States and how their experiences influenced their career possibilities. Hollinger and Fleming (1992) conducted a longitudinal study on gifted women and focused on career and educational attainment, as well as the women achieving their career goals as they had planned in their adolescence.

Adya and Kaiser (2005) have identified social factors (peers, family, and the media), structural factors (teacher/counsellor influence, the use of computers, same-sex versus coeducational schools), and individual factors as influencing women's career choices in the IT environment. In her study, Kulkarni (2002) identified many barriers to Indian women managers' advancement. Her study revealed that Indian women required training in, for example, communication, leadership, decision-making, time management and confidence building so that they could work in top management positions. Social stereotypes, gendered role expectations, individual prejudices and social forces which position Indian women as secondary to men in the larger community also discourage women from aspiring to top managerial positions. The sympathetic treatment of women in Indian workplaces results in their not being assigned difficult and important assignments. This prevented them from obtaining useful experience and developing skills that were vital for working in senior positions.

### *3.2.7.3 The woman's life context framework pertaining to my study*

I used a fairly broad theoretical lens as a means of structuring the interrogation of the lives of the women who participated in the study, namely the woman's life context framework. Firstly, I drew on the woman's life context framework, which suggested the importance of the historical context, Indian culture, religion, family and community influences. Secondly, I also incorporated the idea that attention to the women's multiple identities such as gender, racio-ethnic and professional identities should also be taken into account. Figure 3.1 illustrates the framework used in the current study.

**Figure 3.1: Women's life contexts**



### 3.3 INTERSECTIONALITY

The woman's life-context framework provides an important structure in understanding the different domains that affect women managers' career experiences, but it does not fully address factors relating to the forces of oppression, subjugation, domination and privilege. It is for this reason that in this section I introduce the concept of intersectionality, which explores multiple identities experienced by the women interviewed in my study.

Work dealing with intersectionality focuses on how structural elements shape identities, especially how gender and race shape the identities of marginalised groups (Nash, 2010). Focusing on multiple elements that intersect makes analysis more difficult (Warner, 2008). The criticism levelled at focusing on structural elements is that the emotional and psychological elements of the research subjects are ignored. Many scholars these days also include subjectivity in their studies (Nash, 2010).

In discussing intersectionality, I outline the history of intersectionality theory, the various views of intersectionality, the complex nature of intersectionality and intersectionality in organisations.

### **3.3.1 History of intersectionality**

The term “intersectionality” was coined by Crenshaw (1989, 1994) to illustrate how race and gender intersect and result in black women’s oppression in the workplace. The term was used to describe the unique knowledge that women of colour gained from the work and social relations they encountered in living and working in different cultures (Dill, McLaughlin, & Nieves, 2007).

Essed (1991, 2001) is another scholar who has had a strong influence on the development of the construct of intersectionality. Essed (1991) focused on “gendered racism”. Essed (2001, p. 1) argues that “racisms and genderisms are rooted in specific histories designating separate as well as mutually interwoven formations of race, ethnicity and gender”. Thus, according to Essed (1991), race is “gendered”, and gender is “racialised”, so that race and gender merge and provide distinct opportunities and experiences for all women.

McCall (2005) suggests that black feminist research, by introducing the concept intersectionality, has contributed considerably to enhancing scholars’ understanding of gender. Intersectionality was born as a result of black feminists challenging the traditional methods and theories relating to gender,



for example, psychology's claim that all women are a homogeneous group (Hill-Collins, 2000). Since the 1960s, women of colour have challenged research on feminism which focused primarily on the lives of white women. Not only were women of colour excluded from feminist research, but their experiences were misconstrued (Browne & Misra, 2003). Black feminists complained that the existing gender and race theories did not address the experiences of race and gender in their lives (Browne & Misra, 2003).

Most of the research conducted on intersectionality focuses on three categories of inequality, namely race/ethnicity, gender and class, and the interactions of these categories (Tatli & Ozbilgin, 2010; Zinn & Dill, 1996).

Acker (2006, p. 442) suggests that for the past 15 years feminist scholars have agreed that there is a need for research relating to intersectionality, and are struggling with dimensions of difference and how "simultaneous inequality-producing processes" work.

Understanding the origins of the term intersectionality is vital, but understanding the concept itself is also an important part of using it as a construct in a study such as the current study.

### **3.3.2 Various views of intersectionality**

Intersectionality theorists maintain that "race"-only or "gender"-only studies cannot lead to a fuller comprehension of all women or their oppression (Hurtado & Sinha, 2008; Weber 2001). Hill-Collins (1998) maintains that race, gender, sexuality and class cannot be looked at separately, but should be viewed in terms of how they mutually interact and lead to experiences of subordination and exclusion. Different race groups understand gender differently, and men and women understand race differently. Gender is understood in terms of how it relates to other social identities, such as race, class, sexual orientation and ethnicity (Shields, 2008).

Hill-Collins (2000: 227-228) points out that intersectionality exists through a “matrix of domination” where several intersecting oppressions work together and through each other. Race, class, gender and sexuality are elements of social structure and interaction. Men and women experience different levels of subordination and privilege, depending on where they are situated in terms of their class, gender, sexuality and race (Warner, 2008). Thus, an Indian woman could be subjugated due to her class, gender and race in an organisation, a white male could be privileged on the basis of the very same factors.

Essed (2001) focuses on racism encountered on a daily basis, while Crenshaw (1994) focuses on *structural*, *representational* and *political* intersectionality. Crenshaw (1994) claims that structural intersectionality can explain why ethnic minority women are not eligible for certain positions, as it is widely accepted that those positions are reserved for white women. By contrast, other positions are also not available to a black woman, as these positions are regarded as male-dominated positions (Crenshaw, 1994).

Representational intersectionality refers to the fact that ethnic minority women are depicted in the media in terms of negative, sexualised and stereotyped connotations, and this has a negative impact on their self-esteem (Settles, 2006). For example, Indian women are often represented as passive homemakers.

Political intersectionality illustrates the way in which those who have several subordinate identities, especially ethnic minority women, may find themselves trapped between the two contradictory agendas of two political parties (race and gender) to which they belong, or they are totally ignored by these groups (Crenshaw, 1995). Black women may also find themselves trapped between the social and political parties that claim to represent women and those that represent blacks (Settles, 2006). For example, Crenshaw (1995) discusses the phenomenon that the domestic violence movement has paid no attention to the distress of black and immigrant women.

Browne and Misra (2003) point out that those scholars who believe that race and gender intersect in the labour market also question whether this intersection creates more disadvantages for minority groups. Sidanius (2000) posits that the double jeopardy idea was developed to describe the experiences of African-American women, as they were regarded as experiencing racism under whites and sexism from white and black males. Researchers who subscribe to the double jeopardy or multiple jeopardy models believe that women's disadvantages increase as subordinate-group identities increase (King, 1988).

### **3.3.3 The complex nature of intersectionality**

Mehrotra (2010) believes that intersectionality is regarded as a framework, theory, lens, paradigm, method or perspective by different scholars. Scholars are also not sure whether intersectionality studies should focus on "individuals' multiple identities, intersecting systemic oppressions at a social structural level or the multiplicity of social, historical or cultural discourses" (Mehrotra, 2010, p. 420).

Feminists in various disciplines, such as women's studies (Yuval-Davis, 2006), politics (Conaghan, 2007), geography (Valentine, 2007), the medical field (Hankivsky et al., 2010), find it difficult to apply intersectionality in fields that have been dominated by quantitative methods (Hankivsky et al., 2010).

Nash (2010) points out there are several other reasons for the difficulty of applying an intersectionality approach. Firstly, intersectionality has different meanings in various disciplines. While there is consensus among scholars that intersectionality deals with the intersection of dominant structures which results in the oppression of some groups, and in the shaping of identities, there is no agreement as to whether intersectionality is a theory, a process or politics (Davis, 2008). Most scholars treat intersectionality as a theory, although there is no consensus on what it is a theory of.

### 3.3.4 Intersectionality in organisations

Intersectionality refers to how power is disseminated inequitably in the workplace. Race, gender, class and sexual orientations are identities that, when they act together, can place certain groups in specific positions of power (Vardeman-Winter & Tindall, 2010). These power differences are part of every aspect of social life and have an impact on women in organisations (Browne & Misra, 2003).

Browne and Misra (2003) explain that many researchers view social constructions of race and gender in economic terms. For example, women have different experiences to men, and black women in South Africa have different experiences to white women. The experiences of black women are related to those of white women (Bell & Nkomo, 2001). For example, in South Africa, white women are regarded as professionally competent compared to black women. For historical reasons, most black women worked as domestics. White women therefore have double the advantage accorded black women. Therefore, social constructions of race and gender lead to inequality within the workplace.

Although intersectionality is used widely in various fields, very few researchers have thus far used the concept in organisational studies (Zanoni, Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010). Browne and Misra (2003) conducted a study on race and gender in the United States labour market. These scholars used intersectionality to research labour market inequality in terms of wage inequalities, discrimination and stereotyping and immigration and domestic labour. Adib and Guerrier (2003) used intersectionality relating to gender, ethnicity, race and nationality relating to women's experiences in the hotel industry. Syed (2007) studied the intersectionality of the race and gender of ethnic minority women in Australian organisations and focused on issues of in/equality in these workplaces.

I used intersectionality in the current study to interrogate how gender and racio-ethnicity intersected in the lives of the women who participated in the study in the form of the oppressive forces they experienced related to apartheid, Indian culture and male hegemony within the workplace to examine how the women used agency and resistance to overcome some of the oppressive elements they encountered in their early and adult lives.

### 3.4 IDENTITY

Identity has become a popular lens through which scholars study different individual and organisational phenomena in organisations. Typically, scholars have focused on organisational identity and issues of individual identity. Organisational scholars are interested in occupational, professional, organisational and managerial identities, and how employees negotiate concerns relating to their self-concept in the workplace (Alvesson et al., 2008; Essers & Benschop, 2007; Watson, 2008). Most scholars in the literature describe identity as “subjective meanings and experiences and an individual’s attempt at answering the questions, ‘who am I?’ And ‘how should I act?’” (Alvesson et al., 2008, p. 6).

Rounds (2006) suggests that the concept of “identity” deals firstly with acquiring an identity, holding on to an acquired identity, learning to live with the identity once it becomes a part of the individual and how to live without it when one lets go of it. Identity has to be constructed throughout one’s life, as it is not acquired at birth, nor is it something one has to discover. Thus, identity is not so much what we are, but what we do.

Munsamy (2006, p. 6) claims that “identities are personal as they define who we are, who we think we are and who we imagine ourselves to be”. Who we are is shaped by family, community, institutions, history, language, social circumstances and context. Identity is fluid and changes with a change in context and history (Maslak & Singhal, 2008).

There are numerous approaches to the study of identity. Identity as a construct has been the focus of studies in sociology as well as in psychology. From a sociological perspective, identity has been studied in groups, while from a psychological point of view, the individual had been the focus of such research. Research in organisations on identity has been studied through various lenses, such as functionalism, interpretivism and critical theory (Alvesson et al., 2008).

### 3.4.1 Early identity theories

Erikson (1968) was one of the pioneers of the study of identity. He posits developmental stages where an individual progresses to the next stage only after issues in the previous stage of development are resolved (Erikson, 1968; Schwartz, Cotê, & Arnett, 2005). The basic premise of Erikson's identity theory is that adolescents who achieve identity synthesis are better adjusted than those who experience identity confusion (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, Soenens, & Beyers, 2008). Erikson (1968) emphasises the role of context in adolescent identity development, that is, the important role that people in an adolescent's environment play in shaping his or her identity (Kroger, 2004).

Marcia's (1966) work complements Erikson's idea of identity development. Both Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966) believe that identity formation is a life-long process with fluctuations in commitment and exploration at various stages in an individual's life. Marcia (1966) groups identity formation along two dimensions, namely, exploration and commitment. Exploration focuses on active questioning, whereas commitment deals with choosing from among the alternatives one has explored. Marcia (1966) believes that people go through different stages of identity formation and at any point they can commit to an identity which then becomes their core identity throughout their lives. Unlike Erikson, Marcia believes that people do not experience all the stages of identity development. Unlike Erikson (1966), Marcia (1966) does not emphasise the role of context in shaping adolescents' identities (Beyers & Goossens, 2008).

Both Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1966) focus on identity development in adolescents from a white, male, middle-class, English-speaking Eurocentric perspective (Ferguson, 2006). They ignore race, class, gender and ethnicity and the complexities and life experiences of minorities relating to these different dimensions to identity that act simultaneously at any given time (Constantine, 2002; Jones, 1997).

The importance of context in shaping adolescents' identities is acknowledged in my study, as I believe that the identity formation of the women who participated in the study would be influenced by the family, community and the larger society in which they were raised, as Erikson (1968) suggests. Parents in Indian homes are an important source of socialisation for their children in terms of Indian culture, norms and values (Mathur, Guiry, & Tikoo, 2008), which the women interviewed in my study corroborated.

Since Erikson and Marcia's theories could not adequately explain identity development in minority adolescents, psychologists began to include the sociocultural aspects of identity related to personal identity development (Ferguson, 2006).

### **3.4.2 Social identities**

Tajfel and Turner (1986) define social identities as being related to groups where a set of people regard themselves as part of a social group; they share some emotional attachment, and obtain some social agreement relating to their group. Thus, a social identity forms part of an individual's self-image, which results from belonging to a social group. For example, for Indian women, what it means to be a woman in the family, community and workplace is different to what it is to be an Indian male.

In deciding which identities to choose, the researcher has to make some choices. When too many social identities are chosen, for example, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, region, nationality and religion, it

usually leads a researcher to focus on individuals rather than groups, as people may vary in each of these categories, and then making generalizations to the larger group becomes difficult (Young, 1994). Warner (2008) explains that researchers are not expected to choose all social identities in a particular study, but should choose only the most relevant. In my study I did not know in advance which identities would be salient. I discovered the most salient identities only after I had coded my data. For the current study, racio-ethnic, gender and professional identities were found to be important.

#### *3.4.2.1 Racio-ethnic identity*

The term racio-ethnic identity was coined by Taylor Cox Jr (1990). Cox (1990) argues that race has been used by many researchers as relating to biological differences between groups, while ethnicity has been used with reference to cultural differences. For Cox (1990), using the term race to denote whites and blacks, and ethnicity for Asians and Hispanics was incorrect. Cox (1990) believes that using such labels implies that some groups are distinct from other groups in terms of biology or culture, when in fact they are distinct in terms of both, which then led him to coin the term “racio-ethnic”.

Friday, Friday and Moss (2004) point out that the racio-ethnic group which an individual is born into may not necessarily be the one the person identifies with. This occurs when the social environment or frame of reference the individual is part of does not form part of the person’s national origin or race, and the particular racio-ethnic group does not form part of the person’s social reality.

According to Proudford and Nkomo (2006), racio-ethnic identities for specific groups have been developed. Helms (1990), for example, developed a stage model for white identity, and Cross (1991) developed a model called “Nigrescence” relating to black identity development. In organisational interventions whites are not usually regarded as having a racial identity, but blacks and racio-ethnic minority women are labelled as having racial identities



and are then regarded as a problem within organisations (Bhavnani & Coyle, 2000).

Fearfull and Kamenou (2006) conducted interviews with 26 female participants from different racio-ethnic groups (nine Afro-Caribbean, 11 Pakistanis, two Indians, two South Asians and one African) in three organisations in the United Kingdom to study the discrimination the women experienced in organisations. The findings indicate that racio-ethnic minority women still struggle to be accepted and have limited opportunities to progress in organisations, even though non-discriminatory legislation is in place.

Antecol and Bedard (2002) conducted a study on the earnings of Mexican and black women in the United States and compared these to the earnings of white women. The results of the study indicated that due to their lower racio-ethnic status and educational levels, Mexican women earned less than white women. Black women also earned less than white women, due to lower levels of workforce attachments.

Parker (2002) conducted a study on 15 African-American women executives in private and public organisations in the United States. The findings indicated the women perceived challenges to their racio-ethnic identity when interacting with their white male colleagues and with African-American colleagues and clients. The women used direct, indirect or avoidance strategies to resist, transform and adapt to the perceived challenges relating to interactions.

A study by Chow and Crawford (2004) in a large United Kingdom organisation employing people from diverse racio-ethnic backgrounds indicated that minorities felt that due to their racio-ethnic identities, they were not valued and respected in their organisation. They were kept away from important decision-making meetings and did not receive honest feedback on their performance appraisals.

### 3.4.2.2 *Gender identity*

Gender is a salient identity that pervades social interactions and is an intrinsic part of social institutions (Mehrotra & Calásanti, 2010). Gender identity formation occurs from childhood and is constructed by the relationships one is involved in. Parents play an important role in the gender formation of daughters and sons (Marcia, 1993). Gender defines what behaviour is appropriate for males and females and is therefore a socially constructed category (Ajrouch, 2004).

Female identity development occurs in relation to what it means to be a woman in society and in relation to others. A woman's sense of self depends on successfully connecting with others (Chae, 2002). Gender beliefs combine with other salient identities in a particular situation to shape behaviour as responses vary across contexts. The centrality of gender is either negligible or salient, depending on the social context. Gender becomes central in mixed-sex settings or when activities performed by one sex are linked to cultural stereotypes (Randel, 2002), for example, the notion that women should take care of children.

Gender becomes salient in all management roles and becomes even more salient when the jobs are in male-dominated industries (Stoker & Van der Velde, 2011). The competence and legitimacy of women occupying these positions is questioned wherever management roles are viewed as masculine. When women behave agentically and assert directive authority in leadership positions, they are often met with hostility and resistance. When hegemonic gender beliefs are central in a situation, the focus is on men's superior status and competence, and certain presumptions regarding males' and females' different traits and skills prevail (Ridgeway & Correll, 2004).

In a typical Indian family, gender is a salient identity that has a differential effect on boys and girls. Indian parents scrutinize the behaviour of daughters more than that of their sons. Parents expect their daughters to behave

according to their cultural norms and expectations. Parents feel their traditional values are threatened by western thoughts and ideas. It is for this reason that gendered socialization occurs: parents want to preserve and protect cultural values. Although daughters are encouraged to pursue tertiary education and careers, they are also expected to maintain Indian cultural values and norms (Dion & Dion, 2001).

Ely (1995) conducted a study on how women constructed gender identity in the workplace in law firms in the United States. The results of the study indicated that adopting masculine gender roles and sexualized behaviour reinforced the notion that women are weak and led other women to resent the women who adopted this strategy.

Dennis and Kunkel (2004) conducted a study on 220 CEOs. The results of the study indicated that gender identity is vital to perceptions of similarities and differences between male and female executives.

Ford (2006) conducted a study on 25 male and female middle managers in a metropolitan council district in the United Kingdom. The findings revealed that feminine gender identities were constantly challenged within this environment and women managers tended to adopt contradictory and fragmented male managerial identities if they wanted to be regarded as effective managers.

#### *3.4.2.3 Professional identity*

Dubar (1991, p. 121) defines professional identity as a “basic professional identity that not only constitutes an identity at work but also and more importantly a projection of oneself in the future, the anticipation of a career path and the implementation of a work-based logic, or even better a training orientated logic”. Thus, one’s professional identity is constructed as a result of the link to the world of work. Individuals form relations with co-workers and take part in work-related professional activities (Cohen-Scali, 2003).

The definition of professional identity also pertains to values, norms, beliefs and attributes on which one's professional self-concept in a chosen career is based (Ibarra, 1999). Individuals who thrive in their careers tend to have succeeded in their professional identity constructions (Slay & Smith, 2011).

In the past, the term "professional" was restricted to white male middle class lawyers and doctors who were regarded as having specialist knowledge in their fields and independence in their work. These labels were entrenched in patriarchal power relations and were used to keep women out of traditional professions. This trend changed in the 1970s and 1980s when management identities were incorporated into professional identities (Leathwood, 2005).

As part of their professional identities as managers, women had to take risks, but at the same time had to be successful; they had to be tough but easy to get along with; they had to be ambitious, but should not expect equal treatment; they had to take responsibility, but they should take advice from others. Women had more criteria to fulfil in order to be successful than men (Burke, Koyuncu, & Fiksenbaum, 2006).

Jorgensen (2002) conducted a study on women engineers to establish how they negotiated their professional identities in a male-dominated environment. The study indicated that the women identified themselves as intellectuals and as emotionally engaged in their careers; they coped well within a male-dominated environment; they were not prepared to organise themselves in a woman's group; they did not experience work and home conflict and did not want to be viewed as belonging to a homogeneous group of women. According to Jorgensen (2002), these results contradict other findings relating to women's professional identities. Jorgensen (2002) therefore concluded that women position themselves differently regarding their gender in different contexts.

Holmes and Schnurr (2006) found in their study of organisations in New Zealand that women managers' professional identities were influenced by

their roles in a particular workplace. As managers, women tended to use more directives and authoritarian styles of leadership and assimilate into male identities.

### **3.4.3 Identity work**

#### *3.4.3.1 Definitions of identity work*

Snow and Andersen (1987, p. 1348) describe identity work as “the range of activities individuals engage in to create, present, and sustain personal identities that are congruent with and supportive of the self concept”. Rounds (2006, p. 133) defines identity work as “the processes through which we construct, maintain, and adapt our sense of personal identity, and persuade other people to believe in that identity”.

Howard (2000) regards identity work as fragile, unstable and elastic rather than as inflexible and contradictory. Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003, p. 1165) formalised identity work relating to individuals “engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” which relate to people shaping their personal identities (Watson, 2008).

Identity work is “anything people do, individually or collectively, to give meaning to themselves and to others” (Schwalbe & Mason-Schrock, 1996, p. 115). Thus, as part of their identity work, members of subordinate groups both challenge and seek approval from members of dominant groups (Ezzel, 2009).

#### *3.4.3.2 Theory relating to identity work*

Hintermair (2007) posits that the world has witnessed numerous changes such as globalization, individualization, digital technology, pluralization and value changes. People are now faced with questions relating to their identities that people in Erikson’s time did not have to face. These social changes have

resulted in people's engaging in identity work and embarking on a life-long journey toward discovering who they are and where they belong.

Kreiner et al. (2006, p. 1032) claim that when an individual enters an organisation, the person is always engaged in asking "who am I?" in a milieu of "this is who we are" messages. Individuals and the social contexts within which they engage are dynamic and so are their relationships. When a person actively responds to this dynamic, identity work takes place.

Identity work is also a complex phenomenon. The identity claim an individual makes can be accepted, rejected, ignored or not be recognized. Identity work necessitates interaction with others, as the strength of an identity assertion depends on how others respond to it (Jenkins, 1996) and what is tolerated (Ibarra & Petriglieri, 2010). While some individuals may accept the norms of a social category, others may resist it and yet others may pretend to conform, but reject it in subtle ways (Beech, MacIntosh, & McInnes, 2008).

#### *3.4.3.3 Research relating to identity work*

Ezzel (2009) conducted a study on a woman's rugby team in the United States. She found that the women rugby players did not resist the power of homophobic and sexist stigmas, but distanced themselves from other subordinates and reinforced their own devalued identities. The women identified with and bolstered dominants. Their identity work supported heterosexism and gender inequality.

Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003) conducted a case study on a senior manager and the organisational context within which the participant worked. The results of the study indicate the participant struggled with identity fragmentation and integration in her role as manager.

Watson (2008) conducted a study on the life story of two managers working in the same organisation and how they negotiated their managerial identities. The results of the study indicated how the managers negotiate their individual

identities and reconciled them with their social identities relating to their managerial roles.

Essers and Benschop (2009) conducted research on 20 Moroccan and Turkish business women in the Netherlands and how they negotiated their ethnic, gender and entrepreneurial identities in relation to their Muslim identities. The results of the study indicated these women opposed traditional values imposed by their culture on women by becoming entrepreneurs and within that context negotiated how they dealt with male clients and also how they operated within their communities where the norm was for women to be homemakers and child carers.

### **3.4.4 Hybrid identity**

#### *3.4.4.1 Theory of hybridity*

The term hybridity was coined in the 1980s. Hybridity refers to cultural phenomena and identities, namely the “different lifestyles, behaviours, practices, and orientations that result in multiple identities which are blended, combined and mixed” (Cieslik & Verkuyten, 2006:78). Easthope (2009) points out that the word “hybridity” was originally used to describe people of mixed race, and now theorists speak about the notion of people being between positions and refer to this concept as “in-betweenness”.

Hybridity also means that conflicting messages relating to different cultures are integrated to form new ways of doing things, but the contradictory culture(s) remain visible and powerful (Brettell & Nibbs, 2009). Old traditional values are abandoned and new identities are assimilated. Hybridity takes place when ethnic minorities fuse their own cultural and racial lifestyles and western lifestyles to form new identities (Easthope, 2009).

Homi Bhabha (1994, 2004), a renowned scholar on post-colonial hybrid identities, states that when individuals and communities develop hybrid identities as a result of integrating the differences they encounter, they find

themselves in an in-between or third space. This third space allows for agency and resistance to take place, and identity is negotiated. For Bhabha (2004), hybrid identities are not stable, essential or predictable, and do not regard the world in binary terms. Bhabha (2004) uses the metaphor of “chowder” rather than that of a melting pot to describe identity formations. All ingredients in the “chowder” do not dissolve, and some chunks still float. These “chunks” are parts of one’s cultural identification.

#### *3.4.4.2 Studies relating to hybrid identities*

Van Laer and Janssens (2008) conducted a study on the hybrid identity formation of four second-generation male and female Turkish professionals working in a Belgian organisation. Their findings indicate that the participants found it difficult to negotiate their hybrid identities in an organisation where people perceived the world in dichotomous ways. In most cases they were placed in categories by their Belgian colleagues at work that caused discomfort. The participants mentioned that their hybrid identities were a source of anxiety and stress.

Das (2007) conducted a study of male and female call centre agents in India. The call centre agents had to undergo training to learn to adopt the English accent and learn about the British culture. Although the call centre agents tried their best to change their accents and understand their clients’ culture, their hybrid identities were mocked at by their clients.

Adam et al. (2006) conducted a study on women in the IT industry and the formation of hybrid identities. The results of the study indicated that in order to fit into the male-dominated IT industry, the women did not subscribe fully to their gender identities.

### **3.5 WOMEN-IN-MANAGEMENT RESEARCH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

A study of the women-in-management literature revealed that there is a paucity of research conducted specifically on Indian women and relating to the



challenges faced by Indian women in advancing toward top managerial positions in corporate South Africa. Most of the research that has been conducted so far focuses on the challenges that black and white women face in their career advancement, with Indian women seen as a sub-set of the black female group. This section deals with some of the studies conducted on the barriers black and white women experience in their career advancement in corporate South Africa.

Mathur-Helm (2005) indicates that the progress of women in reaching top managerial positions, such as those of members of a board of directors and CEO, in South African organisations is slow. Lloyd and Mey (2007) point out that cultural and traditional factors such as patriarchy, gender inequality, inadequate training opportunities, a lack of succession planning and white males being given overseas assignments have been some of the barriers to women's advancement, despite the implementation of employment equity legislation. The slow progress of women has been exacerbated by the fact that some white male managers are not committed to implementing employment equity legislation in South African organisations. The reason for this is that because of their privileged positions in organisations, white male managers find it difficult to change the status quo (Booyesen, 1999).

Aside from structural factors within organisations, women's management styles, for example, being less ambitious, less confident and less aggressive, were some reasons provided by male managers for not advancing women (Mathur-Helm, 2005). Women who do not adopt male managerial styles are disadvantaged in their career progress into management positions in the South African workplace (Booyesen, 1999).

South African legislation has to some extent privileged one previously disadvantaged group, namely white females. White women, who constitute a minority group, are currently over-represented in managerial positions in corporate South Africa due to their association with white male managers, while black women who are part of the majority have minority representation

at managerial levels (Booyesen, 1999). This result in black women's encountering dual challenges, one of which stems from their gender and the other of which stems from their race. Thus, black women encounter racism in South African organisations that constantly challenges their upward mobility (Booyesen, 1999). The result is that white women are benefiting to a greater extent from gender equality initiatives than black women are (Mathur-Helm, 2005).

Mathur-Helm (2006) conducted a study of 40 senior and top women managers, including women executive board members, focusing on the career advancement of women in four South African banks. The results of the study indicated that women managers still encounter a glass ceiling, which forms part of the culture, systems and policies of organisations.

Lloyd and Mey (2007) conducted a study of 44 women in managerial and supervisory positions, as well as of 12 male managers in a leading South African car manufacturing plant. The female participants reported that prejudice and stereotypes relating to women's career advancement existed within their organisation. The women also reported that men advanced faster in their careers than women did.

Booyesen and Nkomo (2010) conducted a study on 592 Black and White male and female managers in South African organisations, using Schein's 92-item descriptive index. The results of the study indicated that black and white men did not ascribe successful managerial qualities to women and believed that only males possess the characteristics required to occupy managerial positions. White women regarded both men and women as having the required managerial qualities.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

The many theories I reviewed in this chapter relate to explanations for the slow progress of women in organisations worldwide. As is typical with

qualitative research designs, I built my literature review as the study unfolded. I started my investigation with a broad framework of what I believed to be the many factors that would have to be taken into account in attempting to understand the life and career journeys of Indian women in management. As the research progressed, I continued to review the gender and management literature.

The women-in-management theories ascribed women's slow progress to various individual and organisational factors that act as barriers to female's upward mobility. These factors assisted me in identifying some of the barriers the women in my study encountered in their upward mobility. Feminist theories, especially the psychoanalytic theory which ascribes men and women's behaviour in adulthood to childhood experiences, allowed me to probe the relationships of the women who participated in the study with their parents.

However, the women-in-management and feminist theories were relevant to only a miniscule part of the data I gathered. The aim of the study was to capture the participants' life stories and struggles in reaching senior and top managerial levels in a holistic manner. As a result, the woman's life context framework and intersectionality became sensitizing concepts for structuring the life story interviews. The women's life context framework was important in recording the childhood and adult domains to be captured in the study.. The intersectionality framework focuses on the oppression and suppression that women such as the participants experience due to their racio-ethnic and gender identities which manifest in their professional identities. I also used the construct of identity work, which emerged as a golden thread throughout the women's life stories, to address how these women negotiated their subordinate identities in their childhood, adulthood and professional lives.

The next chapter reviews the research design and methodology, namely life story interviews, grounded theory analysis, the research sample, the research

paradigm, the strategy and the method of analysis that I employed in the study.